



## • BALBOA PARK • CENTRAL MESA PRECISE PLAN •

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# Analysis

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## LAND USE ANALYSIS

### *Surrounding Land Uses*

The Central Mesa is located in the heart of Balboa Park and is topographically separated from other portions of the Park by canyons on three sides. The following is a summary of the existing land uses that surround the Central Mesa project study area. See Figure 7.



*The Plaza de Balboa serving the public in one of its many uses.*

**West Mesa (Sixth Avenue area)** - This westernmost portion of Balboa Park is bounded by Sixth Avenue to the west and SR-163 to the east. SR-163 lies at the base of Cabrillo Canyon. It runs north and south and creates the separation between the West and Central Mesas.

The West Mesa was one of the first developed areas of the Park. It consists of beautiful open lawns, shade trees and wooded canyon slopes. This area of the Park is widely used by all age groups and is devoted primarily to recreational pursuits. Facilities provided for the public include children's play areas, shuffleboard courts, lawn bowling greens and picnic areas. As a transition area between the city and the Central Mesa, this area of the Park functions beautifully to prepare the traveler for the journey across the Cabrillo Bridge to the world beyond on the Central Mesa.

### **San Diego Zoo**

The Zoo is located north and northwest of the project study area. It houses an extensive wild animal and botanical collection throughout its approximately 100 acres (excluding the parking lot). It is one of San Diego's most popular attractions and it draws visitors from all over the world. The Zoo is an excellent complement to the culturally oriented Central Mesa, however, the physical link between the Zoo and the North Prado is rather weak.



### **Roosevelt Junior High School**

The school is located north of the Central Mesa study area and west of the War Memorial area. It separates the Park from the residential areas to the north. The lot south of the school is shared with the Zoo during peak days when school is out and the Zoo requires overflow parking space.

### **Florida Canyon**

The canyon is located east of the Central Mesa separated by Park Boulevard, a four-lane road which runs north and south from downtown to North Park. Florida Canyon is an undeveloped area of Balboa Park and consists of disturbed coastal sage scrub. Florida Drive is located at the bottom of the canyon and extends its entire length.

### **Naval Hospital**

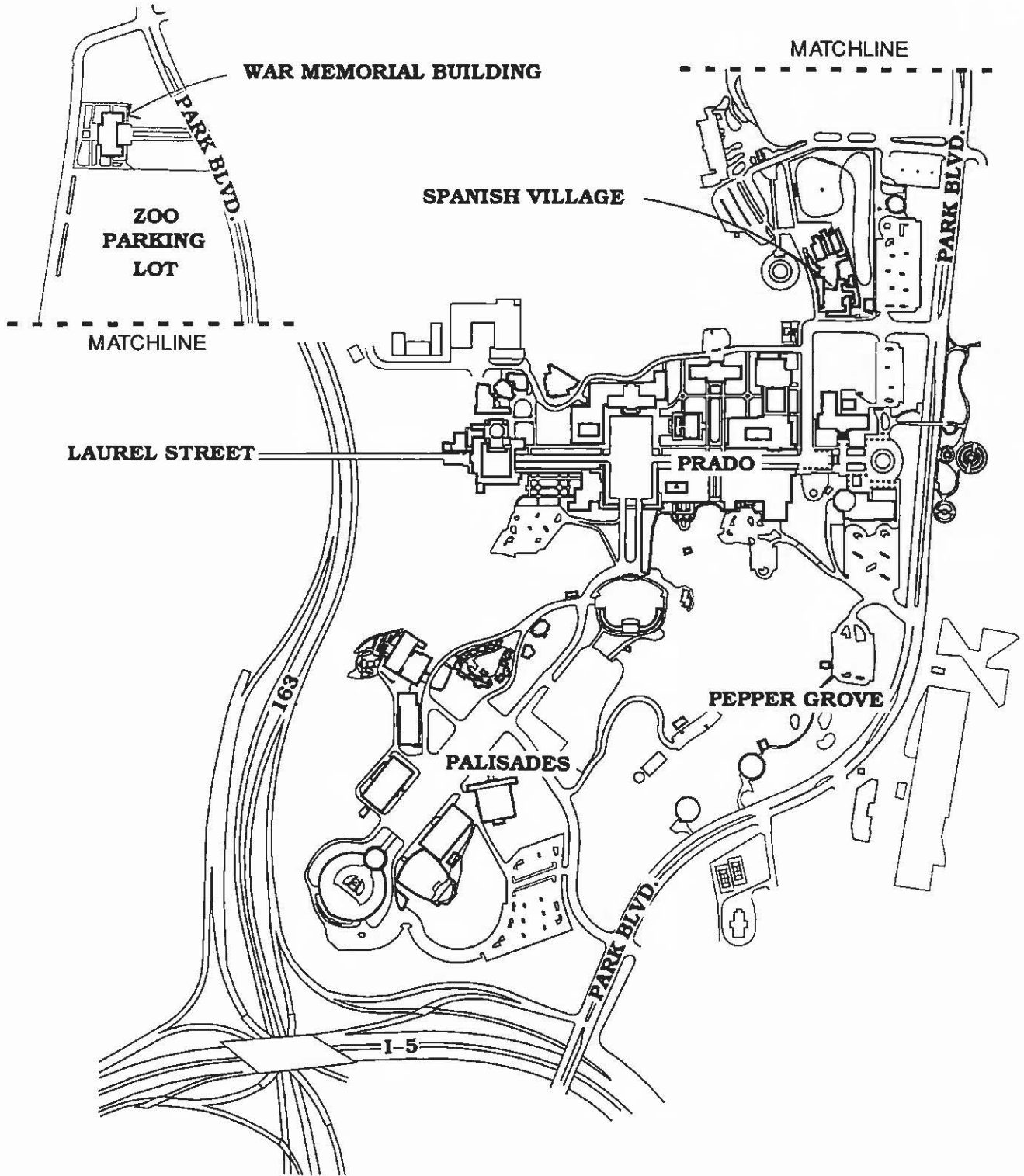
The Naval Hospital is located on the southwest slope of Florida Canyon and is separated from the eastern portion of the Central Mesa by Park Boulevard. It creates a visual barrier to views east and south of the Central Mesa. The Naval Hospital comprises approximately 78 acres. Overlapping uses occur with Naval Hospital employee and patient use of the Park's parking lots.

### **Inspiration Point**

(Old Naval Hospital) - This area of the Park is the site of the old Naval Hospital and is located across Park Boulevard, southeast of the Central Mesa study area. It contains two major parking areas, two historically significant buildings and their surrounding landscape. This is an area that has significant potential for improvements that would complement the Central Mesa. Proposals for this area include using restored historic buildings for Park Management offices providing public art features, and creating open park land that takes advantage of the significant views to the city, bay and mountains.

### **Interstate 5**

This freeway forms the southern boundary of the Central Mesa. The major circulation link from the Central Mesa to downtown occurs at the Park Boulevard overpass. A pedestrian bridge connects Inspiration Point to San Diego High School.



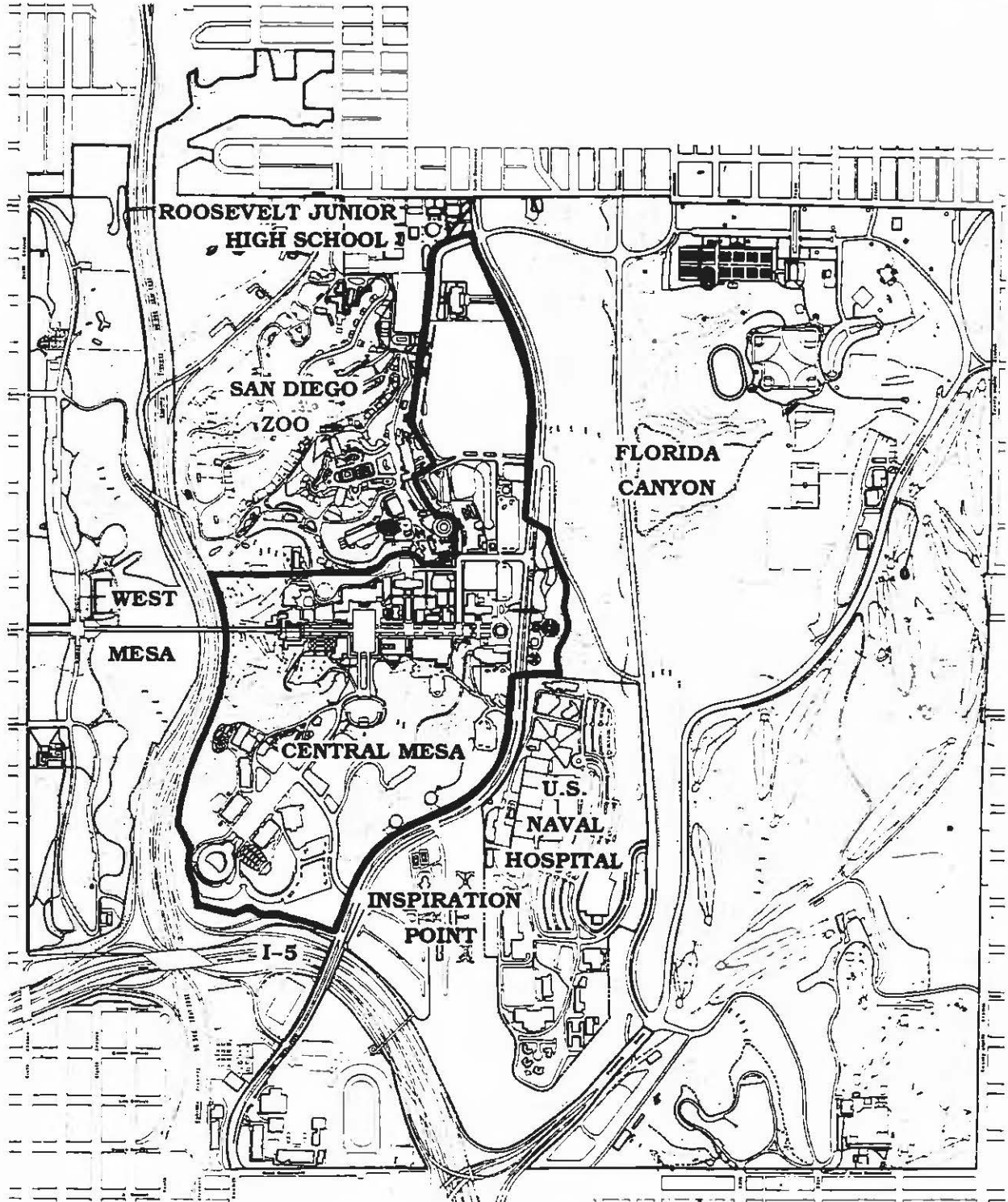
**Existing Conditions**

13 June 1991

Figure  
6







**Surrounding Land Uses**

13 June 1991

Figure  
7







## Land Use Descriptions

Land use of the Central Mesa can be generalized into four categories: open public park use, restricted park use, building use and vehicular use. The total area of the Central Mesa is approximately 193 acres. The types of park land utilized for each are described as follows:

### Open Public Park Land

These areas of the Central Mesa support uses that are primarily free of charge and unrestricted by fences. Open public park land is shown in Figure 8. Open public park land can be subdivided into two types of land consisting of Recreational/Natural areas and Plaza, Promenade and Garden areas. Both types of Open Public Park land have overlapping uses. Combined, both Recreational/Natural areas and Plaza, Promenade and Garden areas comprise approximately 89 acres.



*Gold gulch serves as a quiet natural retreat in the midst of a large urban area.*

Recreational/Natural areas are primarily used to support either recreational pursuits or the naturalized ecosystem. Recreational areas are used for picnicking, hiking, strolling, resting, playing, and nature observance. The central lawn areas may be utilized for special events, however, the usual activities are recreational. These areas include the lawn areas of the Palisades, Botanical Building, War Memorial, Pepper Grove, and the lawn areas along Park Boulevard. Natural areas are used to support botanical collections and to support wildlife habitat. They have remained undeveloped primarily due to their steep topography or proximity to the freeways. These areas include the canyon woodlands such as Gold Gulch, Palm Canyon, Cabrillo Canyon, and the slopes south of the Palisades buffering Interstate 5. Recreational/Natural areas are approximately 66 acres.



*The Prado is the primary pedestrian use area in the Central Mesa.*

The second type of open public park land, Plaza, Promenade and Garden, is all land used to support cultural, social or formal garden activities. These areas are structured and designed to be destination oriented spaces. They accommodate a myriad of cultural activities, including special events, street entertainment, food and beverage vending, garden viewing, strolling, demonstrations and displays. This land use area includes multiple use outdoor spaces such as the Prado, the Organ Pavilion, and the Plaza de Balboa. Multiple use outdoor spaces are shown in Figure 9. This area also contains other outdoor features such as arcaded walkways, open lawns, landscaped areas and gardens such as Alcazar Garden and Zoro Garden. There are approximately 23 acres of Plaza, Promenade and Garden areas.

### Restricted Park Land

These areas are defined as land which is restricted by either admission fees, fencing, limited hours or lease agreement. Areas which do not require an admission fee are restricted for reasons such as safety or selective use. Most restricted Park lands are publicly accessible, but are subject to the requirements of the restrictions. These areas include the Museum of Art Sculpture Garden, the Miniature Train leasehold, the Japanese Garden, and the Archery Range. A few areas are not publicly accessible and include various park operations



and institution service areas and the Spanish Village artist-in-residence quarters and courtyard. Restricted park land comprises approximately 33 acres. This number includes the future expansion area of the Japanese Garden leasehold. Restricted Park land is shown in Figure 10.

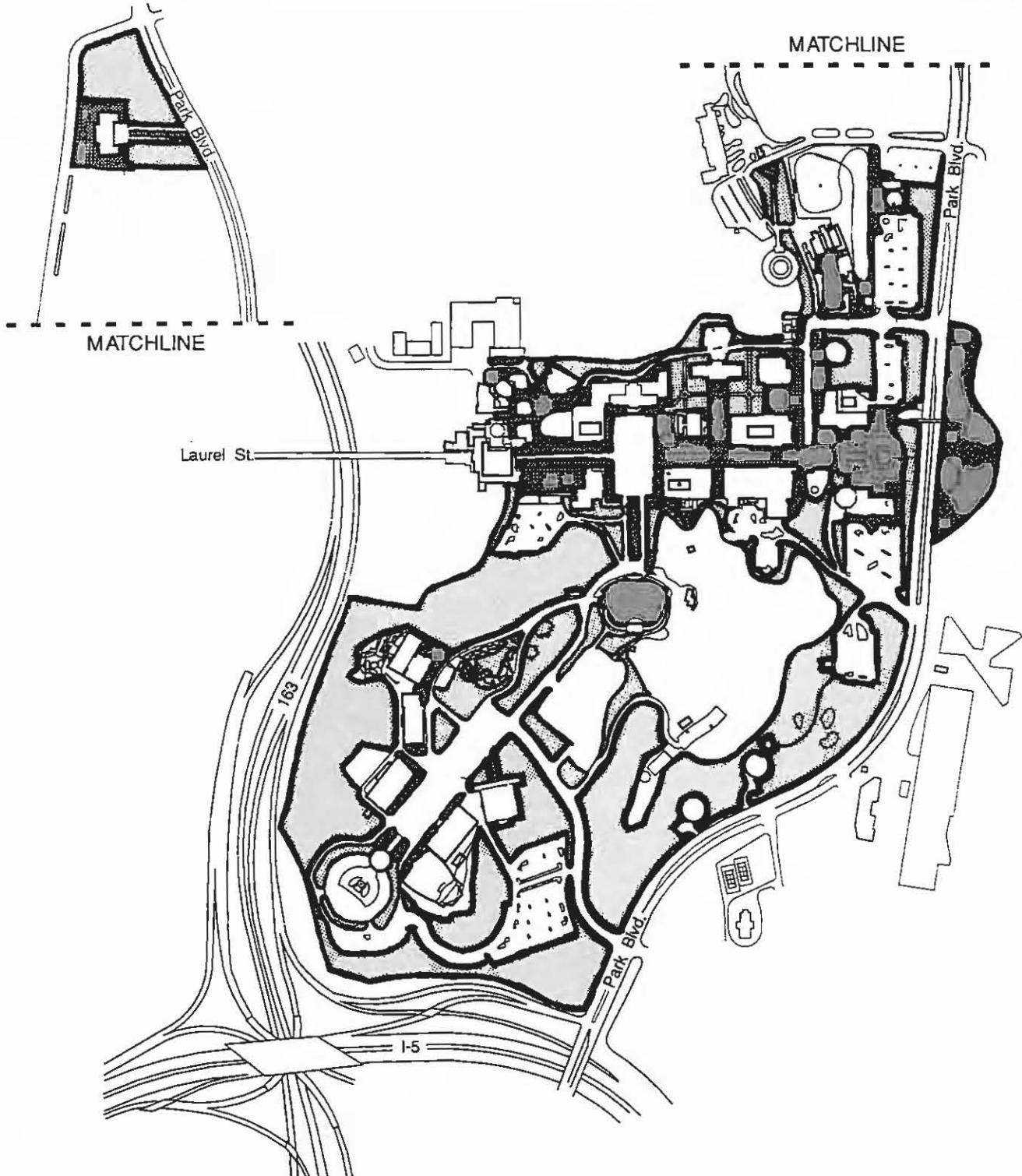
### *Buildings*

The structures of the Central Mesa provide its ability to function as a great cultural center. Most buildings date from the 1915 and 1935 Expositions and possess National Historic Landmark status. Buildings on the Central Mesa are used for cultural and recreational purposes. They also provide spaces for administration, storage, and for community activities such as meetings and presentations. Buildings comprise approximately 17 acres. This figure includes future building expansions within existing leaseholds such as the Automotive Museum and the Natural History Museum. See Figure 11.

### *Roads and Parking Areas*

Areas devoted to vehicular circulation, including service areas comprise approximately 54 acres. See Figure 12.







**Existing Open Public Park Land**

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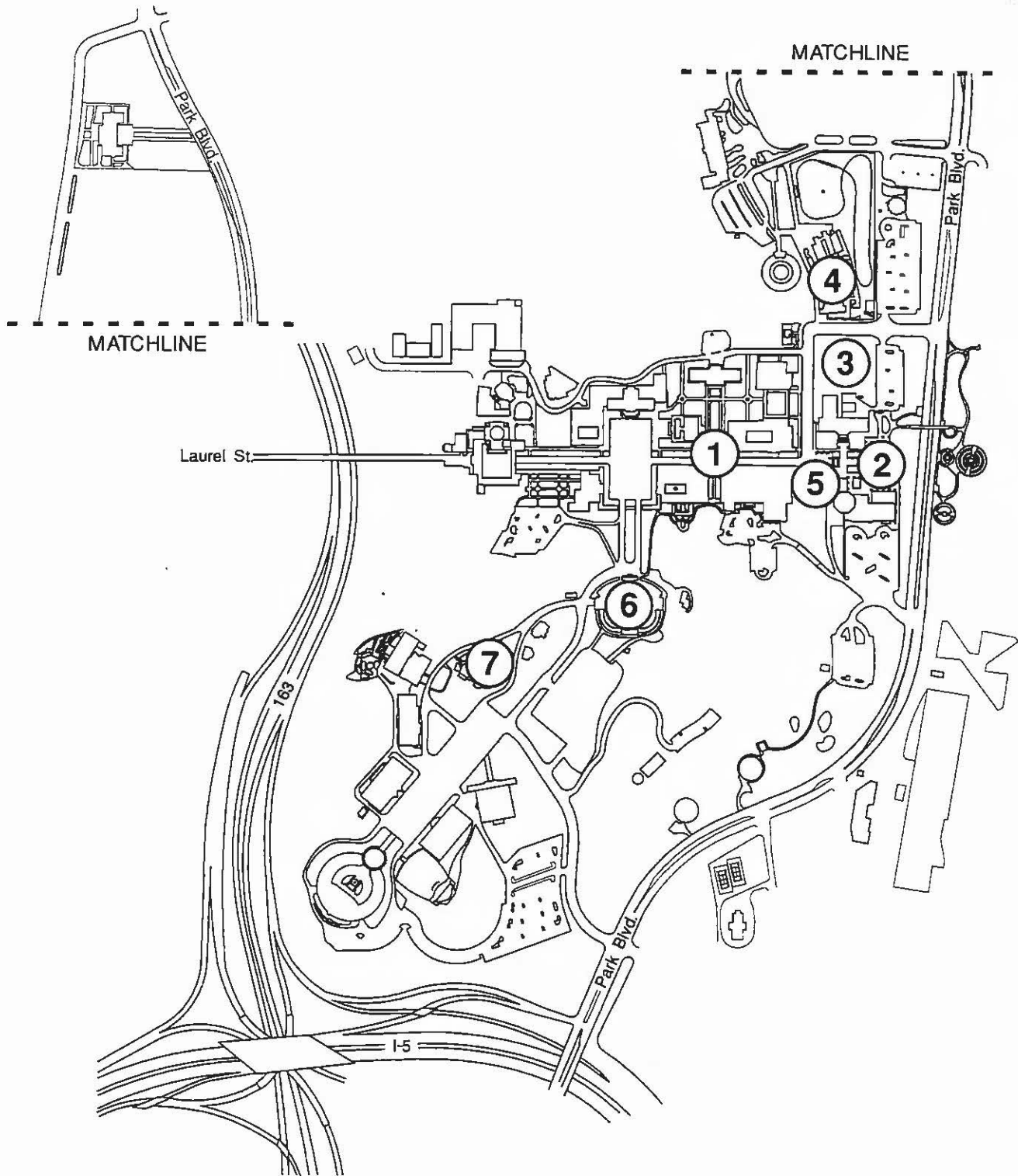
Figure 8

-  Recreational/Natural - 66 acres
-  Plazas, Promenades and Gardens - 23 acres

**Total - 89 acres**







### Existing Multiple Use Outdoor Spaces

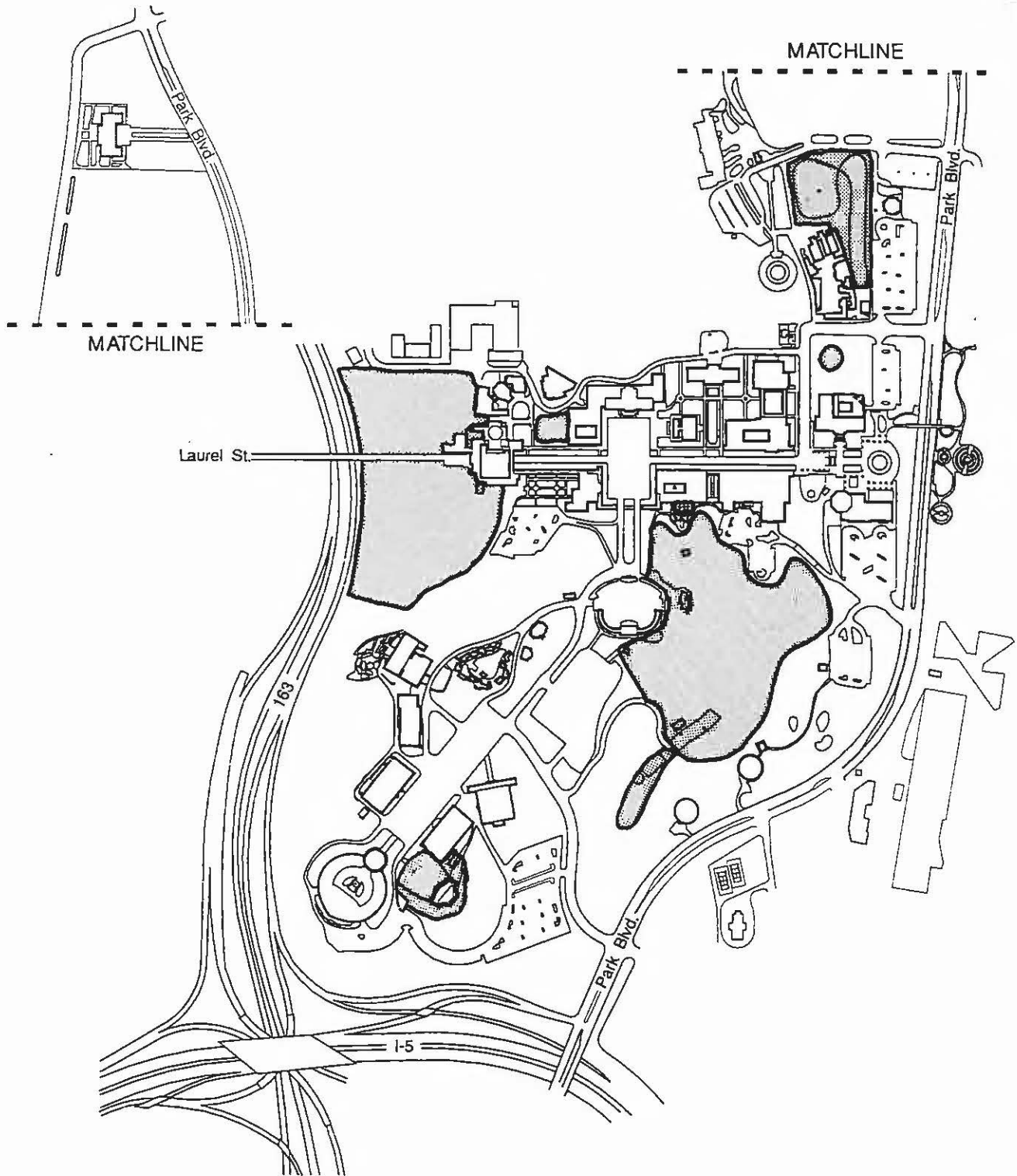
13 June 1991

Figure  
9

- |                              |                                    |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. The Prado                 | 5. Zoro Garden                     |
| 2. Plaza de Balboa           | 6. Organ Pavilion                  |
| 3. Moreton Bay Fig Tree Lawn | 7. House of Pacific Relations Lawn |
| 4. Spanish Village Plaza     |                                    |







**Existing Restricted Park Land**

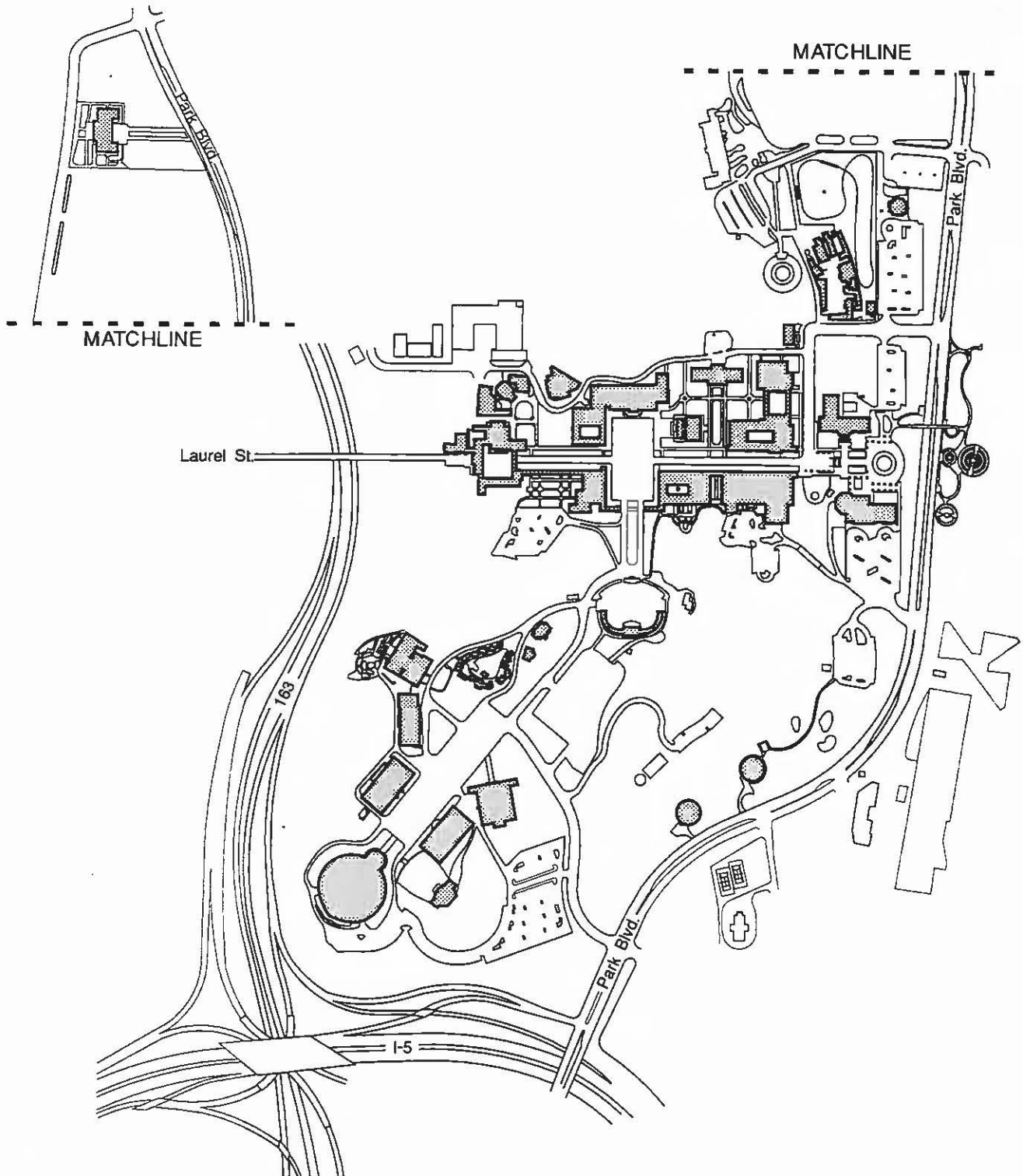
 Existing Restricted Park Land - 33 acres

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Figure  
10







### Existing Buildings

 Existing Buildings - 17 acres

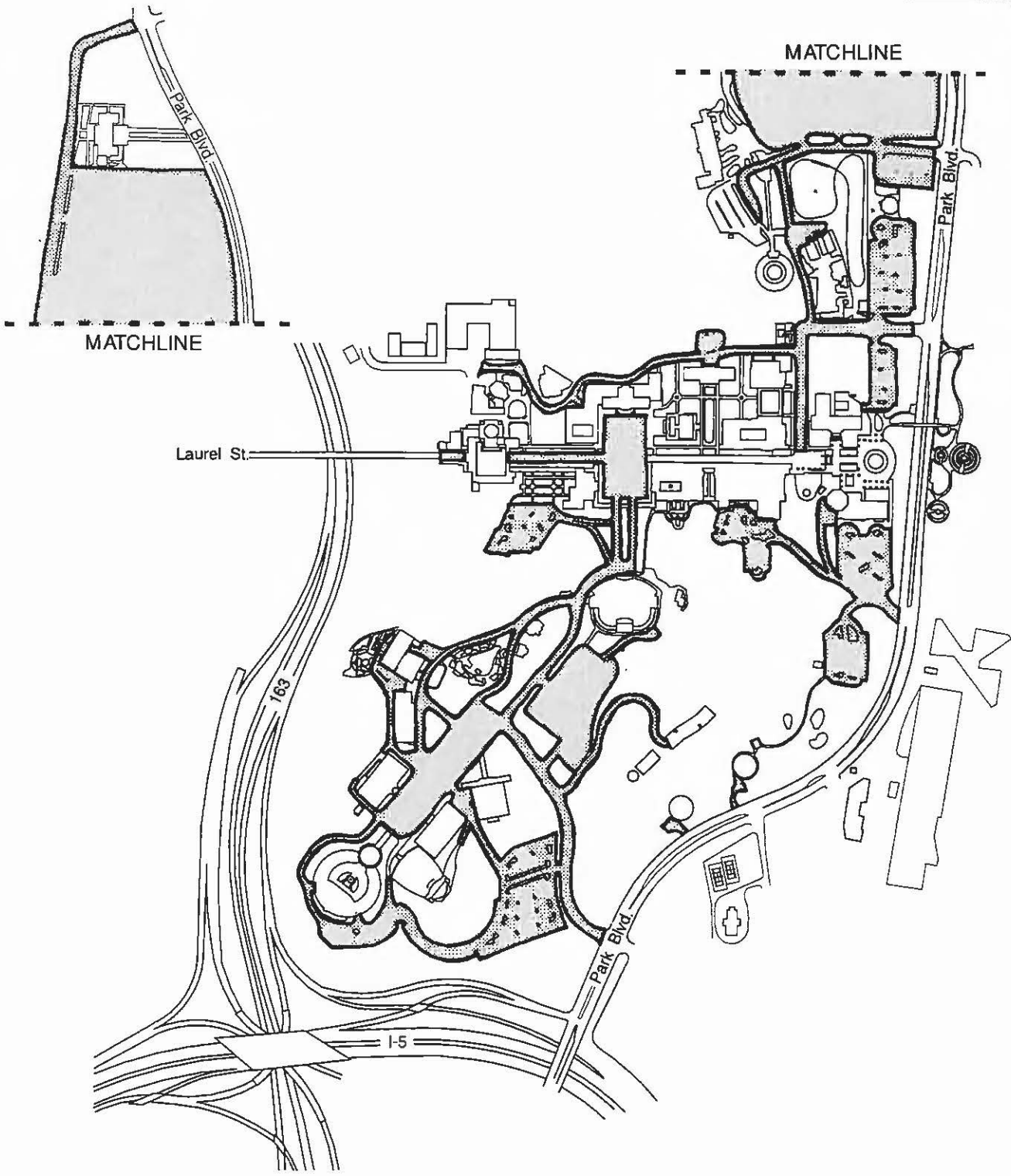
13 June 1991

Figure  
11









**Existing Roads and Parking Areas**

13 June 1991

Figure  
12

 Existing Roads and Parking Areas - 54 acres







### Usable Land Areas

The Central Mesa Precise Plan study area contains approximately 193 acres. The usable areas of the Central Mesa are defined here as those land areas under 15% slope which are easily accessible and desirable for Park development. The usable areas comprise approximately 145 acres of the total study area. See Figure 13. All park land, no matter what the slope, is vital to the preservation of natural habitat. For purposes of analysis, however, each land use category is weighed not only in its relationship to the area of the whole site but also in its relationship to the developable areas of the site.

### Usable Land Area Summary

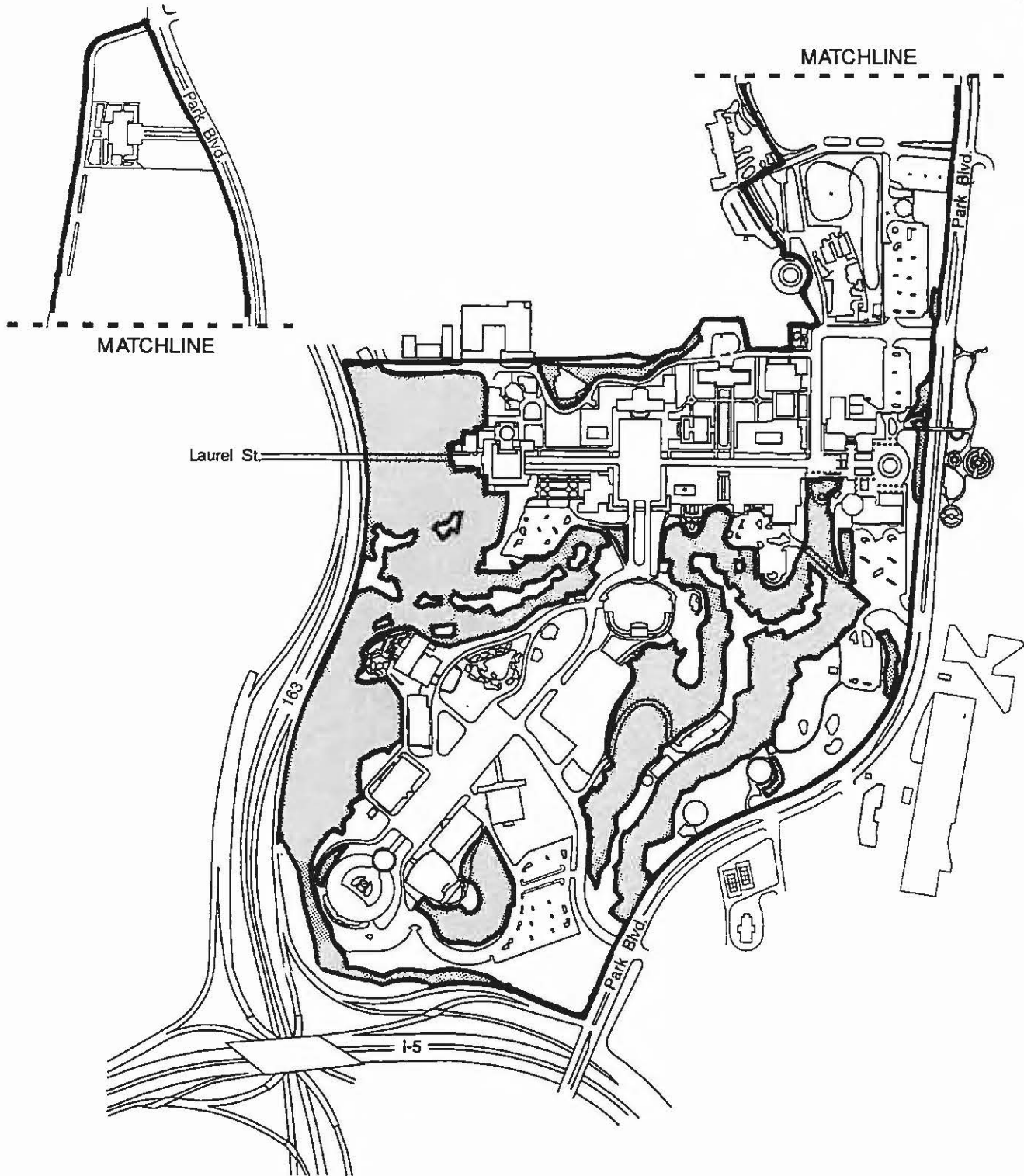
Land Use Type	Usable Land		Non-Usable		Total	
	acres	% of total	acres	% of total	acres	% of total
Open Public Park	64	(33%)	25	(13%)	89	(46%)
Restricted	11	(6%)	22	(11%)	33	(17%)
Buildings	16	(8%)	1	(1%)	17	(9%)
Roads	54	(28%)	0	(0%)	54	(28%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>(75%)</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>(25%)</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>(100%)</b>

### Visitor Use Levels

The highest Central Mesa visitor levels occur in the Prado. This is due to the concentration of activities and institutions in this area. Peak visitation occurs weekend afternoons. Weekday afternoons rank second in attendance.

Since few attractions are open after five, the lowest levels occur in the evenings. Primary evening use is generated by the Old Globe, Starlight, Casa del Prado and Reuben H. Fleet Theaters. The only museum open in the evening on a regular basis is the Museum of Photographic Arts. Some community organizations offer classes and programs in the evening. Low levels of lighting, significant numbers of closed facilities, empty outdoor spaces and unavailable visitor services all contribute to the low levels of evening use of the Central Mesa.







### Central Mesa Usable Areas

13 June 1991

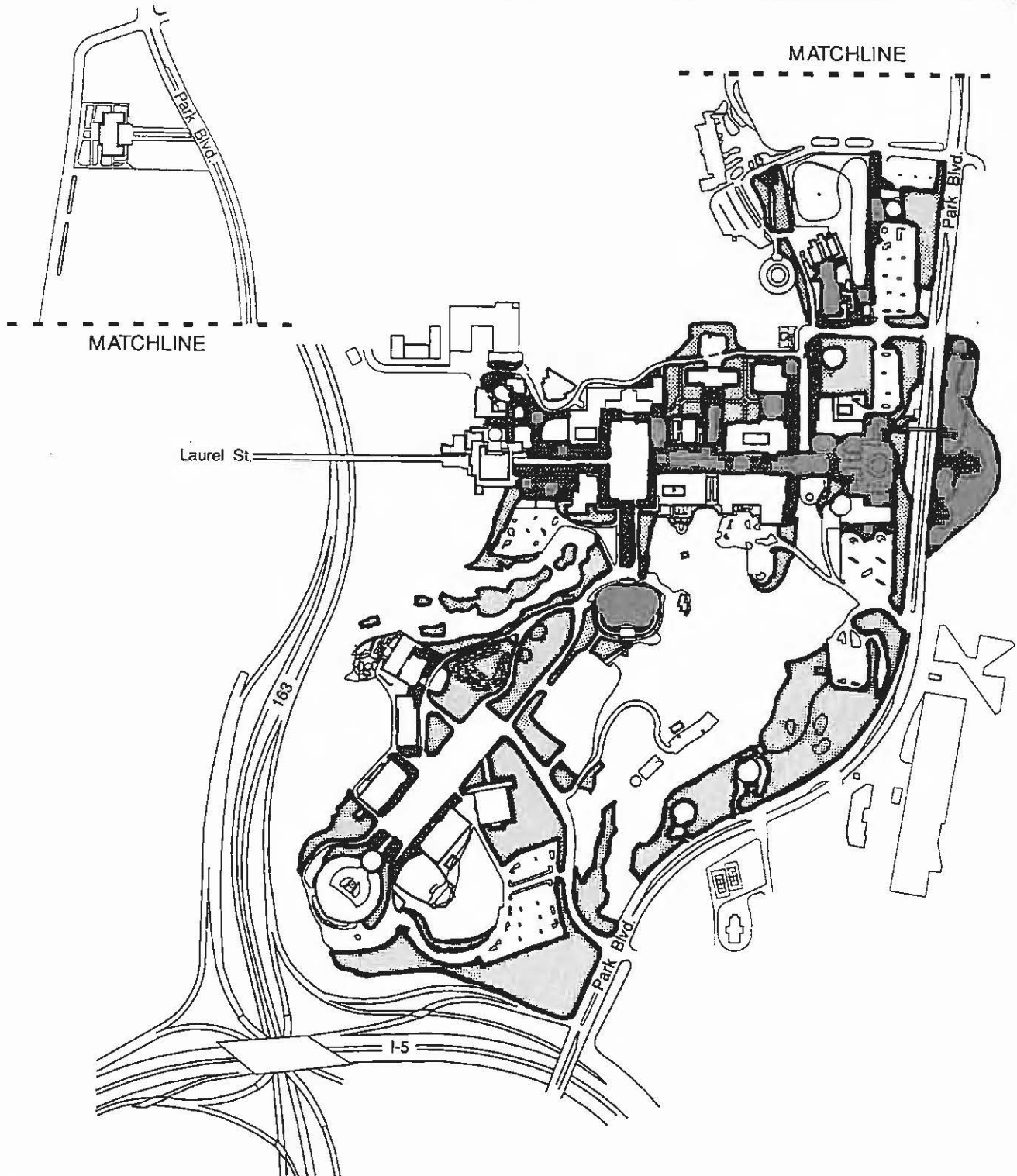
Figure  
13

-  Usable Areas - 145 acres
-  Non-usable Areas - 48 acres

**Total Central Mesa - 193 acres**









**Existing Usable Open Public Park Land**

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Figure  
14

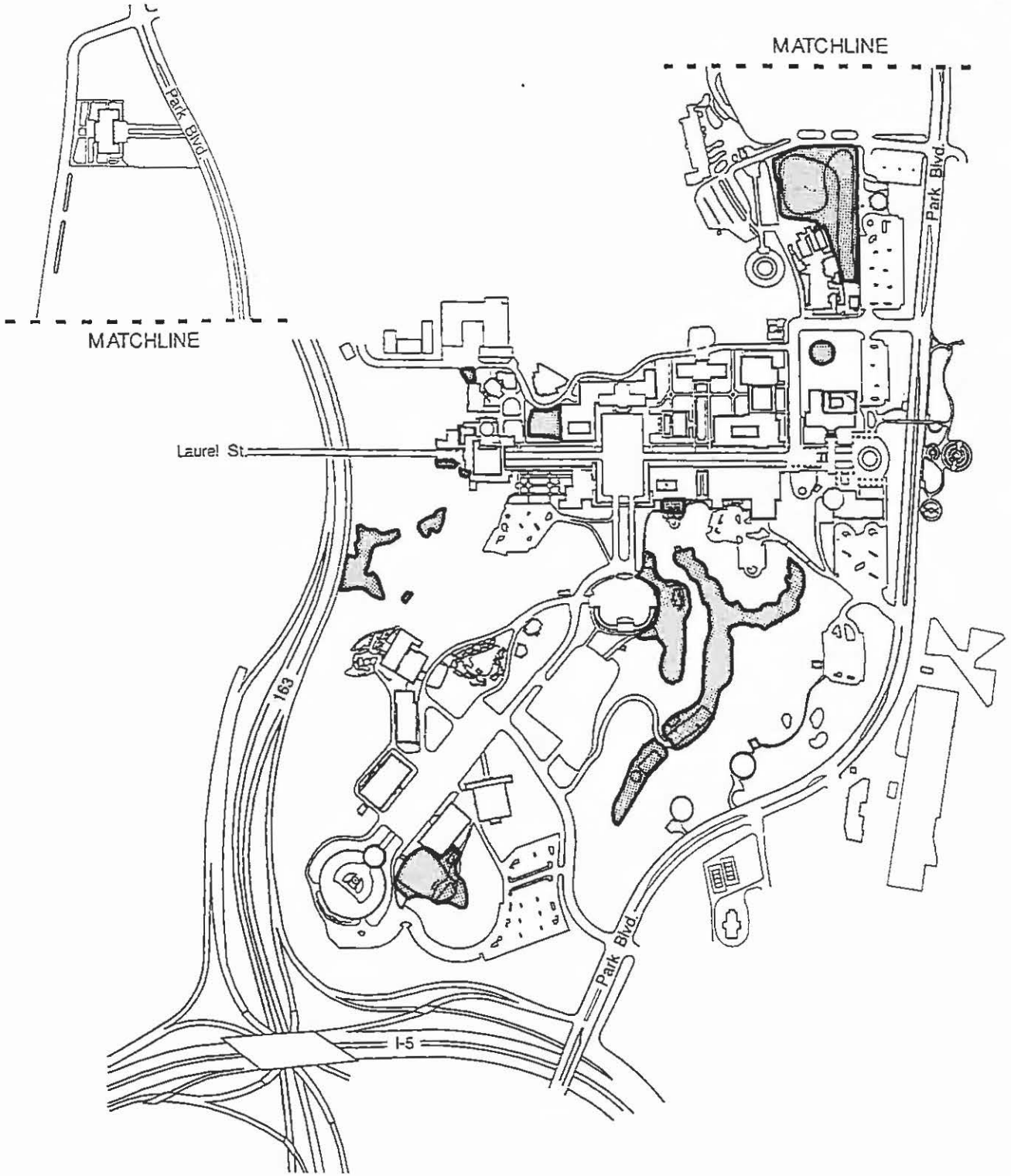
-  Recreational/Natural - 42 acres
-  Plazas, Promenades and Gardens - 22 acres

**Total - 64 acres**









**Existing Usable Restricted Park Land**

13 June 1991 Figure 15

Existing Usable Restricted Park Land - 11 acres





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*Analysis - Land Use*



## *Building Use Analysis*

All facilities on the Central Mesa are owned by the City. The collection of buildings and outdoor facilities are leased to a variety of organizations which provide services and programs of a cultural, educational or recreational nature which enrich and enhance the community. Most lease holdings are defined by the building footprint. A few institutions have additional landscape areas surrounding their buildings within their lease holdings. These are used for service functions or special features such as the Museum of Art Sculpture Garden. Leaseholdings are shown in Figure 16.

There are 30 major buildings or building groups on the Central Mesa. Sixteen of these are occupied by institutions or organizations with long term leases or permits. These are listed below with their location number as found on the sub area maps located in the Architecture Analysis section. Primary occupants are noted in parenthesis:

1. Administration Building (Museum of Man)
2. California Building (Museum of Man)
3. Fine Arts Building (Museum of Man)
4. House of Charm (San Diego Art Institute - 1/2)
5. Museum of Art - Main Building
6. Museum of Art - West Addition
7. Museum of Art - Gildred, Parker, Grant Wing
9. Old Globe Theater Administration Building
13. Timken Art Gallery
16. Casa de Balboa (San Diego Hall of Champions, Balboa Art Conservation Center, Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego Historical Society and Museum, San Diego Model Railroad Museum)
18. Natural History Museum
19. Reuben H. Fleet Space Theater and Science Center
20. Japanese Garden Exhibit House
22. Spanish Village (Spanish Village Art Center, Mineral and Gem Society, Southern California Association of Camera Clubs)
25. North Water Tank (Centro Cultural de la Raza)
27. House of Pacific Relations
28. United Nations Building
29. House of Pacific Relations
33. Automotive Museum
34. Aerospace Museum



Seven Central Mesa buildings are utilized for theater, concerts or other performances. These are listed by number:

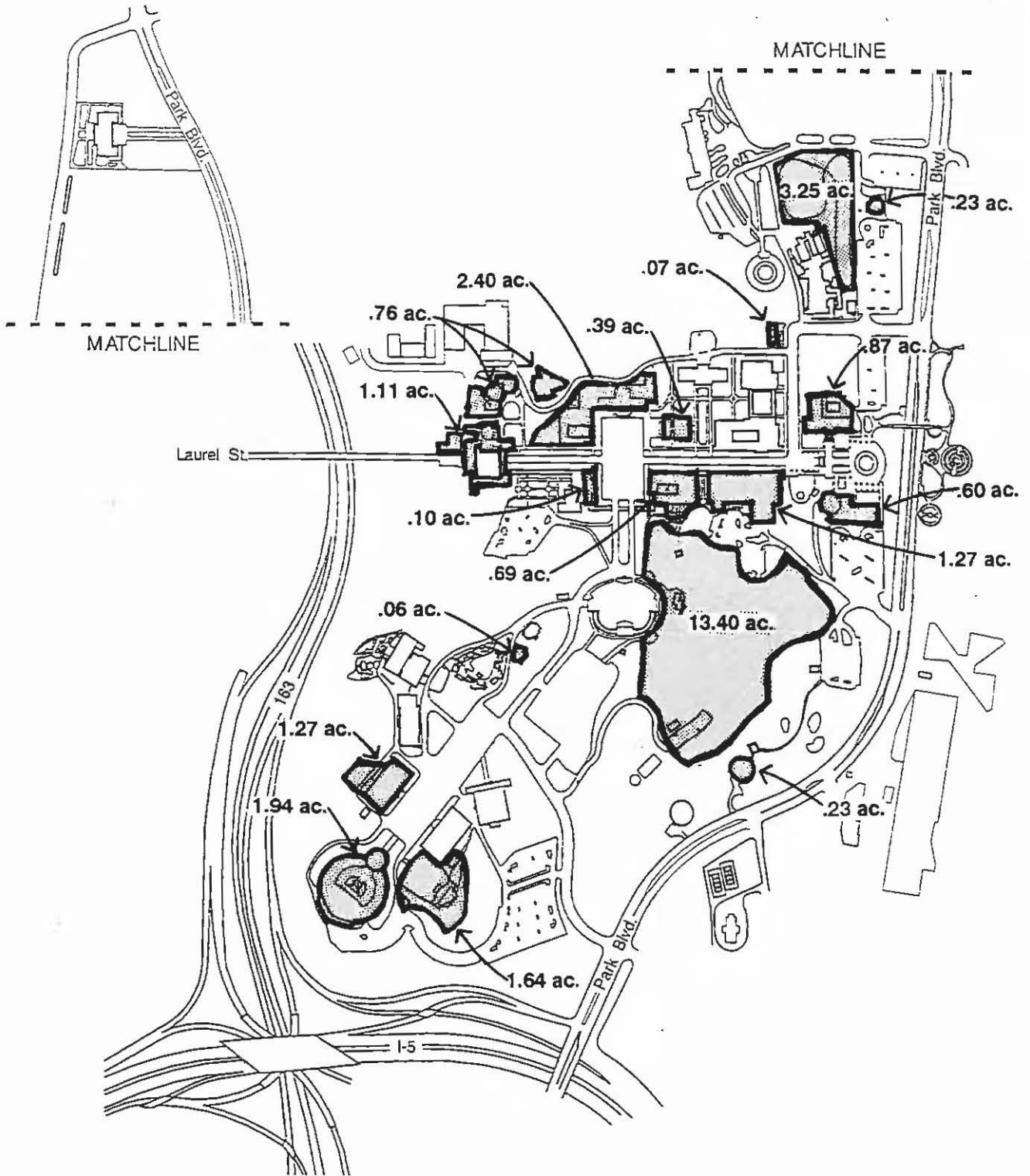
- 8. Old Globe Theater
- 10. Cassius Carter Theater
- 11. Lowell Davies Theater
- 12. Organ Pavilion
- 15. Casa del Prado Theater
- 32. Palisades Building - Recital Hall and Puppet Theater
- 35. Starlight Bowl

Six of the Central Mesa buildings, are primarily utilized by the community for activities such as dancing, athletics, classes, meetings, banquets, exhibits or other such varied endeavors. These are all administered by San Diego Park & Recreation Department, except as noted.

- 15. Casa del Prado
- 17. House of Hospitality (House of Hospitality Association)
- 24. War Memorial Building
- 31. Balboa Park Club
- 36. Municipal Gym
- 37. Federal Building

Both the House of Hospitality and the Casa del Prado also contain organization offices.

The remaining Central Mesa buildings are either unoccupied or used for City operations. The House of Charm (#4) is half unoccupied due to its state of deterioration. The south water tank (#26) is utilized for Park maintenance operations only. Both the Balboa Park Club (#31) and the Palisades Building (#32) presently contain San Diego Park and Recreation Department offices. These City uses are scheduled to move from the Central Mesa in the near future.



### Existing Leaseholds

 Existing Leaseholds - 30 acres

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Figure  
16







## *Carrying Capacity Analysis*

An analysis of the Central Mesa carrying capacity was conducted by Economics Research Associates as a part of the Precise Plan process. Evaluations were made to determine both existing and proposed crowding levels in the destination-oriented indoor and outdoor spaces of the Central Mesa. The analysis was based on a design day, which is a typical busy day such as a weekend day in August. Peak day attendance was also projected. A peak day would occur only a few times each year, usually when special events like Christmas on the Prado occur.

The summary of their findings concluded that existing Central Mesa facilities have sufficient capacity excluding peak days, but that overcrowding occasionally occurs at the pedestrian bottlenecks in the East Prado on design days. The present carrying capacity of the Central Mesa (excluding the Zoo) is almost 6,500 persons with 4,200 being indoors and 2,200 being outdoors. The report indicates that overall, there is a surplus of building space on the Central Mesa. This is primarily due to low usage of meeting spaces relative to their size and underutilization of some museums. The exceptions to this condition are the Fleet Space Theater, Botanical Building and Municipal Gym. Overall, the outdoor public spaces of the Central Mesa show acceptable visitor levels on design day except for the East Prado and lawns adjacent to the Botanical Building and the lawn area around Moreton Bay Fig Tree in North Prado. Almost 80 percent of visitors in outdoor pedestrian areas are in the Prado at any one time, while this area only accounts for 59 percent of total pedestrian and plaza area acreage. At present, parking is sufficient for design day (71 percent occupancy) and on peak days (93 percent occupancy). Utilizing the parking area at Inspiration Point is critical, especially during peak days.

The scenario ten years from now was evaluated with the proposed Precise Plan improvements in place. Design day carrying capacity for the Central Mesa (excluding the Zoo) is projected to expand by about 44 percent to 9,300 persons after the Precise Plan is implemented. Visitor distribution is expected to shift towards outdoor areas with 4,000 persons in plazas, pedestrian areas and landscaped activity areas. Outdoor use will constitute about 43% of Central Mesa visitation compared to the current figure of about 35% of visitors in outdoor areas. No significant shortages in built space are projected during design day, with the exception of the Botanical Building and the Municipal Gym. Proposed building expansions for Park institutions will create additional crowding in the adjacent pedestrian areas. However, the Prado, which is the greatest potential problem area, shows less crowding due to the positive redistribution of visitor attendance throughout the Central Mesa. After the Precise Plan is implemented, the percentage of total Central Mesa visitors in the Prado pedestrian area drops to 47 percent while the Prado area will comprise 34 percent of the plazas and pedestrian areas. This relief from overcrowding on the Prado will be possible with the development of other anchor attractions elsewhere in the Central Mesa such as programmed activities on the Palisades Plazas, the completion of the Japanese Friendship Garden, the Spanish Village revitalization. Parking supply demand on the



Central Mesa would increase to about 6,440 spaces on design day, and 8,370 spaces on peak days. Parking supply is planned to increase to approximately 7,520 spaces. This means there will be an adequate supply on design day (86 percent occupancy), but a shortage of 850 spaces on peak days (10 percent deficit). Transportation measures to mitigate parking shortages such as the Park tram system, free shuttle service from off-site parking facilities, and increased use of public transportation will relieve future parking demand to the degree that design day parking needs should be fully and comfortably accommodated.

The full carrying capacity report is located in the Appendix.