

IV. Urban Design and Development Guidelines

The Urban Design and Development Guidelines section encompasses all components of physical design and other development considerations within the Specific Plan area. It provides the qualitative design concepts and development guidelines that will make all subsequent individual development actions cohesive. The determinants of Urban Design are categorized into three primary areas; the river corridor, the transportation system, and architectural considerations. Development guidelines are recommended in these three main areas and are designed to provide a basis for the evaluation of future private development plans and public improvements. In all cases, the guidelines are written to address physical and visual impacts affecting public areas.

A. RIVER CORRIDOR

The river corridor includes the floodway proper and its surrounding environs, including buffer areas and all land that connects visually and functionally with the river open space.

Natural Environment

As described in the River Improvement Element, the floodway will be designed as a natural-appearing waterway with the redevelopment and preservation of native wetland habitats. Open water, freshwater marsh areas, riparian woodlands, buffer areas and passive recreation areas will together form a complete open space system along the river. Natural environmental features should be preserved and recreated within the floodway proper and should be incorporated as much as possible in areas beyond the floodway boundary to maintain and enhance the habitat and aesthetic values of the river.

Upon completion of the floodway, open water areas will be more extensive because of groundwater sources, although the water level will fluctuate with the seasons. Freshwater marsh vegetation will occur adjacent to and within water areas. Riparian woodlands will generally be located on the floodway slopes and on some islands created within the floodway. A woodland canopy will extend beyond the floodway into the private development area. A continuous vegetation corridor will occur along both sides of the river (Figure 14).

As explained in the River Improvement Element, buffer areas along the floodway are important to maintaining viable wildlife habitats. The following criteria should be carefully implemented.

GUIDELINES:

1. Buffer Areas

The buffer areas are to be located along the entire length of both sides of the river. At no particular location shall the private development intrude into the floodway proper. The average width of the buffer for the entire Specific Plan area shall not be less than 20 feet. The maximum width of the buffer should be approximately 50 feet. It is desirable to have flexibility in the width of the buffer areas, but a minimum buffer area must be assured.

Buffer areas should be widest adjacent to the most sensitive habitat areas.

The buffer areas will be planted with a combination of native trees, particularly riparian woodland species and native shrubs of the coastal sage scrub community.

Land uses within the buffer areas should include only the LRT corridor, bikeway and pedestrian areas and other passive recreation uses.

2. Passive Recreation Areas

Passive recreation facilities are proposed along the floodway, including picnic areas, benches, viewing areas, pedestrian and bicycle lanes and a par course (Figure 20). These activities should occur in the 100-year floodway only where they can avoid the more sensitive wildlife habitat areas.

Active recreation uses are to be provided in the central portion of the Specific Plan area, within the private developments. These facilities are to be linked with the passive recreation facilities along the river corridor.

Flood Protection

Implementation of the Specific Plan will realign the existing Floodway Zone through the construction of a man-made, naturalized channel (Figure 15). The design features of the channel are described in the River Improvement Element. Generally the channel will be designed to carry a 100-year, 49,000 cfs flood. The floodway width and depth will vary, with the width varying from 330 feet in the central portion to over 600 feet in the eastern and western areas. The average depth will be 22 feet. Erosion protection will be accomplished primarily by vegetation with some rip rap in areas with higher water velocity or steeper channel slopes.

Open Space

The river corridor is the central focus of the Specific Plan's open space system. The river corridor, together with the individual project's recreational and urban plaza areas and the street landscaping, form an important focal point to the valley's hillsides and mountain back drop to the east (Figures 11 and 16).

GUIDELINES:

The river corridor is the dominant open space feature in this area and is a part of the San Diego River City-wide open space system; as such, it should be accessible to the public.

Areas outside the river channel should be landscaped and linked to the river corridor.

Private project recreational and urban plaza areas should be linked visually and/or, physically to the river corridor, in order to integrate them into an area-wide open space system.

Public roadways directly feeding into this Specific Plan area should be landscaped on-site and off-site with trees native to this area. If possible, riparian woodland type of trees or drought-resistant and fast growing species should be used.

The open space system of the river channel should be continued to the east and west in subsequent development activities.

Views

View considerations in relation to the river corridor are of two types, 1) ground level views from public areas such as roads, primarily affecting the siting of buildings, and 2) aerial views from the hillsides into the river area and also from public areas such as parks or roads, primarily affecting the desired height and bulk of buildings.

GUIDELINES:

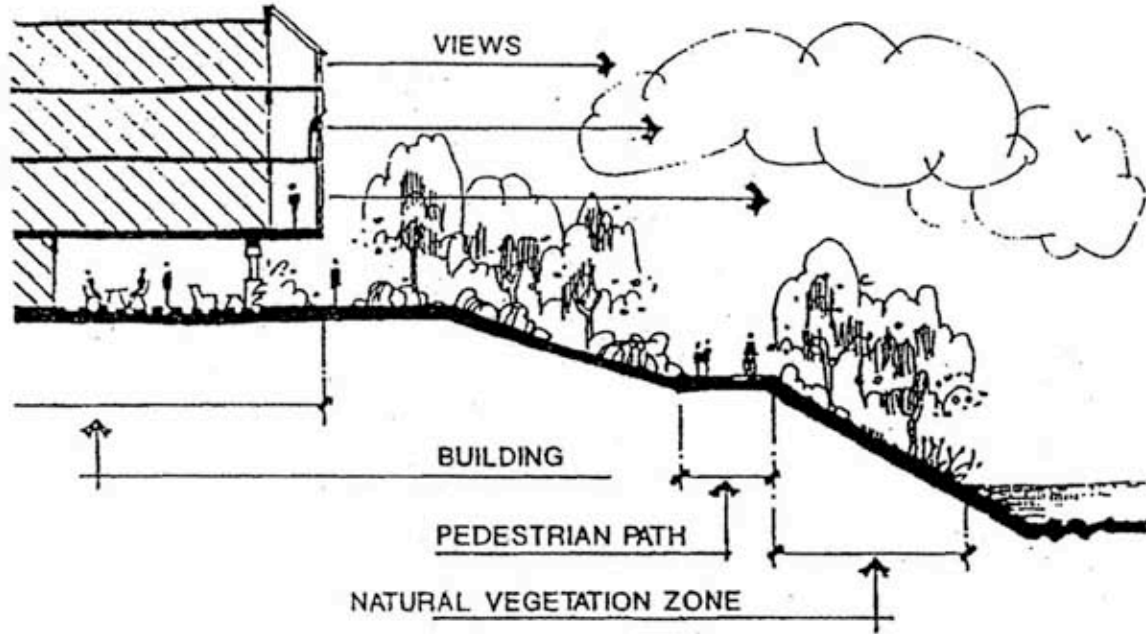
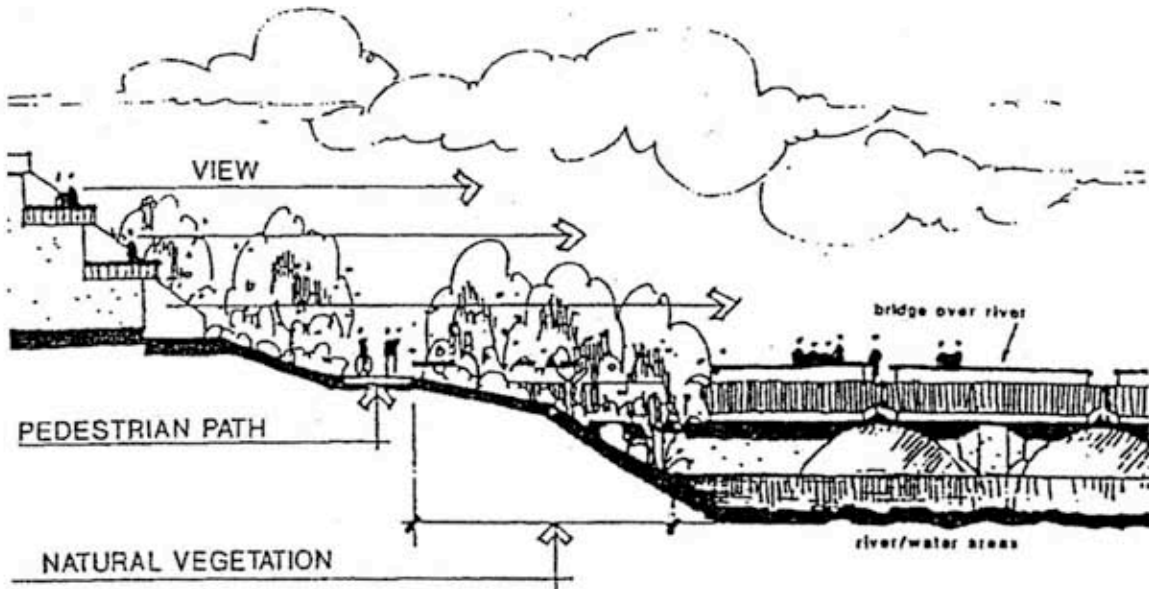
Generally, ground level view corridors into the river corridor should be provided from public streets. This will require space between buildings and development of landscaped areas in the view corridors areas, as identified in Figures 17 and 18.

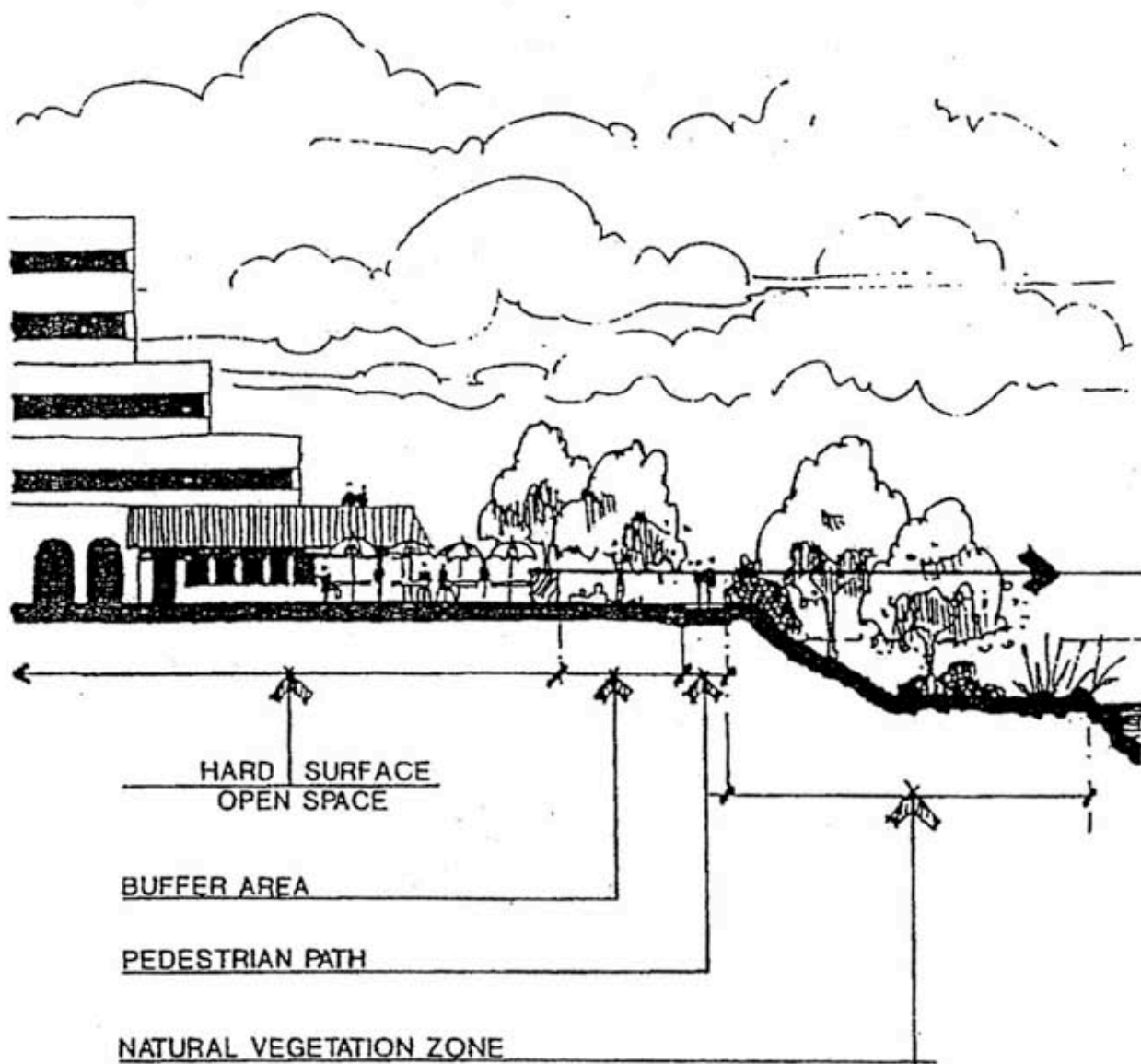
Curving streets also provide special view corridors. These areas have been identified in Figure 17. Development should set back from the corridors and provide landscaped see-through areas.

In order to provide visual openness and pedestrian scale along the river, building heights or portions of the buildings should generally be lower adjacent to the river, stepping up to higher elements (Figure 19).

Because of the view impacts of large low rise buildings as seen from above, roof areas should be carefully designed to enclose mechanical equipment. Projects should also consider the development of roof forms and the use of roof materials that will have positive visual impacts by providing color and pattern. Ideally, strong consideration should be given to the use of roofs for recreation, as terraces and landscaped park-like areas, in conjunction with project recreational activities or commercial activities such as restaurants.

The private developments should provide landmark qualities and focal points for visual orientation, through visual vertical elements or other special forms (for example, towers, campaniles, domes or other forms): These architectural forms are particularly applicable to urban plaza areas in commercial developments.





Concept of Hotel Building's Relationships to the River
 First San Diego River Improvement Project Specific Plan

Portions of surface parking areas can be considered as view corridors if they are depressed 3 feet below the public street's pedestrian level.

B. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

This section is divided into Pedestrian/Bikeway Circulation, Automobile access and Parking and Public Transportation sections.

Pedestrian/Bikeway Circulation

The Specific Plan makes extensive recommendations for pedestrian and bikeway areas along the River Corridor. The Specific Plan further suggests other pedestrian linkages into the river area from the private development areas (Figure 20).

GUIDELINES:

Pedestrian and/or bikeway access should be provided where feasible along the length of the river as generally shown on Figure 20. The pedestrian and bikeway access should be placed in the buffer areas and in the floodway according to the criteria provided in this Specific Plan, with lookouts developed at strategic areas along the river bends to afford views of the habitat areas. Figure 21 depicts the various bicycle facilities classifications.

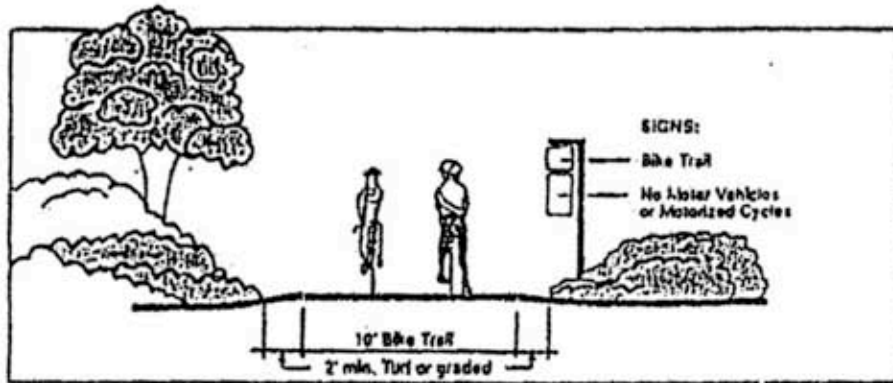
All primary pedestrian walks should be six feet wide.

Pedestrian/bikeway areas should be eight feet wide within 12 foot (maximum) right-of-ways, exclusive of slopes.

The nature trail, planned along a segment of the pedestrian system on the north side of the river, should be a maximum of five-feet-wide and should be paved with natural-appearing material. The nature trail would be a self-guided tour using something like numbered stations.

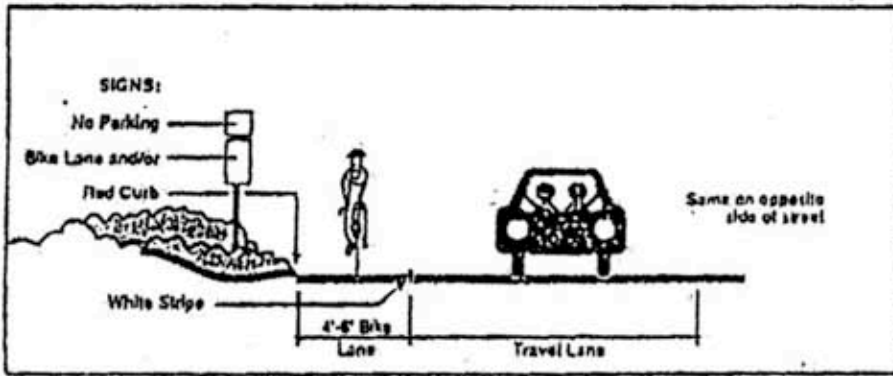
Separated pedestrian bikeway areas should be provided within the improved right-of-way on one side of the major street crossings of the river. Other river crossings may be considered for pedestrian access only as part of the nature trail network. River crossings may be provided as long as they are found to be consistent with the necessary flood protection measures and can be adequately maintained.

Urban plazas and project recreational areas for the commercial, residential, hotel and office development should have direct links to both the river channel and the public streets parallel to the river, Friars Road and Camino de la Reina.



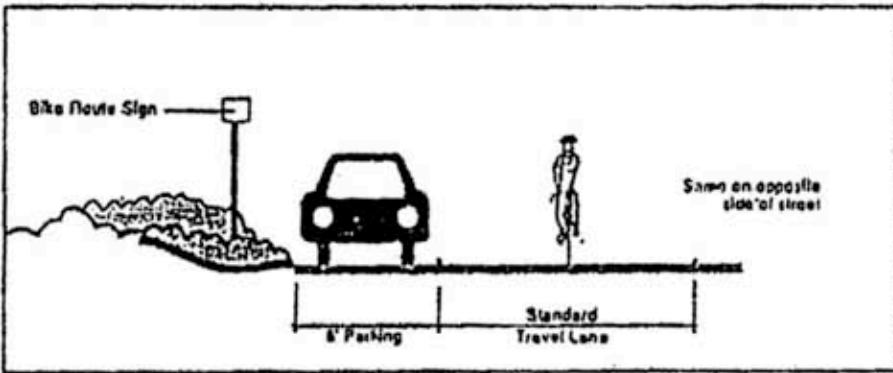
CLASS I
 (typical location: open space)

Bicycle Path
 A completely separate right-of-way for the exclusive use of non-motorized vehicles.



CLASS II
 (typical location: major street)

Bicycle Lane
 A restricted right-of-way located on the paved road surface along the travel lane nearest the curb and identified by special signs, lane striping, and pavement markings.



CLASS III
 (typical location: neighborhood street)

Bicycle Route
 A shared right-of-way designated by signs only, with bicycle traffic sharing the roadway with motor vehicles.

The diagrams included on this page are subject to change.



Project areas along the river should not be designed and developed as islands. In order to avoid this isolation, a separate pedestrian and/or bikeway should be developed within the private development, conveniently linking all individual project areas.

River pedestrian/bikeway corridors should be designed to link to adjacent areas to the east and west of the Specific Plan area. The links will be completed when projects to the east and west are proposed.

Separate bikeway corridors should be provided, where feasible, on the streets serving the project area. The establishment of this separate bikeway system is critical to the concept of encouraging other "local" modes of transportation and to diminish the reliance on the automobile for local trips, by making bikeway access convenient and safe.

Commercial buildings should be encouraged to provide bike racks and other facilities to encourage bicycle use.

Landscaped pedestrian sidewalks should be provided along all public streets, where feasible, to encourage pedestrian activity and expedite pedestrian access. Trees should be located adjacent to the curb to provide pedestrian scale and separation from vehicular activity without reducing normal sidewalk area.

Projects should front on the public street and provide identifiable pedestrian access from the street into the project, even in areas where parking lots are located between the street and the buildings. At the same time, projects along the river corridor should front on the river.

On-grade street crossings should be developed in conjunction with major street crossings. Pedestrian crossings should be identified through special paving design, where feasible. In the event that on-grade mid-block pedestrian crossings are provided, they shall be designed in accordance with applicable standards.

Areas of very high pedestrian activity, which need to be linked across a public street, should be linked above-ground through the development of platform or bridge structures. These bridges should connect pedestrian high activity areas and should not be located in low intensity pedestrian areas or parking lots.

Direct pedestrian lines from transit stops (bus or L.R.T.) should be provided to high activity areas, such as places where there is a concentration of commercial, office, or recreational activity. These pedestrian lines should also link transit stops to the river corridor.

Automobile Access and Parking

The Specific Plan recommends significant improvements in the street system serving the area and provides substantial parking areas to accommodate the projected parking (Figures 22 and 23).

GUIDELINES:

Minimize driveway entrances into parking areas in order to avoid breaking the pedestrian continuity of the sidewalk areas.

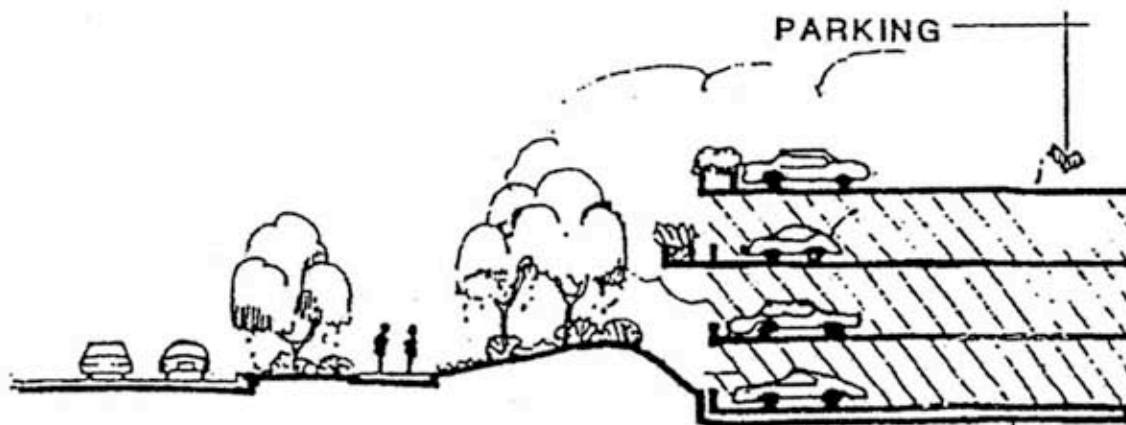
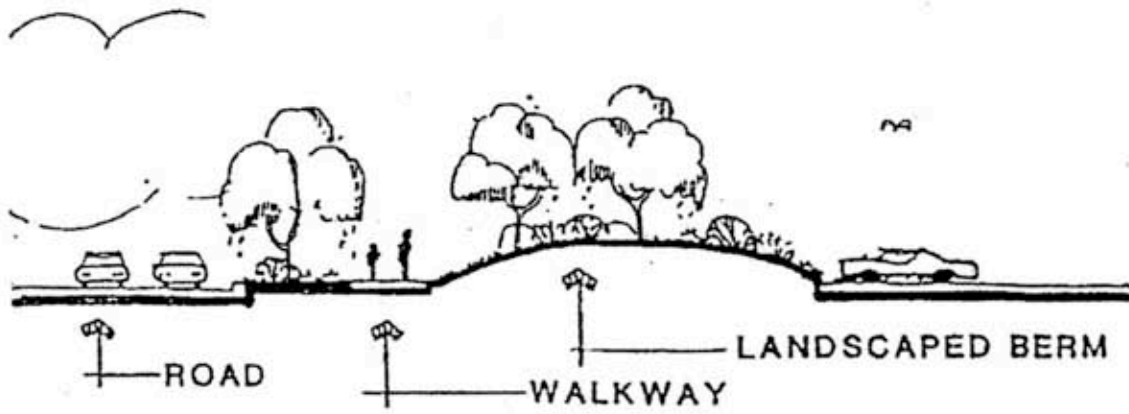
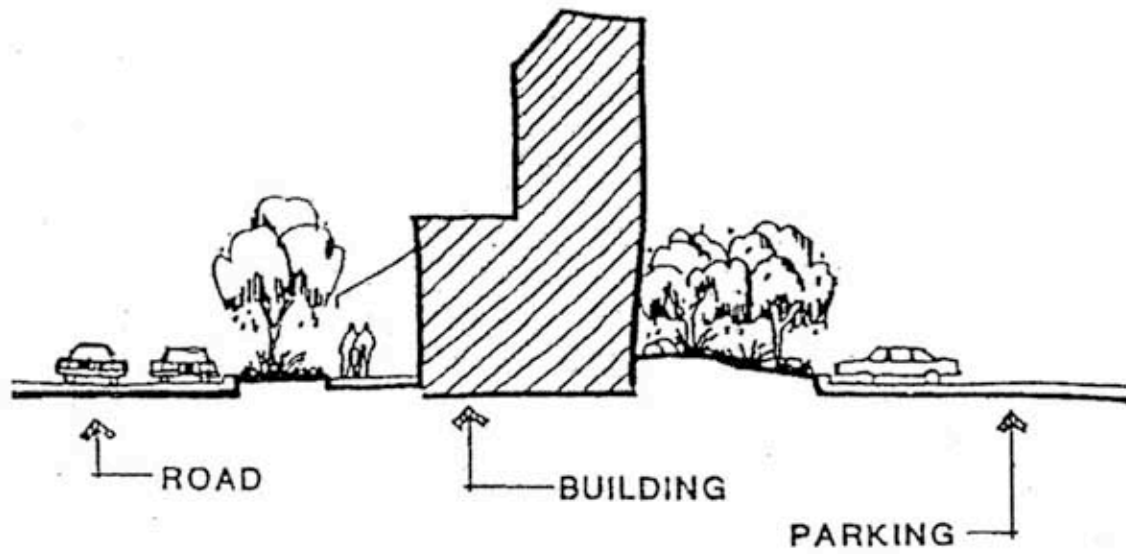
Large parking areas should feed off an internal project street rather than a public street area. In that manner, ingress and egress is simplified and the project provides drive up and drop off access as well as parking.

Streets provided within an individual parcel for the purpose of automobile access should be landscaped and should include six to ten foot sidewalks.

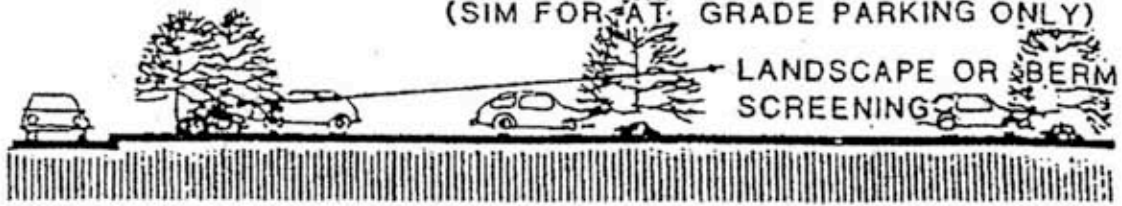
Large parking areas should be enclosed as much as economically feasible and exposed parking areas should include 10% of their area in landscaping. Parking areas should be heavily landscaped and should include large canopied trees. Ideally, landscaping materials should include native plants or either riparian species or drought resistant species.

Large exposed parking areas should be depressed, where feasible, below the level of the public street, in order to maintain view corridors through the project site, as a way to mitigate for potential view blockage at streets perpendicular to the project.

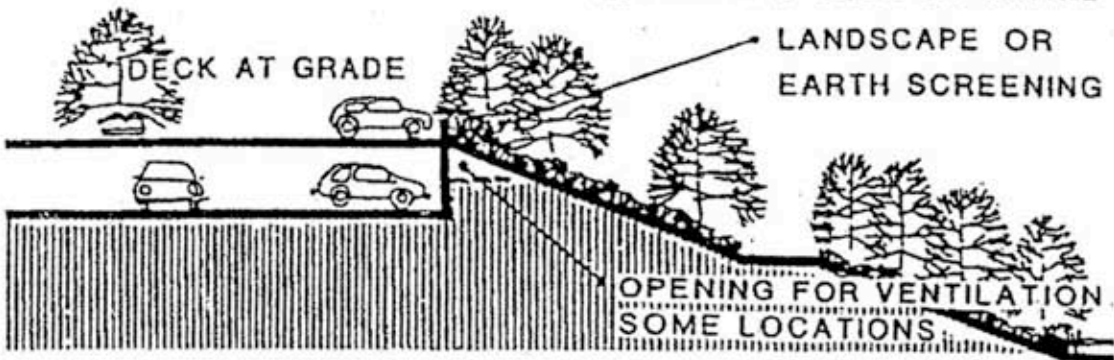
Surface parking areas should be located away from the river corridor in order to give that prime land a higher use with more human orientation. However, if surface parking areas have to be located along the river channel proper, where feasible, the parking areas should be set back allowing a wider buffer area than the average for passive recreational activities.



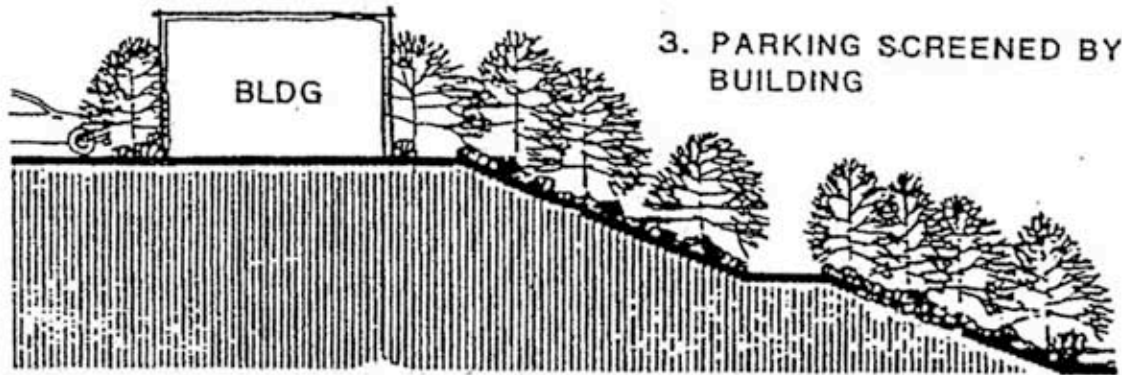
1. PARKING AT F.W. EDGE
(SIM FOR AT GRADE PARKING ONLY)



2. PARKING DECK AT GRADE



3. PARKING SCREENED BY BUILDING



PARKING MULTI-LEVEL
STRUCTURE ABOVE GRADE



Mixed use areas within the same parcel of land may be considered for lower parking ratios than single use parcels. In order to obtain the lower overall parking ratios, an evaluation of peak use has to be made, as well as a specific review of the parking areas, their access and design in relation to buildings.

In order to more efficiently use the parking reserves of the project, all surface parking areas should be interconnected. This design would avoid the need to over-use the public streets by people who are looking for a parking place.

Additionally, a more efficient use of the parking areas can be made, accommodating peak loads in areas that are not being used at capacity.

Public Transportation

In order to accommodate the high intensity of projected development, it is essential that a strong effort be made to accommodate public transit corridors and stops. Two public transit elements are considered in the plan, the City bus system and the Light Rail Transit System. Additionally provision should be made for the accommodation of a possible internal shuttle system, linking the specific plan project area to other high activity areas nearby such as the Fashion Valley Shopping Center and the Town and Country Convention facility (see Figure 21).

GUIDELINES:

Camino de la Reina is identified as the main bus transportation corridor serving the Specific Plan area. In order to expedite bus access, consideration should be given to a 12-foot exclusive bus lane adjacent to the sidewalks. If necessary, parking should not be permitted along Camino de la Reina to facilitate exclusive use for buses.

Bus stop areas should be located at 1/2 mile intervals in order to give the greatest walk-in access possibilities throughout this high intensity project area.

Bus stops should be designed to be integrated into building or pedestrian areas and urban plazas, in order to provide easy pedestrian access from bus stop to destination.

If not integrated into the building, bus stops should be designed to provide shelter from cold and rain, as well as being highly visible inside and out. Bus stops should also be colorful, properly signed, and readily identifiable to both pedestrian and rider.

Light Rail Transit Alignment

The Light Rail Transit System (L.R.T.) should be incorporated along an east/west alignment with an exclusive right-of-way unimpaired as much as possible from cross-traffic. The L.R.T. alignment is illustrated on Figure 7. In order to provide for the L.R.T. line and for no other purpose, a right-of-way for the L.R.T. shall be reserved. Such right-of-way shall provide for the following, unless otherwise approved by the City:

- a. An alignment along the north and south banks of the proposed floodway channel, subject to a determination of the exact location which is mutually agreeable within two (2) years from approval of the Specific Plan, with an extension period of up to one (1) year if it is shown that substantial progress on a final alignment has been made, provided, however, that the City shall calendar a hearing from a progress report on the status of the alignment determination one (1) year from approval of the Specific Plan and again at the end of the said two-year period, and at such hearing(s) the City may delete this condition, if it determines that no substantial ongoing effort, having any reasonable ar of success, is being made to make a final determination on alignment.
- b. The width of such right-of-way shall not exceed twenty two (22) feet, except at station locations which shall be thirty-four (34) feet.
- c. The right-of-way shall be reserved for fifteen (15) years, with an extension period of up to five (5) years, if it is shown that substantial progress on implementation has been made, provided, however, that the City shall calendar a hearing for a progress report on the status of the implementation every three (3) years within said fifteen (15) year period and at such hearing(s) the City may delete this condition, if it determines that no substantial ongoing effort, having any reasonable probability of success, is being made to implement the L.R.T. line.

- d. Owners shall have the exclusive use and enjoyment of the right-of-way, until such time as it is acquired for trolley use, provided such owner use shall not preclude use of the right-of-way for trolley purposes.
- e. The replacement of any off-street parking which is removed due to the L.R.T. line, shall not be required of the subdividing owners by the City.

L.R.T. stops should be located at 1/4 mile intervals in areas readily accessible from urban plazas or major building areas by people, or near main street crossings in order to afford the greatest and easiest public accessibility from other areas outside the project.

L.R.T. stops should provide shelter from the elements and should be designed in a colorful manner to provide readily distinguishable design to both the pedestrian and L.R.T. rider. Consideration should be given to individualistic station designs, within some common parameters, in order to make the stations more individualistic and readily identifiable.

L.R.T. stops may be also located in the interior of a building or buildings, as long as the building use is highly intensive.

C. ARCHITECTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section includes design considerations related to architectural forms and also addresses building materials, energy conservation and signing.

Building Forms and Materials

The quality of the Specific Plan environment points to the use of certain materials as being more appropriate than others. The following guidelines are provided to give some insight into the character of building materials that would fit into the area's environment.

GUIDELINES:

Tall buildings should be designed in the form of slim towers. Consideration should be given to the selection of materials that offset and enhance the dramatic biotic and topographic features in the valley and the inland mountains. The materials should also enhance the light quality in the valley.

Mid-rise residential buildings should make extensive use of balconies, decks and roof terraces. Building materials should be homogeneous and should provide either a contrast or a blending with the open space and landscaped areas.

Low-rise buildings should pay special attention to roof area treatment and materials. Pitched roofs or other special roof forms may be preferred in some cases to flat roofs. Flat roof areas should be considered for human use as terraces. Low-rise buildings should be designed with homogeneous materials that complement landscaping materials. Special care should be given to building detailing, particularly at building entrances.

Signing

Because of the coordinated nature of development proposed within the Specific Plan area, a coordinated sign district should be prepared. Signing standards for both public and private areas should be developed for the project area.

GUIDELINES:

Public signing for river access and parking access should be graphically coordinated. Sign sizes should be subdued relative to the other design elements of the river corridor. Consideration should be given to painting directional signs on the ground. This method is a highly effective method of providing directional signing and is not subject to removal.

Street signing within the project area should be graphically coordinated in the design of the signs themselves and in their location. Sign locations should be prominent in order to establish a clear directional identification.

Private development signing should be coordinated for directional signing, identifying entrances, etc.

Building identification signs identifying building activities and tenants should be designed to fit the structure and design of the building.

Energy Conservation

With the increasing emphasis on energy conservation and the utilization of alternative energy sources, it is important to identify known design considerations that should be considered in the project development.

GUIDELINES:

Rooftop solar energy collectors should be designed as an integral part of the building form. The slopes necessary for the energy collector are important and possible determinants of architectural shapes. If rooftop solar energy collectors are brought into a building complex subsequent to construction, an appropriate add-on design that integrates the collectors to the building form should be required.

Building orientation and building openings are important considerations to efficient energy performance. The use of materials, building form, ventilation, natural vegetation and orientation should be considered to minimize energy loads and to have more energy efficient buildings.

Location and selection of landscaping materials should be considered in relation to energy efficiency. Landscaping can reduce high energy loads in the southern and western exposures.