Executive Summary
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I. Purpose

The School of Medicine (SOM) Neighborhood Planning Study provides a long term plan for the development of the School of Medicine on the southern edge of the University of California, San Diego’s (UCSD) West Campus. The plan encompasses the following:

- An approach for preserving significant natural and cultivated features of the landscape.
- Strategies for the replacement of temporary buildings.
- Guidelines for the intensification of land use on currently under-utilized sites available for development.
- A framework for the expansion of the neighborhood for new programs.

The starting point of this study has been the UCSD Master Plan Study and the UCSD Long Range Development Plan of 1989. These plans set the overall framework for the development of the campus and suggest goals for its build-out.

The key goals identified for this study are:
- To provide a stronger sense of continuity between the SOM Neighborhood and adjacent neighborhoods — especially the East Campus Health Sciences.
- To preserve and enhance the park-like setting at the core of the SOM.
- To provide a convenient, comfortable pedestrian environment and walkway system.
- To replace surface parking with structured parking to free space for other uses.
- To provide appropriate locations and settings for future facilities.

II. Program

The original target for the SOM Neighborhood was approximately 1,275,000 gross square feet of new and existing program space. In addition, the neighborhood was to accommodate 240 beds for student housing on 2 acres of land and 1,625 parking spaces in structures.

The mandate of this study has been to accommodate the basic master plan program and then test the site for additional program capacity. The ultimate build-out determined by this study includes 1,869,000 to 1,969,000 gross square feet (gsf) of new and existing space including academic and research programs and a satellite central plant. Also accommodated is the development of graduate housing for 400 beds and an ultimate parking capacity of 2,910 cars in surface lots and parking structures.

III. Strategic Planning Principles

The SOM Neighborhood Planning Study is built on a series of strategic planning principles based on the observation and analysis of current site conditions. Some of the key planning principles that shape the plan are:

- Respond to the topographical features of the site by preserving the canyon and bluffs as much as is feasible, focusing buildings on the mesa tops and tucking parking garages into the hillsides to minimize their visual impact.
- Take advantage of the moderate climate to provide comfortable outdoor spaces, with special emphasis on canopies and arcades to provide shading in hot summer months.
- Enhance the contrast between the neighborhood’s discrete and rustic landscapes by strengthening the eucalyptus grove and developing a new and diverse hierarchy of open spaces with special planting.
- Restrict vehicular access and parking to the perimeter of the SOM neighborhood in order to create a continuous car-free pedestrian and bicycle network at the heart of the SOM.
- Strengthen pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods with enhanced cross walks, more direct paths and additional bridging; weave the pedestrian and vehicular networks of the SOM neighborhood into the rest of the campus.
- Scale and position new buildings to mediate between the varied, object-like nature of the existing buildings to create
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a more cohesive environment and better define the discrete open spaces at the center of the neighborhood. No new buildings should attempt to compete with the dominant massing of existing buildings at the core of the neighborhood.

IV. Elements of the Plan

The key elements of the SOM Neighborhood Planning Study include existing features which have been consolidated and strengthened and new features which extend the pattern of development south and east to complete the edge of the neighborhood as a front door to the UCSD Campus.

- Existing elements to be strengthened include the park-like quadrangles, including hardscape and landscape areas, at the northern end of the neighborhood and the walkways which interconnect them and the rest of the campus.
- New active plazas have been added to punctuate the more passive green spaces with outdoor programming, such as informal dining.
- New rustic and discrete landscape zones, such as the formal Academic Mall and the informal Science Way edging the Canyon have been added to organize and focus different zones of future development.
- New infrastructure, including vehicular drop-off loops, parking garages and access roads have been added to structure new development.

V. Design Guidelines

A major function of this report is to provide planning and urban design guidelines to establish a plant palette for landscaped spaces; identify development parcels; define the overall massing of subsequent buildings; define the potential density of site development and provide general direction for the parallel expansion of infrastructure.

In general, design guidelines are intended to describe the overall intent for the development of portions of the SOM Neighborhood. In certain instances, the plan is more specific, in order to be able to establish the basic character of key locations within the neighborhood. For example, the development parcel at the north side of the Ceremonial Green, with its distinct quarter round form, has been defined sufficiently to ensure there will be a building that strengthens the curve of its northern edge. The Academic Mall design guidelines describe volumes and edge treatment (arcades) to ensure a strongly defined and formal mall at the heart of the neighborhood.

VI. Phasing

A final, critical element of the study concerns the phasing of development in relation to existing facilities. Phasing has been defined to allow the parking supply to be replaced and grow in relationship to program expansion. The phasing strategy also aims to complete existing open spaces first, minimizing initial impact on infrastructure and maintaining a compact SOM. Each phase expands further out from the existing academic core of the neighborhood, allowing it to function as much as possible as a complete, consolidated organization at each phase.