

OCEAN BEACH PRECISE PLAN

Background

The purpose of a Precise Plan for Ocean Beach is to establish as public policy a program for preserving and enhancing the community. The effort leading to this precise plan encompassed a comprehensive identification of local problems, issues and opportunities together with establishment of community values and goals translated into appropriate long and short-range action-oriented recommendations.

This Precise Plan represents the culmination of the most recent efforts by many interested persons in the community in conjunction with staff of the Planning Department. This Plan is the result of a recommendation of the Peninsula Community Plan adopted in 1968 to prepare a precise plan for the Ocean Beach area. Two years of work resulted in a draft Precise Plan in mid-1971 which was then the subject of discussion at four public meetings in the community. It was the product of joint efforts of the Ocean Beach Implementation Planning Group, a subcommittee of Peninsulas, Inc., which had produced the Peninsula Community Plan, and Planning Department staff. Disagreement over the draft plan arose involving several divergent aspects including, among others, a lack of knowledge and understanding of its purpose and contents, and feelings of a lack of opportunity to participate. In addition, there existed a general heightened public awareness and concern for urban environmental matters particularly in unique coastal areas.

These community concerns resulted in no further processing of the draft plan through the Planning Commission toward the establishment of public policy to guide the future of Ocean Beach. In the face of increasing local problems and issues, the efforts by staff of the Planning Department to reach consensus among divergent interests in Ocean Beach and proceed with a planning program were without success.

However, as a result of mounting community concerns that the area needed a plan for the future, the City Council in the summer of 1973 directed that the Planning Department reactivate the planning program and bring forth a draft Precise Plan to the Planning Commission for public hearing at the earliest feasible opportunity. This direction included making every reasonable effort to work with the various groups that had emerged expressing sincere interest in the future of Ocean Beach. These groups included the Ocean Beach Implementation Planning Group, the Ocean Beach Town Council, and the Ocean Beach Community Planning Group. It was believed that such meetings would provide the opportunity for staff to receive various comments, suggestions and alternatives to those points within the draft on which differences of opinion existed. The Planning Department staff held nine meetings with the three groups involved in an effort to establish a dialogue over various planning proposals.

The staff analyzed the different proposals made by these citizen groups, and presented a draft to them for discussion purposes. (Ocean Beach Precise Plan, Review Draft, January 1974). Since that time, representatives of these groups have met with City staff weekly, and there have been monthly public meetings. (Since June, 1974, the Ocean Beach Business and Property Owners Association has also provided representation and input at these discussion sessions.) This plan reflects those meetings and discussions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRECISE PLAN

The Ocean Beach Precise Plan is a policy framework enabling the community and the City to preserve and enhance the character of Ocean Beach. The Plan provides guidelines and recommendations for public and private development.

Once this Plan is adopted by the City Council, any amendments, additions or deletions will require that the Planning Commission and City Council follow the same procedure of holding public hearings as was required in the initial adoption of the Plan. While this Plan sets forth many proposals for implementation, it does not establish new regulations or legislation, nor does it rezone property. However, it must be clearly pointed out that adoption of this Plan will require subsequent public hearings to be held to determine whether or not to rezone property so that it is consistent with Plan proposals. Finally, the amendment or future preparation of other City Ordinances such as subdivision, housing, building or other development controls must also be enacted separately through the regular legislative process.

The Plan deals with the environment of Ocean Beach, emphasizing "scale" and "character" and major land uses. The plan elements include residential, commercial, transportation, public facilities, and community environment and design. All of the elements consider the community from both a neighborhood standpoint and from its position as a major recreation area. A series of maps and drawings illustrate the major recommendations and policies. The report concludes with an implementation section listing major projects, public and private, required to carry out the Plan.

It should also be pointed out that adoption of the Ocean Beach Precise Plan requires amending of the Peninsula Community Plan, adopted by the City Council in 1968. In addition, adoption of this Ocean Beach Precise Plan will require amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan for the City of San Diego. A harmonious relationship exists between the general goals and policies of this area, adjacent areas, and the entire City. Should differences occur in the future regarding proposals contained in this Plan and the City's General Plan, they may be resolved during the course of related public hearings. This procedure is in accordance with the intent of City Council Policy 600-7. It should also be pointed out that the periodic review of the General Plan may produce recommendations

for changes in this Plan. Again, the normal procedures for legislative actions, including public hearings, must, of course, be followed before changes to these documents can be accomplished.

A flexible document is necessary. Nothing can be rigid in view of changing life styles, human needs and technology. However, the recommendations of this Plan should be kept fundamentally intact and followed unless amended by due process.

THE OCEAN BEACH COMMUNITY

In the early part of this century, a developer named D. C. Collier bought most of the brush-covered hillsides, laid out streets, planted trees, put in utilities and established a streetcar line, and built houses. A boardwalk like Atlantic City's stretched from Mission Bay to Sunset Cliffs. Ocean Beach originally developed as a summer cottage and resort community. Later, many of these cottages were converted to year-round residences. New single family homes were built and Ocean Beach became a small residential community somewhat apart from the rest of San Diego.

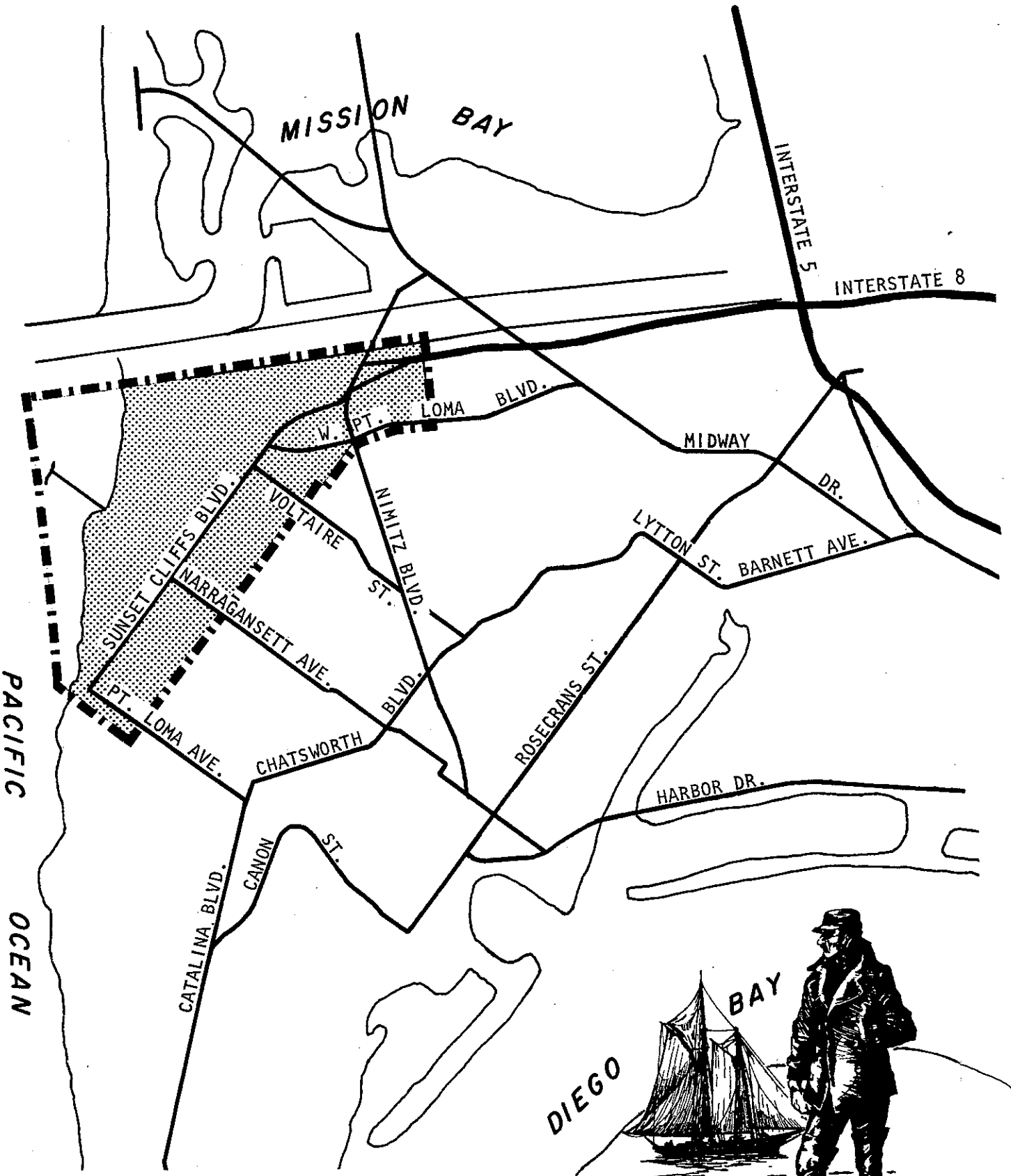
Through the years, Ocean Beach became popular as a beach resort and center of weekend beach activity. The community was affected by World War II, as the large influx of military personnel created the need for rental housing. Recent years have seen a great rise in the number of young adults, drawn to the community by the casual beach atmosphere and other factors. Increased tourism, including the development of Mission Bay Park, a new freeway, and the popularity of beach areas as places to live have brought growth pressures to Ocean Beach.

The planning area is approximately one square mile in size. It is bounded by the San Diego River on the north, the Pacific Ocean on the west, Froude and West Point Loma Blvd. on the east and Adair Street on the south.

The current population of the Precise Plan area is 11,800, which represents an increase of only 400 people since 1970. In fact, the population declined by 100 people from 1972 to 1973, despite a rise in total dwelling units. Some of the reasons for this apparent stabilization in population include decreasing family size, a declining birth rate, and fewer occupants per dwelling unit than in the past. There is a considerable increase of people during the summer months due to an influx of tourists.

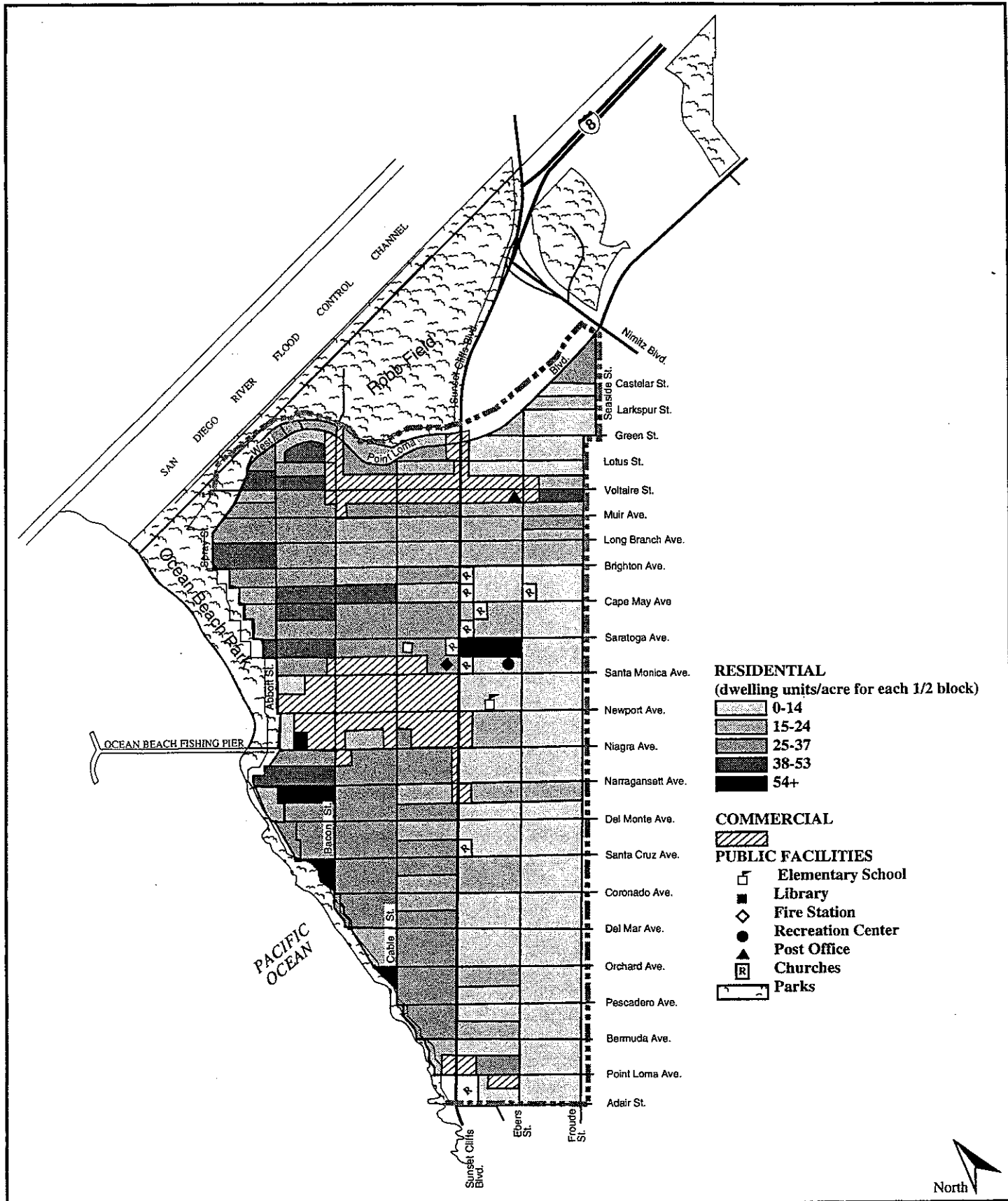
The most significant characteristic of the Ocean Beach population is the large number of young persons. 53% of the population in 1970 was between 20 and 34 years of age which compared to only 27% for the City as a whole.

The median school years completed in 1970 was 12.6. 36% of persons 25 years or older had attended college. The average family income was



location map SAN





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Generalized Land Use
Ocean Beach Community Plan Area
City of San Diego Planning Department

Figure

\$7,490. There were 273 families and over 2,000 persons below the federal government definition of the poverty level, an average of one out of every six persons.

There are 6,700 dwelling units in Ocean Beach, 3,000 units in single family use and 3,700 multiple units. This represents an increase of 700 multiple dwelling units since 1970, when single and multiple units were equal. Also, in 1970, 4,600 of a total 6,100 dwelling units, or 81% were renter occupied, compared to 47% city-wide. The 1970 median housing value was \$19,400 and the median rent, \$120 per month.

From these census statistics, it is evident that Ocean Beach is a community with many young people, is no longer growing at a rapid rate, is relatively well educated, is becoming more oriented toward multiple family life styles, has a high percentage of renters and is characterized by relatively high rental and land values.

One of the most dramatic physical features of the community is its coastline a wide, sandy beach and a rock shoreline composed of eroding cliffs and tide pools. A fishing pier adds to the attractiveness and charm of the beach atmosphere. Another feature is the gently sloping land east of Sunset Cliffs Blvd. which provides dramatic views of the ocean.

RECENT LEGISLATION

In recent years a new understanding of planning principles has developed throughout the nation which not only recognizes the importance of land use relationships, but stresses the preservation of community environment, both natural and man-made. Fostered by the problems associated with uncontrolled urbanization, this new attitude has come about because of people's concern over the threatened loss of the intrinsic values they are increasingly unwilling to forfeit.

These national concerns have been reflected at the federal legislative level with the formation in 1970 of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the creation of the Clean Air Act of 1970. The EPA has been delegated the task of reducing air pollution under this Act. Some of the initial recommendations considered for San Diego were mass transit priority, parking surcharge and management, and limitations on gasoline. The move to decrease dependence on the automobile is balanced by the increased importance of public transportation and the bicycle as an alternate means of transportation.

Several important environmental laws have been recently passed in California. The California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 is aimed at determining the extent of environmental damage, if any, created by the completion of proposed projects which require Environmental Impact Reports. Also, State Assembly Bill 1301 (Section 65860 of the Government Code) was passed in 1971 and amended in 1972; and is intended to create consistency between land use proposals, zoning regulations, and long range plans.

According to A.B. 1301, the zoning ordinance and the land use proposals of the Ocean Beach Precise Plan must be in conformance.

In 1972 the California voters passed Proposition 20, the Coastal Zone Conservation Act. This Act is aimed at balanced conservation and development of coastal zone resources. It created a Coastal Commission to plan development within 5 miles and regulate development within 1,000 yards of the shoreline until a statewide coastal zone plan is adopted by 1976.

With respect to these laws, any significant proposal in Ocean Beach would be (1) reviewed by the Planning Commission, City Council, and Coastal Commission as to its environmental impact, and (2) determined to be consistent or inconsistent with the Precise Plan.

The City of San Diego has also instituted important development controls in recent years. The city-wide zoning ordinance has been revised to include floor area ratios which have helped to reduce building bulk. Also, commercial zones have been revised to greatly reduce permitted residential densities and to also require parking for residential uses.

Another recent regulation was the passage of Proposition D, a citizen initiative which placed a 30-foot height limit on new construction west of the Interstate 5 freeway excepting the Centre City area.

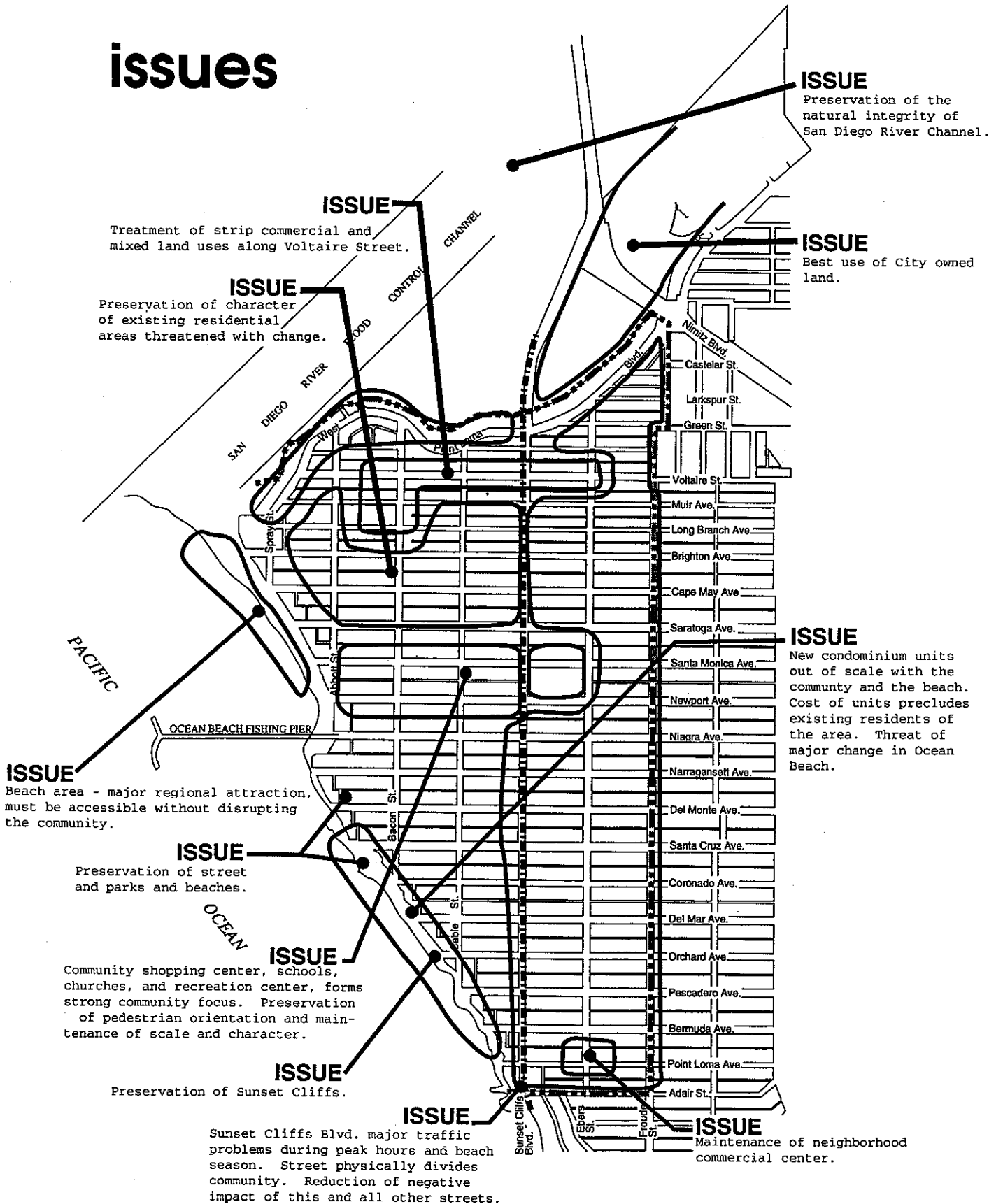
There are several City Council Policies that apply city-wide and hence, are of significance in Ocean Beach. Policy 600-6 (1967) states that zoning should be used to implement proposals in adopted community plans. This policy is an indication of the City's intent to follow through on its proposed plans and is also supportive of A.B. 1301. Policy 600-19 (1972) calls for the fostering of balanced community development through the provision of adequate housing for all segments of the population.

The existence of these Federal, State, and City measures is certain to have substantial effects on Ocean Beach for years to come. These measures will not be replaced by the Precise Plan. Rather, they are supplemented by the criteria within the Plan itself to best achieve the implementation of the Plan's proposals.

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

A diversity of life styles characterizes Ocean Beach. The community contains retired persons, military personnel, college students, street people, families with and without children, young singles, non-professionals, professionals, minorities, and transients. Some are recent arrivals and some are long-term residents. There is no such thing as a "typical" resident.

issues



The profuse availability of alternate life styles make Ocean Beach distinctive from other locales in San Diego and creates what many feel is a genuine sense of "community." Of great concern among many residents is the loss of this community character. It is believed that diversity should be maintained. There are factors, however, that make this objective somewhat difficult to achieve.

The first factor is that land values in Ocean Beach have increased dramatically. Many low income people, young and senior citizens alike, who now live in the community are being forced out. Since land values are greatly influenced by the interaction of supply and demand, and there is only a limited amount of ocean frontage available, it is assumed that land values will continue to escalate.

Due to high land costs, new construction in the R-4 zone west of Sunset Cliffs Blvd. tends to develop at a relatively high density. The cost of these new units is excessive for many of the area's residents. The small size of the newer units also tends to exclude families with children. In addition, where redevelopment is not feasible, rents are raised on older units to meet the rising cost of taxes and maintenance.

East of Sunset Cliffs Boulevard land values have also increased substantially, but little redevelopment has taken place. Under the existing R-2 zoning, only two units per lot may be built. Since many of the existing lots are already developed with two units or have been combined to achieve 3 or 4 units, the relative lack of income-producing potential has tended to stabilize the R-2 areas.

A major problem throughout all of Ocean Beach is the choice between renovation and removal. Many old structures are worthy of preservation and could not be economically duplicated today. These buildings add to the character of the community and should be properly maintained. The emphasis should be on maintenance and on arresting decay before it sets in.

A second major factor contributing to the change in community character is that new construction is sometimes disruptive to the scale and architecture of the community due to (1) excessive height and bulk, (2) the lack of landscaping, and (3) visible parking in front of buildings. If better design is utilized, a slight increase in density would not change Ocean Beach to a substantial degree, provided that new construction did not occur on an extensive scale.

During certain periods of the day and week, the auto congestion along Sunset Cliffs Boulevard is considerable. One proposal that has been discussed to alleviate this problem is the establishment of a one way pair of streets to facilitate the north-south traffic movement. Some residents believe that such a solution would physically separate the community and increase the hazards to pedestrians.

There is also a strong desire among residents to achieve alternate means of transportation--particularly an improved bus system, the development of bicycle routes, and more efficient pedestrian movement. Recent citizen proposals have included a mini-bus system, planned bicycle paths, and street closings. The existing small scale shopping areas meet the needs of Ocean Beach residents and contribute to the community's character. Any proposal to create regional shopping facilities is certain to encounter opposition. There is a trend toward the renovation of old store fronts using natural wood and selling goods in a casual atmosphere. If done well, the use of imaginative popular art in decorating the exteriors of certain shops adds to the overall community character. Such innovations by local merchants should be encouraged.

The means of preserving Sunset Cliffs is a major concern. The cliffs are susceptible to erosion due to wave action, construction activity, human disturbance, water runoff and wind action. The replenishment of beach sand has been diminished by the Mission Bay jetty constructed in 1951, which deflected out to sea the sediment being carried by the southward moving long-shore current. Although the most serious erosional problems are associated with the lower strata of the cliffs, there has been considerable sea-cave collapse, raising the question of public safety. A recent proposal by the Army Corps of Engineers was made to seal the sea-cave openings and construct an artificial beach with borrowed sand. However, a majority of the community seems desirous of preserving the cliffs in their natural state.

Other community planning problems include the protection of scenic vistas with particular emphasis on the coastline; the use of existing recreation facilities by tourists; the lack of sufficient landscaping; and wildlife conservation in the San Diego River Channel.