



INTRODUCTION

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This Otay Mesa-Nestor Community Plan (Plan) represents the first comprehensive update of the original Otay Mesa-Nestor Community Plan that was adopted in December, 1978. Development of the Plan was a joint effort of the Otay Mesa-Nestor Community Planning Committee and City Planning Department staff. Because the community is approximately 95 percent developed, the planning process used in creating this Plan went beyond the scope of the traditional land use plan. A wide range of issues identified by community members, business operators, and residents was addressed. The purpose of the Plan is to serve as a guide for the future development and improvement of the community. This Plan incorporates the Local Coastal Program for the Otay Mesa-Nestor community.

PLAN APPROACH

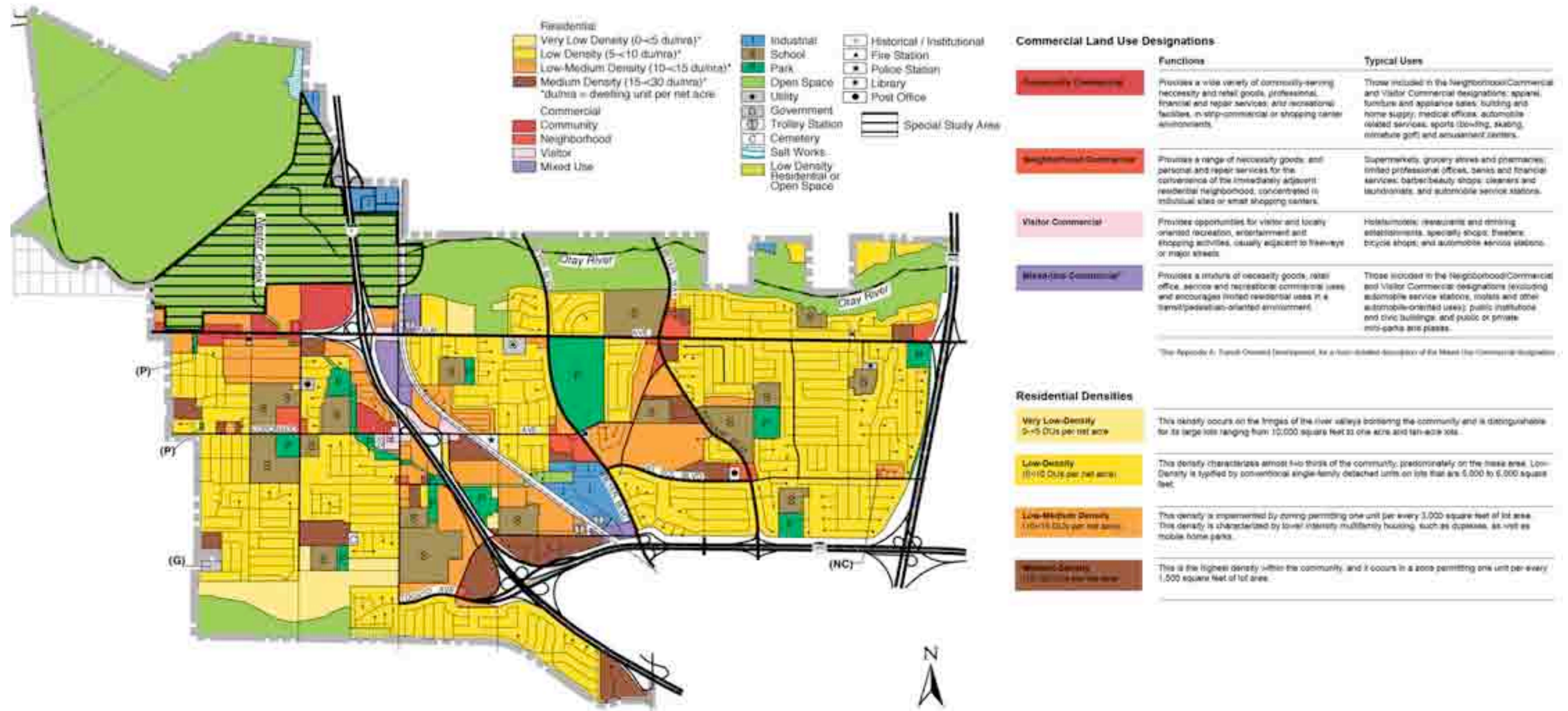
The approach used in creating this Plan relied heavily upon the foundation provided in the Community Conditions Report (October, 1993), a comprehensive assessment of existing conditions that provided a basic knowledge of the community. It includes detailed information about the history of the community, its demographics, and existing land uses. The Otay Mesa-Nestor Community Conditions Report is available for review or purchase through the City Publications Center.

In addition to the Community Conditions Report, the update process utilized a community survey. The survey provided community members an opportunity to provide their opinions about the community. It was designed to identify issues, problems, strengths, and positive attributes that are desired to be preserved.

A prevailing issue identified during the plan update process is the general lack of identity and lack of a strong community core. By addressing individual neighborhood centers and unique natural areas that have potential for improvement, the Plan emphasizes opportunity areas that could augment the community's existing strengths and provide neighborhood identity. The combination of the existing vital neighborhood areas with the future improved areas recommended in this Plan will create the foundation for a vibrant, balanced community.

Each of the community's neighborhoods is unique, reflecting different eras of development, different topography and natural features, and distinct neighborhood centers. Together, these areas provide a wide range of residential, civic, shopping, employment and recreational opportunities. Collectively, they contribute to a community of neighborhoods.

The following are some of the strengths and attributes that were identified as worthy of perpetuation and preservation:





- Quiet and safe neighborhoods.
- Single-family homes mostly owner occupied.
- Affordable housing.
- Ethnically diverse community.
- Close knit neighborhoods.
- Feeling of "small town" community where there is no fear of letting children out to play.
- Good neighbors - less crime and fear.
- Recreational facilities and programs.
- Proximity to Otay River Valley and Tijuana River Valley.

OTAY MESA-NESTOR NEIGHBORHOODS

Otay Mesa-Nestor is comprised of several neighborhoods, each including one or more neighborhood centers or focal points, in addition to parks and schools. Some of these neighborhood centers have been identified as having revitalization potential or providing opportunities for enhancement, and are addressed by the Topics. Other existing neighborhood centers and unique areas are considered to be in healthier condition and contribute to the community's cultural and economic diversity and vitality. The centers are identified on the Community Vision map (**Figure 1**). The following is a brief description of the community's principal neighborhoods and their neighborhood centers.

Nestor

This older neighborhood is located between Interstate 5 (I-5) and Saturn Boulevard, and bordered by the Salt Ponds on the north and the Tijuana River Valley to the south. In addition to containing Nestor Town Center (Topic 2B) it includes several small neighborhood commercial centers. The portion of the neighborhood south of Leon and Tocayo Avenues retains a rural character by maintaining existing large lot residential development and equestrian uses.

Egger Highlands

Located west of Saturn Boulevard between the Salt Ponds and the Tijuana River Valley, Egger Highlands is the gateway to the City and the community from Imperial Beach. It includes Palm Avenue West (Topic 2C), which is the main commercial and circulation corridor in this part of the community, and has revitalization potential. The community's largest shopping centers, Southland Plaza and Coronado Square, are also located in this neighborhood.

Palm City

Palm City, historically the transportation hub for the community, is characterized by the variety of land uses located along the trolley corridor, including the community's two industrial parks. The proposed mixed use Palm City (Topic 2A) and Iris Avenue Mercado (Topic 2D) neighborhood centers will revitalize the areas of the community's two transit stations. The Southern Area Police Station is centrally located in this neighborhood.



Otay Mesa

This newer, primarily residential neighborhood, contains several smaller commercial centers including Palm Plaza and the Palm Ridge Shopping Center. A neighborhood commercial center is located at the intersection of Del Sol and Picador Boulevards. Montgomery-Waller Park, the Otay Mesa Branch Library, the City's Neighborhood Service Center and another shopping center form a civic and commercial focus in the vicinity of Coronado Avenue and Beyer Boulevard.

Although not specifically addressed by the plan Topics, the plan supports the established neighborhood centers by designating appropriate land uses and applying corresponding zoning. Continued development consistent with the planned land use is recommended in these areas.

COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

It is intended that by focusing on the key community issues in a concise, topic-oriented format, that this Plan is an effective planning and communication tool for community improvement. The plan approach should not only facilitate plan implementation, but also foster community involvement. It provides strategies and direction for numerous community improvement projects. While not being able to fully control all the factors that will contribute to plan implementation such as private investment, public funding, and unforeseen social and economic trends, community members can use this Plan as a guide for future development. By prioritizing the topics, community members can begin working with the City, other agencies, and private interests to direct funding and revitalization resources to those areas of the community where they are needed most.

Another prevailing issue identified during the plan update process is the community members' perception that their voice, and the interests of their community, are not heard and considered as strongly as those of other communities. Through the formation of the Community Plan Implementation Team and the direction provided by this plan, community members can increase their involvement and commitment to improving their own community and improve their effectiveness in influencing local government and other forces that ultimately shape the quality of life in Otay Mesa-Nestor.

COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Issues

Community improvement recommendations contained in community plans frequently go unrealized. This is due in part because of poor communication and coordination within the City organization and because community-based organizations are often poorly connected with City Hall. Also, funding for implementation programs is almost always inadequate. Plan implementation has particularly been a problem in urbanized areas where most neighborhood improvement projects require services and expertise from a variety of City departments, outside agencies and community groups.



Strategies

Develop and put into effect a multi-disciplinary approach (a team comprised of City staff, community representatives, community planning members, business operators, students, and other agencies as needed) toward implementing the community plan.

The team shall be involved in implementing the visions, strategies and other recommendations contained in the maps, topics and appendices in this community plan.

The team shall create a community plan implementation work plan and assign priorities and develop a schedule to carry out the plan.

Foster public participation through focused outreach and education programs. Fully utilize the services provided by the Neighborhood Service Center as a community-City agencies liaison. Provide technical support to the community as needed. Represent the community's interest at City Hall.

The Team will ensure its commitment and accountability to the community by holding regular meetings, biannual community meetings, and issuing progress reports annually to the Planning Commission and City Council on the team's progress in implementing the community plan.

Responsibility

The City Manager, working with the community, shall be responsible for creating the Team. The Team shall have representatives from City departments as needed.

To ensure its long-term commitment, the City will strive to adequately staff the Team.

Schedule

Create the Team and commence community plan implementation immediately following plan adoption.





PLANNING CONTEXT

THE COMMUNITY PLANNING AREA

The Otay Mesa-Nestor Community is located within the southern region of the City, in what is generally referred to as the South Bay area. It is bounded on the north by the city of Chula Vista, and on the south by the Tijuana River Valley and the San Ysidro Communities. The city of Imperial Beach is on the west and the Otay Mesa community on the east.

The community extends about a mile and a half from north to south and four miles from east to west, and totals approximately 4,500 acres. Adoption of this update will expand the community planning area further north and west to include 740 acres of the Salt Ponds.

DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING HISTORY

The community's planning history as part of the City of San Diego (City) began in 1957 when this unincorporated area was annexed to the City from the county of San Diego. In 1957 there were less than 1,000 housing units in the area. Shortly after annexation to the City, single-family residential subdivision development began. By the late 1960s, residential development had accelerated dramatically causing serious problems in supplying adequate public facilities in the Otay Mesa-Nestor and San Ysidro areas. In 1973, the City Council rezoned a number of vacant properties to a lower density to reduce deficiencies in, and future demand on, public facilities and services.

The City Council directed City staff to work with the then newly recognized Otay Mesa Community Planning Group in the preparation of a Community Plan. In February 1976, the City Council authorized expansion of the study area to include the Nestor Community, to consolidate planning efforts within the South Bay area. The first Otay Mesa-Nestor Community Plan was adopted in 1979 to serve as a comprehensive guide for development within the area through the ensuing 15 to 20 years.

Since the adoption of the 1979 Plan, there have been fifteen plan amendments varying from one-acre redesignations to a 320-acre southerly extension of the plan area boundary, which resulted in an adjustment to the Tijuana River Valley community planning area. The cumulative effect of the plan amendments was to permit 1,200-1,500 more residential units than had originally been designated in the 1979 Plan.

Many of the land use recommendations of the 1979 Plan, and its subsequent amendments, have been implemented and the community has generally developed according to plan. This updated Plan has considered existing and anticipated conditions which will influence future development, and includes recommendations for the expected final buildout and future redevelopment of the Otay Mesa-Nestor Community.



URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Otay Mesa-Nestor Community is located in the southern portion of the Coastal Plain of San Diego County. The community is characterized by river valleys, steep slopes, mesas and hydrologic features including Nestor Creek and the salt evaporation ponds of southern San Diego Bay.

Otay and Tijuana River Valleys

Two river valleys, the Otay and the Tijuana, generally define the northern and southern boundaries, respectively, of the community. The valleys, which are characterized by wetlands and riparian habitats, are predominately influenced by seasonal rains and stream flow. Land uses in the fertile and productive valleys have included agriculture and mineral extraction. Development within the valleys is constrained by application of the Floodway Zone and the Floodplain Fringe Overlay Zone.

Sand and Gravel Operations

The Otay Valley riverbed has been a source of sand and gravel extraction for many years. Extraction operations existed in the vicinity of Beyer Boulevard. Terrace escarpments in the vicinity of Beyer Way, north of Montgomery High School, are currently being excavated. These operations have resulted in substantial landform alteration, scarring and loss of native vegetation on the valley's floor and southern slopes.

Steep Slopes and Mesas

Steep, north-facing slopes on the south side of the Otay River Valley approach 200 feet in height and are home to sensitive vegetation resources. Steep topography also occurs south of the Otay River Valley and north of Palm Avenue between Hollister Street and Beyer Way. Development on the slopes is constrained by topography and the Hillside Review Overlay Zone.

Contrasting with the valleys and steep bluffs are the community's level marine terraces and transitional areas. Elevations range from 25 to 100 feet within the western Nestor Terrace. Elevations from approximately 125 feet to 250 feet form a transition zone between the Nestor Terrace and the Otay Terrace, which lies east of the community and is greater than 400 feet in elevation. Mesa rims at the crest of the steep slopes, and high mesa ridgelines located throughout the eastern portion of the planning area offer excellent view opportunities in all directions.

Nestor Creek and the Salt Ponds

In addition to the two river valleys, Nestor Creek is a less significant, but still important hydrologic feature of the community. Nestor Creek flows generally aboveground in open channels from 30th Street westerly, meets the Otay River in the marshlands of the lower Otay River Valley, and then empties into San Diego Bay.



The salt evaporation ponds comprise the majority of the approximately 740-acre portion of the community located in San Diego Bay. Terrestrial-based uses, including the salt processing plant, auxiliary buildings, storage yards and vacant land, comprise the remainder of the area.

Development and Circulation Patterns

Otay Mesa-Nestor is an urbanized community that is primarily developed with residential land uses. Over 57 percent of the planning area (not including the Salt Ponds) is covered with residential land uses (approximately 17,000 housing units). In comparison, commercial and industrial land uses comprise only eight percent (five percent and three percent, respectively) of the plan area. Twenty percent of the planning area consists of schools, parks, transit and other public facilities. Vacant, undeveloped, agricultural and mineral extraction and processing uses comprise the remaining 15 percent of the planning area, and occur predominately in portions of the Otay and Tijuana River Valleys.

The community's circulation system includes three interstate freeways (I-5, I-805, I-905) that intersect in a grid pattern of local streets within the community. A light rail transit system connects the community to downtown San Diego and the Mexican border. Bus routes link the two transit stops at Palm Avenue and Iris Avenue to connect passengers to outlying areas.



PLAN ORGANIZATION

The Otay Mesa-Nestor Community Plan is comprised of the following three main components:

1. COMMUNITY VISION/COMMUNITY LAND USE MAP

The Community Vision Map and statements represent the future and describe the vision of an improved quality of community life that includes conservation of natural resources, adequate provision of public services and facilities, and revitalized neighborhoods. The Visions found at the beginning of each Topic or section, set the tone of the Plan and are the basis for the Plan's recommendations. The Vision map illustrates the general setting of the community relative to other South Bay communities and highlights its distinct existing and proposed neighborhood features.

The Community Land Use Map designates land uses for the entire community planning area. These land uses are consistent with the strategies and guidelines recommended in the Topic Sheets and the Appendix. The Commercial Land Use Designations and Residential Densities charts explain the predominant land use designations of the Land Use Map. The Street Classifications map designates community streets according to City standards.

The Community Land Use Map may be used as an independent document that conveys the community's basic characteristics, planned land uses, and vision for the future. Readers interested in learning more about the community including specific issues, strategies, and guidelines can refer to the Introduction, and the two other main plan components, the Topic Sheets and Appendix.

2. TOPIC SHEETS

Each Topic Sheet includes a discussion of the issues and provides strategies to implement the related community vision. Each Topic Sheet addresses either a geographic area within the community or a subject relevant to the entire community. Topics are grouped in chapters by subject. Most chapters address more than one Topic, although two chapters are single-Topic.

The format organizes categories of information in a similar outline on each of the Topic Sheets. The format allows flexible arrangement of individual map and graphic information. Each Topic Sheet contains all or some of the following categories of information:

- **Vision**

Vision statements represent community members' desires for a future improved quality of community life, relative to the particular Topic. Written in the future tense, they present an image of the community as it will be after the community plan



strategies, guidelines and recommendations have been implemented. Visions are either provided at the beginning of each Topic category when there is only one Vision for several sub-Topics (e.g., Community Facilities, Topic 4), or provided for individual sub-Topics, as appropriate (e.g., Palm City, Topic 2a).

- **Issues**

This category identifies the existing and potential future conditions that warrant attention and are the focus of this Plan. Issues can explore the range of conditions from significant problems requiring abatement or improvement to opportunities for enhancement.

- **Strategies**

Strategies respond to the items addressed in the Issues category. They are the recommendations for land use and physical improvement, provision of infrastructure and services, and development of neighborhood improvement programs.

- **Implementation Block**

The Implementation Block includes the following five sub-categories:

Responsibility

This category recommends the participation of the agencies, organizations or ad hoc groups that should be involved in the implementation of the strategies recommended in the particular Topic. Inclusion in this listing is based on areas of expertise, regulatory authority, ownership or business interest. This listing should be considered a guide; and as the implementation process for particular strategies evolves, additional or other more appropriate responsible parties may be identified. Community members and the Community Plan Implementation Team are always included in this category.

Funding

Most projects identified by the strategies in this Plan are unfunded. Except for a few cases where funds have been specifically identified, these recommendations identify potential funding sources and suggest funding strategies for Plan implementation. The potential sources may include a combination of City, other public agency and private funding sources.

Schedule

The implementation schedule shall be established by prioritization of all the plan strategies by the Community Plan Implementation Team and community members. Available or potential funding will be a consideration when establishing priorities. Except for projects or programs which are ongoing, or for which a schedule is identified, the recommendation is: "To be determined."



Land Use

Indicates the planned land use, which is designated on the Community Land Use map, and provides recommendations for interim, future or alternative land uses. Also provided are listings of discretionary permits or other actions required in conjunction with the planned land use, and references to other guidelines or policy documents which provide direction for development of particular sites.

Zoning

This category provides recommendations for future zoning, consistent with planned or future land uses, and identifies requirements or conditions for future application of recommended zones.

At the time this Plan was being prepared, the City of San Diego zoning code was being updated. Since new or revised citywide zone classifications were not adopted by the time this Plan was completed, proposed zoning was described by land use and development criteria rather than specifying a particular zone. Future rezonings should be based on selecting those zones that best match the prescribed criteria.

- **Guidelines**

Guidelines are provided in the Otay Valley Regional Park & Salt Ponds, Neighborhood Centers and Parks Topics. These Topics address anticipated or recommended physical site development. The guidelines may address land use, pedestrian and transit orientation, site planning, and architectural and landscape design associated with future project development.

- **Vicinity Maps**

Vicinity maps are provided in the geographically oriented Topics - the Otay Valley Regional Park & Salt Ponds, and Neighborhood Centers. They indicate the general Topic vicinity, which corresponds to the Topic areas shown on the Community Vision Map.

- **Reference Block**

Reference Blocks, located in the lower right corner of the first page of each Topic Sheet, refer the reader to related or supporting information located elsewhere in the Topic, in other related Topics, on the Community Vision map, or in the Appendix. References are not typically made within the Topic text.

3. APPENDIX

The Appendix contains generic information or recommendations applicable to the entire community or this plan update process, and specific detailed information referred to in the Topic Sheets. A complete list of Appendices is provided in the Index.