



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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City of San Diego Begins Comprehensive Update to Heritage Preservation Program

EFFORT WILL MODERNIZE HISTORIC PROPERTY REGULATIONS TO PRESERVE IMPORTANT PLACES AND STREAMLINE NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION

SAN DIEGO – To streamline the process for building new homes while protecting places of historic, architectural and cultural importance and encouraging their adaptive reuse, today the City of San Diego launched the [Preservation and Progress initiative](#) to update its Heritage Preservation Program.

“This top-to-bottom review of our historic preservation will ensure we are truly preserving the architecture and buildings that are historically significant to San Diego, while also making sure the criteria is clear and this process is not used to block revitalization and new home construction,” said Mayor Todd Gloria. **“This will make historic determinations more efficient so we can both preserve our heritage and revitalize our communities with new housing for San Diegans.”**

Under the City’s existing program, development that impacts an older property is evaluated for possible historic significance as part of the permit review process, the vast majority of which are determined not historic. This review process results in significant time and money invested in identifying what is not historically significant, rather than what is important and worthy of protection, and adds time and uncertainty for builders.

Under Preservation and Progress, staff will comprehensively update existing [policy and regulatory documents](#) guiding the City’s Heritage Preservation Program to fix these inefficiencies and remove regulations unnecessarily impacting properties lacking historical or cultural importance. The initiative aims to identify and protect historic properties and districts truly important to the city’s history and culture. It will provide clearer requirements to builders and clearer procedures for protecting important resources and facilitate adaptive reuse of historic properties to meet our City’s changing needs.

“Many of our urban neighborhoods have wonderful historical resources worth preserving as well as opportunities to add much-needed housing,” said Councilmember Stephen Whitburn.

“Preservation and Progress will enable the City to more effectively and efficiently advance both of these important goals for current and future generations.”

While updating the policies and regulations, City staff will also look to advance equity in preservation to ensure it works better for everyone, particularly communities that have been harmed by injustice and exclusion, including Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), as well as LGBTQ+ communities. The initiative will also evaluate the Mills Act program to ensure it is equitable and incentivizes the protection and restoration of important places in a fiscally responsible manner. This State Act allows the City to grant property tax relief to qualified historic property owners who are actively participating in restoring and maintaining their historic property.

“Identifying and protecting the places, events and people that have shaped our city and history continues to be of high importance, but as our city grows, we must find more efficient ways to preserve our history while also meeting the needs of today’s city,” said City Planning Director Heidi Vonblum. “Preservation and Progress will allow us to navigate change, not stop it, so places can evolve while keeping what makes them most meaningful.”

Community members, organizations and others wanting to provide input can visit the [Progress and Preservation webpage](#) to learn more and submit comments. The initiative will ultimately go to the City Council for approval, and San Diegans will have an opportunity to provide input throughout the public hearing process.

The City remains committed to assisting project applicants with navigating existing historic preservation requirements. Members of the public can view this [quick explainer](#) and [contact City staff](#) with any additional questions.

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