Investigating Connectivity: The Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge in San Diego

Brenda Kayzar
San Diego State University

Spanning a road-filled canyon between two San Diego neighborhoods is a connection not often found in the urban landscape—a pedestrian bridge. While the current Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge opened in 1994, the history of a footbridge in this location dates back to the age of intraurban rail. This study explores the historical context of the original construction of the footbridge, its demise and eventual demolition in 1980, and its resurrection in the 1990s. Historical data is supplemented with recent interviews that offer insight into how the bridge is perceived and used today. Results of this study suggest that providing increased pedestrian access to places of work, recreation, and entertainment can reduce automobile dependency. The footbridge represents an inexpensive pedestrian detail that can be replicated in other places, particularly automobile-oriented suburbs. Understanding the importance of the bridge to current users, as well as its history in relationship to changing planning ideals, can provide the necessary insight for future planning decisions.

Introduction

> *What idle or significant sentence will we write with brick and stone, wood, steel and concrete upon the sensitive page of the earth?*
> —Irving Gill, architect (quotation engraved on Vermont Street Bridge)

The Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge spans the canyon between the San Diego neighborhoods of University Heights and Hillcrest, crossing over busy, six-lane Washington Street (Figure 1). The original connection was built in 1917 but torn down in 1980; in 1994 it was reincarnated in conjunction with the construction of a mixed-use project nearby—the Uptown District. Sandblasted into the concrete walkway of the 416-foot-long steel structure are dictionary definitions for the word "bridge," describing it as a structure that provides passage and connects places. What makes this particular bridge

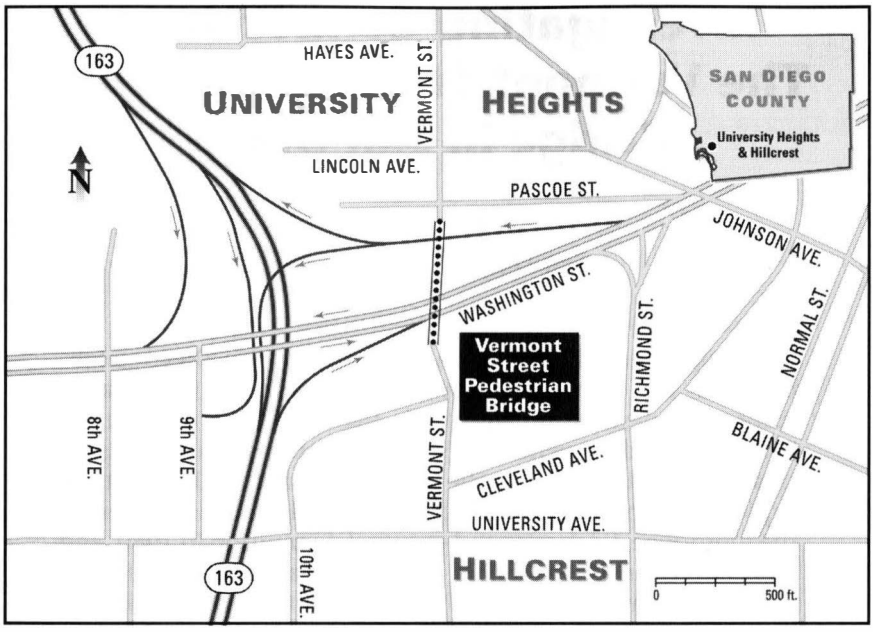

Figure 1—The Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge connects the neighborhoods of University Heights and Hillcrest, approximately three miles from downtown San Diego. (Cartography by the author and Jim Craine.)

unusual is that it is a *pedestrian* bridge, offering passage exclusively for pedestrians, cyclists, skateboarders, and wheelchair users, and enabling them to surmount many difficulties created by San Diego's uneven canyon and mesa topography.

The footbridge is a type of connection that exists in few residential communities today. For the most part, post-World War II residential planning neglected pedestrian needs in favor of the automobile. Wide residential streets were meant to accommodate the automobile and relieve congestion associated with the narrow streets of pre-War neighborhoods. The wider streets were typically combined with zoning that separated residential and commercial land uses and encouraged large residential lots, garage-dominated façades, cul-de-sacs, and expansive commercial parking lots (Southworth and Ben-Joseph 1997, 97–129). Pedestrians were thus subjected to long, indirect routes and inhospitable walking environments. As a result, most metropolitan residents today commonly choose the automobile as the only reasonable link between home, work, entertainment, and recreation (Kunstler 1993, 136; Ford 2000, 20).

Critics of the automobile-dependent landscape and its by-products—e.g., traffic congestion, disconnection, and isolation—have demanded that planning guidelines incorporate pedestrian-friendly features such as those found in pre-World War II town designs (Hayden 1984; Kunstler 1993; Langdon 1994). The neotraditional planning movement, which encompasses the widely popularized New Urbanism, has embraced these ideals and today many communities have updated their standard suburban master plans by incorporating elements of "Traditional Neighborhood Design" (Audirac and Shermyen 1994; McCann 1995). New subdivisions are designed to encourage pedestrian access to parks, schools, shops, and services by incorporating such elements as a gridiron street pattern and a network of paths (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2000, 183–214).

Proponents of pedestrian-oriented design have proposed inserting footbridges into existing neighborhoods (especially where the terrain is hilly) to mitigate automobile dependency and concerns over traffic, but many communities and planners remain resistant to the idea (Langdon 1994, 185–87; Kunstler 1996, 152; Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2000, 192–94; for specific examples in San Diego, see Weisberg 1994a, 1994c; Smith 1995). The focus of this study is a pedestrian bridge that was *reinserted* into an existing urban landscape, indicating that despite the rise of the automobile, it had remained an important asset to the communities it served. It is therefore useful to explore what factors led to its original construction, its demolition, and its eventual reconstruction. As I will show, the history of the footbridge spans different eras of neighborhood planning with different attitudes toward accommodating pedestrians. Further, the unique history of the Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge and the insights and perceptions of current bridge users can offer lessons for promoting this type of improvement in other neighborhoods. It is hoped that this study will help planners and residents appreciate the benefits that a similar pedestrian detail can offer their community.

Methodology

Urban geographer Larry Ford suggests that ordinary, everyday spaces are often overlooked by scholars in their quest to tackle the large-scale issues of planning and development (Ford 2000, 7–9). Yet how people use and perceive the built features in their everyday worlds provides insight into the value of these features—functional as well

as aesthetic. My goal in this study was to suggest that a better understanding of the overlooked features can help with the planning and design of future developments and provide ideas for improving existing places. Toward this end, I present an architectural history of the footbridge, relating its trajectory to changing social contexts and planning ideals. Specifically, I focus on how the structure's functional value was perceived at different times within San Diego's political and planning realms. I relied largely on information from the San Diego Historical Society as well as local histories and newspapers, which taken together provide a detailed account through the present day.

Interviews formed an important part of this study. I conducted more than thirty interviews with current bridge users in order to gain insight into what the structure means to people who use it. The sample of bridge users was not large, because results were intended merely to supplement the historical account. The interviews were unstructured and informal (allowing interviewees to express themselves more freely (Jones 1985, 46–47) and concentrated on two general lines of questioning: how and why the bridge was currently being used and how it was perceived by those who used it. I made four visits to the bridge at different times of day and on different days of the week, spending over two hours each time conducting interviews. Although pedestrian traffic varied, it was usually steady. My approach was to introduce myself to passersby on the bridge, explain that I was writing a report about it, and ask how often they used the bridge. This provided a prologue into further conversation. I spoke with bridge users of different ages and both sexes, although selection was based solely on my availability to talk to them as they crossed the bridge.

History of the Original Vermont Street Bridge

The current Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge has been open to foot traffic since December 10, 1994. Unknown to many, however, is the fact that it replaced a wooden trestle bridge that was built in 1917 but torn down in 1980 after being declared unsafe by transit officials (Clark 1994). For sixty-three years, the neighboring communities of University Heights and Hillcrest had had a pedestrian connection—initially over a deep, shrub-filled canyon, and eventually over a busy, six-lane thoroughfare.

Construction of the original footbridge in 1917 coincided with increases in San Diego's population during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Ford 1976, 174–75; Griffin 1976, 63–67). As the city grew, improvements in intraurban rail expanded the area that could be connected to the downtown business district (Pourade 1964, 185). This also fueled the imagination and ingenuity of real estate speculators. The original bridge, built by sugar heir John D. Spreckels, is an excellent example of such ingenuity and the reciprocal relationships that existed between largely private transportation and development interests during this era. In 1982, Spreckels bought the city's existing intraurban rail system, updating it with motorized cars that were able to traverse the uneven terrain of canyons and mesas surrounding downtown (Pourade 1964, 178–82; Holle 2002, 75). Spreckels had an interest in real estate development as well and owned large plots of undeveloped land north of the growing central business district (Jarmusch 1995; Holle 2002, 74–76). Plots owned by Spreckels and other land speculators were often separated by canyons from the fixed-rail transportation system; footbridges were built largely as a way to make these isolated plots attractive for residential development. In addition to the Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge, two other footbridges were constructed in the uptown area between 1905 and 1917 (Grant 2001; Stein 2002). Both remain in use today.

Spreckels's intraurban rail line eventually reached University Avenue in Hillcrest, across the canyon from land that he owned in what would become University Heights (Figure 2). Construction of the Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge facilitated residential development in University Heights by providing residents access to transit in Hillcrest and jobs downtown (Quastler 1976, 157). Shortly after the bridge's construction, however, intraurban rail transportation in San Diego became less important as the private automobile grew in popularity.

Substantial road paving began in earnest in the 1920s, including the construction of Washington Street, whose six lanes now wind through the canyon below the pedestrian bridge. The streetcars along University Avenue were dismantled and people came to depend on their automobiles for the work commute (Quastler 1976, 158–59). The footbridge continued to provide a connection for pedestrians between the two communities although the reasons for its use had changed. Access to retail shopping gave the bridge a new purpose; it became a connection to life's necessities for the residents of Uni-

Figure 2—Downtown real estate office selling residential property in University Heights in 1887. Note the horse-drawn rail car in front. (Photograph reproduced courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society.)

versity Heights, which had remained primarily a residential community with limited commercial offerings, while commerce in Hillcrest had increased substantially. The access-to-retail function was enhanced in 1953 when Sears opened a large department store in Hillcrest at the corner of University Avenue and Vermont Street, one block from the southern end of the footbridge (Pourade 1977, 94) (Figure 3).

The success of regional shopping malls and freeways over the next two decades would erode the value of the original footbridge. By the early 1980s, large, self-contained shopping malls with a variety of stores, free parking, and easy freeway access had drawn customers away from the retailers located along older automobile strips (Ford 1994, 245–46). University Avenue was no exception. The popularity of the Sears department store began to decline as shoppers chose to go to malls in nearby Mission Valley rather than to individual retailers in Hillcrest (Pourade 1977, 145–52; Dillinger 2000, 149).

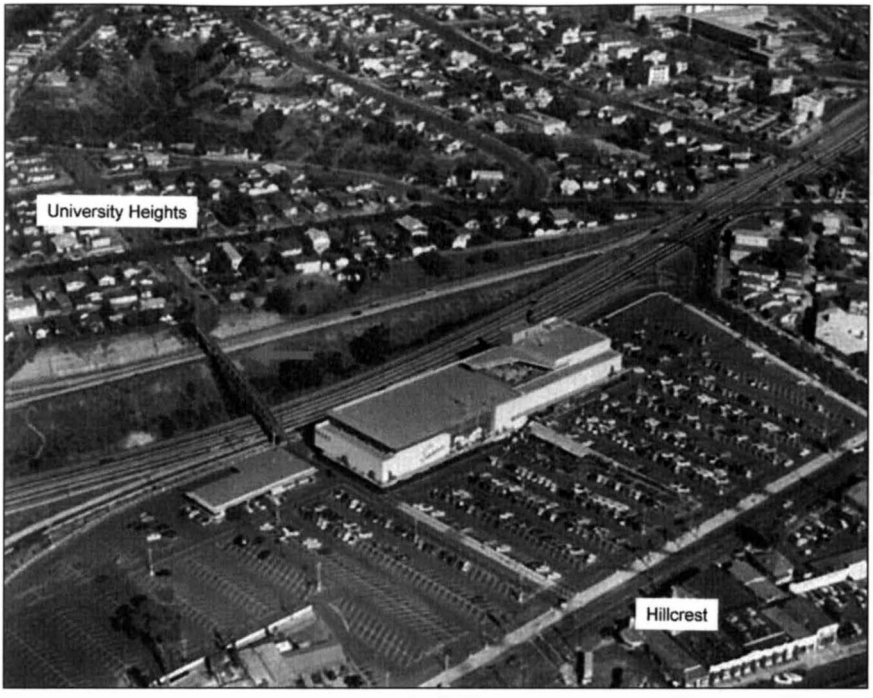

Figure 3—Aerial photo of original footbridge connecting University Heights residents to the newly opened Sears department store in Hillcrest in 1953. (Photograph reproduced courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society; modifications by the author.)

It was during this era that physical decay brought about the demise of the sixty-three-year-old wooden trestle bridge. Termites had badly damaged the structure so that repairs would have been costly (Clark 1994), and the city determined that limited funds and low demand for Hillcrest businesses did not warrant repair or replacement. Pedestrian facilities were a low priority at the time, and San Diego's transportation fund was already overtaxed. In addition, the initial motive for building the bridge—to encourage residential development in University Heights—was no longer relevant, as the community was already well established. Therefore, despite protests from area residents, the bridge was demolished in 1980 (Young 1994).

Although the city refused to fund the bridge's restoration, officials did propose creating a new tax assessment district—encompassing University Heights and Hillcrest—to facilitate bridge rebuilding

(Young 1994). But a majority of residents, many of them elderly and on fixed incomes, objected to the proposed increase in their property taxes, so the idea was dropped. The 1985 closure of the Sears department store dealt a major blow to residents still pursuing bridge replacement (Dillinger 2000, 154).

Rebuilding the Footbridge

Five years after Sears closed, redevelopment began on its vacant 12.5-acre site by a consortium of local architects and developers intent on creating a small-scale, mixed-use project (Weisberg 1996a). This proved to be just the type of project that would provide much-needed support for the footbridge's reincarnation.

The proposed infill project, called the Uptown District, combined more than 300 condominiums in two- and three-story buildings with 145,000 square feet of street-level retail space (Weisberg 1996a) (Figure 4). Its pathways, Mediterranean pastel colors, bright awnings, and mix of residential and commercial space were meant to replicate the feeling of a European village.

After decades of suburban-style development in San Diego, however, such "neotraditional" projects were a hard sell (Weisberg 1994b). As in most U.S. cities, zoning restrictions had made it virtually unlawful to build mixed-use projects, and lenders were wary of funding unproven building designs that were supported by limited

Figure 4—The mixed-use Uptown District, 2003. (Photograph by the author.)

comparable resale data (Audirac and Shermyen 1994, 165; Kunstler 1996, 109–10, 188–89). Furthermore, during the construction of what was referred to as a "grand experiment," the Gulf War broke out and a prolonged recession set in, adding to a growing list of concerns regarding the project's profitability (Weisberg 1996b). Heightened apprehension over the Uptown District's success reopened discussion about the possibility of bringing back the Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge as a way to generate foot traffic to the district's new retail businesses (echoing the bridge's former function).

The Uptown District was completed in 1992, but two years later developers were still having difficulties leasing to and maintaining tenants in the commercial spaces, and no new bridge had yet been built. City Councilperson Ron Roberts took up the cause and argued that retail shops in the struggling development would benefit from pedestrian traffic generated by the footbridge (LaRue 1994). Thanks to a 1988 voter initiative (Proposition A), which increased the sales tax in order to fund city transit improvements, funding was now available from transit reserves, alleviating a big concern that had hampered replacement in 1980 (Clark 1994). The city soon approved construction of the new bridge.

At the opening ceremony and bridge dedication in late 1994, City Councilperson Christine Kehoe acknowledged that the rebuilt bridge was something both communities had desired for a long time (LaRue 1994). After a fourteen-year absence from the landscape, the Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge once again provided a pedestrian connection between the two communities.

Public Art on the Bridge: Creating a Sense of Place

Gordon Brown, a longtime resident of University Heights, was one of the first to cross the newly built bridge at the opening ceremony (LaRue 1994). The seventy-eight-year-old declared he was happy to have this safe route returned to him and recalled the days when as a child he rode his bike across the old bridge to deliver newspapers.

While Brown's trip across the new bridge brought back many memories, and while the old and new bridges served similar functions, the new bridge bore little physical resemblance to the old wooden structure. It was made of cobalt-blue steel embellished with

Plexiglas® side panels, and inscribed with quotations about the benefits of walking and definitions of the word "bridge" (Figures 5, 6). The new bridge was a beneficiary of the city's 1992 public art policy and was meant to be a bold, artistic testament to pedestrian ideals (Pincus 1998). The policy called for the inclusion of local artists in all city development plans, similar to the collaborative efforts being implemented in other urban areas (Fleming 1981, 21–

Figure 5—The Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge, 2003. (Photograph by the author.)

Figure 6—Artwork, with quotations about the virtues of walking, lines the sides of the new footbridge. (Photograph by the author, 2003.)

22). A group of three local female artists known as Stone/Paper/Scissors was selected by the San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture to work in partnership with transit engineers on the design for the new footbridge (Clark 1994). While the engineers' initial architectural rendering suggested an olive-green structure meant to blend into the canyon walls, the artists proposed painting the steel beams a bright cobalt blue to draw attention to the bridge.

In addition to beautification, the goal of most public art collaboratives is to integrate artwork into public projects in such a way that it reinforces the meaning and identity of a place (Hein 1996, 4; Cheng 2000). According to Ford and Griffin (1981, 47), public art "records a heritage, announces current issues, and advocates future actions" and is "integral in personalizing the landscape." The city's public art coordinator hoped the artistic expressions would personalize the footbridge and instill both communities with a sense of pride and ownership in it.

The public art on the bridge advocates walking and confirms a recorded local heritage. Aphorisms about walkers and the benefits of walking are laser-cut into thirty-two Plexiglas® panels along the length of the bridge (Pincus 1998). Citations by ancient philosophers such as Lao Tsu and Pythagoras suggest that walking is a virtuous activity (see Figure 6). A quote from the late author Theodore Geisel ("Dr. Seuss"), who lived in San Diego, reads: "[Y]ou have brains in your head, feet in your shoes, you can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own and know what you know, and you are the guy who'll decide where to go." Quotations from architect Irving Gill, who built many homes in the area, and Kate Sessions, who planted more than three hundred trees in nearby Balboa Park, recall San Diego's early history.

Enthusiastic responses by bridge users suggest that the incorporation of public art into the design has created a sense of pride and ownership in the footbridge. Indeed, one member of a group of young adults pointed to the electrical outlets at the base of the lamps lining the footbridge and mused, "Wouldn't it be great to have our band play on *our* bridge?" References to the artwork were common during interviews; bridge users often pointed proudly to specific artistic features. Several residents from University Heights, for example, pointed out the stone pillars at the northern entrance, designed by Stone/Paper/Scissors to replicate a common feature of

craftsman-style homes within the community (Figures 7, 8). (The artists designed a unique entrance for each end of the bridge.)

Figure 7—Stone pillars at University Heights entrance to the footbridge are much admired by bridge users. (Photograph by the author, 2003.)

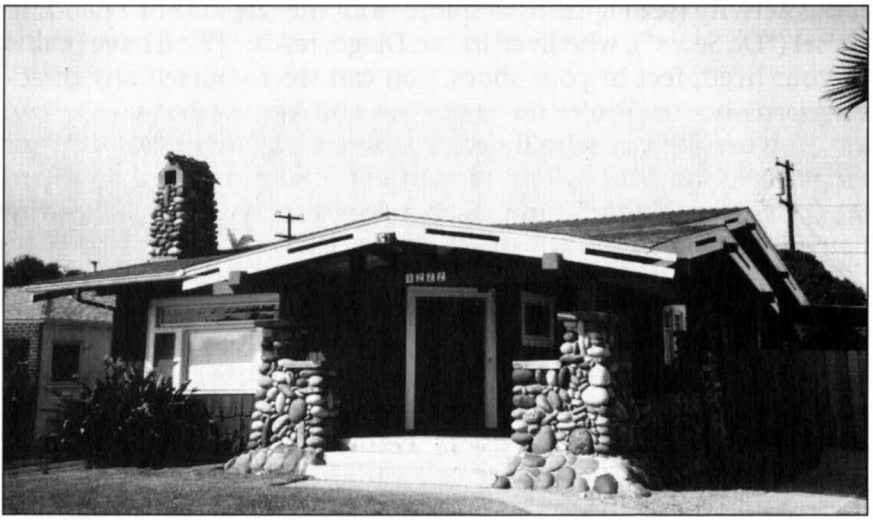

Figure 8—The footbridge pillars replicate stone pillars such as these, commonly found on craftsman-style bungalows in University Heights. (Photograph by the author.)

The artwork also made the bridge an interesting place to visit, and bridge users frequently directed their visitors to it. A woman in her sixties from New York who was visiting her son said he told her about the footbridge and suggested she see it and take time to read the quotations. Similarly, two other interviewees had learned about the footbridge from friends and were there to "see what it was all about."

Perceptions of Bridge Users

Although initial development of both neighborhoods took place during the same era, Hillcrest and University Heights are noticeably different from each other today. University Heights is a predominantly residential community of single-family houses, many of which were built in conjunction with the original footbridge (Fredrich 1989, 4–15). Quiet residential streets, sidewalks, mature palm trees, and craftsman-style architecture create a charming atmosphere. The main commercial street within the community has limited services offered by auto repair shops, liquor stores, and used furniture sellers, although some gentrification can be seen in the recent opening of a few coffee houses and upscale eateries.

While University Heights has retained its image as a quiet residential area, Hillcrest has continually expanded its commercial district and increased residential densities with the construction of multiunit complexes. The neighborhood includes a mix of turn-of-the-century, single-family houses, small mid-century apartment buildings, and newer mixed-use and loft-style developments (Weisberg and Showley 1997). In addition to retail shops in the Uptown District, Hillcrest also has two busy commercial streets lined with stores, restaurants, and office space and a large medical complex that offers considerable employment opportunities to the community.

The differences between the two communities are also evident in the reasons given by bridge users for visiting the opposite side of the footbridge. For University Heights residents, the footbridge provides easy access to commercial centers and social venues in Hillcrest. During the period when there was no bridge (1980–1994), gaining access to these places meant either crossing Washington Street's six lanes of traffic or driving (Figure 9). While it was not surprising to find that the bridge was valued by University Heights residents, it also held a special value for Hillcrest residents, who crossed it to

Figure 9—After demolition of the original bridge, pedestrians had to cross busy, six-lane Washington Street. (Photograph by the author, 2003.)

visit friends in University Heights or to stroll, jog or bicycle in a "quieter" neighborhood with interesting old houses.

Jack, the first person I interviewed, was in his nineties. His reasons for using the bridge were typical of University Heights residents. He had owned a barbershop in Hillcrest for almost fifty years, during which he generally walked the mile and a half from his University Heights home to his business and back; the footbridge thus played an important role in his daily routine. After 1980 he could have crossed Washington Street at Johnson Avenue, but he explained that the duration of the light was too short for him to make it to the other side safely. This led him to take a much longer route, crossing at Park Boulevard where the light was longer. Although he has since sold his business and retired, he makes daily trips into Hillcrest to buy food and medicine, using the rebuilt footbridge.

Bill, also a longtime University Heights resident, referred to the bridge as his "portal to everything." Recalling the years after the old bridge had been torn down, Bill said he felt as if he had been "cut off" from Hillcrest and even thought about moving out of the area. Greg, a thirty-two-year-old native of San Diego, recalled that he and his friends used to ride bikes across the old bridge to get to

the Sears store in Hillcrest. The convenience and attractiveness of the new bridge were selling points for him when he decided to move back to University Heights after college. Like many other bridge users I observed, Greg was carrying bags with purchases made in Hillcrest.

A group of University Heights residents in their early twenties were dressed up and planning to spend the evening in the restaurants and clubs along University Avenue in Hillcrest. For these young people, the bridge provided access not only to shopping but to what Ray Oldenberg (1989) calls "third places"—the neutral ground where people can gather and socialize but do not have to concern themselves with playing host. Such places allow for associations outside the spaces of home and workplace, hence the name "third place." In Hillcrest, third places are abundant and most are within short walking distance from the footbridge.

Residents of Hillcrest also value the bridge, if for different reasons than mentioned above. Most of these have to do with leisurely activities, including dog-walking. Jane, the thirty-eight-year-old vice president of the Uptown District Homeowners Association, was instrumental in persuading the association to put up a signpost with plastic baggies at the Hillcrest entrance to the footbridge that encourages dog owners to clean up after their pets. Jane walks her two dogs across the bridge every day and says "quite a few" other dog owners also use the bridge daily. Jane was very vocal in her enthusiasm for the bridge, recalling how difficult it was to cross Washington Street with her dogs when she moved into the Uptown District before the bridge was rebuilt. She now uses her position in the association to "tell everyone how much I like to use the bridge." (She later mailed me a copy of an article she wrote in 1994 for the association's newsletter, praising the artistic expressions on the footbridge.)

I interviewed a number of other Uptown District residents who had similar reasons for using the bridge. One woman in her fifties moved there after her divorce in 1994 and found University Heights to be a safe place for evening walks, which resolved concerns she'd had about leaving the safety of her previous community where she had lived for more than ten years. She noted that the "lovely gas lamps" on the bridge contributed to her feeling of safety. Doug and Mike, two Uptown District residents in their thirties, enjoyed running errands and recreating on foot. Doug said he drove fifteen miles in

heavy traffic to his job and at the end of the day did not want to get back in his car. Mike admired the quotes carved into the bridge, as they reflected his personal decision to "adopt a pedestrian lifestyle."

Jim and Sandra, Hillcrest residents in their mid-fifties, valued the bridge for each of the reasons mentioned so far: They "love[d] the artwork" on the bridge, brought visitors to the bridge; and crossed the bridge on weekend walks into University Heights where they enjoyed looking at houses and visiting their many friends there. This last was true as well for Carolyn, another Hillcrest resident in her fifties, confirming that the footbridge provides a vital pedestrian connection for friends in the neighboring communities.

In addition to foot traffic, I observed many joggers, bicyclists, roller skaters, and skateboarders crossing the bridge, especially during evenings and weekends. Most recreational users originated on the Hillcrest side, which is often congested due to its heavy commercial activity. The bridge allows recreational enthusiasts easy access to the quieter streets in University Heights. Adams Avenue Park, located at the northern end of University Heights, can also be reached via the bridge, thus avoiding crossing any major thoroughfares.

Other important reasons for the bridge's popularity are the safe passage and sense of independence it provides to certain groups of people. This was confirmed by the elderly people I spoke with, who related how they were able to get to stores and services they needed, and places where they socialized, without the aid of a car. One woman using a cane was happy she no longer had to ask her son for a ride to the store. Two wheelchair users expressed great pleasure at being able to use the bridge rather than having to cross the wide street below. I also witnessed a number of children crossing alone or accompanied by adults (Figure 10). As might be expected, safety and accessibility seemed to be especially important to bridge users whose ability to drive or safely cross busy intersections was limited.

The interviews suggest that pedestrian access between communities is valued for a number of reasons, including passage to commercial offerings and entertainment venues, to visit friends, and for recreational purposes. For members of both communities, the bridge provided safe passage and independence from the automobile, regardless of the destination. Also revealed by the interviews was the value bridge users placed on the artwork incorporated into the design of the new bridge.

Figure 10—Children and adults share footbridge with bicyclist. (Photograph by the author, 2003.)

To conclude my fieldwork, I visited Rattan Realty, located in an Uptown District retail space, and spoke with two agents who regularly represent buyers in Hillcrest and University Heights. Both confirmed that property values in the two communities had risen dramatically since the Uptown District opened, and claimed this was due to the limited availability of, and high demand for, pedestrian-friendly environments. Both agents mentioned the Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge as "one of the area's attractions" and "a selling point." Their comments about this pedestrian-oriented detail underscore the important role such ordinary structures play in the landscape and support the need for more studies such as this one.

Conclusion

> *With lively feelings may I walk. Being as it used to be long ago, may I walk.*
> —Navajo chant (engraved on the Vermont Street Bridge)

The goal of this study was to explore the evolution and current meaning of a pedestrian-oriented detail within an established land-

scape. The history of the construction, demolition, and rebuilding of the Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge chronicles the changing value of the pedestrian to planners over time. During the era when mobility was limited, pedestrian access was a high priority in the design and development of growing communities. The original Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge was perceived as a necessary link in the network of transit options. Without that link further city growth would have been delayed. However, the footbridge was unable to retain its value to city planners as automobile use and suburban-style development flourished after World War II. Due to widespread use of automobiles, neighborhood planners no longer considered pedestrian access a high priority. Repairs to the Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge were neglected and it was torn down in 1980, not to be replaced until fourteen years later.

Reconstruction of the footbridge coincided with emerging planning ideals and principles in the 1990s associated with the neotraditional design movement. Such principles were incorporated into the Uptown District in Hillcrest. As this study showed, concern over the possible financial failure of the project helped catalyze the restoration of the bridge and validated a key neotraditional concept—that the success of a retail project can be enhanced by creating better pedestrian access.

The original wooden-trestle footbridge was primarily functional and lacked artistic adornment. The rebuilt structure, however, a collaborative effort of engineers and artists, melded technology and function with aesthetics and sense of place. Many bridge users lovingly pointed to the artwork on the new bridge and revealed a sense of ownership and pride in the structure. These and other insights from the interviews can be valuable in assisting other neighborhoods in overcoming objections to the addition of similar pedestrian-oriented features. Pedestrian bridges offer a way to accommodate automobile and pedestrian traffic within the same space, at two different levels. While motor vehicles travel along six-lane Washington Street below, pedestrians can safely traverse the Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge above.

What makes this particular story even more interesting is how the past came to influence the present. After initially discarding a structure that was built to serve pre-automobile pedestrian needs, the city rediscovered its value, and it now coexists with cars—the very

vehicles that were supposed to have made it obsolete. One lesson is that the introduction of new technologies—whether transportation or any other—should not necessarily result in the complete rejection of older landscape features that may still serve a valuable function. The story of the bridge illustrates that often automobile-oriented landscapes can be improved by drawing upon planning ideas from the past.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Stuart Aitken and Dr. Larry Ford for reading earlier versions of this paper and for their valuable comments, and Jim Craine for his assistance with the map. I would also like to thank CG Editor Judy Walton and the anonymous referees for their insight and suggestions.

References

Audirac, Ivonne, and Anne H. Shermyen. 1994. An evaluation of neotraditional design's social prescription: postmodern placebo or remedy for suburban malaise? *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 13:161–173.

Cheng, Carl. 2000. Public art: More than a pretty distraction. *Los Angeles Times*, 31 July, F6.

Clark, Cheryl. 1994. Art to beautify new bridge at Vermont Street. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 6 September, B-1.

Dillinger, Michael E. 2000. Hillcrest: From haven to home. *Journal of San Diego History* 46 (4): 144–63.

Duany, Andres, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck. 2000. *Suburban nation: The rise of sprawl and the decline of the American dream*. New York: North Point.

Fleming, Ronald Lee. 1981. Recapturing history: A plan for gritty cities. *Landscape Magazine* 25 (1): 20–27.

Ford, Larry R. 1994. *Cities and buildings: Skyscrapers, skid rows, and suburbs*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins.

———. 2000. *The spaces between buildings*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins.

Ford, Larry R., and Ernst Griffin. 1981. Chicano Park: Personalizing an institutional landscape. *Landscape Magazine* 25 (2): 42–49.

Ford, Lawrence R. 1976. The historical evolution of the San Diego cityscape. In *San Diego: An introduction to the region*, ed. Philip R. Pryde, 169–85. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt.

Fredrich, Barbara E. 1989. The cobblestone connection in San Diego's architectural history. *The Journal of San Diego History* 35 (1): 1–21.
Grant, Kris. 2001. Urban oasis: A trail of bridges and canyons near downtown is soothing relief from asphalt jungle. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 13 May, B6.
Griffin, Ernst. C. 1976. San Diego's population patterns. In *San Diego: An introduction to the region*, ed. Philip R. Pryde, 61–72. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt.
Hayden, Dolores. 1984. *Redesigning the American dream: The future of housing, work, and family life.* New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
Hein, Hilde. 1996. What is public art? Time, place and meaning. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1): 1–7.
Holle, Gena. 2002. Transit in San Diego: ASCE anniversary project. *Journal of San Diego History* 48 (1): 72–86.
Jarmusch, Ann. 1995. From obscure to spectacular, spans cross charm, beauty. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 28 May, H-1.
Jones, Sue. 1985. Depth interviewing. In *Applied qualitative research*, ed. R. Walker, 44–55. Hants, England: Gower.
Kunstler, James Howard. 1993. *The geography of nowhere: The rise and decline of America's man-made landscape.* New York: Touchstone.
———. 1996. *Home from nowhere: Remaking our everyday world for the 21st century.* New York: Touchstone.
Langdon, Philip. 1994. *A better place to live: Reshaping the American suburb.* 1st ed. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
LaRue, Steve. 1994. New bridge spans canyon and stirs the memories. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 11 December, B-2.
McCann, Eugene J. 1995. Neotraditional developments: The anatomy of a new urban form. *Urban Geography* 16 (3): 210–233.
Oldenburg, Ray. 1989. *The great good place: Cafes, coffee shops, community centers, general stores, bars, hangouts, and how they get you through the day.* New York: Paragon House.
Pincus, Robert L. 1998. When it comes to art, artists, she's a believer. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 26 July, E-10.
Pourade, Richard F. 1964. *The glory years.* San Diego: San Diego Union Tribune Publishing Co.
———. 1977. *City of the dream.* La Jolla, Calif.: Copley.

Quastler, I. E. 1976. Transportation in San Diego county. In *San Diego: An introduction to the region*, ed. Philip R. Pryde, 149–67. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt.
Smith, Gordon. 1995. We need more with a pedestrian attitude. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 24 July, A-2.
Southworth, Michael, and Eran Ben-Joseph. 1997. *Streets and the shaping of towns and cities*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
Stein, Pat. 2002. Lifestyles of the rich and famous: Banker's Hill is steeped in an aura of San Diego yesterdays. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 7 November, E40.
Weisberg, Lori. 1994a. Clusters of urban villages key to the new American housing dream. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 1 May, H-1.
———. 1994b. Getting to know the neighborhood: Learning more about the neo-traditional movement. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 11 December, H-4.
———. 1994c. A test of tradition. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 11 December, H-1.
———. 1996a. Uptown district. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 23 June, H-1.
———. 1996b. An urban odyssey in Uptown: Acclaimed village slow to take hold. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 23 June, H-1.
Weisberg, Lori, and Roger M. Showley. 1997. Focus on Hillcrest: Community takes pride in its eclectic mix. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 27 July, A-1.
Young, Eric. 1994. New bridge will reunite what time and termites split asunder in 1980. *San Diego Union Tribune*, 19 February, B-1.