

# ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

# 5

- 5.1 COMMERCIAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS
- 5.2 COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

## Introduction

North Park promotes small businesses, supports arts, culture, entertainment and services in its commercial districts. The community continues to create pedestrian-friendly destinations for shopping, dining, entertainment and local services for North Park residents and visitors. The history of North Park also figures prominently into the community's vision for its commercial districts. Improving neighborhood economic conditions and the physical infrastructure of North Park is a part of the community's vision.

## NORTH PARK 2012

- Commercial businesses employed nearly 5,800 people within North Park.
- Nearly 400 workers were government employees.
- An estimated 2,500 persons were self-employed
- Nearly 490,000 square feet of office space exists.
- Over 1.8 million square feet of retail space exists.
- A very limited amount of flex and light industrial space, at 63,000 square feet exists.

## Economic Prosperity Element Goals

1. *Successful, home-grown arts and culture, and entertainment\hospitality districts which appeal to both residents and tourists.*
2. *Infill development, including mixed use (where appropriate) for the purposes of increasing employment opportunities in village centers.*
3. *Diverse mix of business types to support day time and night time activities.*
4. *Unique, pedestrian-oriented commercial districts reflective of their history.*
5. *Regional reputation as an affordable location for creative business, knowledge based industries and the green economy.*
6. *Vibrant neighborhood commercial districts where the residents purchase a significant share of their basic needs and services from within the community.*
7. *Enhancement of commercial districts appearance and upgraded infrastructure for associated commercial districts.*
8. *Increase awareness of North Park's funding needs for successful local economic development and revitalization actions.*
9. *Social equity and social justice to be included in economic prosperity and community revitalization policies.*

## 5.1 Commercial Business Districts

Commercial activity in North Park tends to be greatest at key nodes or intersections, such as Park Boulevard and Adams Avenue; major intersections along 30th Street at Adams Avenue, El Cajon Boulevard, University Avenue, and Upas Street; and, at El Cajon Boulevard at Park Boulevard and Texas Street. Commercial activity dominates corridors between these nodes, especially on El Cajon Boulevard, University Avenue, 30th Street, and to a lesser extent Adams Avenue and Park Boulevard.

Most of North Park's commercial districts are distinct compared with conventional shopping centers because of the unique offerings and pedestrian-orientation. However, El Cajon Boulevard is distinct from North Park's other districts. While El Cajon Boulevard can be as pedestrian-oriented as other grand commercial boulevards, it also has a tradition of auto-orientation associated with its historical role, traffic volume capacity, and larger lots.

El Cajon Boulevard, from Florida to Texas, has emerged as a concentration of ethnic restaurants and the Lafayette Hotel has undergone renovation to restore its reputation as a visitor and regional event destination. University Avenue and 30th Street business district has a concentration of restaurants and nightlife activities. Adams Avenue also has many diverse restaurants and nightlife activities.

Smaller professional service firms are attracted to North Park because of its emergence as a community for creativity, its amenities, diversity, affordable rent, and centrality in the region. North Park's monthly office lease rates are 80 percent of the City's average lease rates; this affordability is one reason for North Park's low vacancy rates. The North Park office inventory is a small share of the regional market, which provides a limited foundation for business and professional services in the community.

Given North Park's emerging business orientation towards smaller independent boutique service businesses and retail, and given continued regional competition, the amount of commercial land along these corridors may exceed demand, especially further away from activity nodes.

### NORTH PARK 2030

- Employment is estimated to grow by 17% adding over 1,400 jobs.
- Industry sectors which are expected to experience growth include health services, leisure and hospitality, professional and business services, retail trade, finance and real estate, and government.
- Industry sectors that are estimated to experience contraction include manufacturing, wholesale trade, information services, agriculture and mining, and other personal services.



*The North Park community has the benefit of having four business district organizations looking after the success of its commercial areas.*



*El Cajon Boulevard is a historic and major commercial-transit corridor that spans across North Park and the Mid-City communities.*

Despite the great amount of retail space in North Park, residents are currently doing much of their shopping outside the community. While conventional retail outlets have struggled, North Park’s diverse population has generated demand for unique food and retail outlets that serve their tastes. The reduction in North Park’s sales has been mostly in food stores, packaged liquor, autos, apparel, and other conventional retail outlets, such as, those selling furniture, appliances, household fixtures, electronics and general merchandise.

From 1990 to 2012, taxable retail sales in North Park fell by approximately 8 percent compared to a Citywide increase of 18 percent in taxable retail sales during this period. The largest drop in sales was for food stores. Estimated taxable sales generated by bars and restaurants did grow by 74 percent in the past two decades. These bars and restaurants generated 28 percent of all 2012 taxable sales in North Park, compared to 17 percent of all City restaurants and bars taxable sales during this same period.

An opportunity exists to recapture some of the retail trade in North Park. Despite the contraction in sales during the last two decades, the buying power will rise as North Park grows its local market. The expected increase in North Park’s population and the other central communities’ will generate future support for general neighborhood retail services, such as grocers.

Additional buying power in the existing commercial districts and corridors can also be enhanced with mixed use development within the neighborhood village centers. It is more important to have a mixture of uses within a defined walkable area than to require every building to be mixed.

Given the amount of land in North Park along the commercial corridors, some properties in locations along these corridors could be put to uses other than retail. Other uses such as housing and office would help support more concentrated commercial districts and existing retail, providing an increase in consumers and buying power nearby. In these commercial areas, retail can be an optional use, particularly along portions of the corridors that are not near the higher-activity commercial nodes or intersections.



*The University Heights – Park Boulevard Business District is shared by both the North Park and Uptown communities.*



*The Adams Avenue Business Improvement District which runs through Normal Heights, Kensington, Antique Row, and University Heights annually plays host to the Adams Avenue Street Fair and Adams Avenue Unplugged which are the City’s largest free music festivals.*



*In addition to housing, additional office space could help support the community’s commercial districts by increasing the number of employees and consumers in the community.*

## POLICIES

- EP-1.1** Identify and implement nationally recognized best practices that promote an inclusive approach to addressing the needs of both hospitality businesses and nearby residents (e.g. patron and business personal behavioral issues, accountability, and enforcement, noise and trash management, cigarette and food packaging litter, parking issues, public restroom access).
- EP-1.2** Ensure clean and safe business environments that attract pedestrian traffic and local investment (e.g. graffiti prevention/removal, safe sidewalks that are ADA compliant and encourage side walk cafes, sidewalk cleaning and safety ambassadors.)
- EP-1.3** Concentrate commercial activity in the vicinity of mixed use corridor intersections, with pedestrian orientation to distinguish the nodes and Adams Avenue and 30th Street, University Avenue and 30th Street, and University Avenue and Upas Street.
- EP-1.4** Encourage mixed use development shopkeeper units, to attract residents to the core commercial areas, where appropriate.
- EP-1.5** Promote development of physical space such as shopkeeper units, co-work spaces, and business incubators that supports targeted commercial uses and start-up and entrepreneurial enterprises.
- EP-1.6** Activate alleys in the commercial mixed-use areas to improve aesthetics and safety by improving urban design and allowing commercial shop and service activities.
- EP-1.7** Consider allowing shared parking for mixed use new commercial developments that are within identified village centers
- EP-1.8** Support the North Park Business Improvement District association's efforts to promote the use of the North Park public garage, including the addition of signage to make visitors to this commercial district aware of this parking facility.
- EP-1.9** Encourage the Business Improvement District associations to consider a North Park and Business Improvement Districts' "branding strategies" and signage to market the respective commercial districts, while respecting each district's unique character.
- EP-1.10** Position and promote North Park for smaller, independent professional business service firms associated with knowledge based businesses and creative and sustainable industries.
- EP-1.11** Attract and support quality sit-down restaurants that appeal to a broad range of demographics including young families.
- EP-1.12** Attract and support destination restaurants that draw consumers from outside the community.
- EP-1.13** Recapture a greater share of local North Park residents' expenditures with improved basic retail and personal services, as well as promotional efforts.
- EP-1.14** Introduce more diversified housing choices and mixture of incomes to enhance the buying power within North Park, particularly between University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard.
- EP-1.15** Improve the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure in North Park's commercial districts to position it as one of the most sustainable districts in San Diego, and promote this attribute to compete regionally.
- EP-1.16** Support the installation and maintenance of high-quality streets and sidewalks, well-landscaped medians and parkways, enhanced pedestrian crossings, pedestrian-oriented and historically sensitive lighting, creative streetscaping amenities (e.g. street furniture, planters, public art) and street signage.

## 5.2 Community Revitalization

North Park's many businesses are known to produce what they sell, whether it's food, arts and culture, hospitality entertainment, or services. North Park has repositioned itself in the regional market and capturing a dedicated share of the local market. Private and public investment in historic landmarks, such as the North Park Theater on University Avenue and the Lafayette Hotel on El Cajon Boulevard, are recreating anchors of performing arts and leisure and hospitality businesses. With efforts in the community such as the Sustainable North Park Main Street Program and North Park Eco District, which emphasize resource conservation and efficiency, North Park is emerging as a center for sustainability and a setting for the green economy.

North Park has a reputation as an Arts, Culture, and Entertainment District, organically evolving from Ray Street, in no small part due to the efforts of local community organizations. In addition, North Park, due to its proximity, may even be able to capture some of San Diego's visitor trade in Downtown and Balboa Park if transportation links are enhanced.

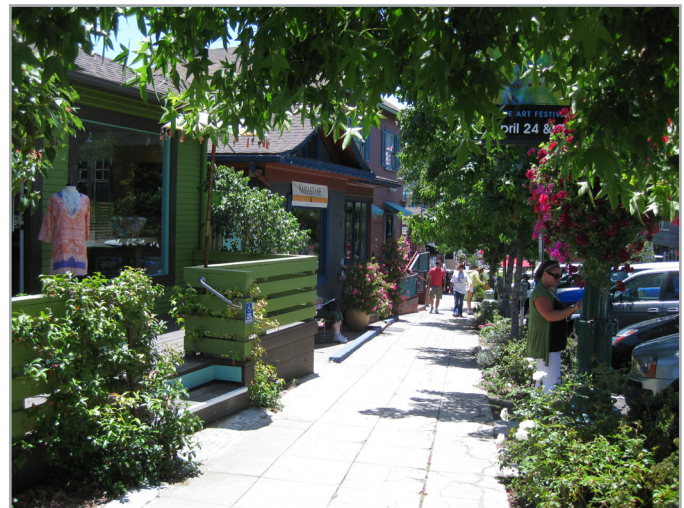


*The growth and popularity of North Park's art, culture, and entertainment district has been major a contributing factor in North Park's revitalization.*

Community dedication to quality of life in North Park is demonstrated by the different self-assessments which residents, property owners and business owners have approved for their community. The Business Improvement District associations and Maintenance Assessment District funds continue to be invested in the north park community to revitalize the area and increase economic prosperity. See figure 5-1: Business Improvement and Maintenance Assessment Districts. These districts are a funding mechanism for services to the area above-and-beyond the city's general benefit services. The business improvement district associations sponsored events which spotlight the community character of their district. The historic districts and main street designation continue to preserve neighborhood character.

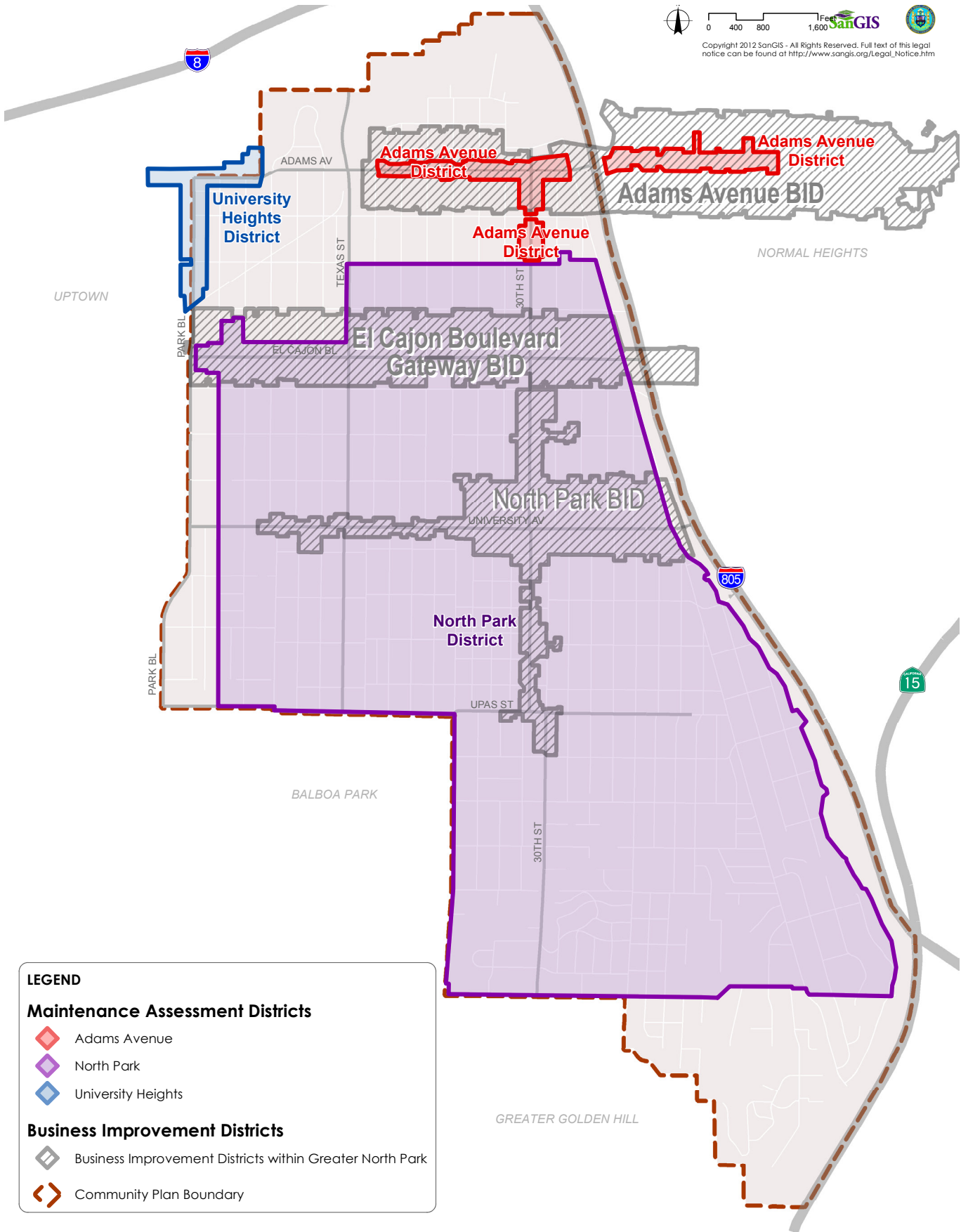
The City's Economic Development Department and Planning Department will continue to work with the residents, community and business organizations in North Park for continued successful revitalization.

Maintaining the efforts and existing revitalization tools listed below, in addition to seeking additional economic development tools, within the pedestrian-oriented commercial and mixed use nodes, will enhance and create competitive commercial destinations.



*Street trees and landscaping can be a major economic generator for commercial districts by attracting pedestrians.*

Figure 5-1: Business Improvement and Maintenance Assessment Districts



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**LEGEND**

**Maintenance Assessment Districts**

- ◊ Adams Avenue
- ◊ North Park
- ◊ University Heights

**Business Improvement Districts**

- ◊ Business Improvement Districts within Greater North Park
- ◊ Community Plan Boundary

## PUBLIC ART

Support the inclusion of art or cultural uses in private development projects within the community. Encourage North Park's business associations to participate in the development and implementation of a North Park Art Master Plan, which includes public art as a commercial revitalization tool. Refer to the Arts and Culture Element.

## URBAN FORESTRY

Expand the urban forest in North Park in hopes of improving the walkability and quality of life.

## NATIONAL MAIN STREET ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations may be designated as Main Street organizations. Main Street use the preservation-based Main Street Four-Point Approach which supports small independent business owners through revitalization efforts by leveraging local assets - historic, cultural, architectural and community pride. The North Park Organization of Businesses received a Main Street designation in 1996 and thus uses the DBA of North Park Main Street.

## SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

Public/Private partnerships to facilitate access to small business financial assistance programs and other support resources.

## STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (SIP)

The City's SIP assists small business owners in revitalizing building facades through design assistance and financial incentives. Many North Park businesses have used this Program.

## MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENT DISTRICTS (MAD)

MADs are established by the City as property-based special assessment districts. Adoption of a MAD provides property owners with the opportunity to self-assess to pay for improvements, maintenance, services and activities beyond those general benefits provided by the City. North Park has an active MAD. Refer to PFSSE.

## BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (BID)

BIDs are geographic areas, established by the City, where the businesses have voted to self-assess, to fund activities and services, which promote the business district. These activities and services are above-and-beyond general benefit City services. Three BIDs are located in North Park, the Adams Avenue BID (which continues into Mid-City), El Cajon Gateway BID and North Park BID.





## MICRO DISTRICTS

A Micro District is generally an area in which the number of individual small businesses is less than 300 or an area where there may be more businesses but they are not sufficiently clustered in close proximity.

## SUSTAINABLE NORTH PARK MAIN STREET

The goals and objectives of this effort are to maintain the cultural and historic integrity of the built and social environment, increase resource efficiency and conservation increase internal community connectivity, and provide a setting for a sustainable green economy. Evaluate the potential to expand this effort to other commercial districts in North Park.

## THE NORTH PARK ECO DISTRICT

The North Park Eco District is a non-profit organization which advocates for sustainability through promoting equity, cultivating the historic nature of neighborhoods, and nurturing the local environment.

## HISTORIC DISTRICTS

A historic district is an area which contains buildings of historical significance and value that has legal protection from development. Its purpose is to preserve and build upon the natural character of its surrounding neighborhood. Refer to the Historic Preservation Element for additional information regarding existing and potential historic districts and other identified community historic resources.

## CLEAN & SAFE

Safety ambassadors, sidewalk sweeping, trash and debris removal, power washing sidewalks, systematic graffiti removal, maintenance of landscaping, and public safety services are frequent components of a neighborhood Clean and Safe Program. As these services and activities are special benefits above-and-beyond the City's general benefits, such services and activities are supported by assessment district funding.



**POLICIES**

- EP-2.1 Position and expand North Park’s arts district on Ray Street to attract regional patrons with continued events and promotions, including the development of the North Park Theater to accommodate special events.
- EP-2.2 Market the Downtown and Balboa Park visitor trade and improve convenient transportation linkages from those destinations to North Park, including a potential street car linkage.
- EP-2.3 Improve the gateway to North Park on University Avenue from Park Boulevard and Interstate 805 with streetscape improvements and concentrated redevelopment.
- EP-2.4 Consider a Micro Assessment District for 30th Street businesses located in North Park and Golden Hill to support, dining, the arts, and entertainment along this commercial corridor.
- EP-2.5 Promote the development of attractive and unique gathering spaces, such as mini-parks, pocket parks, parklets, interior and exterior plazas which include public art and visitor-friendly seating areas, as appropriate.

- EP-2.6 Encourage the Business Improvement District associations to develop a community-based North Park Economic Development Strategy building upon the City’s recently adopted Economic Development Strategy.
- EP-2.7 Encourage the Business Improvement District associations to develop and implement a Business Targeting and Attraction Strategy.
- EP-2.8 Support the Business Improvement District associations’ efforts to identify new funding sources for local economic development and revitalization efforts in North Park.
- EP-2.9 Work with the Business Improvement District associations to strengthen the connections between the northern and southern commercial districts in North Park.
- EP-2.10 Continue to expedite the implementation of the University Mobility Plan (and future like projects) to lessen traffic congestion, encourage use of public transit, improve parking conditions and provide pedestrian friendly streetscape.
- EP-2.11 Utilize economic development tools and programs to attract and retain small businesses, through the maintenance and enhancement of commercial areas.



*Parklets are an innovative way to transform parking into unique gathering spaces within commercial districts. The City’s first parklet is located at 30th Street and University Avenue.*



*Older buildings can be retrofitted to create new indoor - outdoor experiences.*