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## **RESIDENTIAL ELEMENT**

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Mission Beach is presently characterized by a low-profile compact series of residential structures. Community attitudes indicate that an effort must be made to encourage the retention of those characteristics that make Mission Beach the distinct and unique community that it is today.

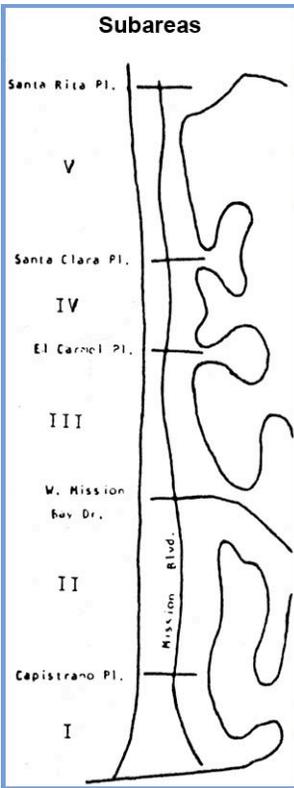
There are a number of problems that exist at present, however, some of which are being amplified by new development. These include the threat of overbuilding in terms of density, excessively bulky buildings that are out of scale with respect to their site and the community, lack of parking, lack of landscaping, and the lack of adequate height regulation. Seventy-five percent of the residential zoning in Mission Beach is R-4, which allows a potential density of 108 units per net residential acre. The continuation of the use of this zone over the years is the reason for the problems today. Each of these problems has been contributing to the environmental degradation of Mission Beach over the years.

The other 25 percent of the residential land (located in South Mission Beach south of Capistrano Place) is zoned R-2B. This zone, recently created especially for that area, is compatible with the character of the residential development in that area. South Mission Beach consists mainly of one- and two-family residences, and has an overall lower density than the rest of Mission Beach.

### **GOALS**

- The continuation of the existing medium-density character of Mission Beach exemplified by the overall low profile and random mix of housing types and styles.
- The establishment of an overall maximum density in Mission Beach in order to prevent overdevelopment.
- The permanent control of height and building bulk so that structures in Mission Beach will not have adverse affects on surrounding property, the beaches, and the community in general.
- The encouragement of good building, site and neighborhood design through the use of bonuses as rewards for extraordinary development.
- The insurance of necessary health and safety conditions such as the provision of adequate light and air, and storage of trash and garbage.
- The insurance of necessary environmental amenities such as the provision of open space, landscaping and vegetation.
- The development of increased on-site residential parking requirements in order to alleviate the critical parking shortage.
- The replacement of R-4 zoning in Mission Beach with development regulations tailored to the community.
- The incorporation of the R2-B zone into special development regulations tailored to South Mission Beach.

Subarea		R15		R2		R2A		R3		R3A		R4		Total	
		Amount	Percent												
V	Parcels	10	2	18	3	115	21	254	47	115	21	30	6	542	36
	Acreage	1	2	1	5	5	26	8	39	5	22	1	6	21	24
IV	Parcels	7	4	11	6	74	39	56	30	29	15	11	6	188	12
	Acreage	1	5	1	7	5	38	3	27	2	16	1	7	13	15
III	Parcels	5	2	24	8	103	35	88	30	62	21	12	4	294	20
	Acreage	1	3	2	9	7	31	6	31	4	21	1	5	21	24
II	Parcels	-	-	10	4	91	37	84	35	48	20	10	4	243	16
	Acreage	-	-	1	5	6	34	6	36	3	19	1	6	17	19
I	Parcels	5	2	31	13	124	53	67	29	7	3	1	-	235	16
	Acreage	1	4	3	16	8	51	4	25	-	3	-	1	16	18
Total	Parcels	27	2	94	6	507	34	549	37	261	17	64	4	1,502	100
	Acreage	4	3	8	8	31	35	27	32	14	17	4	5	88*	100



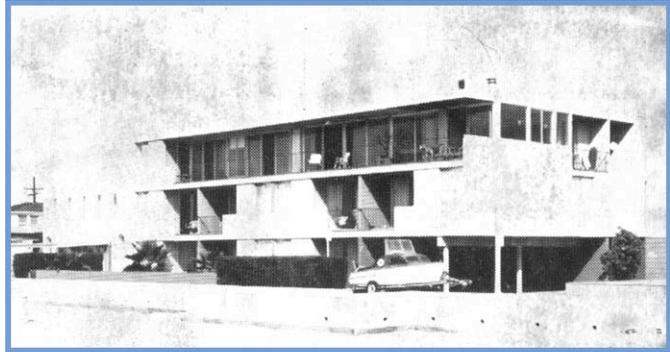
\*This excludes eight acres of vacant residential land.  
Source: research Section, San Diego City Planning Department, September 1971.  
Acreages rounded to the nearest whole number.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The solution to the physical problems attendant to residential development in Mission Beach lies in the creation of special development regulations to supercede the existing ones. The following Plan proposals will establish the criteria for these regulations. These criteria should apply to all residential development north of Capistrano Place. The development south of Capistrano Place should be regulated by the basic criteria as intended by the R-2B zone.

### Density

The 1970 Census revealed that Mission Beach is developed to an average of about 33 dwelling units per net residential acre. If full development occurred under the R-4 zoning, Mission Beach could be developed to a density of over 70 dwelling units per acre. Because of the intense overcrowding and circulation problems that this would cause, it is necessary to limit density well below this figure. If new development is



**Consuming almost all of its lot, this building is developed at over 90 units/acre.**

going to resolve rather than contribute to these problems, it should be limited to an average density of 36 dwelling units per net residential acre. On a lot-by-lot basis, the realistic limitation of present development is two units on a typical 1,250 square foot lot (25' x 50') and 4 units on a typical 2,400-square-foot lot (30' x 80') or about 72 units per net residential acre. The 1,250-square-foot lot is the standard lot size north of Santa Clara Place and the 2,400-square-foot lot the standard south of Santa Clara Place. The proposed limitation of 36 dwelling units per acre would permit one unit on a 1,250-square-foot lot and two units on a 2,400-square-foot lot. These building blocks are the basis for the 36-unit per net residential acre density limitation. The proposed 36 units per acre, while less than presently permitted, is twice the existing density of any community in San Diego.

### Building Bulk

Because the lots are so small in Mission Beach, the problem of excessive building bulk is severe. This can have a detrimental impact on surrounding properties by blocking light and air. The means of controlling bulk are through setback requirements (yards), lot coverage and floor area ratios. The latter will be discussed in the next section. The need to control bulk and to ensure open space is of vital importance. In establishing controls, however, care has been taken not to be so stringent as to prohibit reasonable development of property. Certain criteria, then, has been established that takes both sides of the question into account.

The Courts and Places in Mission Beach provide the only pedestrian open space system other than the beaches. Every residence fronts on either the beach or a Court or Place. Consequently, their preservation is a top priority. Therefore, the existing requirement of a 15-foot setback should be maintained on all Courts and Places south of Santa Clara Place.

Because of the extremely small lot sizes north of Santa Clara, a ten-foot setback is acceptable on single lots. For property on the south side of Courts, there is an additional problem of shadow control that will necessitate further setbacks for development over two stories. This will be discussed under height limitation.

Rear yards and street side yards in Mission Beach abut alleys in almost all cases. Because these alleys are strictly utilitarian, no setback is necessary above the first story. A setback should be necessary only to ensure maneuverability of automobiles in and out of parking stalls. Most alleys are only 16 feet wide, whereas the minimum turning radius necessary for an automobile is as great as 21 feet.

Interior side yards present a dilemma because of the narrow lots. Subtracting anything from either side of a 25- or 30-foot lot leaves very little buildable area. One solution is common wall construction with a zero-foot side yard. This can only be implemented, however, when two or more lots are developing simultaneously. Otherwise, a minimum of a three-foot side yard plus an additional two feet for each story over two is necessary to insure even minimum light and air. This is less than would be required on a large lot but the most that can be reasonably required for very small lots. On consolidated lots, larger side yards are in order because larger lots allow more flexibility in site design. Where possible, minimum side yards should be four feet with an increase of three feet for each story over two.

A special situation is the setback for yards fronting on beaches. Because of the adequate open space of the beaches, a requirement of ten feet is reasonable in most cases. Buildings over two stories should provide additional setback for at least the third story in order to prevent shadows from encroaching on the beaches except for those lots north of Santa Clara where any setback greater than ten feet would deny reasonable use of the property.

All of these yard requirements, if taken at the minimum, could still permit bulky buildings. A further requirement, total lot coverage, added to the yard requirements is necessary to combat excessive bulk. A coverage of 50 percent for interior lots and 60 percent for corner lots will help to insure a reasonable control on bulk for 2,400-square-foot lots. For the 1,250-square-foot lots a requirement of 60 percent is reasonable. As the size of the lot increases through consolidation, the lot coverage permitted should be reduced accordingly. Again, small lots developed one at a time are going to result in less than desirable open space and bulk control. More stringent requirements, however, would prevent reasonable development of the lot. Some consolidation of lots will be necessary to achieve an overall effect of space between buildings, especially with the 1,250-square-foot lots.

### **Floor Area Ratio**

While density can be regulated by limiting the number of dwelling units per lot, and bulk can be controlled through setbacks and coverage requirements, these limitations still do not completely solve the critical problem of building bulk in Mission Beach. A lot permitted four dwelling units for example, could contain four small apartments @ 800 square feet each or four large apartments @ 1,600 square feet each. The latter case, with 6,400 square feet, allows twice the building as the former with its 3,200 square feet. For this reason, a further limitation is necessary. This limitation is floor area ratio. The ratio is as follows:

$$\text{FAR} = \frac{\text{total floor area}}{\text{total land area}}$$

This ratio limits the total living space per lot. Floor area includes most living space but should exclude legal parking, open stairways, trash storage areas, small balconies open on two or more sides, and roof decks. This requirement comes much closer to controlling building bulk based on the size of the lot. The basic ratio for use in Mission Beach should be about 1.0. This requirement should be variable, somewhere between .9 up to 1.2, based on the provision by the developer of certain bonuses such as open space and parking. This ratio, then, works in conjunction with density in controlling the overall development of any particular parcel. A property, therefore, having 4,800 square feet of lot area would be permitted 4,800 square feet of floor area if the ratio were 1.0. It could be developed (depending on limitations concerning total dwelling units) with four units of 1,200 square feet each, three units of 1,600 square feet each, or any other combination not exceeding the maximum floor area or number of units allowed. This permits a maximum amount of flexibility while insuring that a particular piece of land is not overdeveloped.

### **Consolidation**

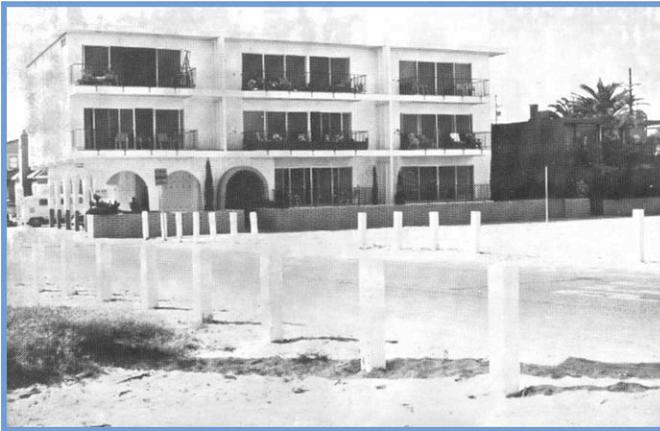
The standard 1,250 and 2,400 square foot lots in Mission Beach are extremely difficult to develop. Larger pieces of land provide more flexibility in situating a building on a piece of property. It is understandable that some consolidation of these small lots can result in better development. At the other extreme, however, is the need to limit consolidation at some point if the existing character of the community is to be preserved. The Courts, Places and alleys in Mission Beach act as boundaries, preventing any exceptionally large consolidation. Consideration should be given to closing east-west alleys in order to provide some flexibility in development possibilities. This should be done, however, only at the request of and with the concurrence of 100 percent of the owners of property abutting the alley. Because of the important role that the Courts and Places serve in providing open space and east-west pedestrian linkages, they should not be closed. Consideration should be given, however, to some minor realignment of the Courts, providing that the terminus of the Court nearest the ocean or bay remains fixed at its present location. Strandway and Bayside Lane, the two narrow north-south streets, provide a continuous link throughout the community both for regular circulation and for emergency vehicles. For this reason these two spines should not be closed. The maximum consolidation, then, becomes the area between two Courts, and between either north-south streets and Mission Boulevard. Should an alley be closed it should be done under the condition that an opportunity exists for dedication of an equal amount of property as public open space on the site. Whether such a dedication occurs should be subject to agreement by the City and the developer at the time of the transaction. The area thus defined is considered to be a reasonable area for consolidation. Anything greater could significantly alter the character of the community. Further consideration should be given to limiting the number of units per structure on large consolidations in order to control bulk. Bridging of Courts, Places or the north-south alleys through the use of air rights should not be permitted.

## Height

The question of height limitation has been a volatile issue in Mission Beach for some time. Temporary height limits, renewed from time to time, have been the interim means of preventing the development of undesirable high-rise structures. Unfortunately, in many instances, high-rise has been mistakenly equated with high-density. The question of density is a separate issue.

A limitation upon the development of high rises in Mission Beach is necessary for several reasons. Without proper regulation, high rises can have a negative impact in terms of excessive bulk, the blocking of wind currents from the ocean to the bay that are necessary for sailing, the blocking of light and air to individual lots, the blocking of views and see-throughs, and the creation of excessive shadows. High-rise, per se, is acceptable if it has generous amounts of open space surrounding the structure, has adequate on-site parking, and has a proper location within the community.

Unfortunately, Mission Beach is so physically crowded that it is virtually impossible to develop a high rise without it having a negative impact on surrounding property, the beaches, or the community in general. The price of land in Mission Beach and the random ownership of all of the small lots make it difficult to assemble the amount of land necessary for an appropriate high rise.



**Three stories is about as high as a structure can go without becoming way out of scale.**

Because of the unique nature of Mission Beach with its small lots and low profile, the impact of an exceptionally large high rise would be considerable. The will of the residents and property owners has been expressed time and again, and it runs counter to tall buildings. Over 70 percent of the residents of Mission Beach voted in the November 1972 General Election to impose a permanent height limit on the community. If Mission Beach is, indeed, going to maintain its existing

character, that of a low-profile community characterized by small residential structures and businesses, then it will be necessary to establish a permanent height limitation. A basic limitation of 35 feet with a three-story maximum is most in keeping with the existing character of the community and the will of the residents and property owners. The critical need is the proper regulation of shadows and structures on the south side of Courts and on Mission Bay. This is because the sun is in the south part of the sky in the former case and because afternoon shadows are undesirable on the bayside beaches in the latter case.

Taller buildings, therefore, must necessarily be set back further in these situations. Generally speaking, buildings on the south side of Courts should cast minimum shadows on the Courts

themselves and on the front yards on the property facing the north side of the Court. Buildings on the beaches should cast shadows onto the beach no faster than at a rate proportionate to the average usage at various times of the day. In other words, when the beach attendance under maximum beach usage conditions is 30 percent such as late afternoon on a hot summer weekend, for example, then the maximum amount of beach in shadows should be 70 percent.

These limitations strictly regulate the height of all structures in Mission Beach, while allowing some flexibility in providing variety in roof lines. This is necessary in order to maintain the existing character of Mission Beach and to insure the provision of adequate light and air that is so critical in this already intensely developed community.

### **Parking**

The lack of adequate off-street parking facilities is one of the most critical problems facing Mission Beach. At present, there are more automobiles (about 5,000) than there are legal off-street parking spaces (approximately 3,700). Consequently, on-street spaces, which should be used for short-term parking such as for visitors, are the only available parking for some residents. The extreme deficiency in parking spaces exists because many older units in Mission Beach do not provide any parking at all.

New residential structures are required to provide 1.3 spaces for one-bedroom units and 1.6 spaces for two-bedroom units. Even this average of about 1.5 spaces for all units is not sufficient in Mission Beach. According to the 1970 Census, the average dwelling unit in Mission Beach generates 1.7 cars. A higher requirement is necessary therefore, in order to begin to make up the deficit.

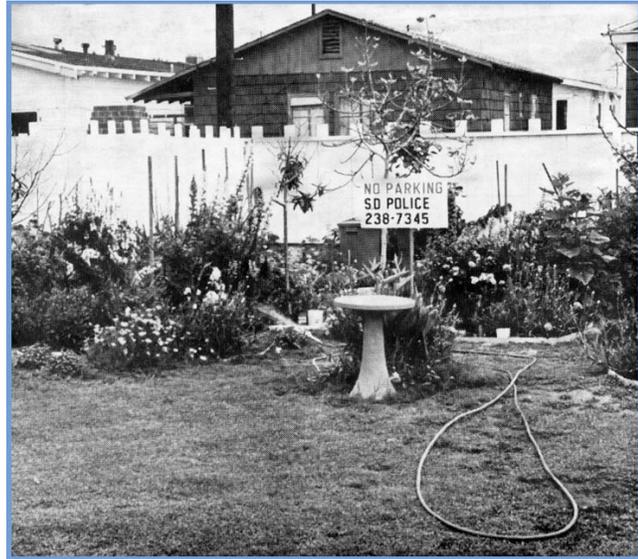
The recommended requirements for residential parking in Mission Beach are as follows:

Single-family	2.0 spaces per unit
Two-family (duplex)	1.5 spaces per unit
Three or more family (apartment)	1.3 spaces per unit (studio) 1.5 spaces per unit (one bedroom) 2.0 spaces per unit (two or more bedrooms)

There are two ways to facilitate the provision of necessary parking. One way is through the consolidation of lots, which provides more flexibility with increased lot area. The other is through the permitting of tandem parking. This allows parking spaces that are blocked by other spaces. Instead of 8' x 20' stalls perpendicular to an alley, for example, stalls of 8' x 40' would allow two parking spaces instead of one. Even in this case every dwelling unit should have at least one space accessible to a public right-of-way. This concept is necessary in Mission Beach because of the critical lack of parking. Special consideration should be given in all large consolidations to constructing the entire development over a layer of sub-surface parking.

## Landscaping

Mission Beach suffers because of the intensity of development combined with a lack of landscaping. The appearance is that of a community of stucco and concrete. The encouragement of landscaping on a lot-by-lot basis can work to change that image. A minimum of 20 percent of the total lot area should be required to be in landscaping and at least 40 percent of the yard area facing Courts, Streets or Places should be landscaped. Landscaping, in this sense, could include walks and decks in addition to trees and shrubs. Although alleys are principally utilitarian they should also be presentable. Many windows look out on them, and many entrances open out upon them. Adequate trash and garbage storage areas should be provided, out of the public right-of-way, and screened from public view. Consideration should be given



**Even a flower garden is a potential parking space in Mission Beach.**



**A little beautification . . .**



**. . . can go a long way.**

to providing for flower boxes on the facades that face these alleys.

The intent of all of these landscaping requirements is to allow flexibility so that adequate yard area can be developed as useable open space, while preventing yards that consist of concrete slabs. A tree that in maturity grows to at least 20 feet should be required for each lot. This is necessary to soften the harsh impact of buildings, alleys and walks. The arrangement of structures on their lots should facilitate the creation of usable open spaces. Narrow three-foot side yards, while providing light and air, do not provide any sort of usable space. A common wall on the property line on one side and a six-foot side yard on the other would allow a usable space. Landscaping is more than trees and shrubs. It also consists of developing usable and presentable spaces outside the home just as they are developed on the inside.

## SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- That a planned district be developed to replace all residential zoning in Mission Beach.
- That a density limitation of 36 dwelling units per net residential acre be established for Mission Beach for all new development.
- That yards be large enough to ensure the provision of light and air to surrounding properties, and that these yard requirements be increased where necessary for buildings over two stories in height.
- That a floor area ratio of about 1.0 be established for all residential development, with variations up to 1.2 if certain bonuses such as increased parking and decreased lot coverage are provided.
- That minor lot consolidation be encouraged through the provision of increased floor area ratio if it is accompanied by bonuses such as increased parking and decreased lot coverage.
- That the maximum consolidation of property permitted be that which is bounded by two adjacent Courts, and by Mission Boulevard and a north-south street.
- That a basic height limit of 35 feet with a three-story maximum be established.
- That on-site parking requirements be as follows:

Single-family	2.0 spaces per unit
Two-family (duplex)	1.5 spaces per unit
Three or more family (apartment)	1.3 spaces per unit (studio)
	1.5 spaces per unit (one bedroom)
	2.0 spaces per unit (two or more bedrooms)
- That tandem parking be permitted provided that at least one space per unit is accessible to a public right-of-way.
- That 20 percent of the lot area in residential development be landscaped.
- That trash and garbage storage be provided out of the public right-of-way and screened from public view.