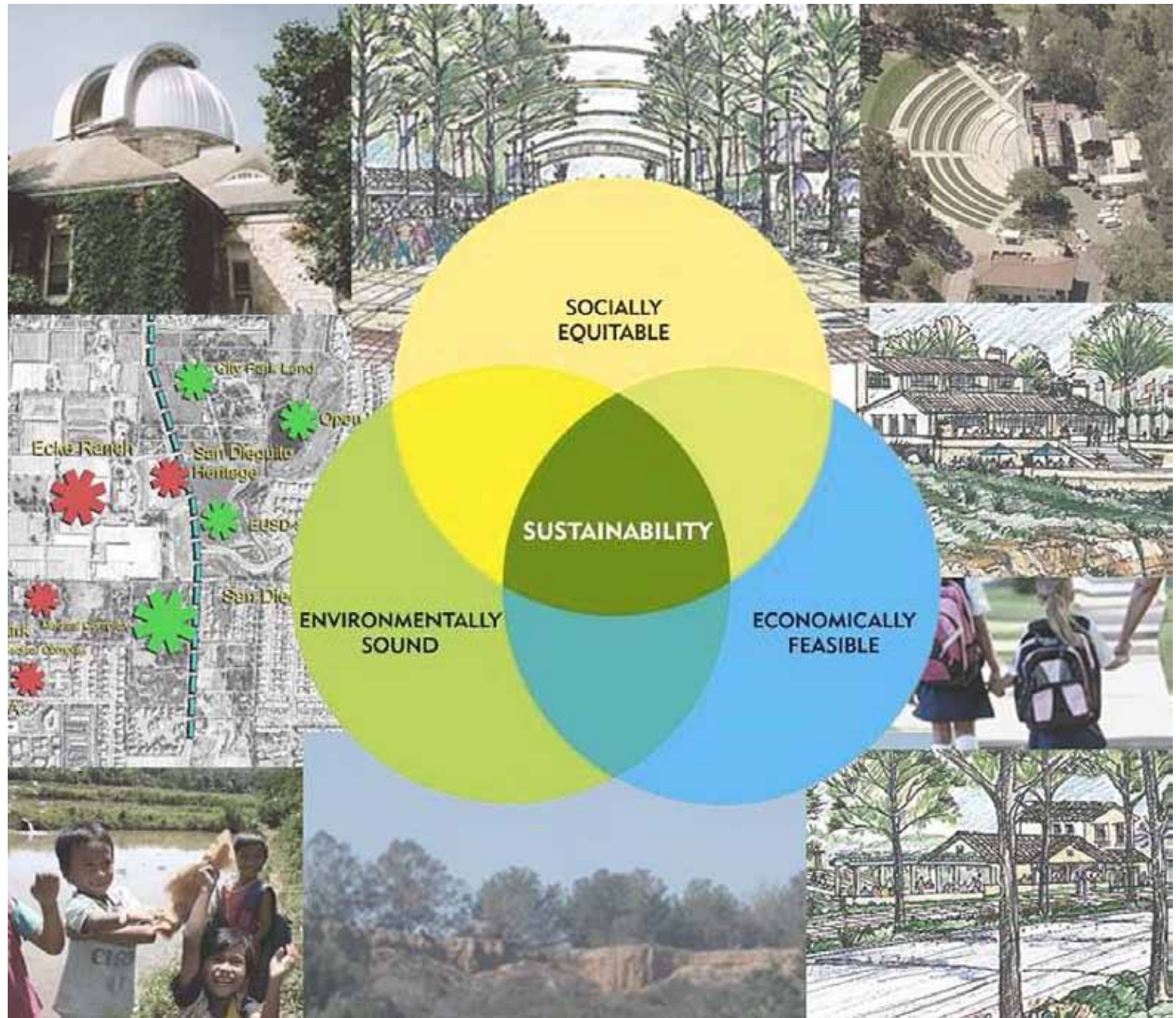


# A Vision for a New Commons in Encinitas

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Prepared by:  
**Estrada Land  
Planning**  
755 Broadway  
Circle, Suite 300  
San Diego, Ca.  
92101

## Introduction

**Imagine** an Encinitas where a sustainable future includes not only natural open space but places linked by safe pedestrian networks for learning, for recreation and play, and for cultural enrichment. Places where health benefits, knowledge increases, and creativity is enhanced by what is seen, heard and felt.

**Imagine** an Encinitas where the local institutions are transformed and enriched and become the leaders in the future of the regional community, enhancing the quality of life for all of the communities.

Communities and cities are transformed over time. Their evolution is based on a combination of factors. How and where a community changes determines the character, the vitality, and the health of its people, its animals, its plants and its environment. People are shaped by their surroundings. Encinitas is noted as a community that values nature, that respects diversity and that desires a sustainable base that will ensure healthy and creative citizens throughout their lives. But how do we make sure this happens? What kind of places do we set upon the land to guarantee a true sustainability for Encinitas, and contribute to the sustainability of our region? And where do we place them? How are they connected?



We believe that a unique location in Encinitas has an opportunity to become a place that responds to and respects the physical and sociological attributes it was given, and provide a unique opportunity to integrate open space, cultural, educational and recreational elements that will nurture and support an enhanced quality of life.

To achieve this possibility, the community needs a vision that unites and compels the goals and informs and shapes change as it occurs.

Instant, massive change over an entire area to achieve these kinds of common goals is neither possible nor necessarily desirable; the organic growth of a community takes time and reflection as well as action. Yet with a common overarching objective, small pockets of change can act as inspiration and catalyst for the gradual transformation of a community. This document is intended as one such catalyst to initiate the search for a better quality of life for our community. We suggest thinking of the whole physical area addressed here as a Commons - from the old notion of a shared common area – but a commons of ideas, resources, and opportunities.

# The Purpose

*The overall goal of this effort is to develop a Vision for a New Encinitas Commons that will create a regional cultural, educational, and recreational core while acting as a steward of the natural open space.*

## Guiding Principles

Five overarching guiding principles have been prepared to oversee this effort. Our Vision should:

- Celebrate natural elements;
- Be sustainable;
- Link social, cultural, environmental and economic interests of the community;
- Develop a relationship between people and nature; and
- Foster lifelong learning

These overarching principles were the basis of every consideration in the work effort. Once these principles were established, a series of objectives were developed that fulfilled the overall goal of the project while abiding by the guiding principles. They are as follows.

## Objectives:

- Establish unifying themes and values framed by nature utilizing sustainable and creative elements such as the arts, horticulture, science, education and stewardship of the community.
- Utilize organizing principles that integrate and balance social, cultural, environmental and economic interests with shared common themes and values.
- Create opportunities to link people and nature across generations through culture, the arts and education.
- Provide a unique environment that creates multi-sensory experiences, and offers an opportunity to create a sacred space for community building.



**The sustainability diagram**

## The Context

The communities of Encinitas and the surrounding coastal areas from Carlsbad to Del Mar and east to Rancho Santa Fe have developed reasonably strong residential and retail commercial elements without developing a significant core institutional center such as Balboa Park. The need for a center similar to this is clear. This center could function as a focal point and creative stimulus for recreation, culture, and education at a similar level of regional cultural sophistication and quality. San Diego Botanic Garden, as one of the few public regional institutions, has the potential for becoming such a focal point. Its location is reasonably central to the entire region and it is surrounded by areas which have been set aside for public or educational uses. Along with nearby transitional undeveloped areas, a physical setting of several hundred acres of contiguous and or proximate property is available for this purpose.



**People and Nature**



**San Diego Botanic Garden**

Many of these areas are connected through the community trail system in Encinitas. However, our vision presents prospects for developing a comprehensive trail system, with botanical elements and enhancements. These trails could be adjacent to community/neighborhood gardens, playgrounds and other hybrid landscapes, including pocket gardens/landscapes for families, seniors and children. The potential exists for creating large spaces with a wide spectrum of 24 hour public and private uses.

This setting creates the possibility of a long term, integrated plan and strategy to realize a transformational regional resource, and the resulting strengthening of the communities and families which it will serve. It is singular by physical location and existing public and non-profit ownerships. It is also in a community which has some existing infrastructure networks in education, arts, recreation, inspiration and horticulture that could provide the basis for such a resource.

In the process of community development and maturation Encinitas has become a unique focus of a wide variety of educational institutions. These include private smaller institutions such as Grauer School, Encinitas Country Day School, Waldorf School, Rhoades School, St. Johns, and public institutions like San Dieguito Academy, the Encinitas Union and Cardiff Elementary School Districts. It includes a series of institutions like Lux Art Institute, World Music Center, Magdalena Ecke YMCA, San Dieguito Heritage Museum, Encinitas Historical Society, and the San Diego Botanic Garden who have, as a part of their a primary mission extended programs for K-12 students. The Mira Costa College Campus can also be viewed as an extension of this focus.

In a community without a large commercial or industrial base, education and inspiration may be the primary product delivered within the community and one of the few areas with a strong infrastructure. The availability of quality educational services for children has been consistently identified as one of the strongest determinants of choice of community and the long term health and stability of a growing and vital community. The presence of Quail Botanical Gardens, and the residue of the nursery industry with its professional base and commitment translated into a disproportionate number of retail nurseries, is an additional unique concentration in the Encinitas community.

This translates into a base of support and knowledge for existing and increased focus on existing open space resources, botanical garden development, continuing research and development of specialized crops or plants which is not only complementary to the core educational infrastructure but also could utilize and respect the heritage of the collection of communities, strengthening the cohesion of these communities.

Using the analogy of Balboa Park, the initiation of these activities and utilization of these resources could transform a loose and fragmented collection of preserved natural open spaces, developed recreational and open space areas, and formal gardens, collections and landscaping into a coherent and meaningful whole that can have a value unique to this area. In doing so, both ends of the age spectrum can find some meaningful opportunities that otherwise exist only in environments that may be fragmented and difficult to access. The area also benefits from a significant visual art community which can provide an additional focus within the communities. As Balboa Park functions with San Diego, taking advantage of the centrality of Encinitas for a major regional resource could also strengthen the adjoining communities by providing a vehicle to support the strong lodging elements of Carlsbad, Carmel Valley, and Del Mar without necessarily weakening the local community efforts.

***These ideas that are raised in this vision and the extraordinary opportunities that they present for our community call for a thorough dialogue now.***

### **A Preliminary Vision**

A snapshot 20 years from now could show a well functioning and integrated core located on a corridor between Saxony Road and Quail Gardens Drive, connected through trails (including pedestrian and bicycle bridges over I-5) and open spaces south and west to Cottonwood Creek and Moonlight Beach. The open spaces would encompass an area from La Costa Boulevard to Encinitas Boulevard and I-5 to El Camino Real. Within the core, centers for recreation, education, and cultural elements, with a special focus on nature and sustainable husbandry, will create a framework for the future.

Commercial uses (such as lodging) supportive and consistent with these activities will have been developed within and around the area. In the areas of focus it will be the center of creativity and leadership in selected fields - perhaps preschool education, eco-education, sustainable agriculture, eco and agri-tourism and visual and performing arts. All of the activities would be at a level competing in perceived quality and delivery of services with the very best nationally. This integrated vision expressed through the planning and institutional investment over time in the area can reflect the core values expressed in the existing uses.

### **San Diego Botanic Gardens**

The public garden is the place of greatest biodiversity in our community. The place is sacred space to a multi-generational, multi-ethnic community of different life forms than ours. Somehow, all these plants seem to get along well enough to create great vigor and beauty in our lives on many levels. Indeed, the public



**San Diego Botanic Gardens**

garden has much to teach us. The public garden isn't sustainable without the public. Over time, the public is where it derives its great institutional strength. Hamilton Children's Garden at San Diego Botanic Garden will be viewed as the epicenter for early childhood environmental education in the region. The efficacy and successes of early childhood nature-based education models has been well documented.

### **Early Childhood Education**

The Encinitas Union School District ("EUSD") has announced its intent to develop an early childhood program or alternative education center two parcels on Quail Gardens Drive. From this core educational facility, compatible and consistent uses will create important opportunities that could have huge impacts on the community for generations. These ideas range from creating a robust natural preschool environment within a public/private partnership model, to the development of a Children's Museum which would be highly compatible with the Garden, to the development of a Children's Observatory. These ideas build upon concepts of No Child Left Inside, biophilia, the Forest School Movement, the Schoolyard Habitat Movement, the Grow Outside campaign and the Naturalized Playgrounds and Schoolyards Movement, to mention a few. An analogy of the kind of opportunity realized in this future is the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center Preschool in Milwaukee.



**Schlitz Audubon Nature Center**

As the vision is realized, a critical linchpin necessary to the successful development of a multi-generational community will be put in place. It begins to fulfill a primary objective of educational leaders, including the First 5 Commission, as well as philanthropists that focus their funding on education who consider investment in early childhood education to represent one of the best returns on investment in education.

### **Agri/Eco-tourism, Production Research and Development of Horticultural Products**

The remaining production areas of agriculture and horticulture are reformed and renewed in a manner that permits smaller, focused and creative research and development of new horticultural products using the infrastructure of the local and regional horticultural community and the special relationship with the botanical garden. Coupled with lodging, meeting, service, and educational facilities the area becomes a center of sustainability for the unique southern California and Mediterranean climate.

An eco-centric education center would also serve as a hub for vocational uses, including landscape design and maintenance, public gardens, and other jobs related to our regional horticultural industry, including retail nurseries. It may include a facility for the public sale of locally produced agricultural products in a continuing Farmer's Market, meeting space for flower and plant shows, meeting space for the San Diego Horticultural Society and community garden clubs.



**Agri/Eco-tourism**

### **Cultural and Educational Center for the Entire Region**

Building on the community of significant artists and institutions (such as Lux Art Institute), who have addressed the southern California experience and environment, the area, and the robust educational diversity in primary and secondary schooling, the core area will provide the environments and institutions to encourage dialogue, expose and reflect on new ideas and create the space for display and preservation. This may include the kind of performance and presentation space for music, dance and other interpretative performance like the spaces provided in La Jolla at Sherwood Auditorium and The Neurosciences Institute. These concepts are realized by the plans to accommodate the space and nurturing the synergy from the base of uses that now exist.

### **Recreation**

Linking all of these activities is a core set of values to encourage the engagement of all generations in the unique environment and provide the opportunities to stimulate interest, the exchange of ideas, the pleasure of recreation in a the natural environment and the quality of life possible in this community. The trails, golf, and other recreation are constantly renewed and additional linkages sought to increase the range of access and scope of activity. Every opportunity to extend the engagement through physical linkages (like a pedestrian/bike bridge across I-5 linking the area with Moonlight Park) will be pursued through a consistent community wide appreciation of the potential.

This area will provide a special opportunity to engage older members of the community who have chosen to live in the residential communities surrounding the area with education, recreation and with the cultural activities in a manner that enhances the ability to capture and enrich the community as a whole with their knowledge, experiences and commitment. The influence of institutions like the Magdalena Ecke YMCA in creating and nurturing a multigenerational involvement in education and recreation will be extended throughout the core area activities.

### **Design Elements**

A variety of potential land uses and concepts are possible in order to achieve this vision. It is not the purpose of this vision to propose specific land uses. Rather, it is hoped that this vision will inspire and present possibilities that perhaps have not been thought of before. Listed below are some potential land use elements that would meet the criteria discussed above. These are merely presented here for discussion purposes.

#### **Current “Anchor” Elements**

- Encinitas Ranch Golf Course
- San Diego Botanic Garden
- Magdalena Ecke YMCA
- San Dieguito Heritage Museum
- Open Spaces



**Encinitas Ranch Golf Course**



**San Diego Botanic Garden**



**Magdalena Ecke YMCA**



**San Dieguito Heritage Museum**



**Natural Open Spaces**

### **Family Based Recreation**

- Series of small linked interactive playgrounds
- Water Element
- Model Boat Basin
- Ropes Course
- Campground / Day Use Picnic Area
- “Build it Place” Carousel

### **Integrated Parking**

- Central location with limited on-site parking
- Arboretum Parking – “Parking Forest”
- Underground Parking with functional green roof

### **Moving People**

- Integrated Walking Paths
- Pedestrian Bridges over Roadways
- Link to the Coast
- Trams



**Small sustainable playground**



**Pedestrian Bridges over freeways can be landmarks**

## Performing Arts Center

- Indoor and Outdoor Theaters
  - Music
  - Dance
  - Theater
- Media Arts Studio for children
- Lifelong Learning Experience
- Center for Creative Retirement

## Open Spaces

- Balloon Port
- Remote Plane Flying
- Festivals
- Art Fairs
- Exercise
- Community Events

## Cultural Elements

- Heritage Museum
- Center for Sustainable Living
- Center for Creative Retirement
- Other Museums

## Community Gardens

- Urban Farm
- Teaching Spaces
- Demonstration Gardens
- Farmers Market
- Outdoor Kitchen



Outdoor Theater



Heritage Park in Old Town San Diego



Floral research and production

## Educational Elements

- Outdoor Preschool
- Culinary College
- Science Center
- Children's Observatory
- Senior Creative Center

## Research Park

- Research and Development Facilities for horticulture, agriculture and native plant preservation and nurturing

## Lodging

- Central Plaza / Promenade linked to Performing Arts
- Artist's Lofts
- Stand Alone Lodging centrally located for access to all elements
- Recreation Oriented – Linked to Golf Course
- High end Camping Casitas

## Dining

- Outdoor Cafes next to Vegetable Gardens
- Locally Grown, Specialty Food, Service and Culinary School
- Outdoor Kitchen

## Retail and other Businesses

- "Green" "Sustainable" Businesses
- Landscape and Horticulture



**Children's Observatory**



**Restaurant next to garden**

## The Site

The subject area is where the eastern portion of Leucadia intersects with the community of Old Encinitas. The area possesses many special features and attributes. These features and attributes present the City of Encinitas with a unique opportunity to develop a plan for the area that truly responds to its natural environment and will meet the needs of the community for decades to come. This project concentrated its efforts in the focus area shown at the right. Most of the discussion and recommendations that follow are within this area. However, analysis of the site extended well beyond these boundaries and occasional recommendations also reached beyond the limits shown.

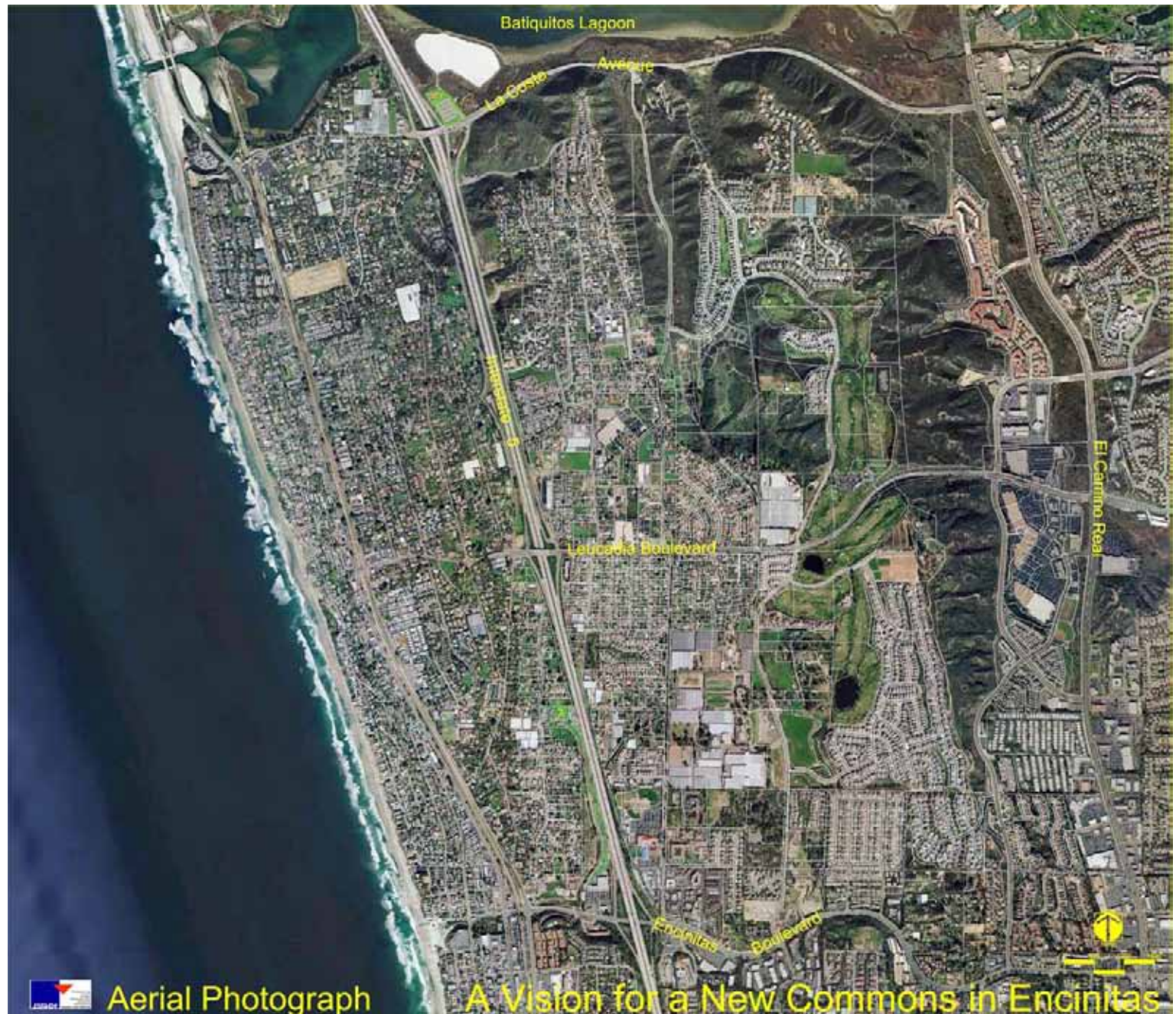
In order to better understand the site and its environs, it was necessary to perform a series of site investigations and analysis. These included site photographs, identifying key features, natural vegetation, landform, visual characteristics, land use and ownership patterns and textures, previous plans and studies, and analysis of other places.



**Major Influence Area**

An aerial photograph of the entire existing area is shown to the right.

Note the significant open space on the northern and northeastern portions of the area.



The site topography is one of canyons, lagoons, mesa tops, bluffs and hillsides. A Topographic Analysis is shown to the right. This image shows the major ridges and drainages within the area.



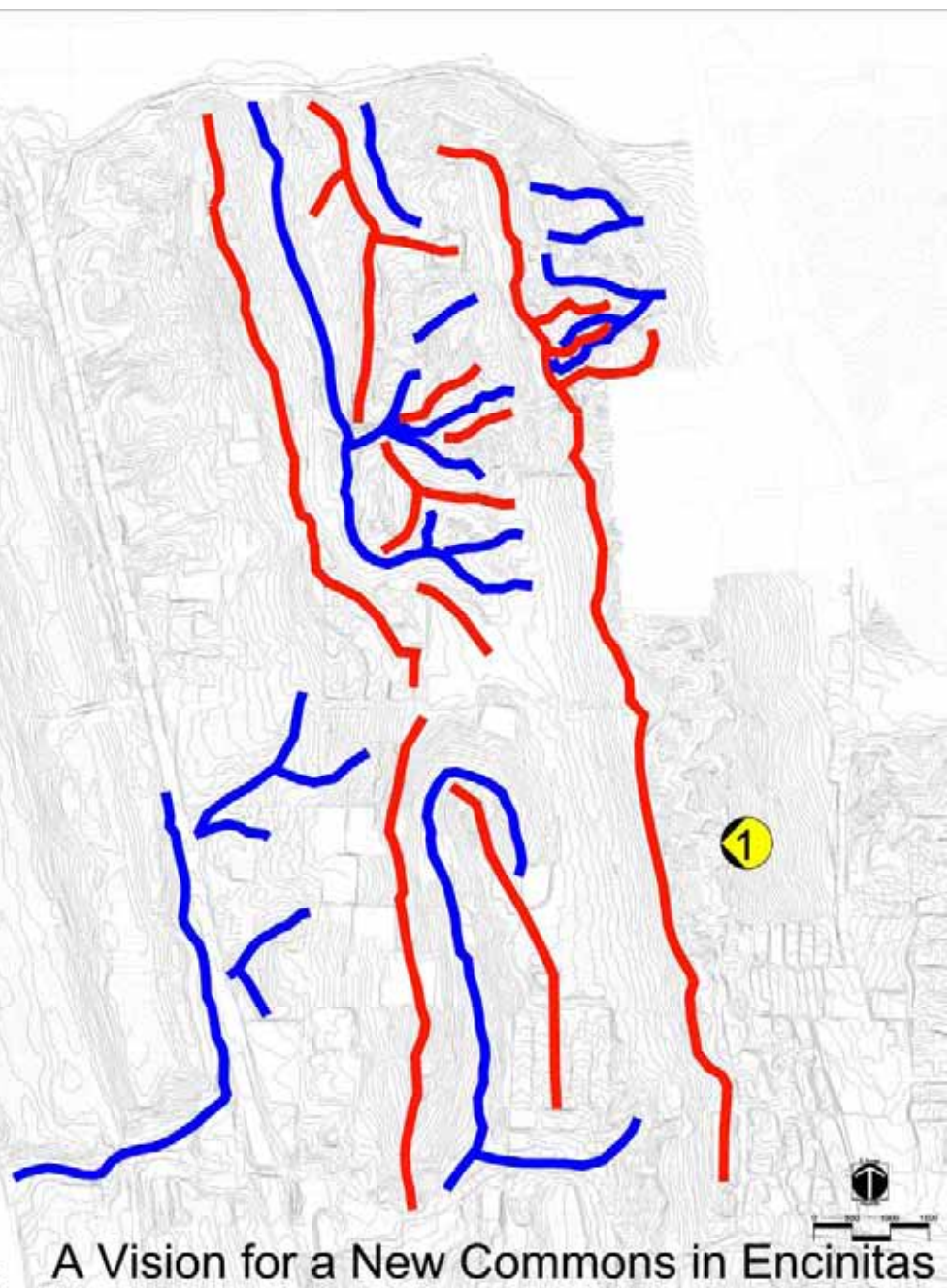
**Significant bluffs**  
(Image location shown by symbol)

**LEGEND**

A Ridge	
A Drainage	



Topographic Analysis



A Vision for a New Commons in Encinitas



Looking west over site illustrates unique topography

The result of the ridges and drainages is the creation of a series of “outdoor rooms”. If one is within one of the “rooms”, your perception of space is mainly limited to the “room” you are in. This is significant because it is frequently desired to create land uses that relate to the land they are on by taking advantage of the spatial “walls” that are created by the land.

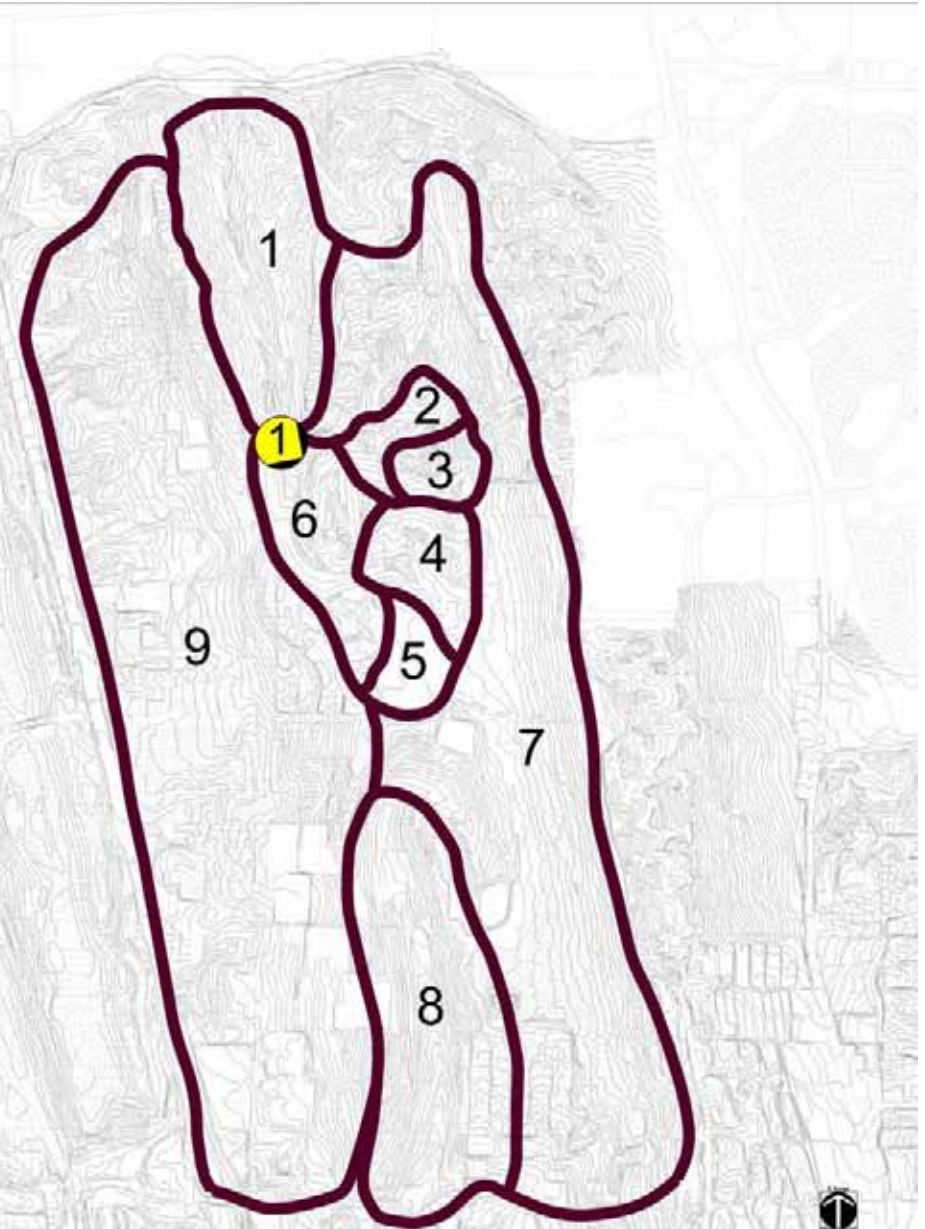
The photograph to the right shows one of these “walls” and the graphic to the right shows the entire exterior spatial analysis area.



Example of topographic wall



Spatial Analysis



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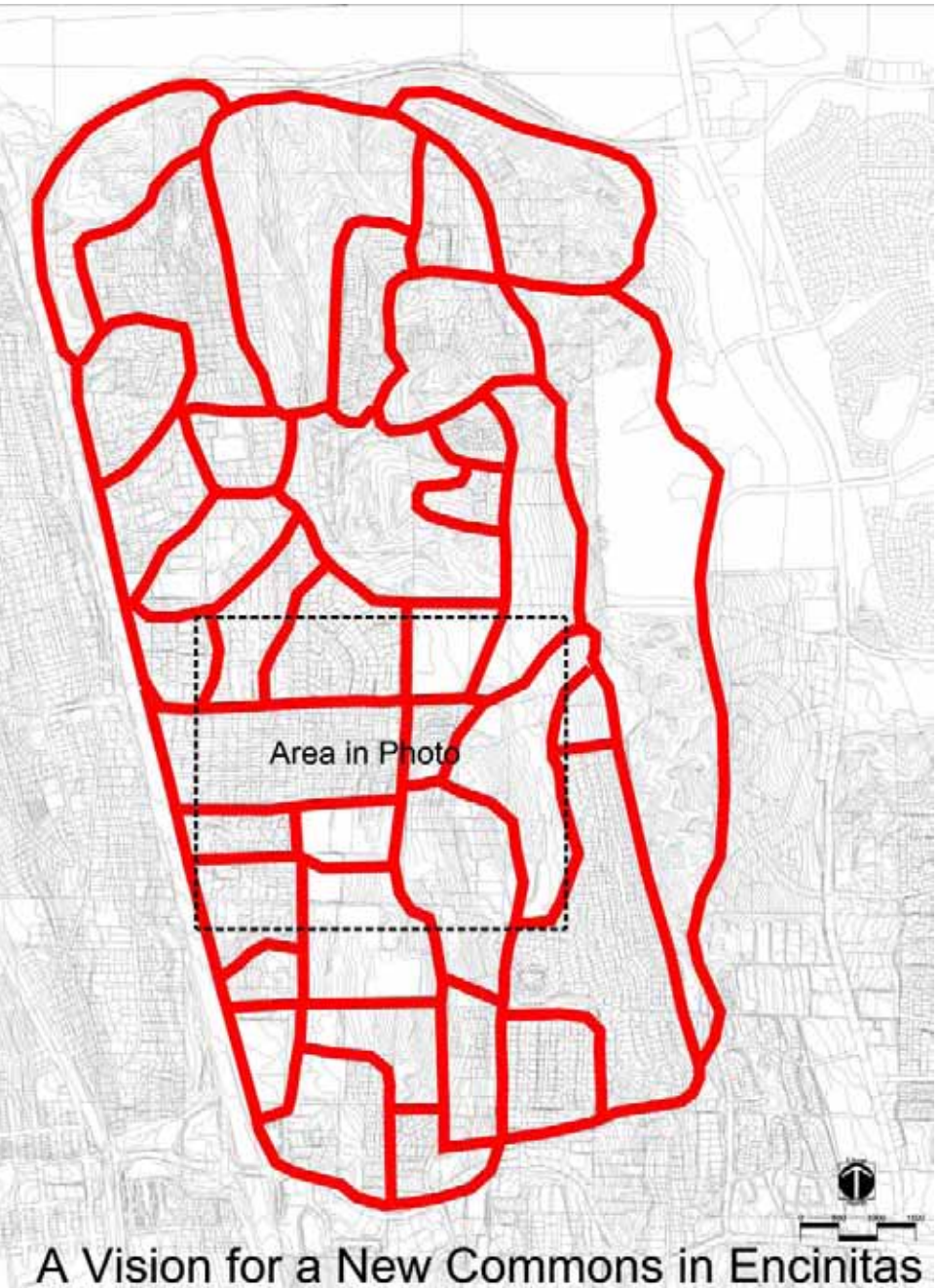
Over the years, the influence of buildings, streets and landscaping have changed the natural appearance of the land. This has created a series of character zones, each one different than its neighbor. For example, one area may consist of large lots with large front yard setbacks and narrow streets while another area may have smaller lots with little setback. The map to the right illustrates the approximate area of these differing character zones.



Character zone example



Character Zones



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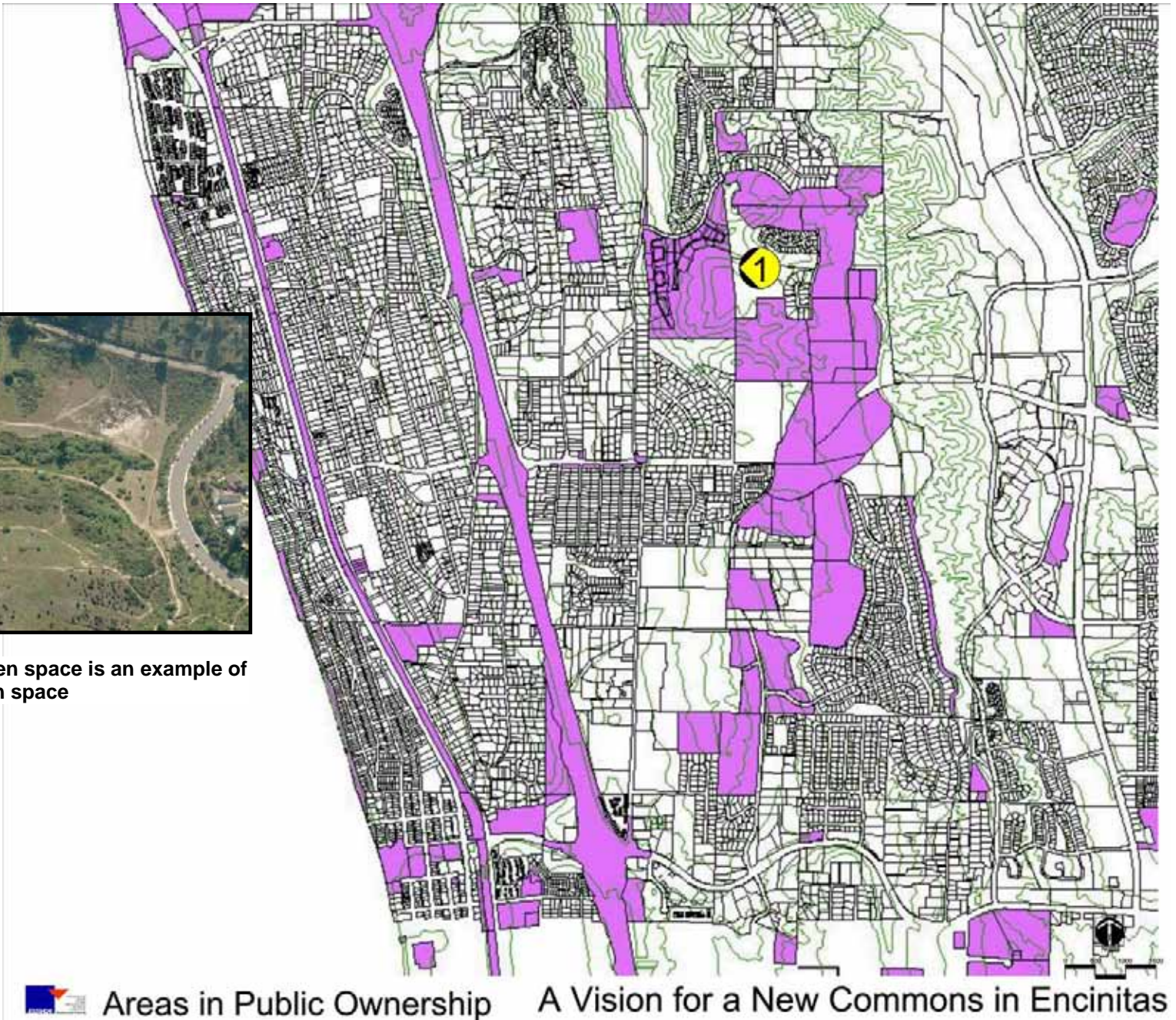


To get a better sense of the varying lot sizes, the map to the left only shows the parcels within the study area. Note the variety of lot sizes.

It was important to know which areas were owned by the public. Note that the Encinitas Ranch Golf Course is in public ownership.

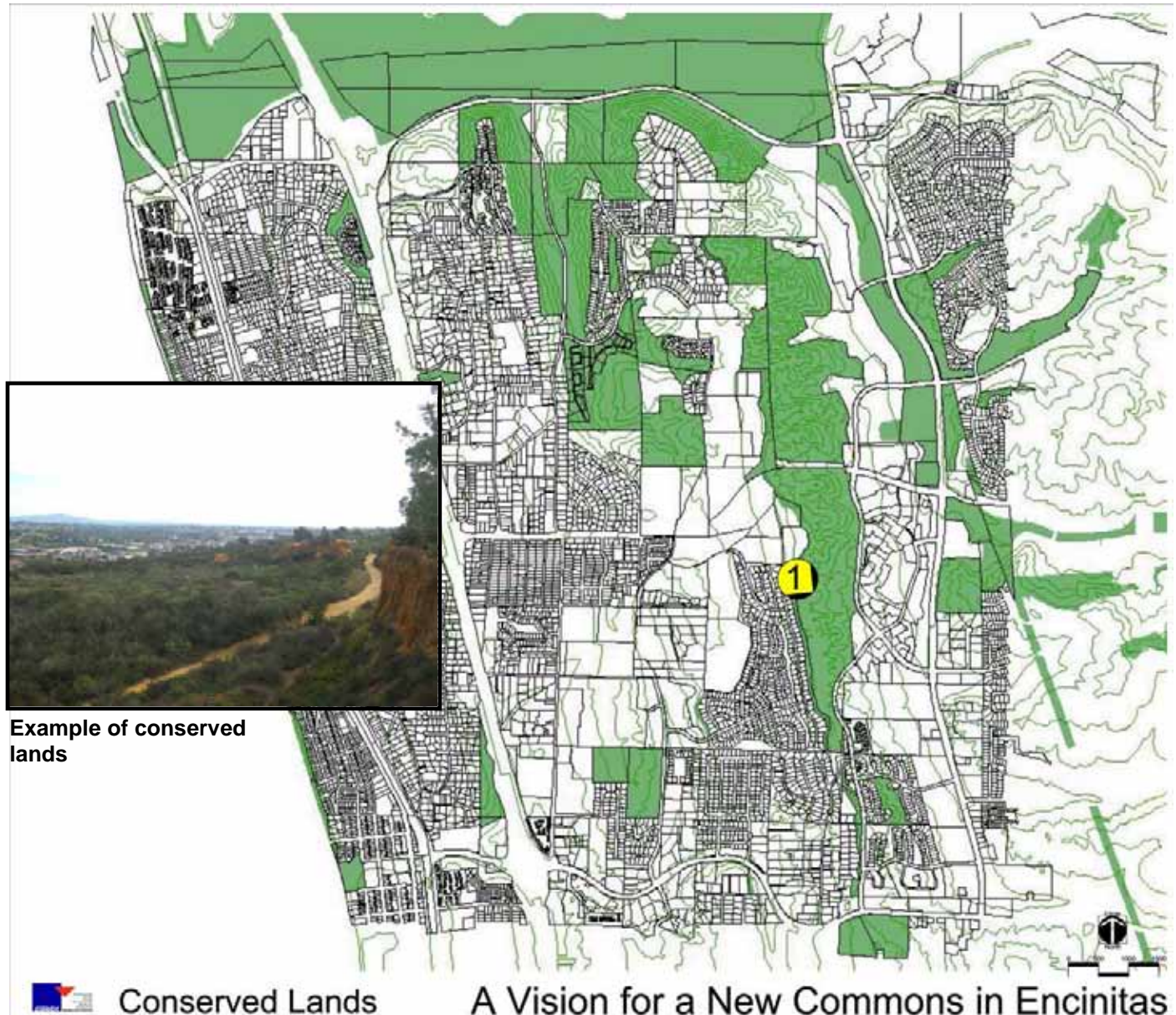


The Indian Head Open space is an example of publicly owned open space



The single largest track of significant coastal sage, maritime chaparral habitat left in Encinitas is an important part of the vision area. As a commitment to the local environment, this conserved land will be providing much needed restoration and management to protect it against invasive non-native species and preserve its native biodiversity. It would also be enhanced with interpretive signage to raise awareness of its importance in preserving some of the rarest native habitat left in California.

These areas have been designated as conserved. This means that they shall remain in open space. Certain minor improvements such as trails, access roads, play areas, botanical gardens and other similar uses are allowed within conserved lands. The following pages present more photographs of the existing site.





1. Looking West Towards Bluffs



5. Open Space Trail at Samuel Court



9. Looking Northeast Over Bluffs



13. Indian Canyon Open Space



2. Quail Gardens Drive Streetscape



6. Quail Gardens Drive - Looking South



10. Ecke Ranch



14. Indian Canyon Open Space



3. Ecke Ranch Gate



7. Golf Course Bridge over Quail Gardens Dr.



11. Encinitas Ranch Open Space



15. Water Tank at Golf Course Clubhouse



4. Looking NW at Quail Gardens Dr.  
Leucadia Blvd. Intersection



8. San Diego Botanical Garden Entrance



12. Looking South from Rainey Court



16. Future Park on Quail Gardens Drive



## Site Photographs

## A Vision for a New Commons in Encinitas



1. Looking North Over San Diego Botanical Gardens



2. Looking West at Magdalena Ecke Park



3. Looking East over Ecke Ranch



4. Looking North Along Saxony Road



5. Looking North Along Interstate 5



6. Looking North Toward Magdalena Ecke Park



Bird's Eye Views

A Vision for a New Commons in Encinitas



1. Looking West Towards  
Golf Course at Water Tank



2. Looking West at Ravean Ct and Aryana Ct.



3. Looking North in Indian Canyon



More Bird's Eye Views



4. Looking West at Leucadia Boulevard/  
Quail Gardens Drive Intersection



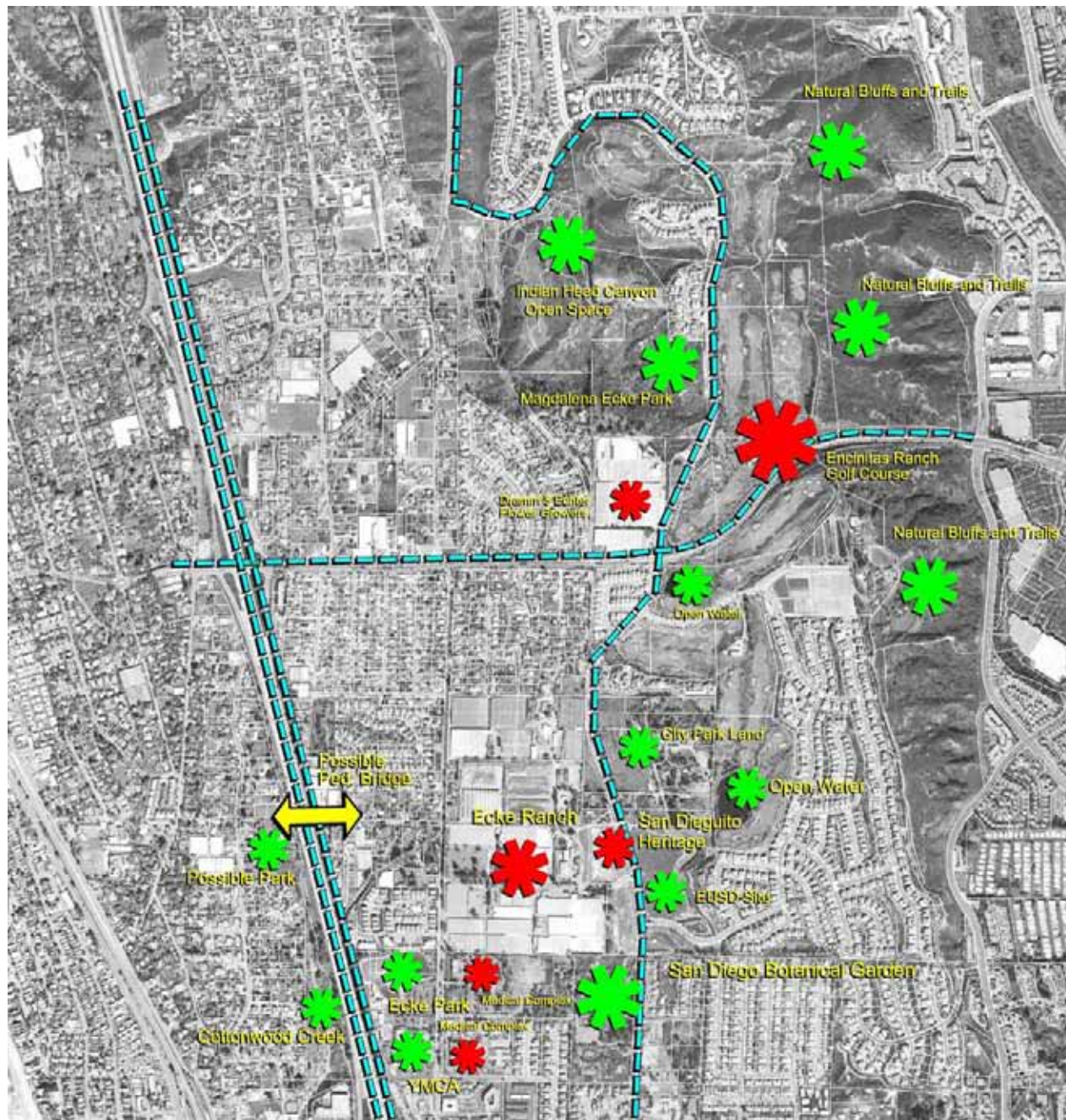
5. Looking South at Indian Canyon



6. Looking West at San Diego Botanical Gardens



A Vision for a New Commons in Encinitas



As discussed, the site and vicinity possess many unique features and landmarks. These include the following:

- Natural bluffs and trails
- The Encinitas Ranch Golf Course
- Indian Head Canyon Open Space
- Magdalena Ecke Open Space
- Small ponds
- Damm and Echter Flower Growers
- Future City Park Land
- Future School Site
- Ecke Ranch
- San Diego Botanic Garden
- The Ecke YMCA and Sports Park
- Several nearby medical complexes

These are noted on the graphic to the left.

## The Vision

Using the analysis of the site and the purpose discussion, a series of key words were developed to create an overall feeling of the site and the objectives. These words are shown below.

**Sustainable**

**Green**

**Creative**

**Education**

**Bicycle**

**Learn**

**Connection**

**Nature**

**Walk**

**Imagination**

**Eat**

**Eclectic**

**Character**

**Diversity**

**History**

**Children**

**Unique**

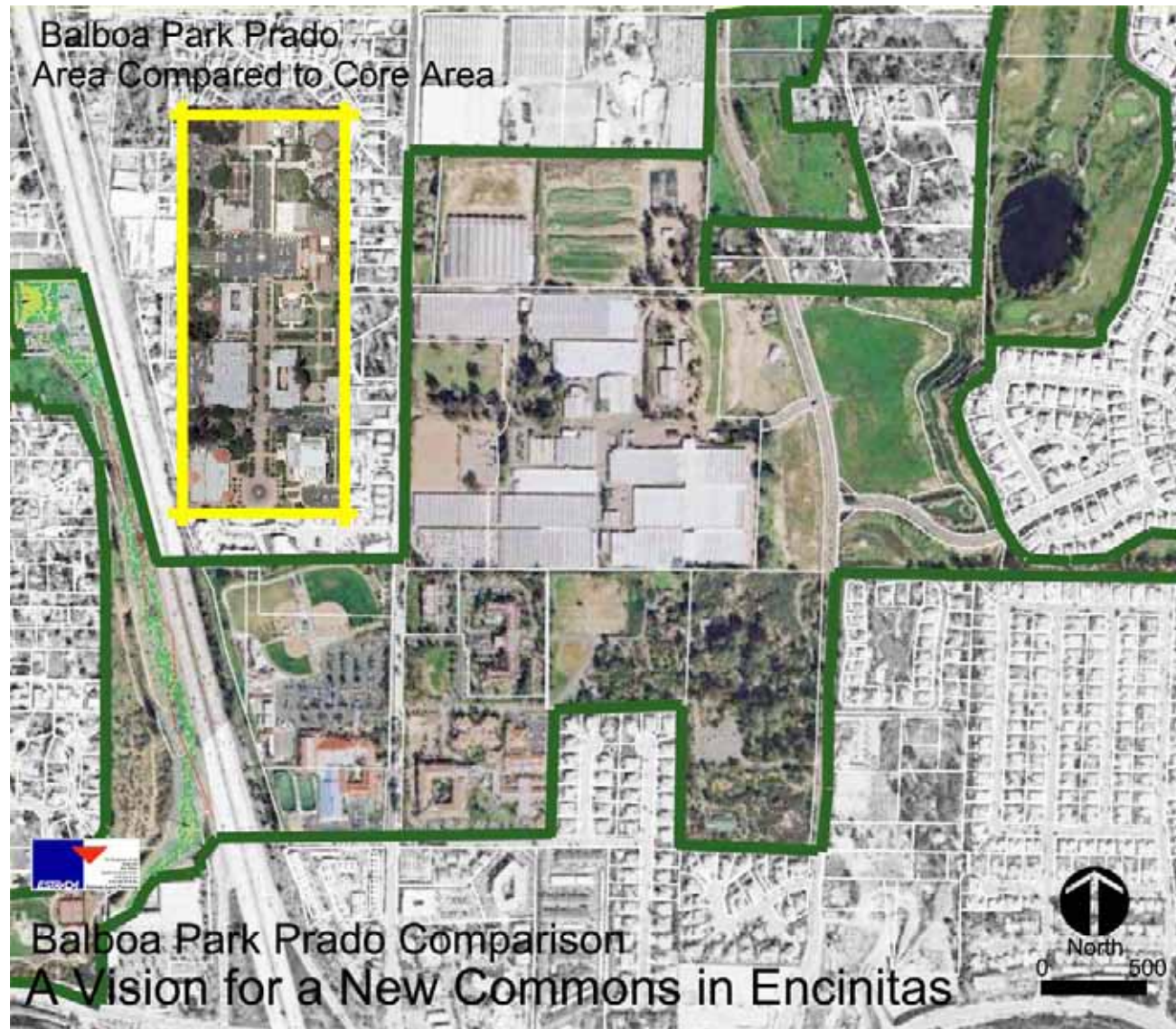
**Stewardship**

**Celebration**

**Balance**

**Community**

**Flowers**



The process resulted in many ideas that might comprise the vision. Rather than prepare a site plan that potentially could lead people to believe that specific land uses and locations were being proposed, it was decided to list some of these ideas and prepare sketches to give one an impression of the possibilities. After the core area location was determined (shown in a previous graphic), a scale comparison was prepared. Balboa Park was discussed earlier. This is an area all local citizens know well, thus it was decided to use the core of the Balboa Park Prado as a scale comparison to give one an idea how much could be accomplished within the proposed core area.

*The Balboa Park image shows the Prado (outlined in yellow) from the Museum of Man to the Natural History Museum (north is to the right on this image). This comparison is shown to the left of the core area. In addition, the next page depicts images of the Balboa Park area to get a sense of the kinds of uses that could be accommodated.*



Photographs

Balboa Park Prado Comparison

A Vision for a New Commons in Encinitas

## Potential Ideas

The major ideas are shown on the following pages with a composite map following indicating the approximate locations of each idea.

### Perimeter Area Improvements

#### I-5 and La Costa Avenue (Caltrans project)

As part of the overall vision, it was decided to incorporate future projects proposed by Caltrans as these projects tie in to the overall vision concept. This project would construct a Lagoon visitor center, a new park and ride and associated trail improvements. It is shown below.



## Union Avenue/Cottonwood Creek Improvements (Caltrans project)

This would include a new pedestrian bridge across I-5, a neighborhood park, Cottonwood Creek wetland enhancements and a through trail.

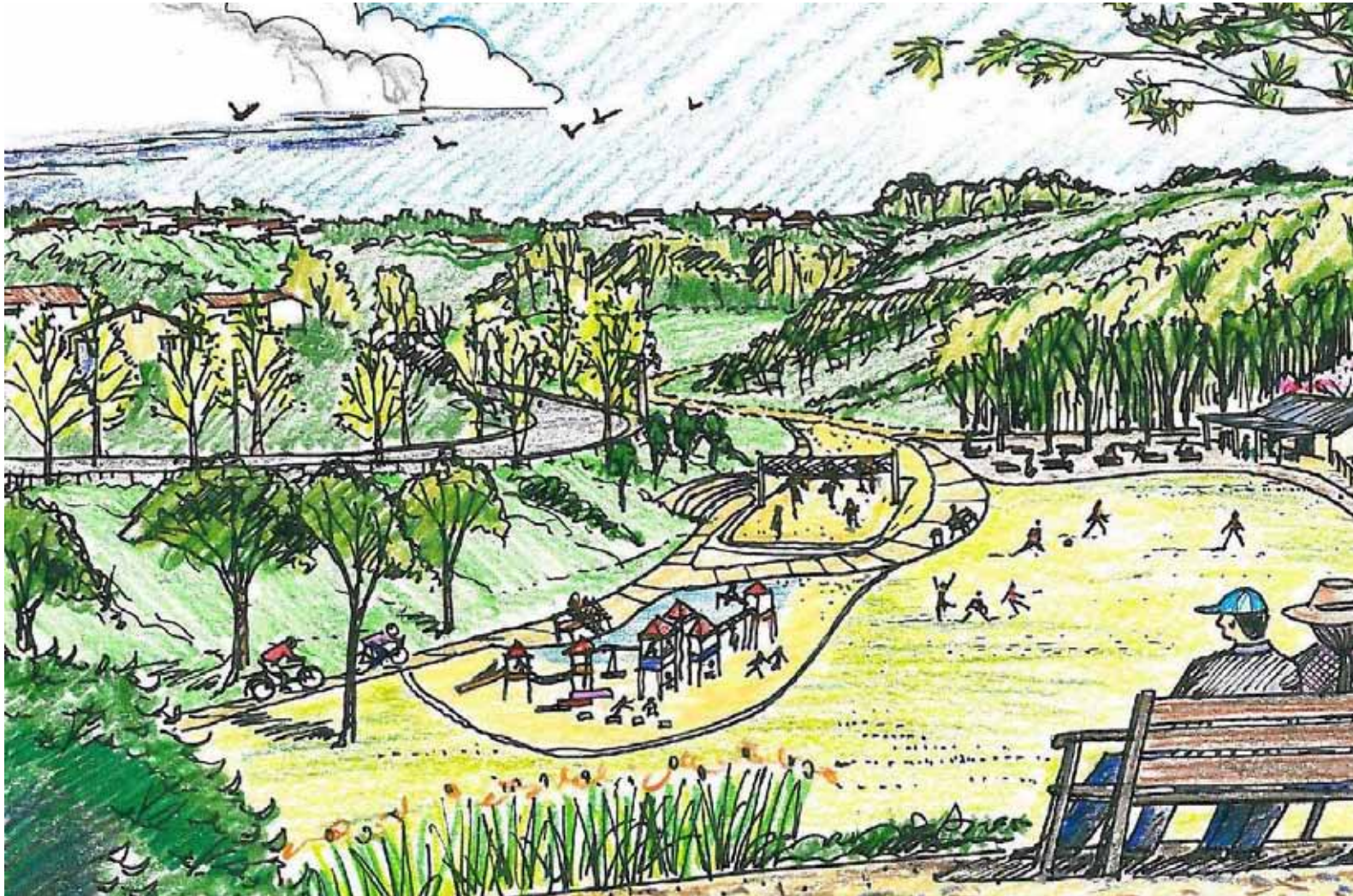




The park, bridge and trails shown could become part of a sustainable trail system within the vision area resulting in a pedestrian link to Moonlight Beach.

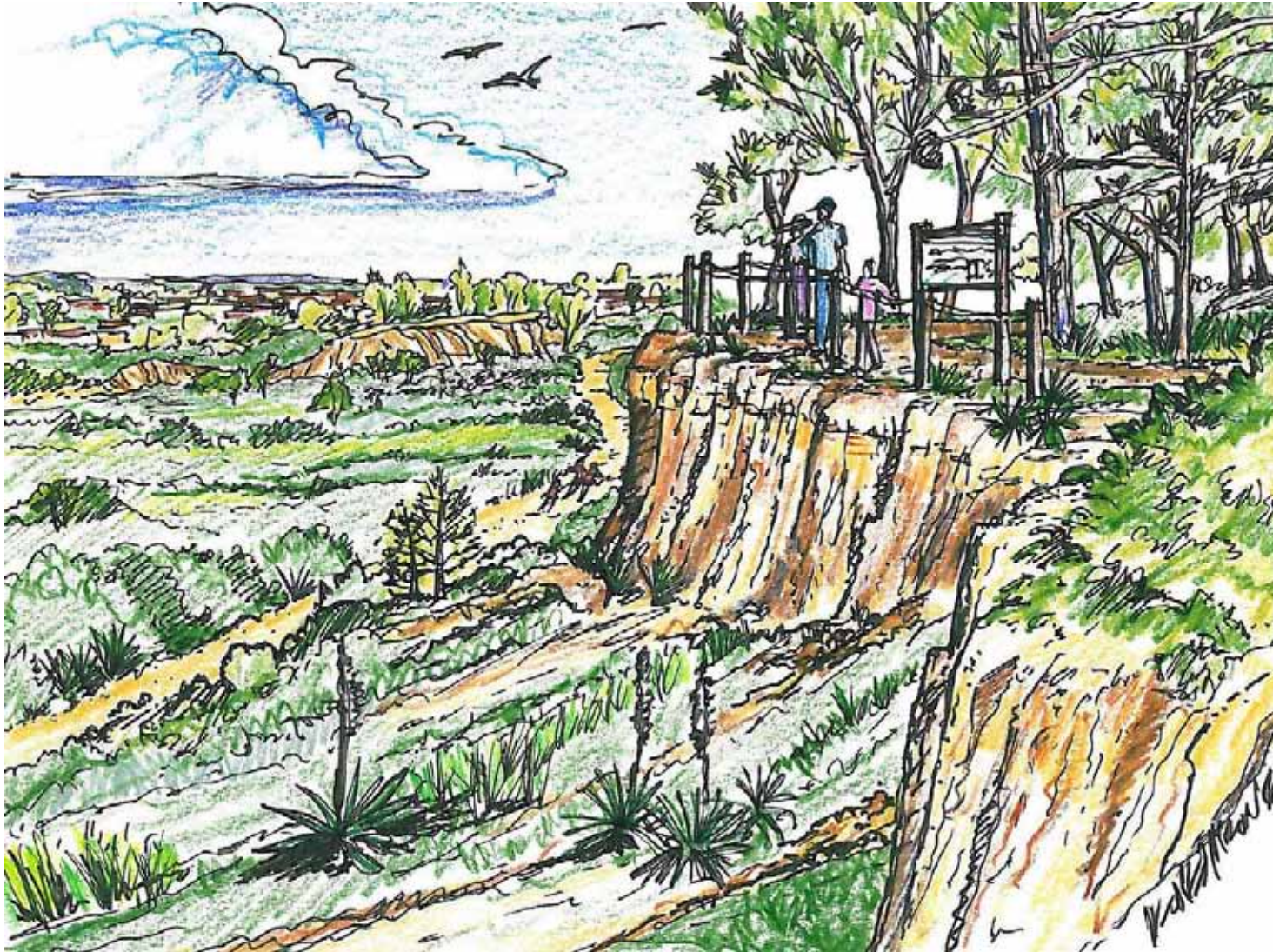
## Indian Head Canyon Sustainable Park

This sustainable/natural park could be constructed using few resources and providing a gateway, improved trails and playgrounds. A simple sketch appears below.



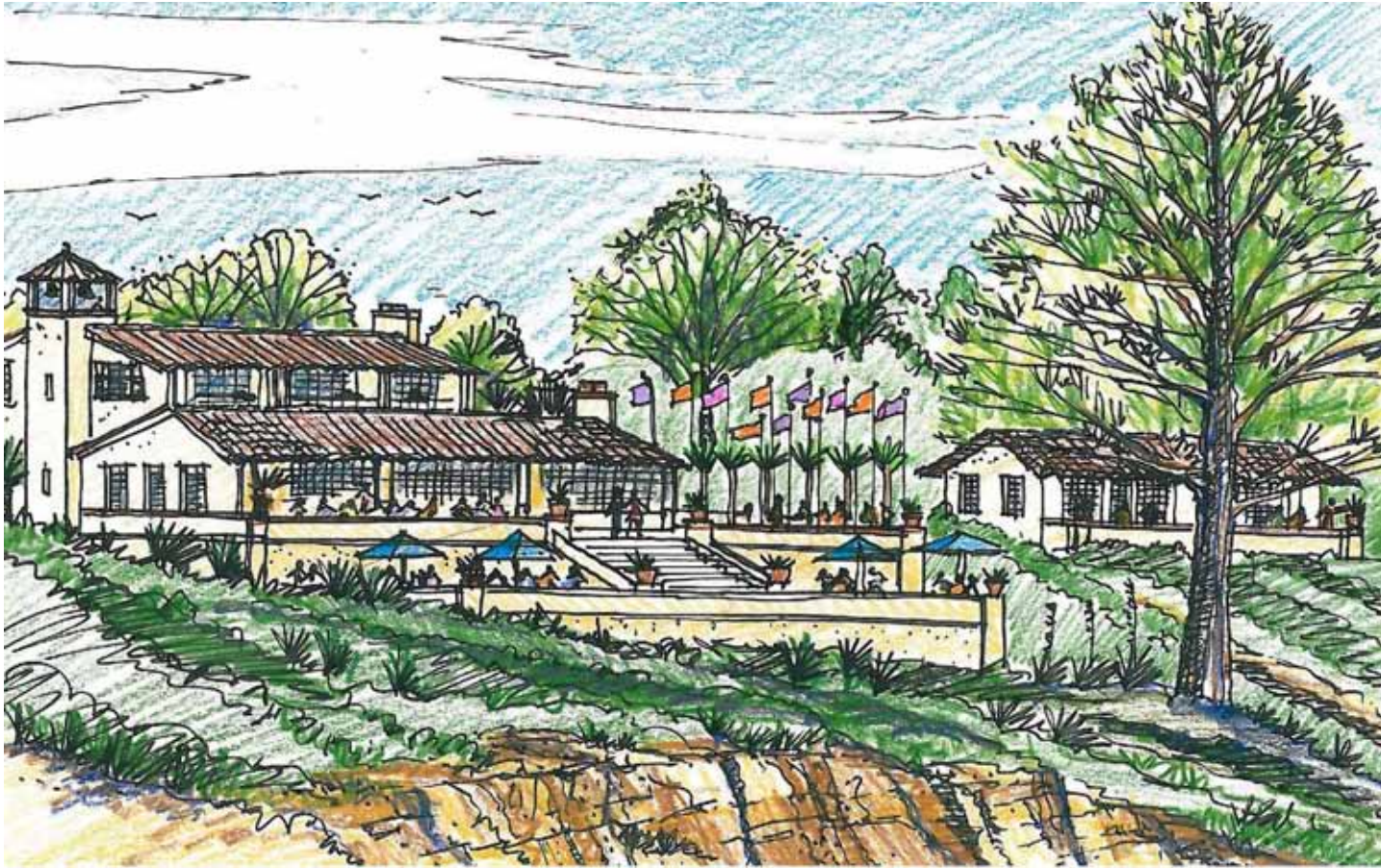
## Enhanced Interpretive Trails

Some existing trails could be enhanced with additional interpretive material, better access and seating, and some new trails could be built.



## Lodging

A lodging area could be built overlooking the open space with restaurants and a pedestrian bridge over Quail Gardens Drive providing access to the Encinitas Ranch Golf Course. This could be built on the northeast quadrant of the Quail Gardens Drive and Leucadia Boulevard intersection.



**Lodge and Restaurants**



**New Pedestrian Bridge Linking Lodge and Golf Course**

## Core Area Ideas

Most of the ideas that were generated occur within the core area with the objective being the creation of a cultural, sustainable, educational and recreational focal point, not only for the community of Encinitas, but for Coastal North County.

### Core Education Area

This would be located east of Quail Gardens Drive with a pedestrian bridge connection to the west across Quail Gardens Drive.

#### Early Childhood Education

The education center could be built in cooperation with the Encinitas Unified School District with the focus being the creation of a Creative Child Development Center.

#### School

#### Park

#### Children's Museum

#### Children's Observatory

#### Model Boat Basin

This could be built as part of a new park allowing for model boat regattas and other model boating activities much like what occurs on Vacation Isle in Mission Bay in San Diego.



Model Boat Basin

## Core Cultural Area

### Promenade

A new pedestrian only promenade could be built on the existing ridgeline. A new entrance for the Botanic Garden could be constructed at the south end of the promenade.

### Museums

These museums could focus on arts, visual arts, sculpture gardens, galleries, culture and history could be built along the promenade.

### Lodging

This could be constructed at the north end of the promenade in conjunction with meeting rooms, restaurants and museums.

### Meeting Center

### Performance Center (indoor and/or outdoor)

### Greenhouse Food Production

### Cooking School

### Botanical Research

### Floral Research and Production

### Sustainable Restaurants “Green” Oriented Retail Shops

### Surface Parking



The north end of the promenade



The south end of the promenade showing the new entrance to the Botanic Garden

### Structured Parking with Green Roof

This could be built so it conforms to the topography and act as an excellent example on how to construct a sustainable parking structure.

### Vegetable and Fruit Garden

### The San Diego Botanic Garden

### A Center for Creative Senior Retirement

This senior retirement center could focus on creativity and relations with nature.

### Integrative / Holistic Health



Cross section showing possible parking structure relationship

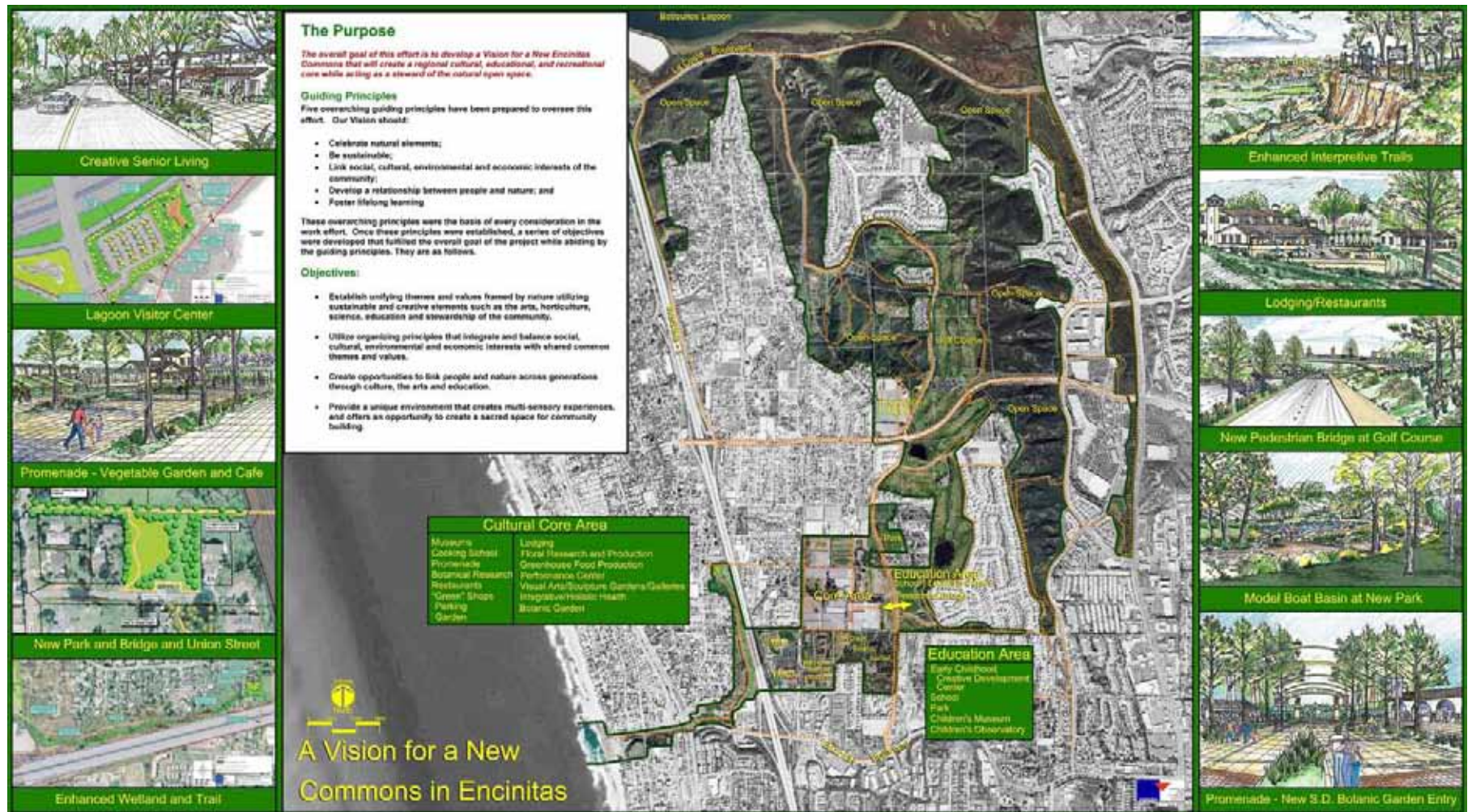


A Center for Creative Senior Retirement



## Trails

A sustainable trail system linking all parts of the area is envisioned as shown to the left.



## Composite Poster Plan

The graphic above summarizes the key proposals in our vision.

## Conclusion

Encinitas is at a crossroads. Considering new land use possibilities as commons for the future may actually be feasible if we proceed wisely. Realizing the potential of some of the institutions and assets we share in common can move our community forward in a direction different than the same worn and tired path seen in local development over the last 30 years.

Because change occurs whether we plan for it or not, we risk losing the opportunity to create a great space that will make our and our children's quality of life measurably better if we fail to begin a process of considering a greater vision for this area.

This Vision for a New Commons in Encinitas is intended to stimulate interest and a public dialogue about our future, with a focus on a unique area that, at this moment in time, has possibilities which may be lost with time.

This document and process were funded by grants from The Leichtag Family Foundation and The Thomas C. Ackerman Foundation as a part of their commitment to building community.



## **Vision Participants**

**Consultant, Vicki Estrada**  
Estrada Land Planning

**Jim Farley**  
The Leichtag Family Foundation

**Christopher C. Calkins**  
The Thomas C. Ackerman Foundation

**Julian Duval**  
San Diego Botanic Garden

**Barbara Fanning**  
Mindswing Consulting

**Marjory Kaplan**  
Jewish Community Foundation

**Ann Hunter-Welborn**  
Lux Art Institute

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Foundation.**

**Peder Norby**

**Cami Mattson**  
San Diego North Convention and Visitors Bureau

**Susan Hight**  
Magdalena Ecke Family YMCA

**Tim Baird**

**Tyler Miller**

**Evelyn Weidner**  
San Dieguito Heritage Museum

**John Dewald**

**Ron Lelakes**  
Magdalena Ecke Family YMCA

**David Welborn**