

Mental Map: Escondido Village

Even though the building stock and colors are uniform and the site lacks the typical street grid, my neighborhood is fairly easy to envision and map even for newcomers. It contains all five of Kevin Lynch's imageability elements (paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks), and each of the elements is relatively distinct and unambiguous.

I live on Stanford University campus in Escondido Village. The landmarks I'm aware of as I come into the neighborhood are the Starbucks at the corner of El Camino and Stanford Avenue and the credit union, fire station, campus service station, and Quillen highrise on Serra Street. The entrance to campus from El Camino to Serra lacks a strong visual landmark, but the three buildings punctuating the green space along Serra stand out because they also mark automobile entrances to E-V.

Escondido Village is bounded by El Camino to the north, Stanford Avenue to the east, and Serra Street to the west. I'm not sure if the official boundary to the south is Escondido Road or Bowdoin, but I consider it to be Escondido because I rarely cross that road. Additionally, there's an inner road, Olmstead, that circles E-V and feeds onto both Serra and Stanford Ave. Stanford campus is across Serra, and the College Terrace neighborhood of Palo Alto is across Stanford Avenue. The major streets act as edges to define E-V.

E-V has housing reserved for married students and couples with children, as well as apartments for single students. The housing for married students with children is arranged around fenced-in courtyards, each with a sand pool and play area. These courtyards, and particularly the sand pools, are nodes of activity. Not only do the children use the area daily as a playground, but people barbeque and throw birthday and graduation parties there. We also have courtyard events scheduled every month. Each of the dozen or so apartment-courtyard arrangements acts as a district within the larger neighborhood. It's easy to get to know everyone in your courtyard, but less likely that you'll know more than a few faces in the others since people graduate and move on every quarter.

The irregularly-shaped center courtyard in E-V is not fenced in, but contains a large sand pool with playground equipment; a community garden; a picnic area; and tennis, basketball, and volleyball courts. This center courtyard acts as a node for the whole neighborhood, particularly during the E-V carnival, the Book Fair, and various other village-wide events. There are footpaths and bike paths from each courtyard to the center, and also within each courtyard. People like to do a loop around the tennis courts after dinner in the summer, and parents with stroller-age kids often take them there on their afternoon walks. My family likes to walk past the tennis courts up to 750 Pub on Escondido Road, make a right and walk up to Campus Drive, then turn around and come home again. It's about 30 minutes total, with a 9 year old in tow.

I usually walk by the community garden and down Thoburn Court to get to the credit union or to the pool. Otherwise if I'm going to campus, I walk by the tennis courts and down McFarland to the corner of Serra and Campus Drive. I spend more of my time off campus than on, so I use Olmstead to Yale to go to the nearest market. I walk or bike up Stanford to El Camino to the video store and salon, but I go down Yale to Cambridge to go to all the Cal. Ave. area offerings, including the Caltrain Station. Another regular path

I take is through the parking lot in front of my building, past the studio apartments, and down Comstock Circle to the E-V administrative office area to pick up our C.S.A. box on Wednesdays, and occasionally to pick up my friends' son at daycare near there. My daughter doesn't go to Escondido Elementary School, so I don't consider it part of E-V. Since most E-V families send their kids to Escondido Elementary, I assume they do consider it a part of the neighborhood.