

Commercial Element

There are three major focal points of commercial activity within the Ocean Beach community. The primary center is located along Newport Avenue from Sunset Cliffs Boulevard westward to the beach. This area is the community's major commercial center. One neighborhood-type center is located along Voltaire Street from Bacon to Ebers. Another activity area exists at Point Loma Avenue and Ebers Streets. Each will be discussed separately in terms of existing conditions, then in terms of proposals.

Newport Center

The Newport Shopping Center functions as the commercial core of the Ocean Beach community. The Center provides convenience goods, financial and personal services, automotive service, variety store items, hardware, apparel, food, and a number of specialty items. Somewhat over 30 acres are presently "C" zoned with about 20 acres used commercially. The remainder is used for residential or office purposes. The "C" zoning of the area was applied in the 1930's and had no requirements for off-street parking, landscaping, setbacks or other development criteria. This amount of commercial zoning is more extensive than the present or projected population of the service area warrants. General Plan standards for a community center are .9 acres per 1,000 persons which includes sufficient area for off-street parking. The service area is estimated at approximately 20,000 to 25,000 persons which translates into a total need of about 18-22 acres with approximately 1,000 well located off-street parking spaces. The present 900 spaces available are mostly private in nature and are insufficient in location and accessibility.

Environmental inadequacies concerning the Newport Center include unattractive signs and building facades; lack of maintenance, especially in the alleyways; and a large incidence of pedestrian-vehicular conflicts. This last problem causes a serious safety problem.

Voltaire District

The Voltaire Street commercial strip is a mixture of retail outlets interspersed with residential uses. "C" zoning also loops north on Abbott Street to West Point Loma Avenue and eastward to Bacon Street. This western loop is developed mainly with residential units. A total of 35 acres are "C" zoned with approximately 10 acres in commercial use. The remainder is in residential use with only one parcel vacant. The main concentration of commercial activity is between Bacon and Ebers Streets.

A wide range of goods and services is offered including furniture, food markets, automobile services, liquor, bars, drive-in restaurants, and professional services. The community fire station is located at the intersection of Voltaire and Eber Streets.



Most of the commercial outlets have been developed with the minimum constraints of the "C" zone. Few off-street parking spaces exist and the area is practically devoid of landscaping except for street trees. Certain of the newer "sidewalk" styled establishments have, however, provided a pleasing pedestrian-oriented atmosphere. Generally the "strip" lacks any environmentally enhancing aspects and presents an image of sign clutter, sidewalk congestion, and some lack of maintenance. The alleys both to the north and south are especially cluttered and in need of up-grading.

Point Loma-Ebers District

A small neighborhood center on Point Loma Avenue at Ebers Street provides a limited variety of convenience goods and services for nearby residents. Approximately 7 acres are zoned commercial but only about 1.7 acres are commercially used. The remaining C zoned land is used residentially with the exception of a church and a small amount of off-street parking.

According to General Plan standards, neighborhood centers should provide for daily needs and serve between 5,000 and 10,000 persons. Site area is generally recommended to be 4 to 8 acres with a ratio of 3 square feet of parking to each square foot of retail area.

The Point Loma Center has very limited off-street parking facilities. There is little cohesiveness physically tying the outlets together. Store facades and signs are random and some lack of maintenance is evident. Landscaping is minimal. A proliferation of signs including many different styles and types exists.

Goals

- o The accommodation of retail commercial, as well as residential and office facilities to serve the entire community, as well as to provide some employment for residents of the community.
- o The development of criteria and standards for all commercial districts in order to facilitate an image of continuity in each.
- o The upgrading of those existing commercial facilities characterized by physical deterioration and lack of maintenance.
- o The regulation of the scale and bulk of new development to reflect the smaller scale and pedestrian orientation of existing commercial development.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Newport Center

In older established communities such as Ocean Beach the commercial area serves as more than a place to do business. The Newport Center has served as a convenience center, as a focal point of community activity, and as an image of the Ocean Beach community and should be maintained as such. The Center should have a full range of consumer goods and services as well as residential and entertainment activities. Residential density and development criteria should be similar to that proposed for residential areas except that residential uses developed in the same structure as commercial should be permitted less restrictive yard regulations. The actual configuration intended is ground floor commercial with residential above.

A shopping area is most effective and functional as it becomes well developed and compact thereby limiting the distance between commercial establishments. The shopper relies more on walking than on the use of the car. When businesses are compactly arranged there is more time devoted to shopping and less to finding a parking place. The emphasis of the Newport Center, therefore, should be within the six blocks between Sunset Cliffs Boulevard, Santa Monica Avenue, Niagara Street, and the ocean.

Projections of future retail space requirements indicate that sufficient commercially zoned property already exists within this Center. As with residential, the use of special development regulations is the most appropriate vehicle for achieving necessary changes in the Newport Center. Additional commercial zonings, therefore, should not be granted.

From an environmental standpoint, the physical appearance of the Newport Center should be upgraded. Conformance to all legislation regulating signs should be encouraged at an early date. Private upgrading of commercial structures should be encouraged where necessary. In most cases minor renovation is all that is required. All overhead utilities should be undergrounded at an early date through whatever means necessary. Street furniture should be introduced in order to upgrade the public portions of the Center.

Following the establishment of parking reservoirs, should this eventually occur, Newport Avenue could be closed to traffic entirely. A pedestrian mall including resurfacing, landscaping and the expanded use of street furniture could be developed through use of the assessment district procedure. The creation of such a district is the responsibility of the owners of the property affected.

In order to adequately guide the further development of the Newport Center specific criteria are suggested for use in the creation of future development regulations. These criteria, intended to be compatible with existing development, are detailed under separate heading following the general recommendations for all commercial areas.

Voltaire District

The Voltaire Street corridor may well be the commercial area in most need of improvement. It is a major access point to the community and gives resident and visitor alike an "image" of the character of the community. In terms of land use, convenience outlets and personal services should be emphasized within this neighborhood center.

The district should serve primarily as a neighborhood center with some visitor-oriented services as well as residential uses. The proposed district will be approximately 10 acres in size, an area about equal to the existing amount of land in commercial use. The limitation of boundaries promotes an increased intensity of use within the most viable area of this commercial area. Specific development criteria for this district, as with the others, is included in a separate section.

Potential exists to up-grade the environment through sign control, landscaping, renovation and increased maintenance. One particularly important visual improvement would be the undergrounding of utilities. The tall palms lining the street provide a visual corridor that is marred by overhead utility poles and lines. The limitation of commercial activity to a reduced area, specifically between Bacon and Ebers, will promote a compactness which will enhance pedestrian emphasis. Coupled with sign control and building improvements, a significant improvement in the district is possible.

Point Loma - Ebers District

The primary need for the Point Loma - Ebers Street neighborhood center is site containment and environmental improvement. The standards for a neighborhood center have already been discussed. The application of signing, landscaping, and some parking requirements will result in the gradual improvement of the area by at least controlling future developments.

Future land uses should be of a neighborhood commercial type, just as proposed for the Voltaire Street district. Some mixed uses, specifically offices and residential, are acceptable in this area provided they conform to the general design criteria for the area.

Development Criteria

Any residential development should conform to the density requirements proposed for adjacent residential areas as suggested in the residential element. The floor area ratio should be about 2.0 for commercial development. The height limit should be 35' with a three story limitation in order to allow for a variety in roof lines. Restrictions on lot coverage should be oriented toward the provision of adequate landscaping and off-street parking for any development. Landscaping should be used for screening where necessary and as an accent to structures. Buildings should be located on the front part of the lot in order to preserve the

continuity of the street for pedestrians. For purposes of appearance, facades of new development should extend in a single plane no more than 50% of the lot width or 50 feet, whichever is less. Some break in the plane offers architectural variety and permits some area for landscaping purposes.

The parking requirement should be a minimum of one off-street space for each 500 square feet of building area. Recognizing that such a requirement is not realistic for on site parking, every attempt should be made to provide as much parking as is feasible. Considerations should be given to requiring a fee in lieu of the remainder. Such a fee could be used to create a fund to be used in the creation of parking reservoirs in the future. If such parking can be created through a parking district or some form of joint agreement it would not, then, need to be located, necessarily, on the site itself.

In no cases should parking be established at the front of the lot adjacent to pedestrian rights-of-way. Drive-in establishments should be designed so as to minimize the impact of automobiles upon pedestrians and upon the overall movement of traffic. If developed, they should be regulated by a conditional use type permit.

Finally the maximum ground floor coverage by any single structure should be 7,500 sq. ft. for the Newport Center and 5,000 sq. ft. for the two neighborhood centers unless the design of the facility is such that it maintains the small scale character of the existing district.

Summary of Plan Recommendation

- o That the three commercial districts be contained in area in order to foster compactness and facilitate pedestrian orientation.
- o That the Newport Center be maintained as the major Ocean Beach activity center.
- o That the two smaller districts serve as neighborhood centers for the northern and southern portions of Ocean Beach.
- o That office and residential uses be encouraged, in addition to retail commercial, in the three districts, especially as mixed uses in the same structure.
- o That taller buildings with less lot coverage be encouraged in order to allow more area on the lot for parking and landscaping.
- o That the physical appearance of the three commercial areas be upgraded.

- o That consideration might be given to the possible closing of Newport Avenue in order to develop a pedestrian mall at such a time as the owners of the property affected desire to initiate the action.
- o That specific development criteria be established to replace existing zoning regulations. Such criteria should include but not be limited to the following:
 - a floor area ratio of about 2.0
 - a maximum height limit of 35' with a three story limitation
 - maximum ground coverage by any single structure of 7,500 square feet in Newport Center and 5,000 square feet in the Voltaire and Point Loma - Ebers districts
 - a limitation of facades to no more than 50% of the lot width or 50', whichever is less
 - compliance by all signs with City-wide on-premise sign regulations
 - at least one off-street parking space for every 500 square feet of floor area or a fee in lieu of the provision of such parking where not feasible, such parking to be either on the site or part of a parking reservoir in the immediate vicinity of the use it serves
 - location of parking and access at the rear of the property whenever feasible
 - regulation of drive-in establishments via a conditional use permit type process in order to minimize the impact of vehicles upon pedestrians and upon the overall movement of traffic
 - landscaping to affectively screen parking from adjacent pedestrian activity and other non-compatible land uses, and in pockets to accent buildings adjacent to pedestrian activity.

commercial recommendations

