Section 2.0
URBAN DESIGN PROGRAM

In the broadest sense, the Urban Design Program for the Specific Plan area includes all elements of this Plan and related City policies which address physical form, appearance and character of development – both public and private – in the Plan area. This section of the Plan, however, provides project designers and developers with a focused discussion of why and how the various concepts on of the Specific Plan fit together to create a coherent urban design quality for the Plan area.

The Urban Design Program includes both public improvements and private projects, and under the Vision of the Specific Plan, these efforts must be coordinated and cooperative. This section addresses public and private aspects of urban design together so that strong relationships can be created between private development and the public open space system.

The following three major parts of this section should be used along with the development standards in Section 4.0 and design guidelines in Section 5.0 to design proposed projects:

- **Specific Plan Vision** – describes the Vision of the community for the Specific Plan area
- **Urban Design Concepts** – explains why the community wishes to regulate various aspects of development and discusses relationships between ideas
- **Urban Design Guidelines** – provides qualitative direction for projects concerning both public and private improvement

2.1 Specific Plan Vision

The members of the community who participated in the Specific Plan process shared a vision of revitalizing the Plaza, Fletcher Cove and the Highway 101 corridor as the “heart” of Solana Beach. This area represents both the traditional focus of the community and an area of distinct opportunity. It offers the setting to create a community core that combines open space, the beach, community facilities, residential neighborhoods, retail businesses and transit access. People who live in Solana Beach want to see the heart of the community as a source of pride – a place with personality and individuality – a place to eat, stroll, sit at the beach, shop, watch the sunset and celebrate major community events and festivals.

Specifically, the Vision includes a more attractive, pedestrian-oriented commercial district at the Plaza, improved landscaping and development quality of the Highway 101 corridor, and creation of a distinct image for this area as an
identity for the community. This identity should relate to the beach, open space, ocean views and the community’s historic connection to the Plaza and Highway 101.

Most community members who participated in the workshops or as members of the Specific Plan Committee want to create a distinctly low-key, small town character in Solana Beach. They want neither a tourist-oriented impact like Santa Barbara, nor a strip highway business center like Miramar Road; instead they want a vital, slightly funky, mixed use heart-of-town.

This Vision was developed through Community Workshops and then refined into a series of project objectives by the Specific Plan Committee (see 1.0 Introduction). The Urban Design Program then has developed these objectives into design concepts described below. The concepts are reflected in the other sections of the Plan, but this section addresses qualitative aspects of the Plan – critical design issues of physical form, quality and character.

### 2.2 Urban Design Concepts

The Urban Design Concepts are ideas developed by the Specific Plan consultants and the Specific Plan Committee to expand on and clarify the Vision and community objectives. These design concepts include:

- **Reinforce existing neighborhoods, focusing on a pedestrian Plaza** that will provide a gathering place and a sense of heart or center for the community; Unify the landscape to create a distinctive, but rustic and natural setting for the area;

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- **Encourage a variety of architecture** in keeping with the scale and eclectic character of the community;

- **Frame and preserve views** to reinforce the sense of Solana Beach as a beach community;

- **Improve site planning** to consolidate parking and access and minimize the dominance of traffic and asphalt in the area; and

- **Establish distinct business districts** with clear marketable images and support facilities such as consolidated parking.
Each of these six concepts is described in more detail below.

**Concept #1: Reinforce existing neighborhoods**, focusing on a pedestrian Plaza that will provide a gathering place and a sense of heart or center for the community.

- **The Heart** – Create more intensity and a mixture of business and community activity with design of public spaces to facilitate interaction.

- **Districts** – Create separate for different districts of the Specific Plan area to reinforce their desired qualities, such as: pedestrian-oriented districts at the Plaza, Transit Station and South Cedros; automobile-oriented districts at the north and south ends of Highway 101; and distinct kinds of neighborhoods on North Cedros and South Sierra. In turn, establish links to adjacent residential neighborhoods to the east and west of the Specific Plan area.

- **Cooperation** – Intensity of use requires cooperation to create a better and more vital retail mix, continuous pedestrian retail edge, common public parking facilities, and success with the concept of walking between businesses. Foster public/private cooperation in creating buildings which frame the public space, provide common, shared convenient parking at the right stages, events and promotion of businesses, and organizing the community to manage revitalization of the districts.
Concept #2: Unify the landscape to create a distinct, but rustic and natural image for the Specific Plan.

- **Framework or Armature** – Take advantage of the open space opportunities in Solana Beach by creating a unique landscape character as the impact of the community. Integrate the rail right-of-way, Plaza, Fletcher Cove, public facilities and edges of development with a unified, park-like landscape. The landscape of this open space can provide a memorable setting for the community almost in the way that Monterey Pines create Carmel's identity (see Figure 2-1).

- **Public Realm** – The landscape framework and the public spaces throughout the Specific Plan area will create a new kind of public realm. This will consist of the parks and public facilities, as well as sidewalks and streets. These systems will be better linked together with sidewalks, off-street walkways, and signs to encourage walking in the area. The landscape continuity can also visually link the commercial areas with the adjacent residential neighborhoods and strengthen the feeling of a center or heart-of-town.

- **Landscape Character** – The image of the landscape should be rustic and naturalized to incorporate existing plantings and trees and to reinforce the best characteristics of Solana Beach’s setting. These are its heritage as an unpretentious small town defined by the beach, lagoons and canyons. Use a limited number of tree types to create a simple, dramatic background to this setting. Sturdy, rustic trees which already predominate in this area should be encouraged. These trees are Torrey Pines, Melaleucas, Eucalyptus, California Pepper, Palms, Ficus, and a rich mixture of domestic trees on neighborhood streets.

- **Sequence of Experiences** – Within the unifying tree canopy, create variations in groundplane, gardens, flowers, and tree spacing to create distinctions between districts, emphasize views and strongly frame the Plaza. The landscape of Highway 101 should change, for example, in tree massing – from open and informal at the lagoons, to dense and powerful parkway and then, to a strikingly-framed open space at the Plaza.
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Concept #3: Encourage variety of architecture in keeping with the scale and eclectic character of the community.

- **Beach Character** – Most of the community members who participated in the workshops and the Specific Plan Committee opposed prescribing a theme or style for buildings in the Specific Plan area. Many also did not like much of the existing older or newer buildings, and yet appreciate the unpretentious, unique character of the older parts of the City. That character includes the Quonset huts on Cedros, a Victorian storefront on the Plaza, and a cross-section of other nondescript styles. Historic building types throughout the City included small-scale wood cottages, lightweight metal buildings and a variety of plaster and frame styles. Many people that if there is a Solana Beach character, it is a response to the mild climate, ocean breeze and sun, and the opportunity for environmentally responsive buildings with vitality.

- **Variety of Style** – Style can and should vary from building to building, but with compatible scale and detailing. Building design or style can also relate to setting. For instance, more rustic “edge of town” buildings may be appropriate for the automobile-oriented districts at the north and south edges of the community. More urban storefronts may be appropriate at the Plaza.

- **Frame for Public Realm** – Building massing is controlled in different ways. The Plaza edge along Plaza Street and along the west sides of Highway 101 within the Plaza District should create a distinct street wall or continuous building edge. This building edge will frame the public open space of the Plaza and the linear park on Highway 101 to accentuate the center of town and the view to the ocean. Guidelines for other areas encourage deeper, varied setbacks to reinforce the open parkway character in the automobile-oriented districts.

- **Building Height** – The community expressed distinctly different views concerning building heights in various forums. The Workshops strongly suggested that the Specific Plan area allow varied height, or averaged-height buildings to create more picturesque roof lines. The Specific Plan Committee and City Council, however, strongly favored retaining existing height regulations and review process, including the View Assessment Ordinance.
Concept #4: Frame and preserve views to reinforce the sense of Solana Beach as a beach community.

- **Views from the Public Realm and private property** – Solana Beach has few, yet very distinct views from public open space within the Specific Plan area. Accentuate these views by framing and reinforcing them with careful building design and landscape. The View Assessment process shall also continue to be an important consideration.

- **Window Sequence** – Use the sequential landscape character, which opens toward the lagoons at the north and south and then tightens toward the Plaza, to create a dramatic frame around an open “window” at the Plaza. Support this landscape sequence with guidelines for building placement along Highway 101.

Concept #5: Improve site planning to minimize the dominance of traffic and asphalt in the Specific Plan area.

- **Pedestrian and Auto-Oriented Areas** – Site planning guidelines within districts will be coordinated with emphasis in that area on providing a walkable or driveable environment. This will affect the location of access points, parking and service areas, and the type of ground floor uses.

- **Irregular Lots** – Very deep, narrow lots, access inconsistencies, and highly irregular parcel sizes in some areas, particularly near the Plaza, will involve cooperation among property owners to provide off-site parking and eliminate much of the chaotic automobile circulation.

- **Restricting Access** – The community wishes to improve traffic flow without increasing speeds and to eliminate the visual blight of automobiles in the corridor at the same time. Limiting automobile access from Highway 101 and Sierra, and emphasizing cross-streets and shared driveways for access, can improve flow by limiting disruptions. This also provides for greater landscape continuity and pedestrian walkways.

- **Links to the Beach and Plaza from Neighborhoods** – Use street right-of-way for access. Orient front doors to streets and create a more continuous sidewalk and pathway system. Connect all adjacent sites to the Linear Park, the Plaza and Highway 101. Also provide access points across Highway 101 and between Cedros Avenue and Sierra Avenue for access to Beach walkways and Plaza. Require street-side walks and bicycle parking on every site.

- **Parking** – Parking requirements are established in Section 3.0 – Development Plan. Requirements are standard City-wide for all districts except the Plaza. The Plaza District has reduced requirements based on shared use and transit access.
**Concept #6: Establish distinct business districts that will have clear, marketable images and support facilities, such as consolidated parking.**

- **Mixed Use** – Mixed use can be carefully fostered to increase the intensity of business activity without increasing traffic and non-retail congestion. Encourage office and residential uses in and near pedestrian-oriented districts.

- **Community Activity** – Design spaces which foster community activity. Activities and events in the Specific Plan area will attract residents and visitors who will support local businesses.

- **Stronger Image as a Community Core or Heart** – Retail continuity, retail mix and a unique identity will also make it easier for both the pedestrian-oriented and automobile-oriented districts to create a market niche. This approach is preferable for both types of districts.

- **Convenience** – Promote a different kind of convenience – many shops close together offer the opportunity to walk between shops and comfortable, relaxed, open space at the ocean. Transit and residential areas are nearby.

- **Attractiveness and Appearance** – An unbeatable setting and public amenities of a real community core or heart are a significant attraction.

- **Landscape Framework** – Create a unified public realm which links open space to create a strong park-like image for Solana Beach. Capitalize on the existing Torrey Pine trees in the Highway 101 right-of-way by adding more trees to establish the character of a native California landscape.