



3.2.5 Overarching Study Area Guidance

Building Guidelines

Ground Floor Use:

Commercial/Retail Ground Floor

- A portion of the front setback may be increased by as much as 15 feet if that setback is used as public space (i.e. outdoor restaurant seating or a courtyard with public access). A minimum of 60% of the front facade should be constructed up to the front setback. Utilize building setbacks for ground-floor retail uses for spillover activity such as outdoor café seating and adequate space for pedestrian movement.
- All commercial uses located at the street level should provide a direct at-grade access from the sidewalk. An entrance should be provided for each tenant street frontage exceeding 50 feet. Where such frontages exceed 100 feet, one entrance should be provided for each 100 feet of frontage or portion thereof. Separate pedestrian entrances for individual tenants should be at least 25 feet apart.
- The building lobby for office, hotel or other commercial buildings should be expressed on the exterior ground floor of the building, as well as designed as a clearly defined architectural feature of the building.
- Entries to stores and ground-floor commercial uses should be visually distinct from the rest of the building façade. The use of scale, material selection, glazing, projecting/recessed forms, architectural details, color, and shade devices can all contribute to the visual interest of the ground floor uses and street environment.
- For ground floor uses between 3 and 12 feet above the sidewalk, a minimum of 50 percent of storefront façades should contain windows of clear or lightly tinted vision glass that allow views of the interior space.
- Commercial buildings should build to the sidewalk edge, or minimum setback requirement, to bring buildings close to the street and pedestrians.



Images above highlight ground floor retail uses and the adjacent pedestrian zone

Residential Ground Floor

- The ground floor of residential building facades should be articulated at regular increments to differentiate individual residential units from each other and from the overall massing of the building, and to express a rhythm of individual units along the street.
- Residential buildings are encouraged to build to the minimum setback requirements.
- Stoops and landscaping should be provided in front setbacks to provide a buffer between the sidewalk the unit's living areas.
- Ground-floor residential units should be raised between 18-42 inches above the adjacent sidewalk grade to provide an additional buffer.
- A minimum of 25 percent of each street-facing ground-level residential unit between 3 and 12 feet above the sidewalk should possess clear, non-reflective windows.
- Fences and gates should be utilized within the setback area only if they demarcate private open space attached to a residential unit. Solid walls or fences should not exceed a height of 42 inches above grade. At-grade railings (at least 50 percent open) may reach a height of 60 inches. Gates and railings located on stoops or raised patios should not exceed 48 inches in height.



Entrances should encourage pedestrian activity



Entries & Parking:

Entries:

- Primary building entrances on all buildings should face the primary public street. Additional secondary entrances should be oriented to a secondary street or parking area.
- Accentuate building entrances with architectural elements, lighting, and/or landscaping.
- Provide clear and continuous paths from every primary building entrance to all sidewalks, crosswalks, transit stops, and parking lots directly adjoining the site.
- Encourage awnings, overhangs, and arcades along commercial facades to provide overhead protection for pedestrians and to create significant entrances. Awnings, decorative roofs, and miscellaneous entry features may encroach up to eight feet into the front public right-of-way, provided that they are not less than eight feet above the sidewalk. These elements should not extend beyond the curb face.
- Recesses or projections in the building façade surrounding the entrance are encouraged to enhance visibility and prominence. Recessed entrances should not exceed 25 feet in width and the face of the door or gates should be within 15 feet of the property line.
- Residential entries in mixed-use buildings should be separate and distinct from commercial entrances.
- If customers, visitors and/or tenants park to the rear of the building, a well-defined and lighted rear entrance is strongly encouraged. If no rear building entrance is provided, a signed and lighted walkway to the front or side building entrance should be provided.

Parking: Parking should also be discreet, utilize on-street parking whenever possible, and should be reserved for use in the rear or side of sites. Parking lots, spaces, and head-in parking should not dominate the frontage of pedestrian-oriented streets, interrupt pedestrian routes, or negatively impact surrounding neighborhoods.

- Joint parking allowances are recommended for nearby uses with staggered peak periods of demand. Encourage the use of shared parking lots and shared driveways, especially for the properties within the Restaurant Row District.
- Connect adjacent parking areas through the use of reciprocal access agreements. Retail, office and entertainment uses should share parking areas and quantities.
- Encourage the use of parking lots in off-peak hours for sporting activities or farmers markets.

Integrating the ground floor use and design the building greatly impacts the street environment. Being a good neighbor includes encouraging pedestrian and bicycle activity on the street.



- All commercial parking lots adjoining a residential use should be screened by perimeter landscape treatments.
- Restrict the number of new curb cuts along Morena Boulevard. New curb cuts must be a minimum of 75 feet away from any intersections and a minimum of 40 feet from any existing curb cut. If these conditions cannot be met, a shared access agreement must be established.
- Parking lots should be located to the rear or side of the property or internal to the block. Provide access to parking through alleys and driveways, as possible.
- A minimum of two bike racks shall be provided per block. The recommended goal is to achieve a ratio of one bike rack per storefront.
- All parking lots must have sufficient trees so that within 10 years, 70 percent of the surface area of the lot is shaded.

Being a good neighbor includes providing screening to parking areas. Parking is not attractive and should be shielded visually.

Windows & Visibility

- Orient active portions of buildings and facades with windows to allow for surveillance of exterior areas, particularly plazas and other public spaces where people may gather.
- Maximize windows to provide visibility of adjacent public spaces. Building facades that face public areas should have a minimum of 50 percent transparency. The view out of windows should not be blocked by shelving and displays.



Visibility at the ground floor is an important part of the street experience

Building Articulation: All buildings can impact the character of a street and neighborhood through its articulation. It is important that new projects/developments act as good neighbors and ensure that they do not negatively impact the character of a neighborhood. Building articulation discusses the parts of a building and how it forms the whole. Articulation breaks up the volume and shape of a building.

- Blank building walls are not acceptable. No greater than a ten foot horizontal space shall be allowed with some change in building articulation through color, attachment, vertical piece, or the use of perimeter landscaping (e.g., foundation plantings or wall vines). Unavoidable blank walls along public streets or those viewed from public streets, open spaces and thoroughfares should use graffiti-resistant surface materials and enhanced with architectural detail in material texture, ornamentation, landscape treatment and/or artwork.
- Encourage positive transitions in scale and character. Upper stories should be stepped back along the following key corridors: Linda Vista Road, Clairemont Drive, Milton Street, and Tecolote Road. Stepping back these buildings along these corridors will reduce massing and preserve important views to USD and Mission Bay.
- Buildings should incorporate a variety of vertical and horizontal step backs to break up continuous horizontal or vertical volumes.
- Encourage upper-story step backs to introduce an increased number of floors. Provide a vertical transition between high-density development and any adjacent lower density development. This can be accomplished by varying the massing within a project, stepping back upper stories, using balconies, and varying sizes of elements to transition to smaller-scale buildings. Buildings should have variations in rooflines to diminish building massing.



Image above shows how a large building can stand out when building massing and articulation are not considered



Being a good neighbor includes providing upper story step backs at the street, alley, and parking. Step backs should be used any time there is a two story change or more.

- Step down building heights along the secondary frontage and rear of buildings to reduce the impact on adjacent properties. Stepping back upper stories will also minimize shadows cast on public amenities and lessen privacy concerns with adjoining lots/neighbors.
- Utilize step back areas to encourage active uses such as balconies or roof gardens. These areas provide additional open spaces for residents and add more “eyes on the street.” Courtyards and balconies break up massing and enliven streetscapes.
- Development on either side of streets (facing each other) should be designed at a compatible scale and massing to encourage a comfortable pedestrian environment and maintain a sense of visual cohesion along the street.

Screening:

- Fences and walls should be used to prevent or discourage the public access to dark and unmonitored areas and/or dead-end areas.
- All utilities should be located outside the public right-of-way within a building alcove, utility room, or landscaped area and be fully screened from view of the public right-of-way.
- All mechanical equipment, appurtenances, and access areas should be intentionally grouped and screened architecturally within fully covered enclosures consistent with the overall composition of the building.
- All parking lots should be screened from streets by non-bermed perimeter landscape treatments.



Image above highlights how landscape and fences can be used to screen parking areas

Street Guidelines

Pedestrian Zone

Sidewalks: The sidewalk is the primary means of pedestrian access.

- A minimum 5 foot clear unobstructed path of travel should be clearly identified and kept clear of any obstructions, especially utilities.

Parkways: Planted parkways positively impact the street. The parkway acts as a physical buffer between the sidewalk and the edge of the multi-modal zone. It has vertical elements such as urban forestry, lighting, and furnishings that can provide visual cues that drivers need to slow down.

- Parkway should not be filled in with concrete.
- Parkway should include street trees, shrubs, and ground cover.
- Parkway shall be a minimum of 5 feet. It does not require any fencing or built up curb.

Bike Routes: Although identified in this section, refer to Chapter 4: Mobility for details.



Planted parkway with shade trees & ground floor retail uses



Transit Facilities: Transit facilities shall integrate Morena Boulevard branding for bus stops and light rail transit stops or stations.

- Each bus stop shall include a shade shelter, bench, and trash and recycling receptacles.
- For transit stops with more than three bus routes, a mid-block bulbout plaza shall be provided.

Landscape:

Planted areas have many benefits. The presence of trees, plants, and nature can create an attractive street while providing shade, more oxygen, and reducing air pollutants.

- For areas with existing landscaping, care should be taken to create views through existing landscaping. Removal is not a preferred solution.
- Select landscaping for durability and easy maintenance.
- Regional native and drought-resistant plant species are encouraged as plant materials.
- Careful plant selection can provide visual cues and physical deterrents to areas where pedestrian access is not desired. Use thorny or thick plant materials in perimeter landscape areas to discourage pedestrians from cutting through parking areas, trampling vegetation, approaching ground-floor windows, or climbing fences and walls.
- Landscaping and hedges should be used to minimize adverse impacts such as litter, noise, odor, glare or lighting impacts between adjoining residential and non-residential land uses.



Image shows a transit shelter that incorporates wayfinding, signage, and public seating with a shade structure

Street Trees

Consistent tree planting creates an urban forest and also results in a canopy that can provide shade to residents and visitors. A well landscaped and designed street can increase retail revenues and property values.

- See the City of San Diego Street Tree Selection Guide for recommended species.
- The size of the tree shall be a minimum of two inches in caliper with a clear zone between the top of pavement and bottom of limb of eight feet.
- Street trees shall be planted at a rate of one 24" box for every 35 feet of property line that abuts the public right-of-way.
- 40 square feet of water and air permeable landscape area shall be provided at the base of each street tree. This area must not have an impervious surface. The area shall be protected with either a tree grate or shrubs and mulch.
- Tree grates shall have a minimum 12 inch diameter opening for the tree and shall not have any other openings greater than 1/4".
- The space between the tree grate and the finish grade of a tree shall be filled with gravel larger than 1/4" to limit the accumulation of debris.
- Root barrier will be used to direct tree roots away from hardscape surfaces.

Groundcover and Shrubs: Planted areas should incorporate groundcover and shrubs into planted areas. Stone and cobble can also be used in planting areas.



- Groundcover and shrubs should be carefully selected for drought tolerance and native conditions. Refer to the San Diego County invasive ornamental plant guide for recommendations.
- A maximum height of 30 inches should be maintained from the bottom of the plant to the top of the plant for visibility by cyclists.
- If the street is within 250 feet of a drainage inlet or environmentally sensitive area, the plant palette must be approved by City's Community Forest Advisory Board.

Hardscape: Proper control of urban runoff is an important part of street and hardscape design. It is not a visible enhancement, but its benefits can be far reaching. Urban runoff strategies shall be incorporated into any planted area, as well as adjacent areas where there is an opportunity to capture and treat stormwater and dry weather runoff. These areas include the sidewalks, parkways, medians, bulbouts, and on-street parking areas.

- Projects should incorporate porous materials on walkways, driveways and parking areas to minimize stormwater runoff from paved surfaces whenever possible.
- Sidewalks shall incorporate permeable surfaces through the use of ungrouted pavers. This surface shall be in used in conjunction with structural soil, Silva cells, filterra treatments, or other runoff capture devices.
- All planted areas shall incorporate urban runoff strategies. The strategy can range from filtering soils to a structural soil with sub surface drain. Parkway, bulbouts, and planting areas can be used to capture runoff. Strategies include curb inlets, bio-retention soils, and plants that can capture and treat contaminants before being released to the storm drain system.



Image above highlights the use of Silva cells with tree grates and expanded sidewalk



Street Furniture: The verticality of street furniture provides visual friction to a driver and cues the driver to slow down. In addition, street furnishings can provide some amount of physical barrier between the pedestrian path of travel and the vehicle path of travel.

Benches: Benches can take many forms and be designed to suit almost any environment.

- Street benches shall be provided at regular intervals and shall be consistent with district theming (even at MTS transit stops). Benches should match the branding of the street in color and style.
- Wall seating can be incorporated to building designs, or low walls can be placed to provide public seating. Seating should be incorporated into the design by the building owner.
- Public seating can be community art opportunities.



Above shows a branding of street lighting and seating

Trash/Recycle Receptacles

Waste receptacles with separate recycling receptacles are preferred. Both waste and recycling receptacles are an excellent opportunity for a community art project.

- Blocks with more than 50% retail frontage shall provide separate trash and recycling receptacles (four per block, one at each end of the block on each side of the street).



Lighting: Lighting provides visibility and lighting standards can enhance the street environment significantly by providing objects at a human scale.

- Lighting standards shall be consistent with designated branding for the street character. The pedestrian lighting shall be provided separate and in addition to vehicle lighting. The lighting standards shall be at a human scale with a maximum height light standard of 15 feet.
- Pedestrian scale lighting shall be provided at a regular spacing. Parkway shall include pedestrian lighting to provide 0.8 foot-candles average luminance along the path of travel. Provide adequate lighting for pedestrian areas, access points, sidewalks, pathways, plazas, parking areas, and building entrances to improve public safety and security in these areas. Avoid overly bright light, which can reduce security by create dark shadows and visibility issues.
- The pedestrian lighting elements shall be included at the edge of the parkway so it sheds light on the sidewalk.
- Site, direct, and/or shield light fixtures to prevent light pollution through glare or light spillage. Lighting strategies, including shields on luminaires, that minimize light pollution and glare on adjacent properties should be implemented.
- Up-lighting is discouraged on areas of buildings that have substantially specular facades (such as glass or other highly polished material) due to undesirable light scatter.

Public Space: Public spaces can include a range of spaces from parks to parklets.

- Public gathering space should be placed next to public streets, residential areas, and retail uses. Public gathering space should not be formed from residual areas. Rather, they should be integrated into the design of the project.
- If there is a grade change, a public space should not be more than three feet above or below the sidewalk grade.
- Any walls, planters, or other obstructions (not including trees, lights and steps) that would prevent views into the open space should be limited and generally not exceed a height of 18 inches above the adjacent sidewalk.
- A minimum of 20 percent of the publicly accessible private open space ground area should be improved with landscaping, which may be reduced with the provision of substantial tree canopy coverage. At least one 36-inch box tree should be planted in the urban open space for each 25 feet of street frontage (for linear open space) and/or each 500 square feet of urban open space, whichever is greater.
- Seating should be provided for users in urban spaces at a ratio of 1 linear foot of seating for each 40 square feet of urban open space. The seating may be composed of benches and seating walls. Movable seating is highly encouraged.
- Publicly-accessible through-block walkways, courts, pocket parks, plazas, and urban open spaces are strongly encouraged to enhance the richness and variety of publicly accessible open spaces.
- All public spaces shall include lighting and a public art component.
- Curb extensions extend the sidewalk into the on-street parking lane to narrow the roadway and provide additional public space. Curb extensions may be placed at transit stops. Where curb extensions are provided at transit stops, they should be a full-length transit bulb, and not a standard corner bulb, as it can be difficult for a bus to exit or re-enter traffic around a corner bulb-out.



Image above highlights a building setback and use of an arcade (building articulation) to incorporate a public plaza at an intersection





- Mid-block curb extensions should use special paving or an edging treatment to distinguish the space as a plaza space separate from the through travel area.
- Street furnishings and other above-grade objects should be located on curb extensions where space allows, increasing space for pedestrian through travel on the sidewalk.

Wayfinding & Signage: A neighborhood coalition or business organization can generate a specific branding for a district. In instances where a specific branding or logo is created, signage and gateways should integrate branding into all streetscape elements.

On-Going Maintenance Requirements and Shared Space Agreements:

- As part of the project approval documents, inform property owners of the ongoing responsibility to keep parking areas, buildings, lighting, and landscaping properly maintained.
- Property owners must provide a maintenance agreement for lighting, landscaping, and street furnishings.
- Property owners must provide a shared access agreement if applicable to shared driveway or parking access.

*Being a good neighbor includes communication
and sharing curb cuts, parking, and access
whenever possible.*



4.0 Mobility

A key component to the success of future land uses in the study area as well as the planned Mid-Coast LRT stations, is the potential connection to various modes of travel. Only when these systems are individually successful and coordinated as a whole, can the entire system be optimized. The following discussion examines the vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit systems of the study area.

4.1 Vehicular Systems

Vehicular systems are primarily comprised of the roadways used to carry vehicular traffic through the study area. Below is a discussion of important terms/definitions used to describe the network, as well as metrics used to evaluate the performance of the system.

The following transportation analysis was prepared by Nelson Nygaard, a professional transportation planning firm. Nelson Nygaard also reviewed and provided input on non-vehicular recommendations to ensure compatibility with industry standards and best practices.

4.1.1 Existing Street Network

The City of San Diego roadway classifications are introduced and defined in Section 2.5, Overview of Street Network. Below is further detail on the classifications as they apply to streets within the study area based on existing roadway characteristics. Figure 4-1 graphically displays the existing street classifications.

Major Streets

The City's Street Design Manual requires that Major Streets be designed to accommodate a minimum of four to six travel lanes and a raised median at full build-out. Major streets provide access to the study area (including direct access to adjacent land uses and local streets) for automobile, bicycle, bus, and pedestrian travel. The following streets are designated as Major Streets:

- Clairemont Drive
- Friars Road
- Linda Vista Road
- Sea World Drive/Tecolote (west of Morena Blvd)
- West Morena Boulevard
- Napa Street

Collector Streets

The City's Street Design Manual requires that Collector Street be designed to accommodate a minimum of two to four travel lanes and act as a transition from local streets to major streets. Important in the performance evaluation of collector streets is whether or not they include center turn lanes and whether there are fronting properties with driveways. The following streets are designated as Collector Streets:

- Morena Boulevard (between the splits with West Morena)
- Tecolote Road (east of Morena Boulevard)
- Pacific Highway
- Milton Street