

Architects see a bright future for La Jolla

By Lorie Hearn
Staff Writer

They started Saturday by walking the streets of La Jolla and finished by carefully collecting the opinions of more than 100 residents like seashells from the sand.

Then literally overnight, a cadre of nationally known architects fashioned clusters of paper and mental notes from a two-day planning and study session into a collage for the future of La Jolla's coastline, business and urban areas.

Not surprisingly, the architects emphasized a village atmosphere with a strong connection between land rovers and the sea. La Jolla should be a haven for pedestrians, they said, with just enough automobile access to entice sightseers — and most of all, shoppers.

The most striking suggestion came in the form of a cardboard and clay model with tiny stick trees that depicted a grassy, terraced pedestrian avenue down lower Girard Avenue from Prospect to the ocean.

Berkeley architect Christopher Alexander called the idea for closing lower Girard to traffic an example of a "bold stroke" of community identity. He reminded a gathering of more than 50 residents yesterday that the concept had been proffered and then forgotten nearly 15 years ago.

"The town lacks a center," Alexander said. Scripps Park, at the base of Girard, he said, "is really the jewel, and at the moment, unfortunately, it is not connected to the town."

The study session — which featured architects from all over Cali-

fornia — was sponsored by the La Jolla Town Council with help from the California State Coastal Conservancy, an agency with funding capabilities through state park bonds.

Other San Diego communities have sponsored similar sessions, and La Jolla's effort over the weekend represented another step in drawing residents into the planning process, which has zeroed in on problems of traffic, loss of retailers in the downtown and building densities.

Robertson Whittemore, president of the Town Council, said community involvement is a key to getting support from the San Diego City Council, and he pronounced the \$12,500 in honorariums to the architects well-spent. He said he hoped another could be conducted in October to home in on a pilot project that could

be funded by a tax assessment district and matching public funds.

Peter Brand, conservancy project manager and workshop director, said once La Jolla agrees on designs, it could be a candidate for some of his agency's \$30 million in bonds approved by the voters earlier this month.

From the first residents' meeting on Saturday, Brand sifted out what he said were the beginnings of a community design consensus. These included defining the village character; reclaiming for pedestrians lower Girard, central Prospect or Wall Street and paths to and above the Cove; restoring with gardens Green Dragon, Red Rest and Red Roost.

San Francisco architect John Lund Kriken said La Jolla's focus should be its coast and upland bluffs, ele-

ments to which the town's design should be tied.

Picking up the theme, Bruce D. Judd, another Bay Area architect defined La Jolla's character as "gently intertwined with nature." He recommended enlarging the list of historic buildings for preservation eliminating dark brick and glass from buildings and covering sterile walls with trellises.

Lamenting the fading days of the seaside bungalows that have been replaced with cookie-cutter, plate-glass buildings, San Diego architect Andrew Spurlock talked about the need to integrate building with nature. Subtleties, not drama, are La Jolla's trademark, he said, adding "It has the quality of a Mediterranean community."