

little mobility, more attention was paid to providing a strong focal point for activity at the town center. In function as well as appearance, that center represented an idealized view of the traditional community core.²⁰

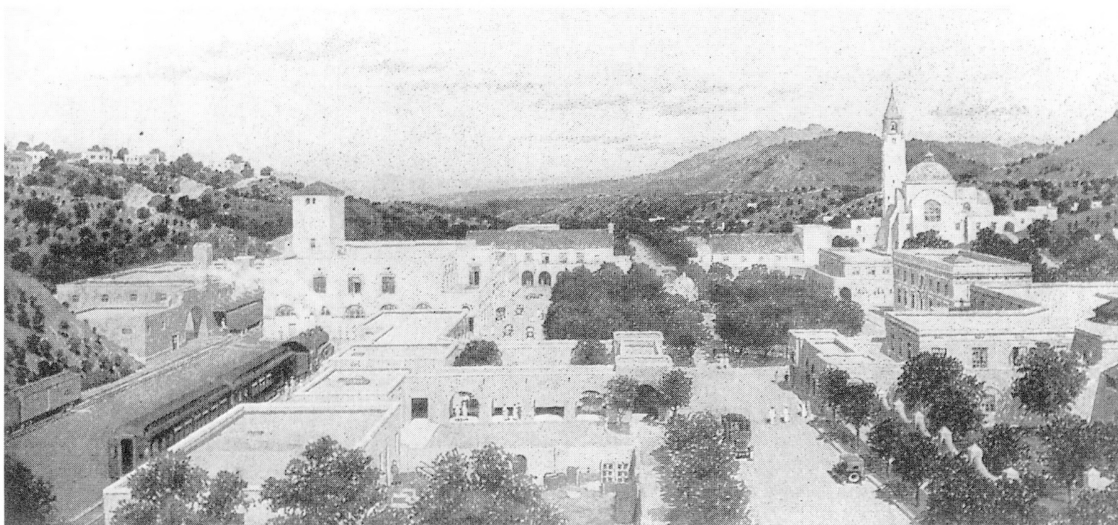
Some of the most ambitious proposals for early twentieth-century industrial towns were developed for copper mining operations in the Southwest. These schemes provided a direct precedent for California work in their imaginative responses to topography and climate as well as their use of Latin-inspired forms.²¹ One of the best known and most widely praised—in Los Angeles and nationally—was Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue's scheme for Tyrone, New Mexico (1914–1918), prepared for the Phelps Dodge Corporation (figure 108). Though based in New York, Goodhue spent much of his time in southern California and did much to shape its architecture, first through his plans for the Panama-California Exposition at San Diego (1911–1915), which to many observers seemed at once more worldly and sensitive to the region, more sophisticated and natural, more decorous and coherent than local work.²² The exposition influenced design in the state through the 1920s as few individual projects did. Tyrone was an important sequel, possessing many of the same attributes, simplified in a manner conducive to residential application. The design had an unpretentious gentility coveted by the affluent during the 1920s. The town center, which was emphasized in the presentation drawings, suggested not so much an outpost for miners as the heart of an exclusive residential tract in southern California. It was likely on the minds of those planning Palos Verdes.

PALOS VERDES

When designed in 1921–1923, Palos Verdes Estates was to be one of the largest planned communities in the United States. The tract encompassed some 16,000 acres. Topographically, it was spectacular by any standard,

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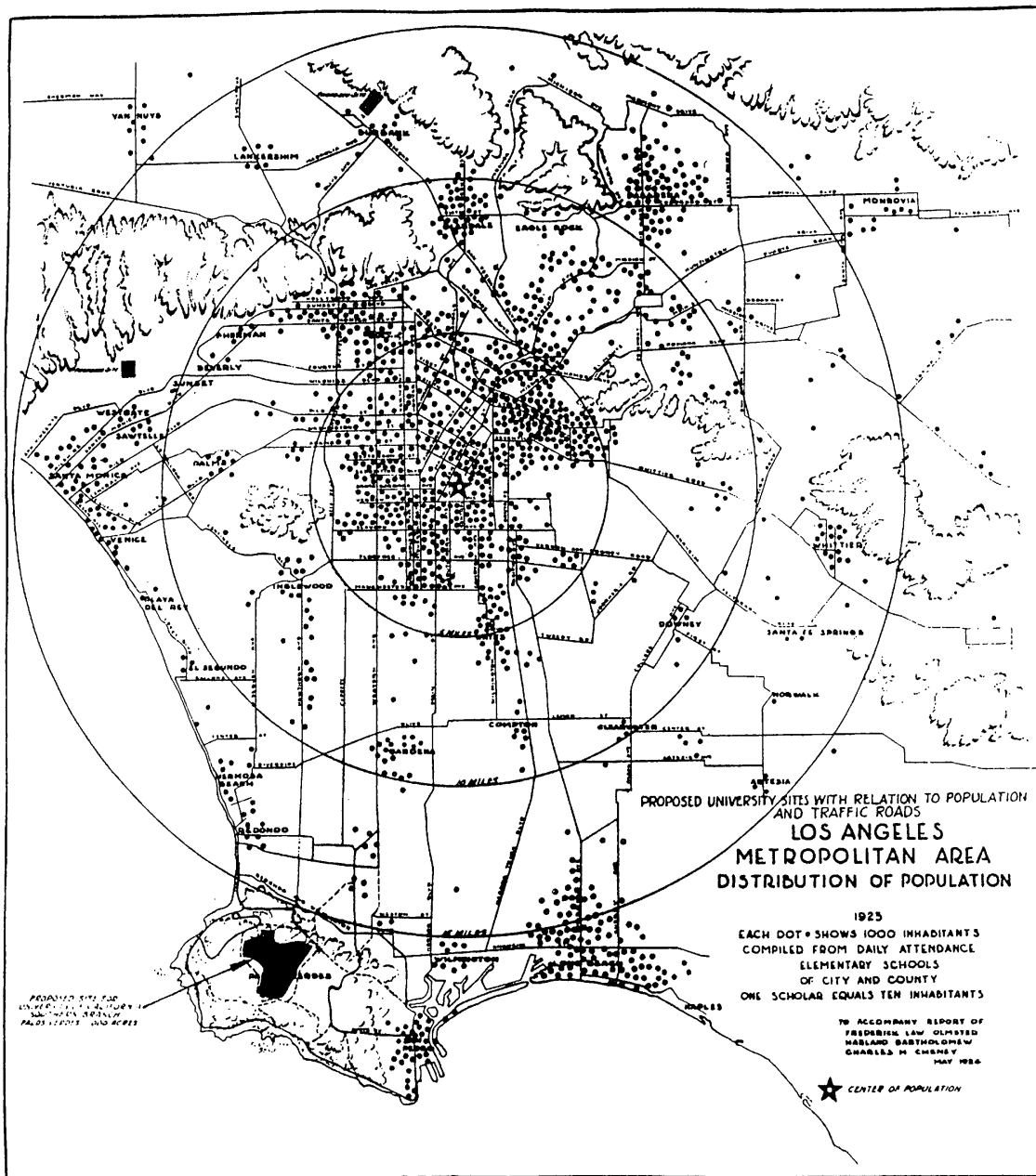
Town center, Tyrone, New Mexico, 1914, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, architect; partially realized, all constructed buildings destroyed. (Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, *Master of Many Arts*, pl. clxx.)



with quasi-mountainous terrain and panoramic views of the coast in three directions.²³ Wanting to create a national model for enlightened development, Vanderlip and his associates took pains to ensure that the natural setting was used to advantage. The venerable Olmsted Brothers firm, widely considered the nation's foremost landscape architects and town planners, together with Charles H. Cheney, then one of the few nationally prominent planners on the west coast, were hired to prepare the master plan. Concurrently, they made more detailed plans of four initial subdivisions, comprising about one-fifth of the total area. More than in most such undertakings, natural features were to be protected and form the basis for development. When completed, precincts would suggest gradual growth over several centuries. In some areas indigenous vegetation would be cultivated to a degree that would make it difficult to discern the presence of settlement. Generous provisions were made for open space, much of which would be left undisturbed, with the rest allocated to recreational amenities. A strict zoning code excluded all land uses considered undesirable. Among the provisions that elicited the greatest interest nationwide was the establishment of a professionally qualified "art jury" with authority over individual projects to assure a high standard of design. Few if any precedents, save for the federal core of Washington, D.C., under the purview of the Commission of Fine Arts, were then subject to such detailed and sweeping aesthetic oversight.

Palos Verdes was envisioned as an idyllic enclave for persons of means. Controls not only mandated costly development but excluded the rise of any substantial employment base.²⁴ The endeavor was repeatedly promoted as a "city," to harbor 80,000 residents in a decade and eventually twice that population. Yet breadwinners would, of necessity, commute to work. Furthermore, the location was a considerable distance from centers of employment even by regional standards. Downtown Los Angeles lay twenty miles afield; downtown Long Beach ten (figure 109). Public transit connections were nonexistent. Only persons who could afford to spend the time driving or who did not have to work might find Palos Verdes a feasible option.²⁵ Probably no other planned, year-round residential community possessed a greater sense of detachment from the urban world on which it depended.

Basic characteristics of the Palos Verdes plan drew from an earlier one for a lavish resort on the same site, developed in schematic form during the early months of 1914.²⁶ The initial project, also undertaken by the Olmsted firm, was to create a west coast equivalent to New York's Tuxedo Park. Vanderlip and his syndicate of some fifty friends considered a number of places in both the United States and Cuba prior to choosing Palos Verdes for its climate as well as natural beauty. Large country places would be built for seasonal occupation by a coterie of the very rich, most of whom would occupy their coastal retreats for perhaps a month each year. Three "small, model villages" would provide staff quarters. Each "hamlet" would also have a few stores and community facilities arranged around a plaza and composed as a picturesque assemblage "such as that



which delights the tourist automobiling among the village districts of . . . England and Germany.”²⁷ Distinguished east coast architects would design these ensembles; the syndicate would own them. Conceptually, the village centers were allied with Market Square in image, with Tyrone in function.

The outbreak of World War I and a depressed local economy postponed the plan. The subsequent recasting of Palos Verdes as a year-round residential area was likely influenced by the fast growth of the region and the increased mobility brought by widespread automobile use. Still, the 1914 scheme left its imprint. Nowhere was this legacy more evident than in the design of the business centers, which retained a paternalis-

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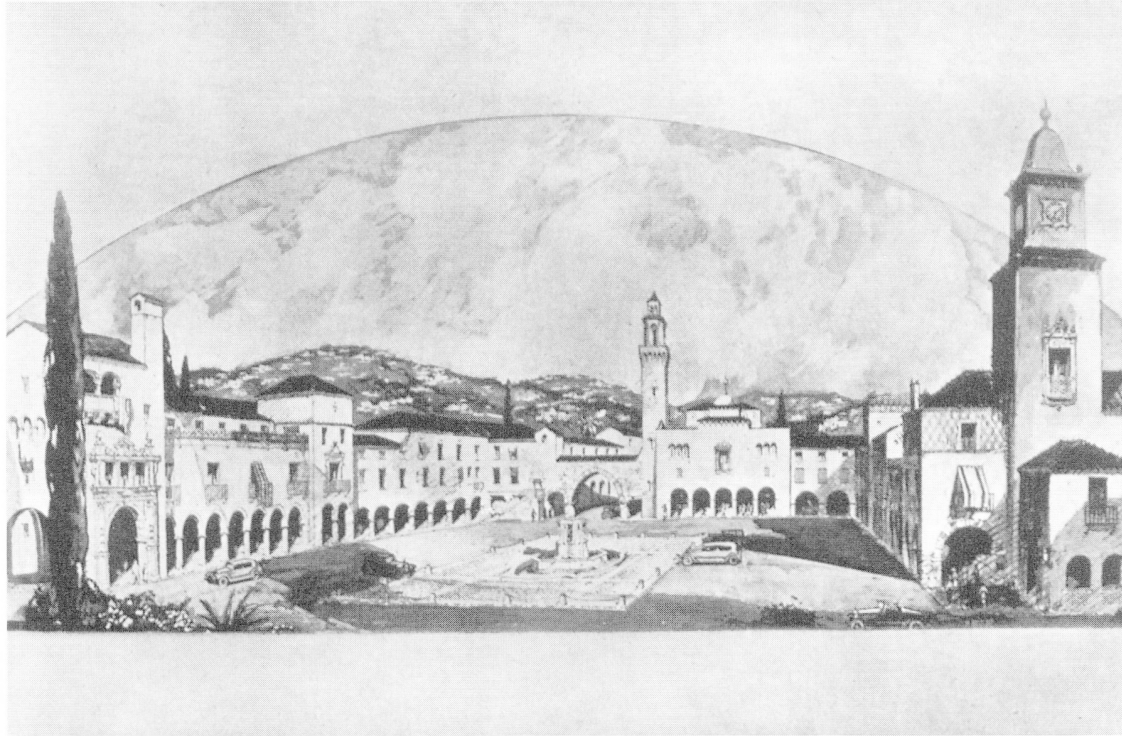
Map of Los Angeles metropolitan area showing relation of Palos Verdes tract (lower left) to existing population densities, 1925. (*Palos Verdes Bulletin*, February 1925, 7.)

tic aura. The design nevertheless indicated an attitude that was now more accepting of commerce, using it as a pretext for community focal points. The plans further acknowledged the importance of convenient automobile access. Visual appeal to the sightseer was by no means discounted, but a far more important objective now was addressing the routine use of these business centers by their well-to-do constituency.

The Olmsted-Cheney plan called for a network of commercial centers throughout Palos Verdes, a provision of unprecedented scope in comprehensively planned developments. Each subdivision was to have one such complex, which would meet all basic needs of between 10,000 and 30,000 residents. The projected size was quite large relative to that of the clientele, with a minimum of around forty stores and perhaps as many professional offices.²⁸ The scope no doubt extended beyond routine goods and services, such as those that occupied the majority of units at Market Square, to include some fashionable specialty shops. This range was advanced, in all likelihood, because no other places of business were permitted inside Palos Verdes and no competing ones existed for some distance beyond the boundaries. To a degree that many retailers would welcome but seldom had the luxury of experiencing, the target audience was a captive one.

The exterior of the business centers, each designed by a different, hand-picked architectural firm, was intended to help set the tone for the whole enterprise. As soon as the general plans were completed during the winter of 1923–1924, they were conspicuously featured in advertisements as part of an intensive campaign to stimulate land sales.²⁹ The popular appeal of these images lay in their pronounced historicizing attributes (figure 110). The ambience of a preindustrial village cultivated at Market Square and Tyrone was fully exploited, to the point of suggesting a stage set. In concert with the prescribed mode of residential design, the complexes employed a free interplay of Spanish and Italian, medieval and Renaissance, high-style and vernacular sources, idealized in character and regularized in arrangement. The results were more evocative of the past, more a departure from the conventional business district, than anything then realized in the United States. Nothing was allowed to compromise the totality of Latin allusions. Instead of a landscaped square—an amalgam of English and Yankee, not European, precedents—the center space was a paved plaza punctuated by an ornamental fountain. Storefronts and signs lay behind arcaded passages. All services related to the automobile itself were to be discreetly placed on side streets. The messiness of commerce was edited from the picture.

For all their old-world associations, these complexes differed from the historic urban patterns they emulated in being contained and inward-looking. Linear extension of commerce from the square into the streets of the community was nonexistent. A guaranteed neighborhood meant not only prohibiting business beyond a tightly defined node, but also providing a buffer zone comprised of multiunit dwellings around those nodes (see figure 102). Total segregation of trade from the preserves



of single-family houses would be explicit in concrete no less than in perceptual terms. The relationship possessed almost medieval overtones—the business centers as latter-day fortresses—only with protection directed toward those living outside rather than within the confines.

From a practical standpoint, on the other hand, aspects of the business centers' layouts were innovative. The center square made an effective parking lot, which far exceeded most provisions for cars at that time. The plan of Malaga Cove Plaza was especially well suited to this function, with entrances placed at the corners rather than in the middle of the block (figures 111, 112). Even though no distinction was made between space for moving and for stationary vehicles, the arrangement minimized the opportunities for conflict between the two. Furthermore, unlike in the great majority of commercial development in Los Angeles and elsewhere, vehicular circulation was strictly local. Roads carrying through traffic were separated from the plazas to preclude congestion. Finally, the inward orientation of stores to the plaza, combined with the extent of the latter's space, facilitated keeping shoppers' cars off nearby residential streets. The results could go a long way to mitigate the visual impact of the motor vehicle.

Greater thought was given to the physical plan and to the regulations guiding it than to the operational structure of the business centers. In 1922, blanket newspaper solicitations, differing little from those promoting boulevard frontage, were directed toward prospective merchants.³⁰ Lots could be purchased and buildings erected on an individual basis; even speculative holding of property was permissible. Not until the following

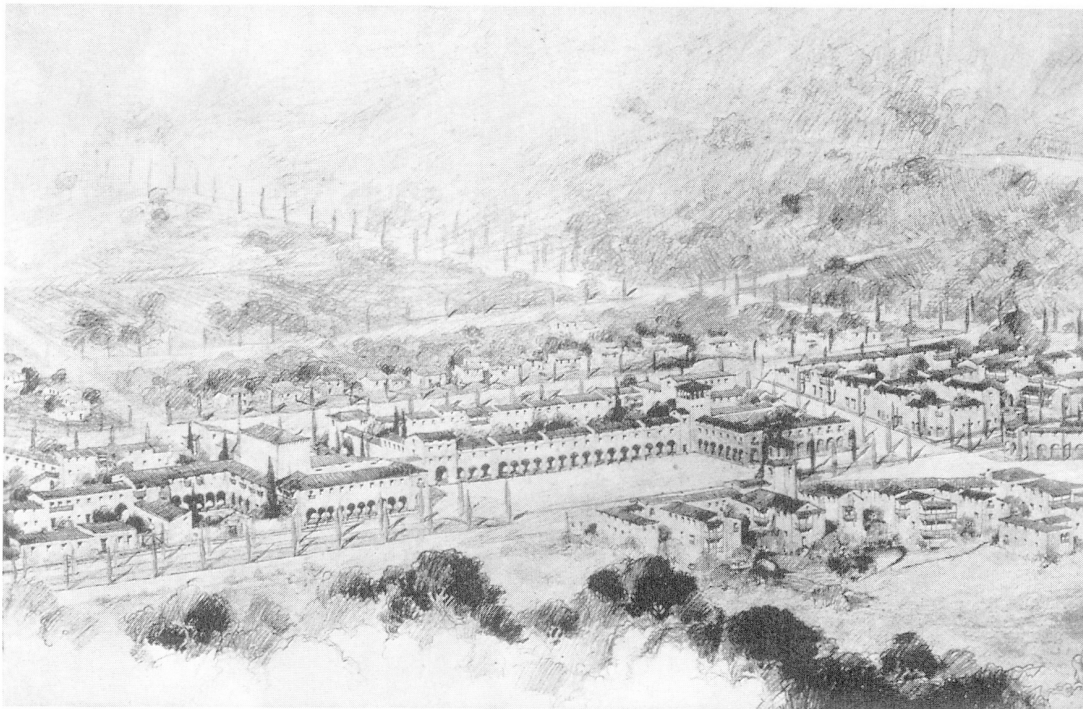
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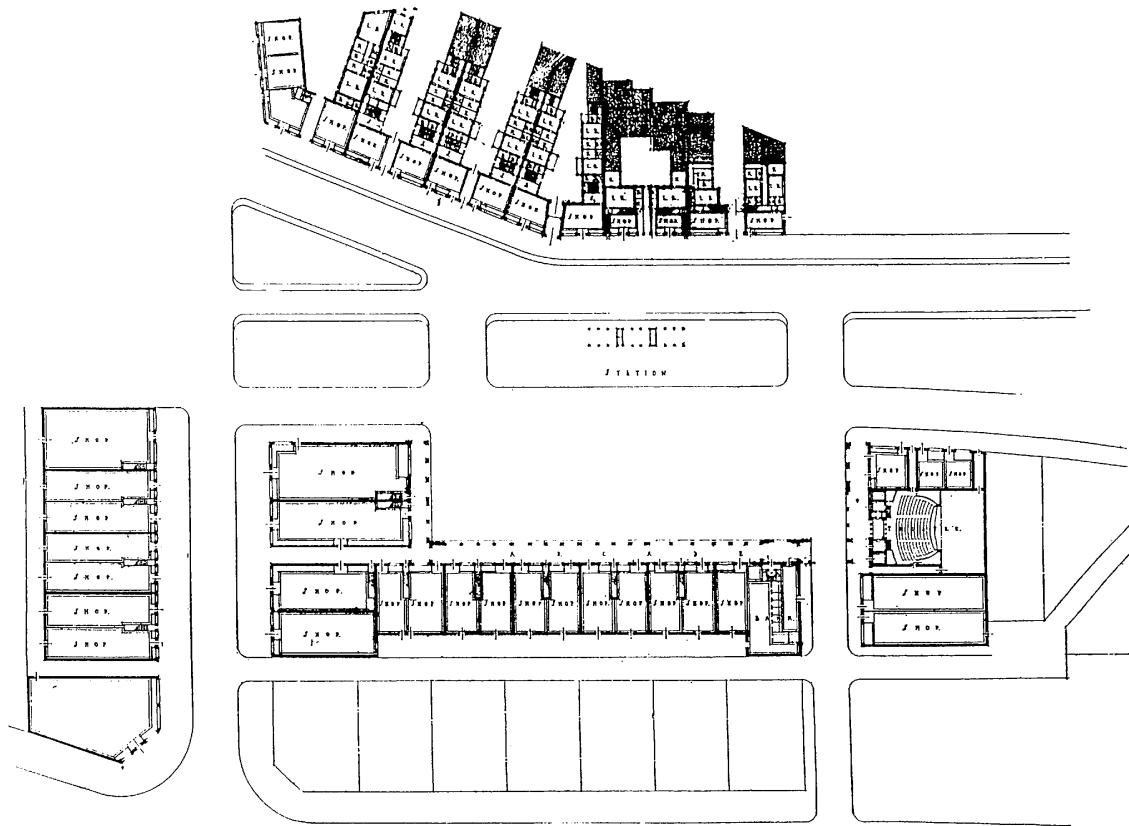
Lunada Bay Plaza, Palos Verdes Estates, 1923, Kirtland Cutter, architect; project. (*Architect and Engineer*, January 1930, 83.)

year were plans begun for unified complexes. Even then, development of a center would be undertaken by several parties, each purchasing a separate portion of the site. Participants had to adhere to the overall exterior design; however, policies governing the selection, mix, and management of tenants do not appear to have been formalized. Throughout the numerous accounts of planning at Palos Verdes, no clues were given to suggest that these centers of trade would be run as fully integrated business developments.

As it was, little need for an operational plan arose because most of the building scheme never materialized. Following the peak of residential real estate activity in the mid-1920s, public interest in Palos Verdes began to wane, dropping precipitously with the depression. Although southern Californians were driving ever greater distances to work, the tract lay too far from existing population centers to stimulate the rapid growth its sponsors envisioned. Development prior to the late 1930s was confined primarily to the northernmost subdivision, Malaga Cove. Only a small part of Malaga Cove Plaza was realized during its first decade.³¹

While mostly stillborn, the projected network of stylish business complexes at Palos Verdes came at a pivotal point in the shopping center's emergence as a significant part of planned community development. Retail facilities anticipated at Palos Verdes enjoyed a prominence—both in the plan and in promotions—never previously accorded in the residential sphere. The designs represent a capstone to the reformers' use of commerce to advance the cause of civic improvement. They had few direct offspring in part because planning on this scale required enormous capital, more than most developers of residential property could command. The





risks were high as well. All the money spent on planning and improvements to the land was for naught if a substantial part of the tract was not purchased by prospective homeowners. Attractive commercial centers were presented as part of numerous community plans in southern California during the height of the real estate boom, but few were realized.³² In some cases, the undertaking does not seem to have attracted enough residents to sustain much retail trade. In others, competing businesses were too close at hand. Finally, unless the projected business volume was great, lenders and merchants alike were probably inclined to think of decorous buildings as a garnish they could not afford. The shopping center had to be more than an ornament to a guaranteed neighborhood; it had to succeed in strictly economic terms. The idea of an integrated business development continued to grow in sophistication not because proponents were seeking aesthetic reform in its own right, but rather because they believed their approach to be a profitable alternative to the norm. That transformation took a major step forward with the announcement of Westwood Village in 1927.

WESTWOOD VILLAGE

Unlike the Palos Verdes complexes, Westwood Village was conceived as a major business center and a significant generator of profit in its own right. The target audience comprised residents not only of surrounding tracts cre-

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Malaga Cove Plaza, Palos Verdes Estates, preliminary design, 1923, Webber & Spaulding, architects. (*Architect and Engineer*, January 1930, 38.)

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Malaga Cove Plaza, site plan. (*California Southland*, February 1924, 23.)