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DIAMOND HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

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HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

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REFERENCE
BOOK

Not to be taken from the Library

an urban design and report to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency

LAWRENCE LACKEY A.I.A. , Urban Design Consultant . . . ROYSTON, HANAMOTO & MAYES, Landscape Architects

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Lackey, Lawrence.

Diamond Heights
neighborhood center :
1961.



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Diamond Heights is a planned urban residential neighborhood which will ultimately have a population of about seven thousand five hundred residents. It is being constructed on the slopes of Red Rock Hill, Gold Mine Hill and Fairmount Hill which are in the central part of San Francisco, and which command imposing views of the surrounding city and the Bay Area. This project will achieve high standards of urban design in the creation of finer environment for city living.

The approved redevelopment plan for Diamond Heights provides for a neighborhood center, approximately eighteen acres in area, to contain an elementary school, a branch library, a church, plaza and playground areas, and neighborhood shopping facilities. The approved plan was based upon design studies prepared in 1951.

In consideration of the lapse of time since the original concept, and the Redevelopment Agency's progressive refinement of its development standards, the Consultants were requested to prepare a more precise design for the neighborhood center including:

A schematic, three dimensional urban design for the Center, including a schematic landscape plan.

A re-platting of the boundaries of land areas assigned to the several land uses in order to derive the maximum return, commensurate with the over-all development objectives, from the sale of the land.

A recommended procedure for effecting the design.

The land will be sold to private developers, and to city agencies, for development under conditions approved by the Redevelopment Agency. The design presented herein establishes the general concept and objectives. The procedure recommended for effecting the design provides the necessary flexibility for detailed design and refinement of the architecture and landscape development.

DIAMOND HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER



General Plan

SCALE - FEET



This is a neighborhood center. As such it should be modest in scale, informal and residential in character, and should be interesting, attractive and inviting to adults and children alike. The Center will be the meeting place, the neighborhood commons. It should be easy and safe to get to the playground, school, and church whether walking or cycling. Visiting the library, or shopping should be pleasant and easy to do. There should be sheltered places, apart from the playground and the commercial hustle and bustle, where adults may sit, or read, or chat.

A visit to the Center will often involve several of these activities, therefore they must be functionally related near one another. Yet there are basic incompatibilities among them. Shopping, with its auto and truck traffic, must be separated from the playground; the service area for the stores must be fenced so that it can be controlled lest it become an attractive nuisance. The school also must be separated from the commercial area, yet it will occasionally have functions attracting numerous visitors who will want to use the commercial parking area. These requirements and many others have been recognized and accommodated in the development plan.

The design achieves spaciousness by placing the buildings near the outer boundaries of the Center and concentrating the open space to form an expansive, beautifully landscaped core which links Diamond Heights Boulevard to Glen Canyon Park. All activities are accessible from this core and are linked together by it.

The Center is situated in the valley between Red Rock Hill and Gold Mine Hill where it will be in constant view by the residents of the high-rise apartments and houses on these slopes. Consequently, the visual aspect as it will be seen from above — roofs, building masses, open spaces and landscape — is of major aesthetic importance. Sloping roofs are preferred for most of the buildings because their contours and profiles create variety and interest in light and shadow, they can be surfaced economically with materials which are attractive to look upon, and they do not collect dirt and debris as do flat roofs.



- 1 playground - recreation
- 2 library
- 3 stores - shops
- 4 church
- 5 school

DIAMOND HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

DUNCAN STREET

EMERALD DRIVE

DIAMOND HEIGHTS BLVD

General Plan



WEST CARPENTER PARK

GOLD MINE DRIVE

JADE PLACE

1

PLAYGROUND · RECREATION

This area is the heart of the Center. It is the common link to all activities yet it provides simultaneously the needed separation between dissimilar functions. Altogether it includes the playground, recreation plazas, and the greenbelt corridors which extend out to the periphery to provide direct, controlled, and safe access for pedestrians, and children on bicycles, from the adjacent streets to all parts of the Center.

The five acre playground adjoins Glen Canyon Park and the school. It has grass areas for active games, a small recreation building with adjacent play courts and patios, and associated service facilities. The earth berm on the west and the slopes on the north are planted extensively with pine and Monterey Cypress trees to shelter the play areas from the prevailing wind. A path up the gentle slope of the berm connects the school yard to the playground areas.

Between the playground and the church to the north there is a twenty-five foot change in grade. This slope is terraced at several levels to form recreation plazas. These are landscaped with evergreen hedges, trees, grass, and paving to create pleasant, sheltered, sunny spots for sitting and passive recreation. Paths and walks connect this plaza area to Diamond Heights Boulevard, to Red Rock Hill, to the auto parking area, and to the library, shops and stores.

The corridor along the south boundary of the Center allows direct access to the playground by children coming from the south part of the neighborhood. They will not have to traverse the automobile circulation, parking or service areas of the shopping center. The steep slopes are planted with evergreen trees, shrubs and ground cover to make them stable, and to create a handsome screen between the commercial area and the residences above on Gold Mine Hill.

Representatives of the Recreation and Park Department were consulted during the formulation of the design. Under its supervision and cultivation, the playground and recreation areas will exert a strong and beneficial influence on adjacent development.





plan view
of
study model

2

LIBRARY

The library should have a central, ground floor location related closely to the commercial activities. Modern practice is to seek locations at points of maximum pedestrian activity where the library can be used conveniently by the greatest number of people. In this particular instance the library will serve a broad cross-section of neighborhood residents. It will be used by school children, by visitors to the recreation and plaza facilities, by shoppers and others. Consequently, it should be centrally located and be accessible from the playground, the school, and the auto parking areas.

The design places the library at the west end of the internal shopping street where it is an integral part of the commercial center, but where it also serves as a buffer between the shopping activities and the playground. In this central location it is near the playground, the school, the recreation plazas, the church, and the parking area. This relationship of the library to the commercial activities has been endorsed by the City Librarian. The shops and stores should likewise benefit from the patronage of people who use the library. The adjacent landscaped courts and walks are designed as multipurpose areas to serve the shops, the library, and the playground recreation building activities, as well as providing space for outdoor displays, exhibits and the like.



Architectural design of the library should be sympathetic in character and materials to the stores and shops --- and vice versa. This complex of buildings, courts and walks should appear as a single, coordinated design. The relationships, forms and profiles, and finish materials of roof structures are particularly important to the total aspect of the Center.

3

STORES and SHOPS

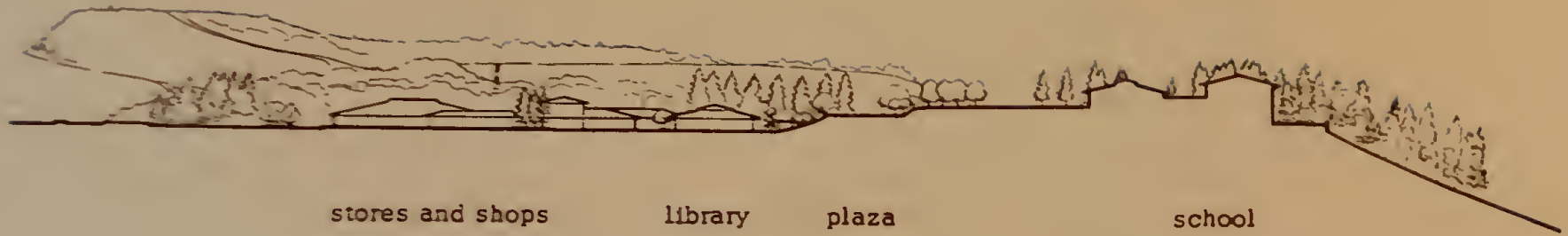
The commercial area is intended to accommodate retail businesses and service establishments which supply new commodities or personal services primarily to the residents in the immediate vicinity. It will have no comparable competition in Diamond Heights.

The design provides forty-three thousand square feet of ground level store area plus seven thousand square feet of second floor space. The consensus among developers interviewed is that this amount of space is appropriate for a neighborhood shopping facility. Stores and shops are grouped around an intimate internal shopping street which will concentrate pedestrian activity to produce good commercial frontage for all establishments. Among the businesses that could occupy the ground floor are a supermarket, variety store, branch bank, drug store, appliance store, and service shops. A restaurant, and business or professional offices would be appropriate for the second floor space.

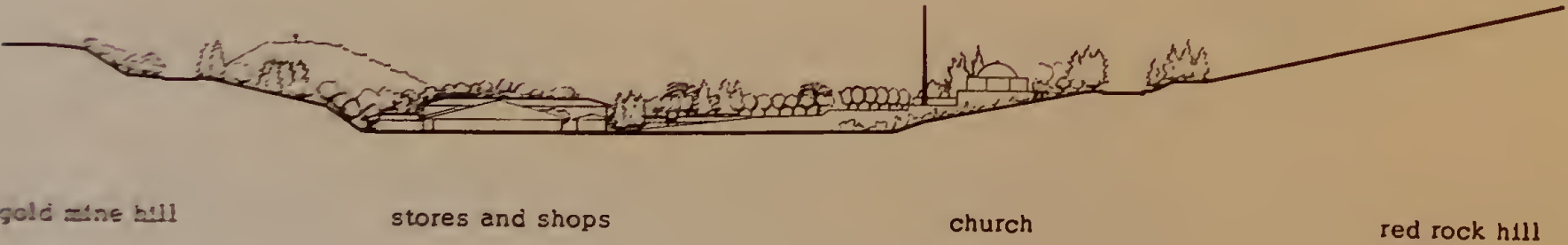
Five hundred feet of frontage on Diamond Heights Boulevard, the principal thoroughfare of the neighborhood, affords excellent visibility from the street and ample vehicular and pedestrian access. As requested by the prospective developers, customer parking is located between the street and the store buildings. The space provided will allow comfortable circulation and parking for about three hundred forty cars. This is a ratio of parking to sales space of nearly three to one which is reasonable for an urban center of this kind. Service access to the stores, and employee parking, is located at the rear of the buildings where it is inconspicuous, does not conflict with customer parking and circulation, and can be fenced in. The location of the buildings adjacent to the south property line allows maximum utilization of the site.

Imaginative architecture and landscape will make this an inviting and busy shopping center, and as all residents of the neighborhood will be aware of it, large or blatant signs are not necessary. Illumination of the parking area and spaces around the stores should be indirect and so designed that the Center will be pleasing to view after dark.





section through the center, looking south



section through the center, looking west

4

CHURCH

The church occupies a prominent location at the intersection of Diamond Heights Boulevard and Duncan Street on the highest ground of the Center. As it will be a focal point which will be seen by pedestrians and motorists approaching the Center from any direction, careful consideration has been given to the site location and mass of the building to ensure three dimensional relationships which will enhance the vista of the entire Center.

The general concept was evolved during conferences with representatives of the St. Nicholas Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church, the purchasers of the site. A building of elegant simplicity, in keeping with the architectural traditions of the church, is contemplated. The quadratic form of the main structure, surmounted by a low dome, is complemented by a slender, free-standing bell tower rising from the courtyard. The building utilizes the sloping site to maximum advantage by placing the church proper at the upper level, and the auditorium, fellowship hall and adjunct facilities on the lower floor at the courtyard level. The rectory also is at the lower level where it opens onto the garden area and has a pleasant exposure.

The church is set back from Diamond Heights Boulevard to allow appropriate landscaping of this frontage, and to effect a pleasing transition of the sloping terrain into the plaza at the lower level. The main floor of the church and the principal entrance are at the level of Duncan Street. On-site parking is at mid-level, accessible from the street. Along the west boundary of the site, a public pedestrian way follows down the slope to the level of the church courtyard and the adjacent recreation plaza. Paths and walks connect this level to the shopping center parking area which will be available to the church congregation.

A bank of trees on the west along the pedestrian way will shelter the church site from the prevailing wind and screen it from the school play yard. Similar planting on the south will screen the shopping center parking area.





view of study model looking
toward Gold Mine Hill



view of study model looking
toward Red Rock Hill

5

SCHOOL

The elementary school children of Diamond Heights will enjoy appropriate and imaginatively designed facilities situated on a promontory overlooking both Glen Canyon Park and the playground. A preliminary layout prepared by the San Francisco Unified School District includes a three-storey classroom building with an adjoining one-storey wing containing the multi-purpose room, kitchen and associated facilities. The classroom building is adapted to the sloping terrain, to provide two floors above the level of the main play yards, and one floor which opens onto the Kindergarten play yard at a lower level. The location of the buildings permits maximum utilization of the level portions of the site for play yards. Automobile and service access enters directly from Amber Drive.

Site development and landscaping of this large and important part of the Center have been studied carefully in relation to the whole concept. The western slope of the site is planted generously with trees to shelter the Kindergarten yard. At the main level, rows of trees and the building itself, will protect the Primary and Intermediate play yards from the prevailing wind. Landscaping along the street frontage, and tree cover on the surrounding recreation and playground areas will make the school site most attractive. Paths and walks connect the school grounds to the adjacent playground, recreation plazas, and to the commercial parking area. Although climatic conditions require that the play yards be paved, these surfaces should be treated to present a pleasing appearance to residents on the surrounding hills.

The architectural character of the school is of great importance as these buildings will be a dominant element of the Center. Exterior materials, and the design of the roof structures and roof surfacing materials, should be coordinated with that of the library, shops and stores complex.





panorama of the existing site looking north



EFFECTING THE DESIGN

The over-all concept and character of site development, disposition of buildings, ground coverage and volumes of buildings, and major landscaping is clearly evident from the schematic drawings and descriptions presented in this report. During the formulation of this design, consultations were held with representatives of the respective public agencies and potential private purchasers of the land, and there is preponderant agreement to these proposals. However, it must be recognized that the scope of this study did not include architectural design of buildings, or plans to accommodate the specific requirements of owners and tenants, or detailed design to a level of precision that would justify rigid development specifications. Therefore, the recommended procedure for effecting the design is:










First: The Redevelopment Agency should specify as a condition of sale that purchasers of the land would be expected to adhere to the design as presented herein, except as they could demonstrate to the Agency's satisfaction a clearly superior design.

Second: The Consultants should be retained to assist the Agency in conveying to the purchasers the design features implicit in the general concept, and to assist in the review of plans submitted to the Agency by the purchasers.

This procedure would afford maximum opportunities to achieve the full intent of the general design in the development of plans for the several sections of the Center, and it would obviate the imposition of a burdensome set of detailed design specifications upon purchasers of the land.

DIAMOND HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Land Parcels & Existing Conditions

-  PARCEL BOUNDARY
-  LIMITS OF CENTER
-  SET BACK LINE
-  EXISTING CONTOUR
-  SUB SURFACE DRAIN
-  SEWER EASEMENT
-  SLOPE GREATER THAN 5%
-  P. D. & E. SUB-STATION SITE
-  PROPOSED BUILDING LOCATIONS



PRELIMINARY
 9' x 10'

SEE SHEET PAGE

LAND PARCELS

Land Use	Area * (square feet)	Area * (acres)	Site Coverage by Buildings (square feet)	Gross Area of Buildings (square feet)
1. Playground . Recreation	302,300	6.93	2,100	2,100
2. Library	11,500	.26	6,000	6,000
3. Stores and Shops	206,500	4.74	43,000	50,000
4. Church	32,500	.74	8,540	17,080
5. School	<u>197,200</u>	<u>4.52**</u>	<u>18,650</u>	<u>40,350</u>
Total	750,000	17.19	78,290	115,530

* These areas are subject to precise engineering calculation from field measurements.

** Provides 3.5 acres of net usable area.



Winner

THIS DESIGN for apartments to be built on Red Rock Hill, Diamond Heights, received final approval yesterday. Winner of a nationwide competition, the plan was drawn up by San Francisco architects B. Clyde Cohen and James K. Levorsen. Construction will begin next year (Story, Page 13)

