

## **PLANNING CONTEXT**

### **THE COMMUNITY PLANNING AREA**

The Pacific Beach community planning area is located within the mid-coastal region of the City of San Diego. It is bounded on the north by La Jolla, on the east by Interstate 5 and Clairemont Mesa, on the south by Mission Bay Park and Mission Beach, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean (Figure 3).

### **DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING HISTORY**

Pacific Beach was included within the original Pueblo Lands, which divided the area into a large grid pattern in the mid-1800s. The founding of the San Diego College of Letters at the northwest corner of Garnet Avenue and Lamont Street in 1887, acted as a catalyst for development of a nearby small village. In 1910, the redevelopment of the college site to the San Diego Army and Navy Academy--later named the Brown Military Academy--spurred significant residential building activity.

This activity continued at an accelerated pace through the war and post-war years. During this same period, major transportation routes served as the focal points for commercial development. With the exception of Pacific Plaza, very little change has occurred to the commercial development pattern established at the time.

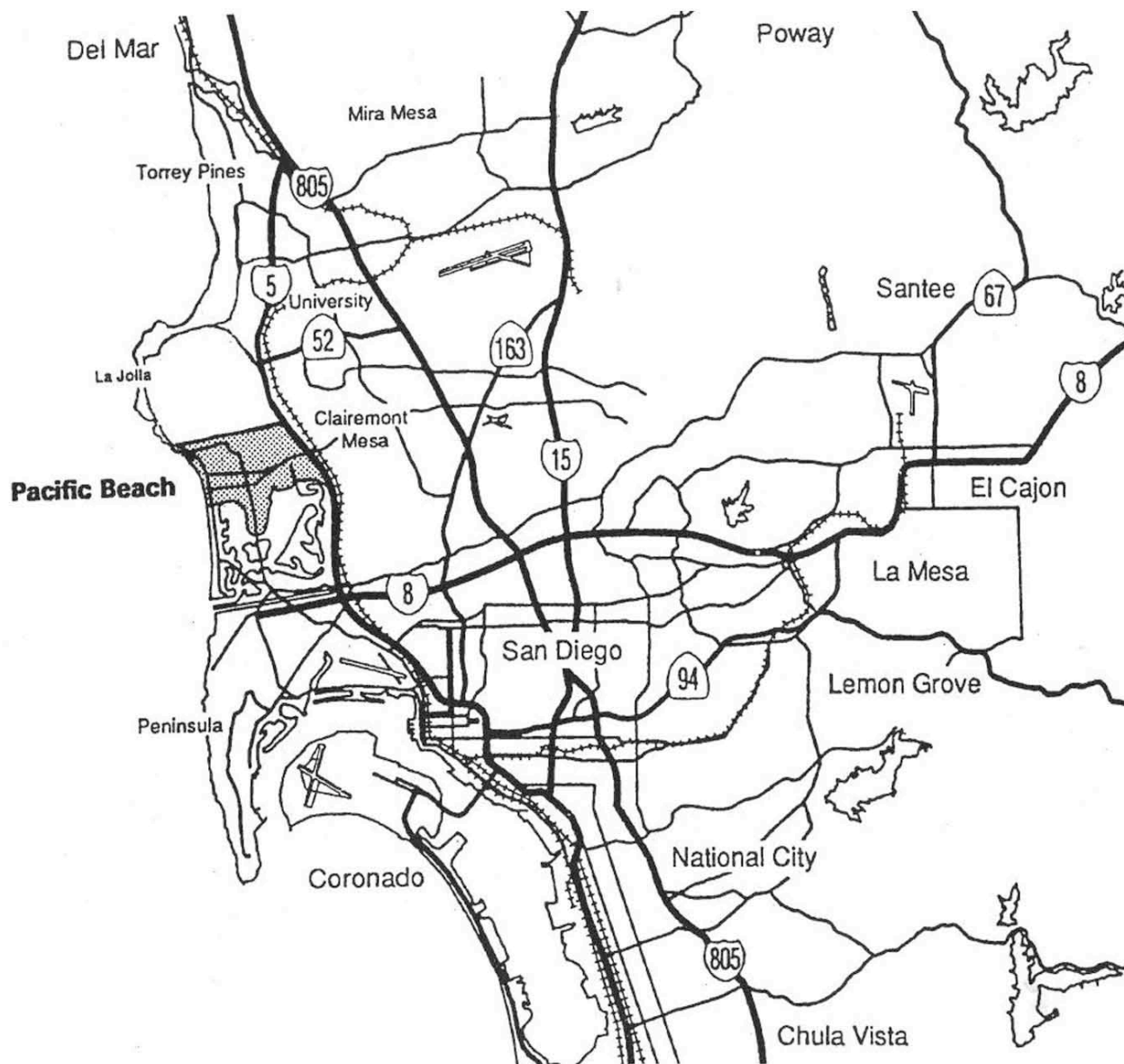
Tourism has consistently had a major economic impact on Pacific Beach and its surrounding communities. Belmont Park, Crystal Pier and Mission Bay Park were all developed to take advantage of this potential.

The Mission-Pacific Beach Community Plan, adopted by the City Council in 1970, was the first area plan for Pacific Beach. In 1974, the Council adopted the Mission Beach Precise Plan, and amended the 1970 plan to remove the Mission Beach Planning Area.

In 1977, the City Council recognized the Pacific Beach Community Planning Committee as the official organization to provide citizen input on planning and development issues in Pacific Beach. The committee worked with the Planning Department to prepare the updated Pacific Beach Community Plan and Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan, which was adopted by the City Council in 1983. The plan has been amended five times since then.

In 1988 and 1989, the City Council approved rezonings to various residential and commercial properties in Pacific Beach to implement the 1983 community plan and the local coastal program. Upon the California Coastal Commission's certification of these rezonings in 1988, the City assumed Coastal Development Permit authority for most of the properties within Pacific Beach's coastal zone.

In 1990, as part of the City's Single-Family Protection Program, the 1983 plan was amended to redesignate most of the community's multifamily residential area from a maximum allowable density of 29 dwelling units per acre to a maximum allowable density of 15 dwelling units per acre, with rezonings from R-1500 to R-3000. This latest downzoning followed previous downzonings in the community from R-1000 to R-1500 in the 1980s, and from R-400 to R-1000 prior to that.



**Location Map**  
**Pacific Beach Community Plan**

**3**  
**FIGURE**

## URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

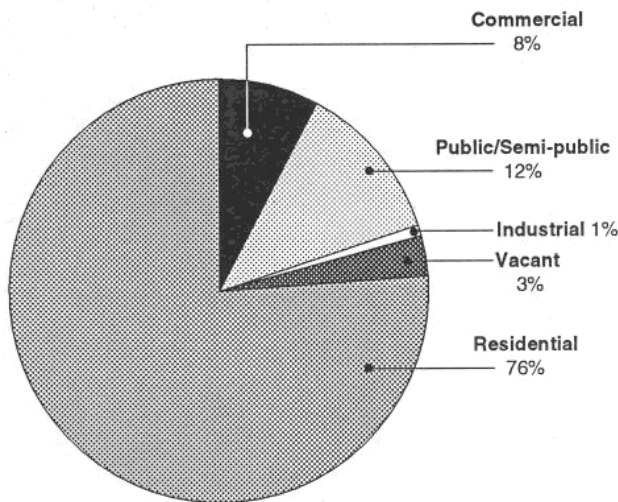
The following aspects that make up the urban and environmental setting of the community establish a framework for future development in the community. There is very little vacant land left in Pacific Beach upon which to build. Approximately 97 percent of the community's land area is developed with residential, commercial, industrial, institutional or park use. Most new development is expected to consist of redevelopment or infill development.

There are both opportunities and constraints for the future development of Pacific Beach that are inherent in its location, topography and development history (see Figure 4). These opportunities and constraints are discussed in more detail in the sections below.

### Development and Circulation Pattern

Pacific beach is predominately residential in use as illustrated by the chart below:

There are opportunities for providing more affordable housing through a balance of housing types in the community, both in residential and commercial areas.



The circulation network of Pacific Beach is composed of major, collector and local streets, arranged in a grid on the plains portion of the community and contoured on the slopes of Soledad Mountain in the hills portion of the community. Interstate 5 forms the eastern boundary of Pacific Beach and is the only freeway that serves the community. The predominant grid pattern, along with transit-oriented development, presents an opportunity to provide for alternative forms of transportation to the private automobile.

### Hillsides

The northwest quadrant of Pacific Beach is topographically characterized by its gently- to moderately-sloped hillsides. Development potential on these slopes is constrained by the Hillside Review overlay zone. The only area that contains slopes in excess of 25 percent is the east side of Pacifica Drive, facing Interstate 5. Most of the area is built out primarily with low-profile single-family residences.

## **Coastal Bluffs**

The shoreline area from Grand Avenue to the community's boundary with La Jolla contains coastal bluffs that gradually increase in height as they extend north. The City has developed an oceanfront park north from Grand Avenue to Diamond Street, and has plans to extend the park south of Grand Avenue. North of Diamond Street, the properties along the bluffs have been developed with residential or hotel uses. According to the 1983 City of San Diego Seismic Safety Study, the bluffs south of Diamond Street are considered generally stable with a low risk rating. The bluffs north of Diamond Street are considered mostly stable, with a moderate risk rating.

Most of the bluffs within the community are experiencing varying degrees of erosion (see Figure 5). Development in close proximity to the bluffs is constrained by the Sensitive Coastal Resource Zone applied to properties west of Ocean Boulevard.

## **Geology**

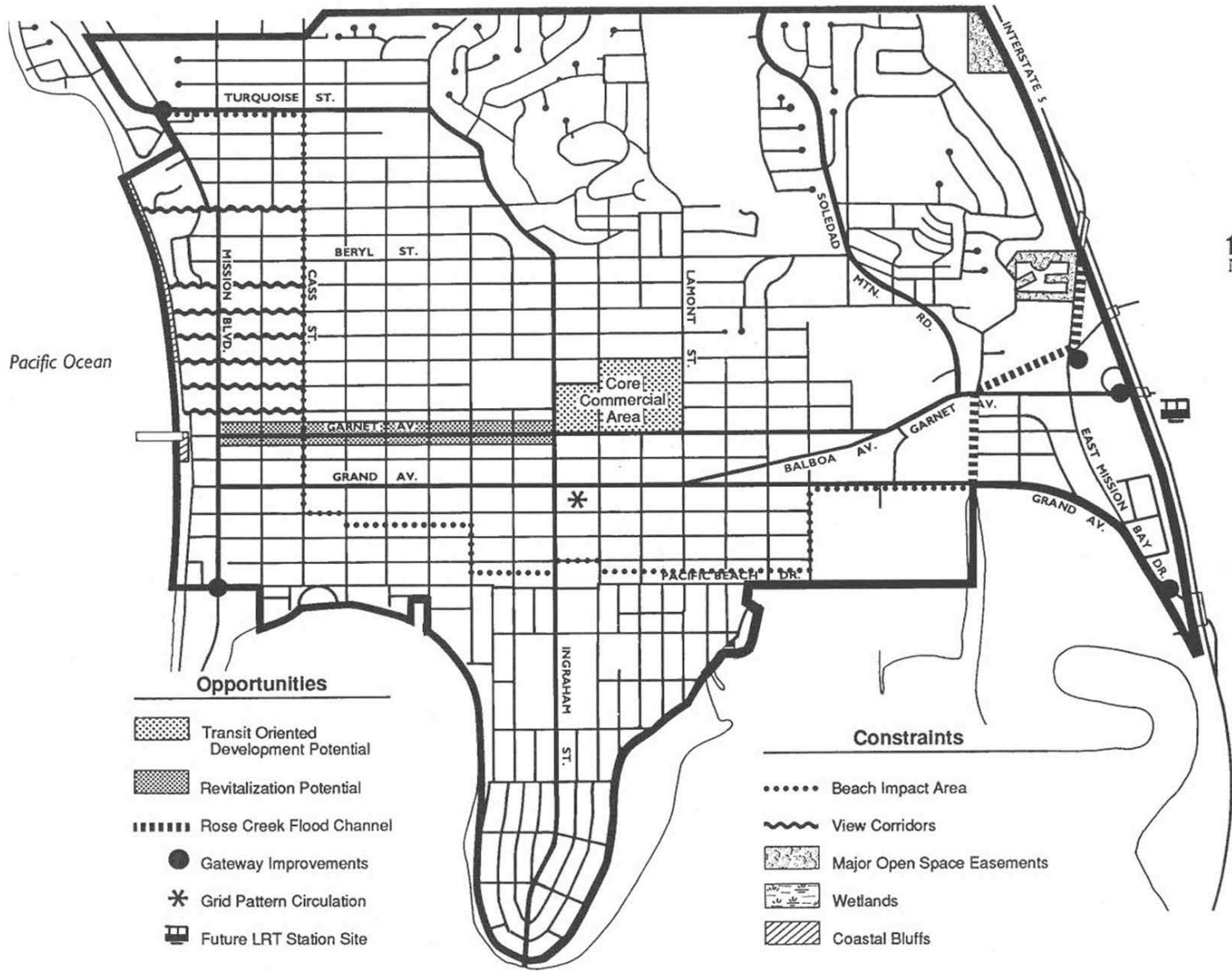
The City of San Diego Seismic Safety Study determined that there is a relatively high potential for liquefaction (ground failure) in some areas of Pacific Beach, as indicated in Figure 5. There are three fault trace lines identified in the community: the Rose Canyon Fault paralleling Interstate 5; and two other faults in the northwestern portion of the community. According to the study, the portion of the Rose Canyon Fault that runs through Pacific Beach has a "high" geotechnical risk rating and the other two faults have a "moderate" risk rating.

## **LOCAL COASTAL AREA**

The California Coastal Act of 1976 established a coastal zone boundary and mandated that all jurisdictions within that boundary prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP). The LCP brings the jurisdiction's planning process into conformance with the 1976 Coastal Act.

Approximately 60 percent of the Pacific Beach Community is located within the coastal zone, as identified in Figure 6.

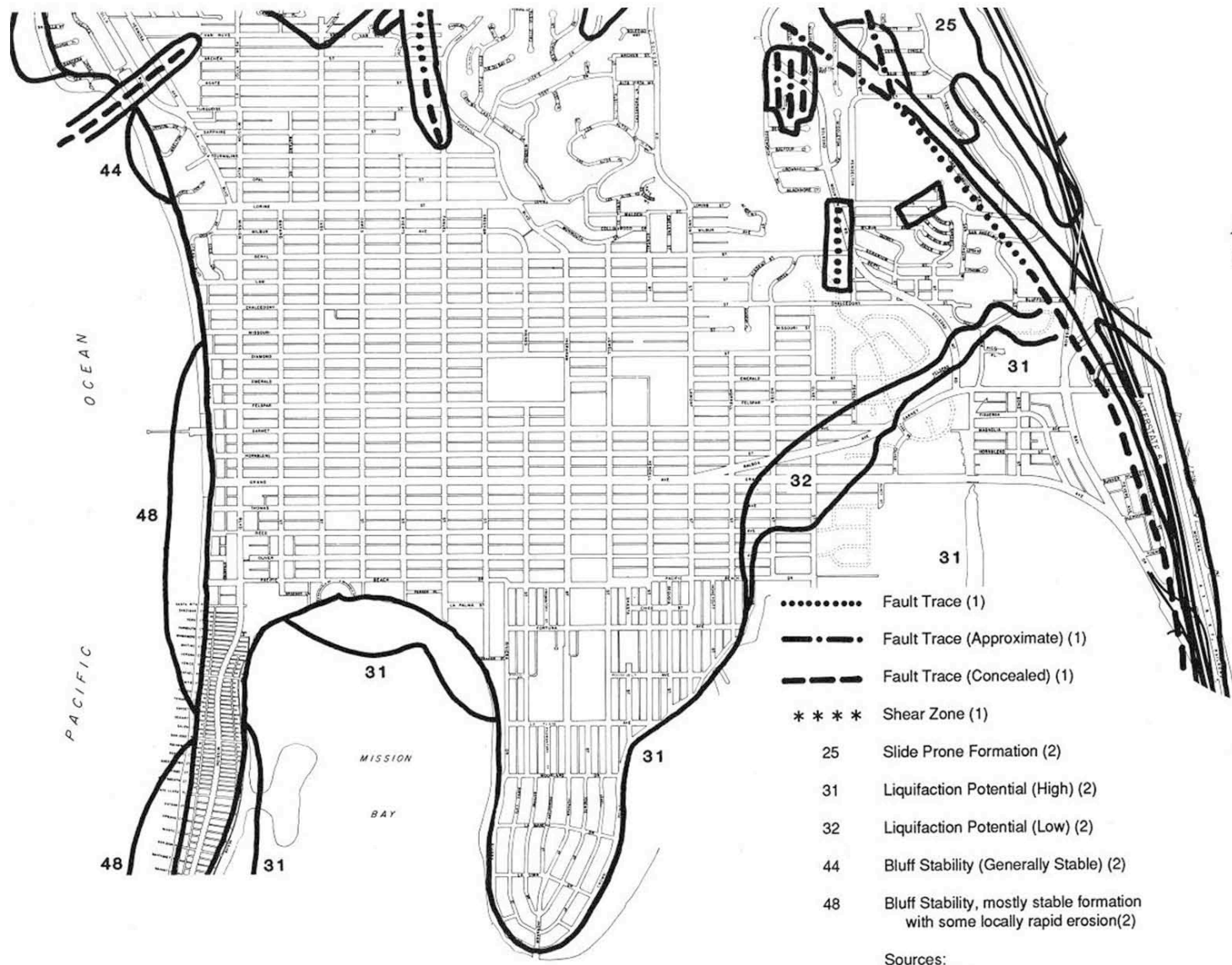




**Opportunities and Constraints Map**  
**Pacific Beach Community Plan**

**4**  
**FIGURE**



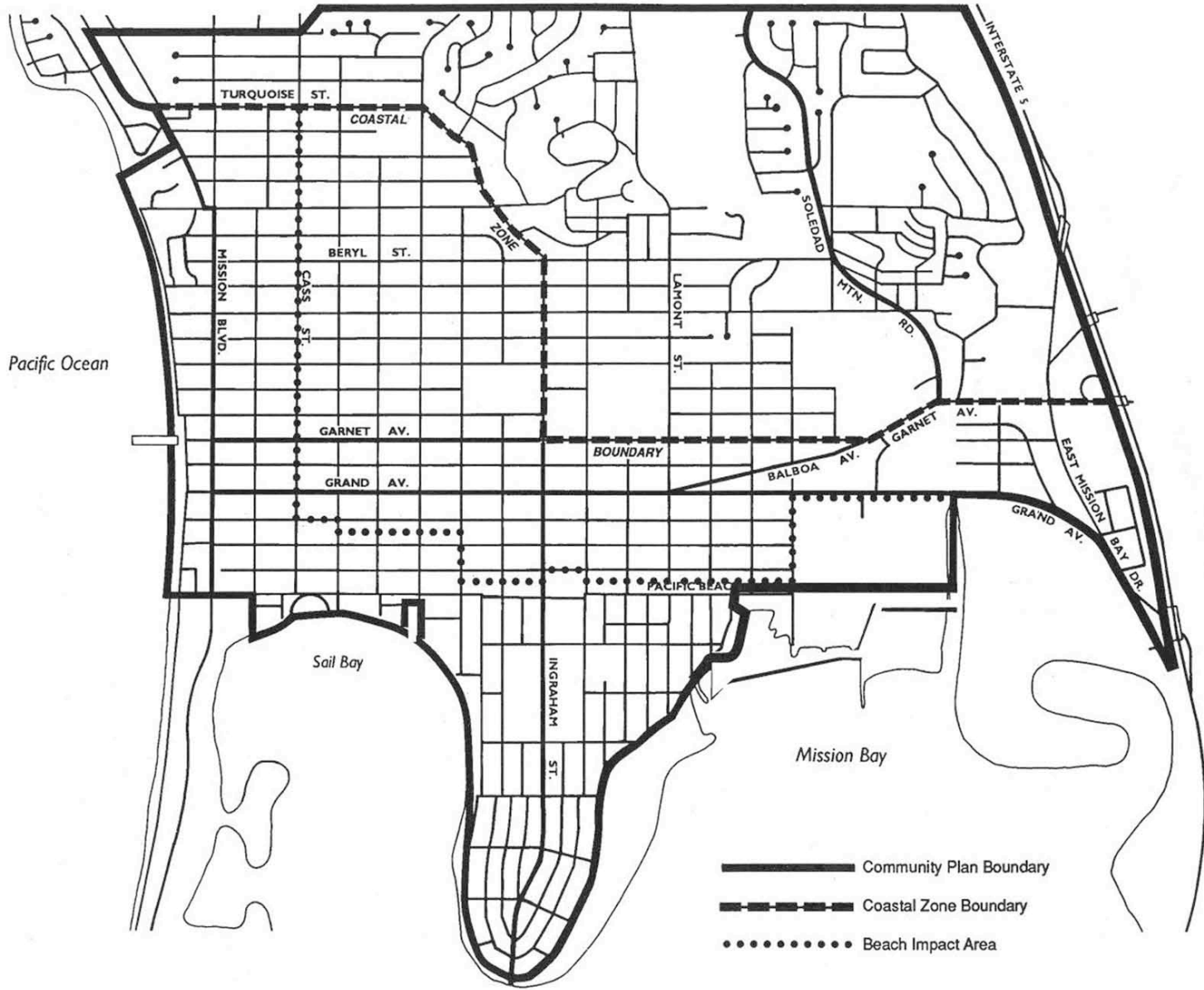


- ..... Fault Trace (1)
- - - - - Fault Trace (Approximate) (1)
- - - - - Fault Trace (Concealed) (1)
- \* \* \* \* \* Shear Zone (1)
- 25 Slide Prone Formation (2)
- 31 Liquification Potential (High) (2)
- 32 Liquification Potential (Low) (2)
- 44 Bluff Stability (Generally Stable) (2)
- 48 Bluff Stability, mostly stable formation with some locally rapid erosion(2)

Sources:  
 (1) Cal. Div. Mines & Geology  
 (2) City of San Diego Seismic Safety Study, 1974

**Generalized Geology**  
**Pacific Beach Community Plan** **5**  
**FIGURE**





**Coastal Zone and Community Plan Boundaries**

**Pacific Beach Community Plan**

**6**  
**FIGURE**



Because of the area within the coastal zone, this community plan has the responsibility of including planning and development standards to protect and preserve the state's coastal resources pursuant to the adoption and certification of the City of San Diego's LCP.

A portion of the community also falls within the beach impact area which is applied to those areas of the coastal zone that are subject to higher levels of traffic congestion and parking need.

This Pacific Beach Community Plan and LCP Land Use Plan has incorporated the coastal issues that have been identified for the community, and has developed policies and recommendations in the various elements of the community plan to address those issues, as summarized below:

### **Public Access to the Beaches and Bay**

The Parks and Open Space Element incorporates recommendations for improving vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access to the beaches and bays; both the Parks and Open Space and the Community Facilities Elements include recommendations for improving visual access through landscape maintenance programs and undergrounding of utilities.

### **Recreation and Visitor Serving Facilities**

The Commercial Element recommends retaining existing commercial areas in proximity to the beach and bay with a commercial and visitor serving focus, while still providing community goods and services.

### **Preservation of Crystal Pier**

The Heritage Resources Element and Appendix E contain design standards for the preservation of the historical integrity of Crystal Pier.

### **Provision of Community Parks & Recreation Areas**

The Parks and Open Space Element recommends the identification of additional park and recreation opportunities through the joint use of school sites.

### **Provision of Low- and Moderate-Income Housing**

The Commercial Element provides for an increased density for mixed-use projects, and promotes the development of Single-Room-Occupancy Hotels and Living Units to provide a greater opportunity for the development of more affordable housing.

The Residential Element further recommends revising multifamily development standards to encourage the development of smaller units.



## **Preservation of Water, Marine & Biological Resources**

The Parks and Open Space Element contains recommendations for new development of properties abutting the North Marsh preserve, for rezoning Kate Sessions Park to OS-P, and for enhancement of the Rose Creek Flood Control Channel.

## **Beach and Coastal Bluff preservation**

The Commercial and Residential Elements include standards for coastal bluff development. The Heritage Element contains specific recommendations for the future development of Crystal Pier that is sensitive to the beach and bluffs.

## **Hazard Areas**

Potentially hazardous areas are identified in the Urban and Environmental Setting section and illustrated in Figure 5.

## **Impact of Buildout on Coastal Access**

The land uses designated in the various elements of this plan reflect the intensity of existing development. The Circulation Element focuses on transit improvements designed to facilitate visitor access to the coastline.

## **Visual Resources**

The Community Facilities Element recommends undergrounding of overhead utilities; various elements in the plan contain recommendations for improved signage; and Appendix D contains streetscape recommendations to improve the visual quality of Pacific Beach.

## **Public Works**

The Community Facilities element contains recommendations for future water, sewage, gas and electric service to Pacific Beach.