

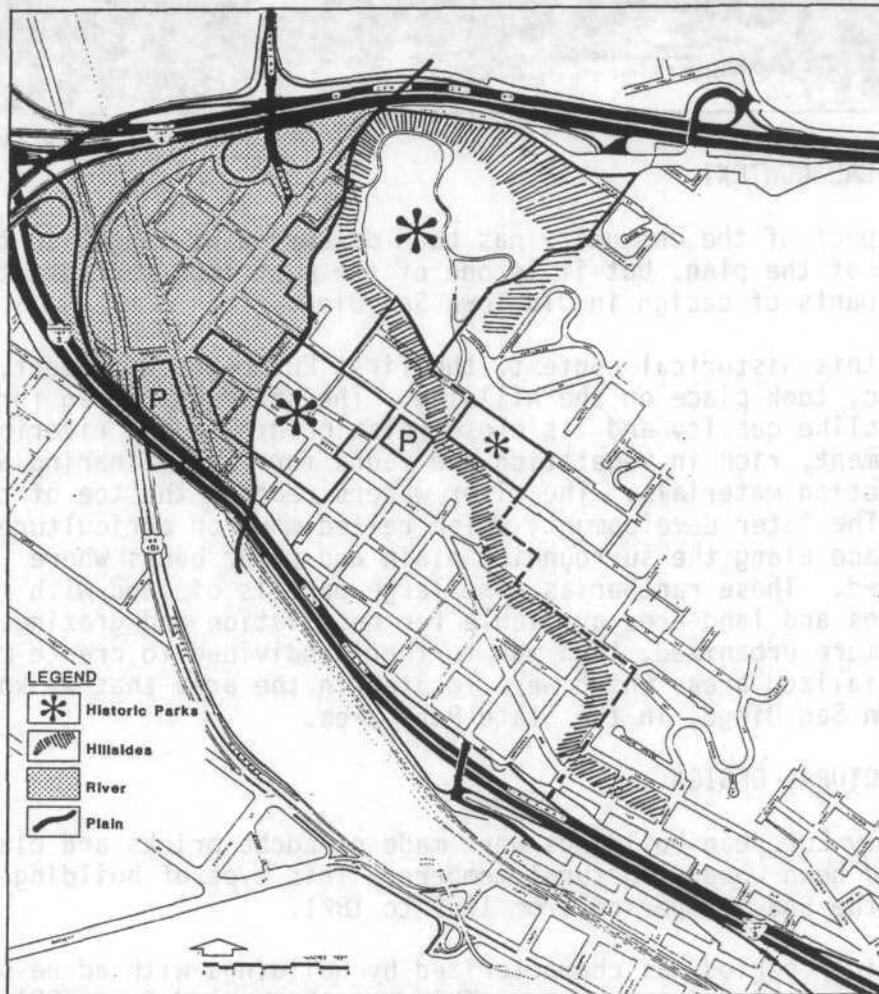
URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

BACKGROUND

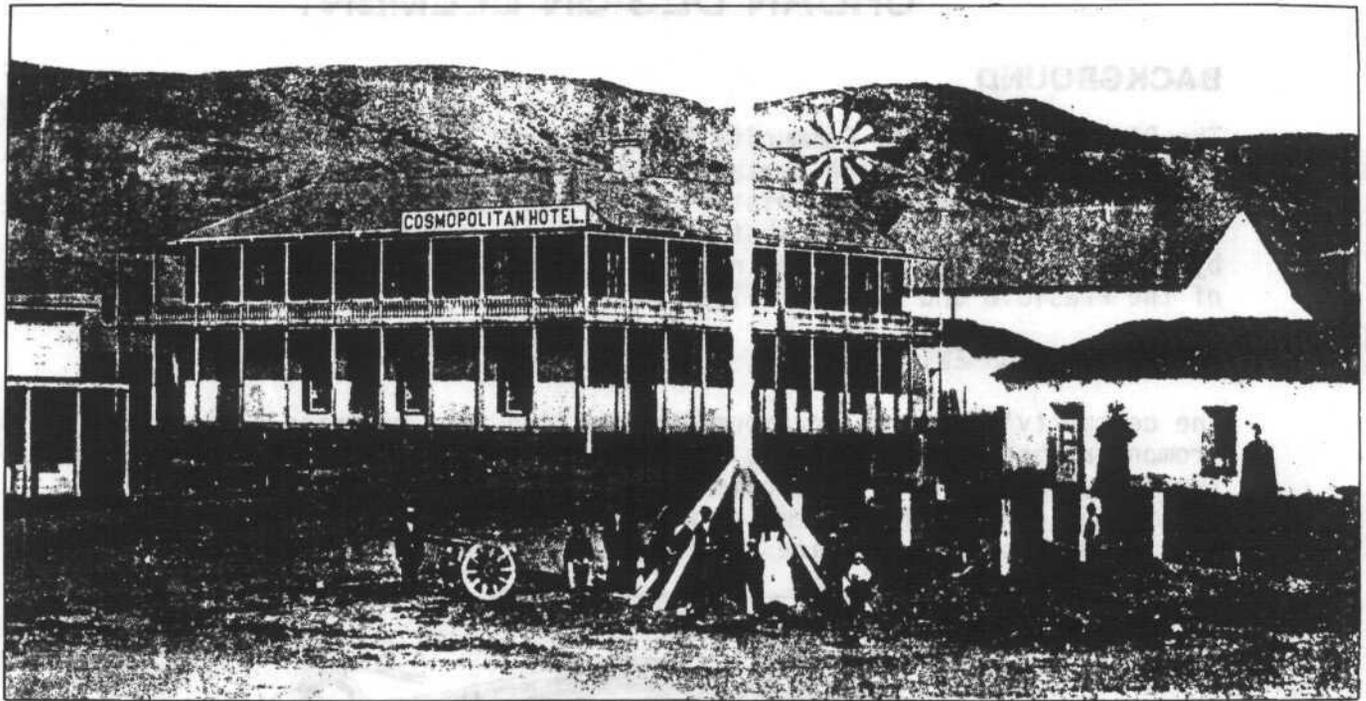
The Old Town San Diego Community Planning area is physically made up of a pronounced hillside which contains the majority of Presidio Park and the lower plain area where the historic park and rest of the urban development is located. The north and western boundary is a man-made barrier created by freeways I-5 and I-8. The northern and eastern boundaries are made up of the Presidio and Mission Hills.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

The community's natural environmental setting is a riverine plain with a promontory backdrop. The area has been the site of urban development since the early European settlers came to this area and probably earlier. No native environment areas remain, although the site's original landform still remains. The riverine environment has been totally disrupted.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FEATURES



Old Town April, 1872 (Godfry)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT.

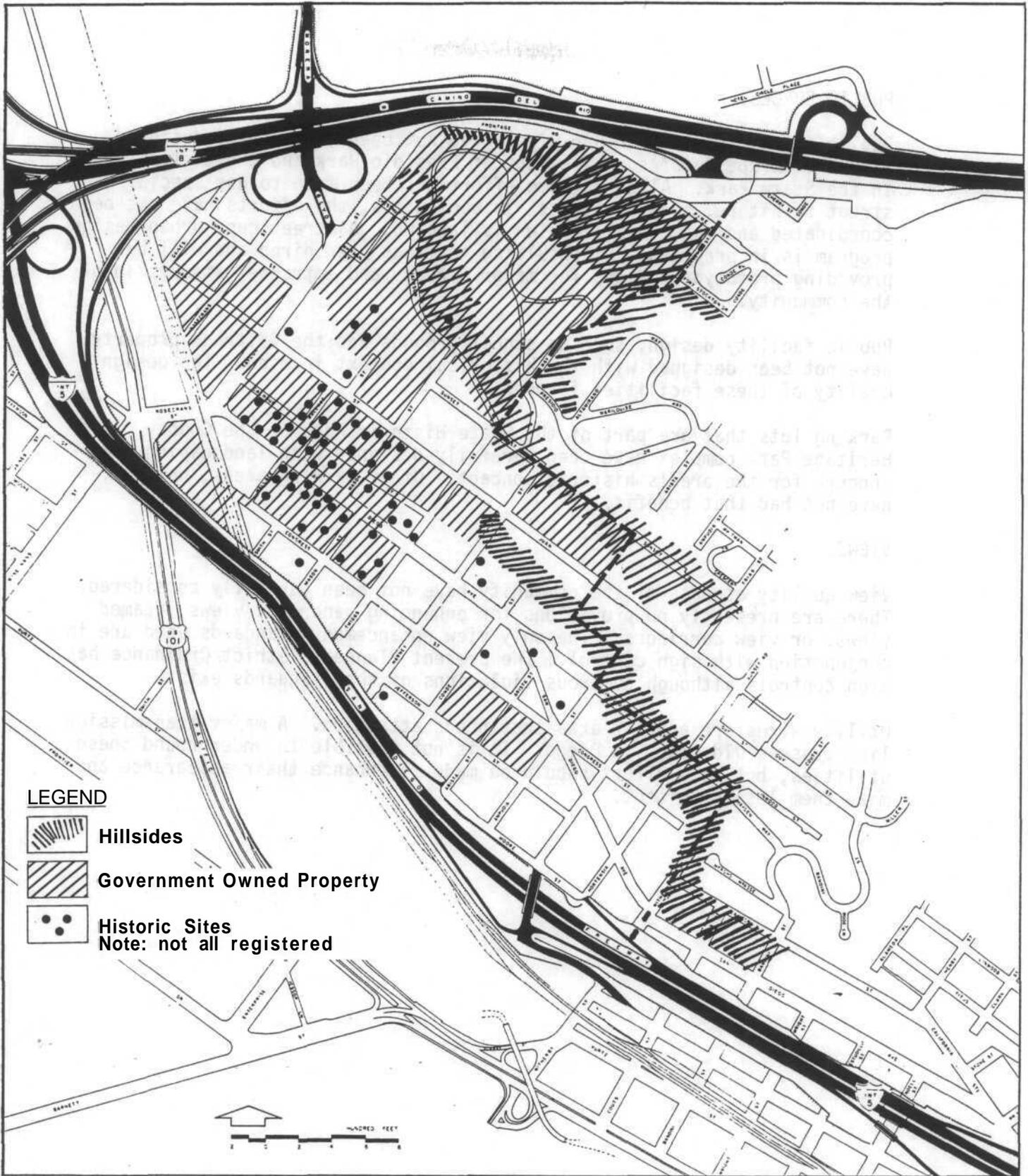
This aspect of the community has been discussed at length in the Historical Element of the plan, but it is one of the most important existing determinants of design in Old Town San Diego.

Within this historical context, the first European settlement, the Presidio, took place on the hillside. The site was chosen for its fortresslike quality and its close relationship to the riverine environment, rich in vegetation and fauna for food gathering and construction materials. The river waters reached the toe of the hillside area. The later development, which relied more on agriculture and farming, took place along the surrounding plain and river banks where "rancherias" developed. These rancherias were large parcels of land with residential buildings and land area available for cultivation and grazing. As the area became more urbanized, land was further subdivided to create more compact commercialized areas which were located in the area that we know today as Old Town San Diego, in the State Park area.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN.

The early European buildings were made of adobe bricks and clay tile roofs and hand hewn wood structural members. This type of building occurred during the Spanish period from 1769 to 1821.

The Mexican period was characterized by buildings with adobe brick walls and mission tile or sod roofs. This was the period from 1821 to 1846. The late American period 1846 to 1871 concurrent with the California Gold Rush saw wood-walled and roofed buildings with sawn and milled woodwork.



URBAN DESIGN INVENTORY

PUBLIC SPACES.

Public spaces in Old Town San Diego have not been consciously designed, with the exception of some sections of Presidio Park and the central plaza in the State Park. Although some effort has been made to use special street furniture, such as lights, in some areas, the efforts have not been coordinated and the overall design is lacking. A streetscape urban design program is in progress. A consulting team has been hired and will be providing prototype designs for major streets and entrance gateways into the community.

Public facility design, such as school grounds and the Caltrans property, have not been designed with the historical context in mind. The design quality of these facilities is poor.

Parking lots that are part of the State Historic Park or the County Heritage Park complex have been carefully designed with landscaping and concern for the area's historic concept. Other parking areas, however, have not had that benefit.

VIEWS.

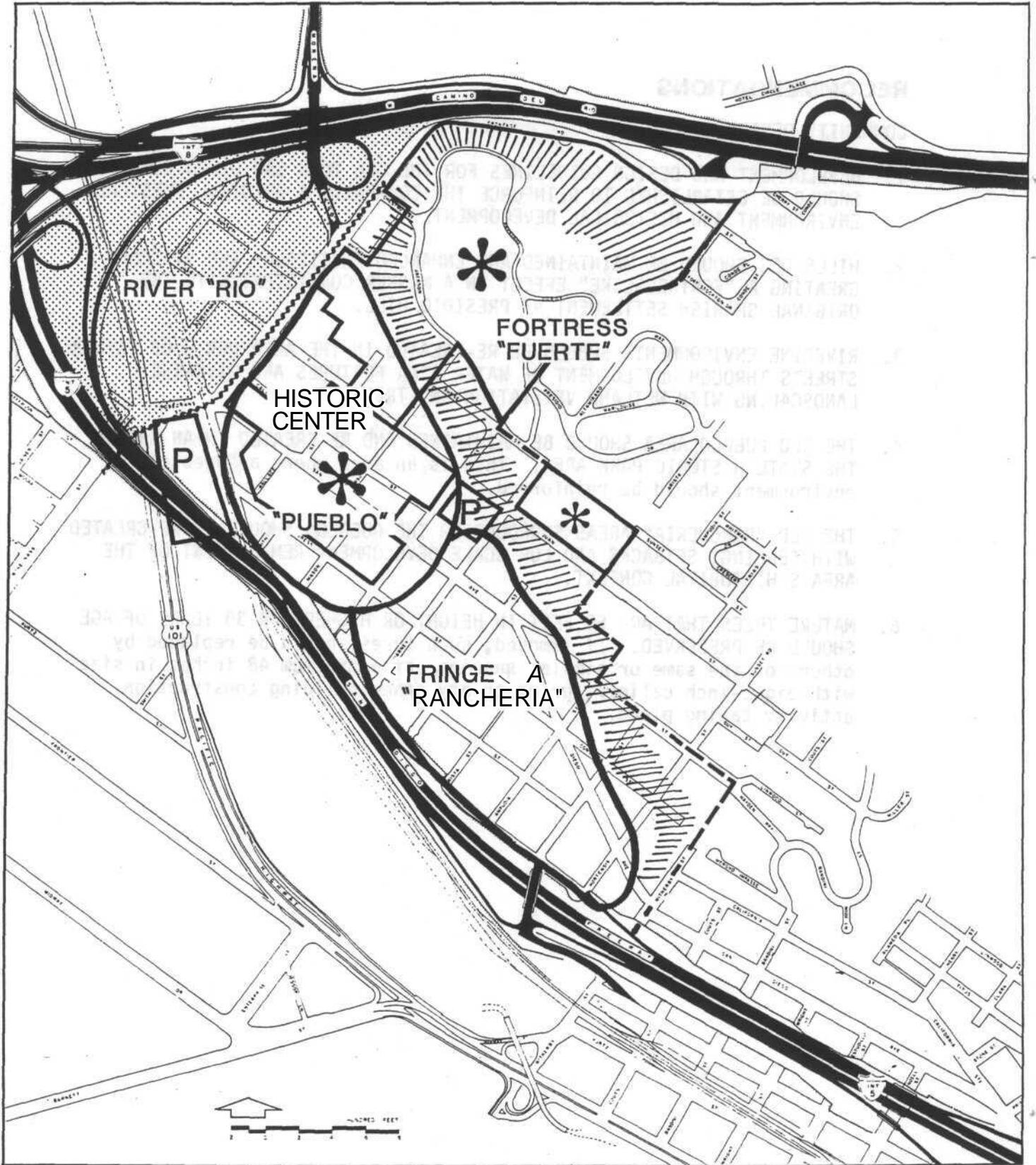
View quality aspects of the community have not been carefully considered. There are presently no provisions for enhancing panoramic views, framed views, or view corridors. The only view enhancement standards used are in conjunction with sign control. The present Planned District Ordinance has sign controls although numerous violations of the standards exist.

Utility wires are another area that needs attention. A major transmission line crosses Old Town San Diego. It is not feasible to underground these utilities, but some effort should be made to enhance their appearance and make them less prominent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMUNITY DESIGN CONCEPT:

1. DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE OLD TOWN SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO REINFORCE THE COMMUNITY'S ORIGINAL PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT.
2. HILLSIDES SHOULD BE MAINTAINED AND ENHANCED PHYSICALLY AND VISUALLY CREATING A "FORTRESSLIKE" EFFECT IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE ORIGINAL SPANISH SETTLEMENT AT PRESIDIO HILL.
3. RIVERINE ENVIRONMENTS SHOULD BE RE-CREATED IN THE AREA NORTH OF TAYLOR STREETS THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF WATER AREA FEATURES AND RIVERINE LANDSCAPING WITH WETLAND VEGETATION AND TREES.
4. THE OLD PUEBLO AREA SHOULD BE MAINTAINED AND RE-CREATED IN AN AROUND THE STATE HISTORIC PARK AREA. This is an area where a "pueblo" environment should be reinforced.
5. THE OLD "RANCHERIA" AREAS SURROUNDING THE PUEBLOS SHOULD BE RE-CREATED WITH FENCING, SETBACKS AND LOW SCALE DEVELOPMENT REMINISCENT OF THE AREA'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT.
6. MATURE TREES THAT ARE 50 FEET IN HEIGHT OR HIGHER, OR 30 YEARS OF AGE SHOULD BE PRESERVED. If removed, such trees **should** be replaced by others of the same or **similar** species, of a minimum 48 inches in size with eight-inch caliper, prior to any other **building** construction activity taking place.



HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEX1

DEVELOPMENT DESIGN/SCALE:

1. FOUR DISTINCT DESIGN DISTRICTS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED, AS FOLLOWS:

HILLSIDES. The "Fuerte" Presidio area.

Development should respect the hillsides and revegetate them. Minor encroachments could be permitted on steep **hillsides** (25 percent or greater). Encroachments should be designed to fit into the hillside as **unobstructively** as possible. **Hillside** development should be clustered. This area is also crisscrossed by earthquake fault **lines**, thus **development** should be minimized from a safety standpoint.

RIVER. The "Rio" area.

Development should re-create the river environment by **consolidating** lots into large parcels and providing low scale development set into a park-like "riverine" environment. In order to create this riverine environment, at least 70 percent of the site should be **landscaped** with wetland vegetation species. Buildings on stilts are appropriate for this area. This area is subject to **liquefaction**, therefore **development** intensity should be reduced for safety reasons.

CORE. The "Pueblo" area.

Development should be urban with no setbacks and one- or two-story structures covering the front area of the site at the street. Open, unbuilt areas, if any, **should be relegated** to the back portion of the **lot**.

CORE SUPPORT. The "Rancheria" area.

Development should have **larger** setbacks of 15 to 20 feet. Side yards should **also** be observed, of five feet or so, and backyards of ten feet from the property **line** should also be observed. Open **landscaped** frontages as **well** as open wood fences of rural character or four- to five-foot-high walls at the street frontage are to be encouraged, re-creating in this manner the residential settlements of old Hispanic **villages**.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

1. **BUILDING DEVELOPMENTS, STRUCTURES, AND SITE DESIGN AND LANDSCAPING SHOULD FAITHFULLY REFLECT THE HISTORICAL PERIODS OR DEVELOPMENT IN THE COMMUNITY.**

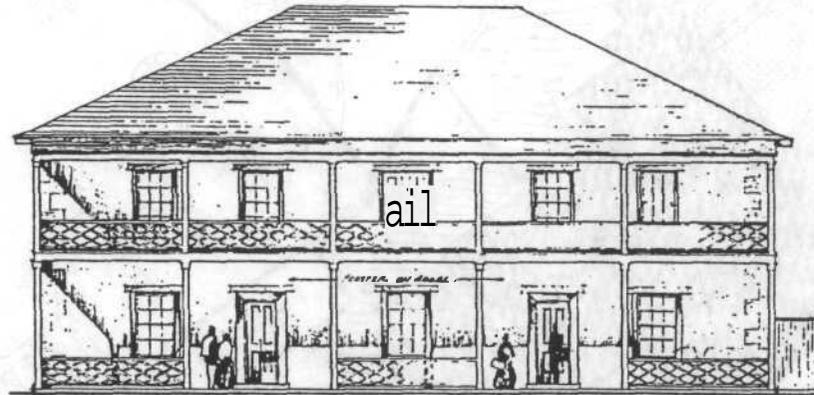
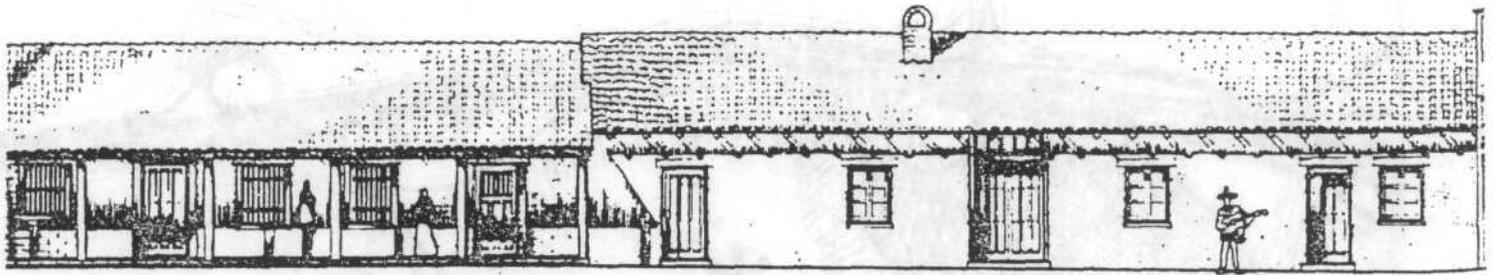
The existing **Old Town San Diego Design Guidelines** should be updated to better reflect the historical context and styles of **Old Town San Diego**. At present, this document does not clearly identify those **stylistic** components that fit each **historical/architectural** style, and as a result, the architecture is a **nondescriptive** mixture of stylistic details that detract rather than compliment the **community's historical** importance. A program should be approved immediately to fund the updating of these guidelines, so that future development **will** enhance the international importance of this historical community and site.

2. **ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES SHOULD BE PRESERVED OR RECONSTRUCTED.** Any **archaeological** building site found should be carefully studied and preserved to **allow** future generations to view it and study it. Preservation should be achieved by building around it and minimizing the amount of development on the site to that which is consistent with the preservation goals of the site. The archaeological site, artifacts or building elements **should** also be preserved in a manner that they can be viewed by the **public**. For this purpose, development standards of the Planned District Ordinance such as use, setbacks, height restrictions, coverage, and landscaping requirements may be modified on a project by project basis, with the objective of preserving the site **economically** and visually, for present and future generations to enjoy.

Sites where archaeological and historical evidence exists which would allow their reconstruction should so be reconstructed. Special development considerations and economic incentives, **including tax** incentives, should be provided.

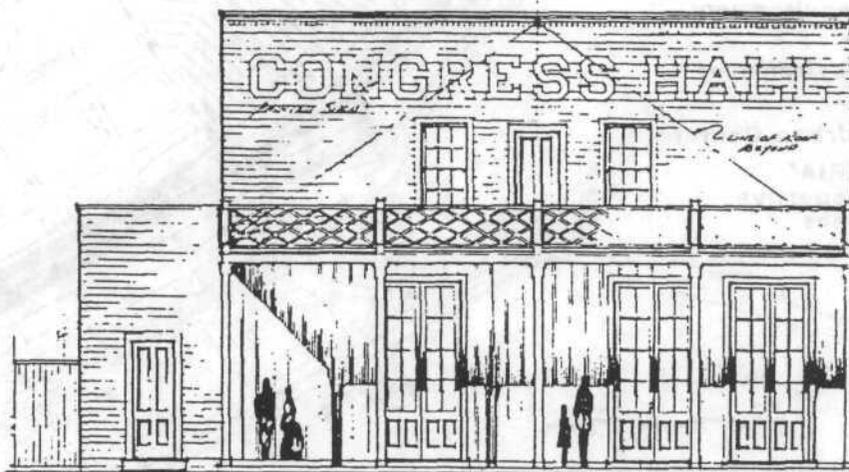
3. **HISTORICAL/ARCHITECTURAL STYLES SHOULD BE FAITHFULLY FOLLOWED.** This should also **include** the incorporation of original/historical bearing wall structural standards. The observation of these standards **will** result in a better, more faithful historical/architectural design. Maximum height of buildings or structures shall not exceed 30 feet from the natural grade.

The following historical/architectural styles should be followed:

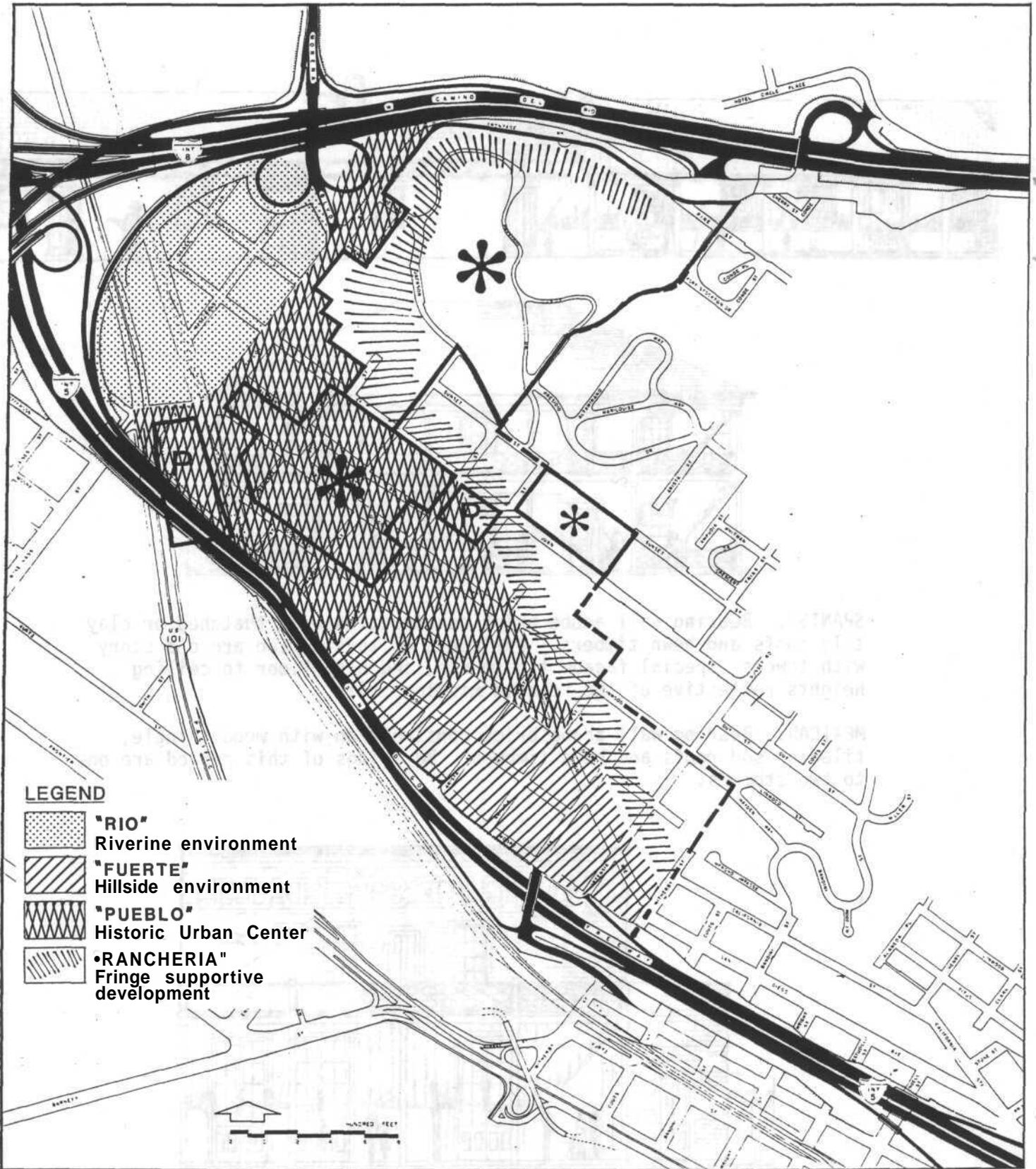


SPANISH. Bearing wall adobe brick construction with thatched or clay tile roofs and hewn timbers. Buildings of this period are one story with towers, special facade treatments, and high floor to ceiling heights reflective of the related mission style.

MEXICAN. Bearing wall adobe brick construction with wood shingle, tiled or sod roofs and hewn timbers. Buildings of this period are one to two stories.



AMERICAN. Wood wall and roof wood and shingle construction, a brick wall with wood roofs and shingles with sawn timbers. Buildings are one to two stories.



URBAN DESIGN CONCEPT AND DISTRICTS

PUBLIC SPACES:

1. SPECIAL **DESIGN CARE** SHOULD BE GIVEN TO PUBLIC SPACES AND FACILITIES, INCLUDING BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS. Public projects should be specially responsive to the **community's** historical importance and sensitive to its design context. **Public entities should** always set the example for private enterprise to **follow**.
2. PUBLIC PARKS LOCATED WITHIN THE HISTORICAL AREAS SHOULD BE SENSITIVELY DESIGNED TO COMPLIMENT AND ENHANCE THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT. Areas known to be rich in **archaeological** value should be researched, exhibited, and protected consistent with the **public** purpose of the park. **All public** park development **shall** be reviewed by the Architectural Review Board and community **planning** group for consistency with the **plan** goals and **objectives**.
3. REDEVELOPMENT OF AND IMPROVEMENTS TO PRESIDIO PARK SHOULD INCORPORATE HISTORICAL INTERPRETIVE EXHIBITS. The fencing should be reconstructed **to reflect historical** designs as was done in the State Park. Heavy brush areas should be **trimmed** and thinned to provide a **visual** connection between the Presidio and State Historic Park. Buildings should be **designed to reflect faithfully** the **community's** early historical **styles**. Park trails should be dirt or **dirt-crete** with stoned gutters re-creating the early designs.
4. SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS SHOULD BE DESIGNED IN A MANNER THAT RESPECTS THE COMMUNITY HISTORICAL/CULTURAL VALUES. **School** buildings should be **stylized** to reflect **historical/architectural** forms in the community. Fencing should be designed in a manner that is reflective of the **area's** architectural/historical context. Grounds, **particularly** their perimeter, should be **landscaped** with native and drought resistant materials. The **school district**, or any other agency or private group responsible for the development of **schools** should seek the input of the **community's Architectural** Review Board.
5. ALL PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND SITES SHOULD BE DESIGNED CONSISTENTLY WITH THE PLANNED DISTRICT ORDINANCE AND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES. The community's Architectural Review Board should provide input to the **design** of public building sites and facilities.

6. STREETS SHOULD PROVIDE ADEQUATE AREAS FOR PEDESTRIAN ACCESS, THE SIDEWALKS SHOULD BE WIDE ENOUGH TO TAKE THE PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC PROJECTION . AUTOMOBILE TRAFFIC LANES SHOULD BE DEEMPHASIZED. Pedestrian **clear** paths should be a minimum of six to eight feet in the river and fringe areas. In the core, pedestrian "**clear** paths" should be 10 to 15 feet in width. Street trees shall be provided throughout along parkways next to the curb. Tree species **shall** be different in the different subareas. The river area **should** have street trees of **wetland** species. The **hillsides** **should** have chaparral type of vegetation with **tall** vertical trees. The core (pueblo) area should have arid **tall** and narrow tree species. The fringe (rancherias) should have broad canopied tree species. The streetscape plan program **will** provide greater detail on the design and landscaping materials. Sidewalk areas should be tanned in **color**, mimicking dirt paths. High groundcover reminiscent of weeds **should** be **planted** in the parkway. Street lights should be pedestrian-oriented and maintain the historical context.
7. TAYLOR STREET SHOULD HAVE A **30-FOOT-WIDE** PEDESTRIAN PARKWAY ON EACH SIDE OF THE STREET. Buildings should be set back 30 feet from the property **line**. The landscaped areas should include a **meadow-like** environment with grass and trees. A landscaped street median should be incorporated. A sidewalk pedestrian clear path eight feet in width with tan color paving reproducing dirt paths, and a four- to six-foot-wide **landscaped** parkway at the curb should be developed within the **street's public right-of-way**. **all** areas that are not used for plantings or automobile access shall have enhanced paving, such as **tiles**, textured concrete, etc. Street **lights** **should** reflect the community's historical context.
8. TAYLOR STREET SHOULD HAVE LANDSCAPED CENTER ISLANDS. Turning lanes should be defined by four-foot **landscaped** center islands.
9. SAN DIEGO AVENUE SHOULD MAINTAIN THE STREET RIGHT-OF-WAY BOUNDARY CONTINUITY BY DEVELOPMENT OF ADOBE WALLS. Four- or five-foot adobe **walls** at the property **line** are encouraged. Landscaping in the form of vines to provide color and contrast is encouraged.
10. FREEWAY RIGHT-OF-WAY SHALL BE LANDSCAPED WITH LOCAL FLORA. Freeway edges **should** be **landscaped** with vegetation **materials** that are consistent with the **community's** historical context. Freeway entrances into the community **should** be designed to make a statement of entering an important historical area. Features **similar** to the "**colonial bell**" which graced the Camino Real route in California is an example of **such** a feature. The streetscape design program will develop each motif, and **should** become a part of this plan for future **implementation**.
11. PARKING LOTS SHOULD BE DESIGNED IN A MANNER REPRESENTATIVE OF A LOW SCALE RURAL CONTEXT. The State Historic Park parking areas between Congress Street and San Diego Avenue are an **excellent** example of design

for these areas. The dirt landscaped island with arid landscaping coupled with the more **rural-like blacktop** automobile circulation areas represent an **excellent** solution to this design **problem**.

12. PARKING STRUCTURES SHOULD BE DESIGNED AS UNOBSTRUCTIVELY AS POSSIBLE. The structures should have a minimum of 15-foot landscaped setbacks from the street right-of-way. The **landscaped** setbacks **should** include mounding and various types of groundcover, bushes, and trees. Buildings should be **reflective** of adobe type structures, with articulation reflective of historic buildings and **development** patterns. The roof of the structures should **include landscaped** planters that allow vegetation such as vines to grow and cascade onto the ground, providing further visual relief and **color**. Structures of 20,000 square feet or larger should be broken up by landscaped **wells** in the middle of the structure. Mixed-use is encouraged, provided the other uses are located in the periphery of the structure in such a manner that the parking structure is **located** in the middle of the project not viewable from the street. Roof elements from other uses should project over the roof of the structures to provide visual relief from the top of the **hill**.

Access to parking structures both above and below grade **shall** not be gained directly from the street but should be gained from a separate driveway perpendicular to the street.

13. UNDERGROUND PARKING STRUCTURES SHALL BE DEVELOPED TOTALLY UNDERGROUND. No portion of the structure **shall** project more than one foot above the **sidewalk level**.

PUBLIC VIEWS:

1. PANORAMIC VIEWS FROM THE HILLSIDES SHOULD BE MAINTAINED. Roof tops should be carefully designed to avoid blighting panoramic views. Roof top mechanical structures **should** be buffered, sheltered, or enclosed to avoid negative impacts on views.
2. PANORAMIC VIEWS INTO THE HILLSIDES SHOULD BE MAINTAINED. Hillsides should be preserved and revegetated. Development on and around hillsides should be **clustered**.
3. VIEW CORRIDORS TO PRESIDIO HILL SHOULD BE MAINTAINED. Streets focusing on Presidio **hill** should not be **closed**, in order to maintain **public** view corridors. Setbacks should be constructed to enhance **public** views as **needed**.
4. STRICT SIGN CONTROL SHOULD BE EXERCISED TO MAINTAIN THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT. Due to the small scale of most pre-1871 development, signs should be pedestrian-oriented as contrasted to automobile-oriented **signs**.

5. BILLBOARDS AND OTHER OFF-PREMISE SIGNS SHALL BE REMOVED FROM THE OLD TOWN SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY. The Planning Department should encourage property owners near Taylor Street and Rosecrans area not to renew their present leases. The Old Town San Diego Planned District Ordinance does not permit billboards or off-premise signs. Redevelopment proposals should be subject to full compliance with the Planned District Ordinance, and require the removal of any existing signs consistent with the Planned District Ordinance which has been in effect since 1971, as amended in 1987.

