



1

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES
- 1.2 PURPOSE
- 1.3 PLAN ORGANIZATION
- 1.4 PLANNING PROCESS
- 1.5 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
- 1.6 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK
- 1.7 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Introduction

Old Town San Diego has significant historical importance for the City of San Diego. It is the site of initial settlement in the City and the birthplace of the State of California. The rich heritage of this community is of immense value to present and future generations. Old Town is a historic and cultural destination for visitors, which supports the community's retail and restaurant businesses, hotels, and museums. The Community Plan provides a vision that preserves and enhances the historical significance and supports a balance between residential and visitor-oriented uses. Figure 1-1 shows Old Town's location and its surrounding communities.

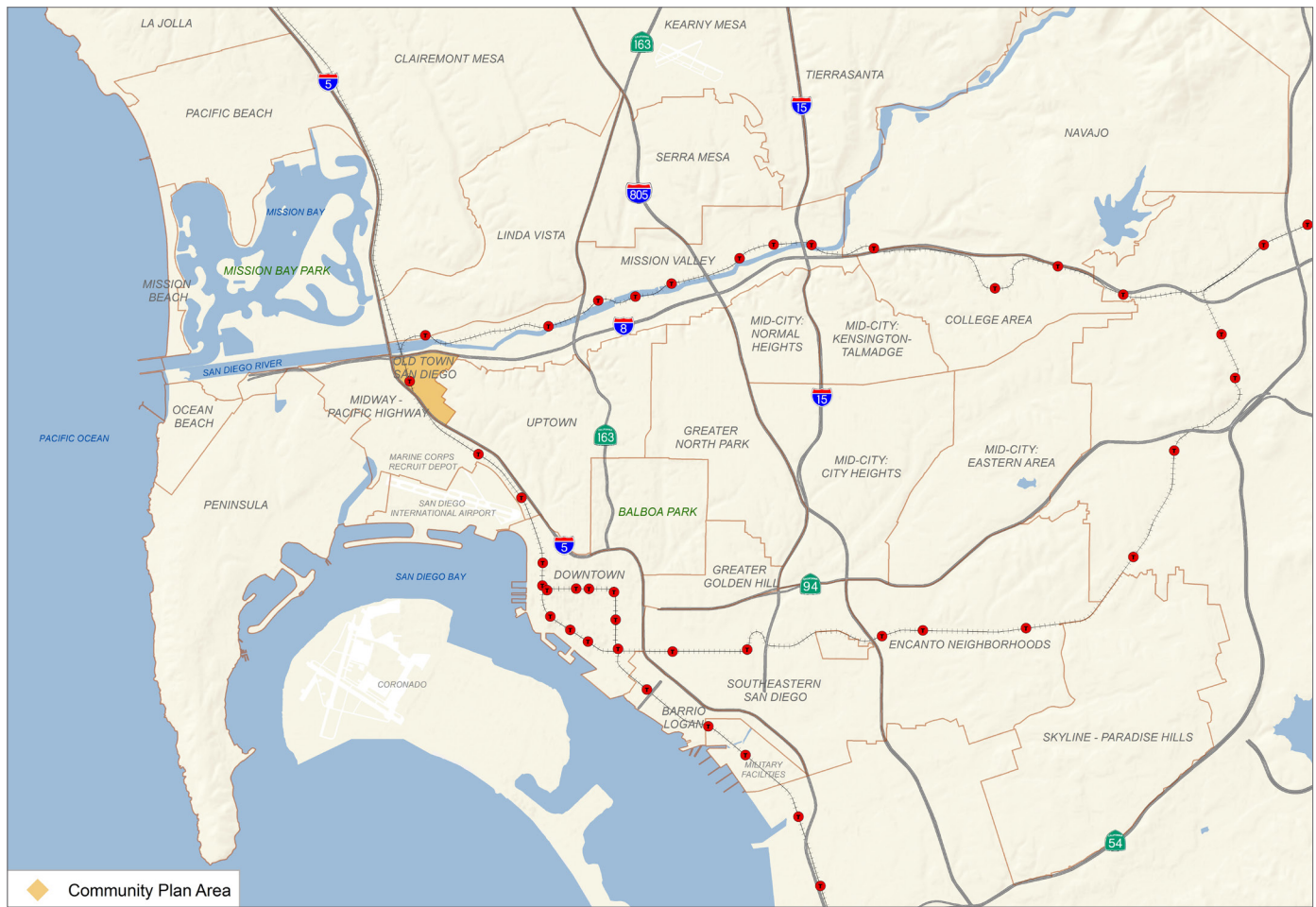
1.1 Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles are at the heart of the Community Plan. They express a vision for Old Town as the "Birthplace of the State of California," together creating the overarching goals that the Plan strives to achieve. The Principles provide the platform for the detailed policies of the Plan, which will guide further development in pursuit of this vision in a manner consistent with the General Plan goals and policies. The Old Town Planned District Ordinance along with citywide regulations implements the Community Plan vision and policies.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- A Community of National and International Historic Importance. The Community Plan respects the importance of Old Town San Diego as the site of initial settlement in the City and the birthplace of the State of California. The Plan envisions a community with buildings that replicate, retain, and enhance the distinctive character that existed prior to 1872.
- A Community Founded by People of Diverse Heritages. The Community Plan acknowledges that Old Town San Diego was the site of the Native American Kumeyaay village of Kosaii, and founded as San Diego by the Spanish explorers and missionaries, and later expanded and shaped by Mexican and American settlers.
- A Visitor Destination and a Residential Community. The Community Plan recognizes the importance of Old Town as both a visitor destination and an established residential community.
- A Small and Local Business Core. The Community Plan bolsters Old Town San Diego as a historic and cultural destination that supports the creation of small and local businesses that serve residents and visitors and attracts office and service uses.
- A Pedestrian-Oriented Community with Historic Block Patterns. The Community Plan acknowledges that Old Town San Diego functions as a pedestrian-oriented town with an established small block grid pattern. The Plan envisions a mobility system that provides options for people to walk, ride a bicycle, or take transit to parks, shops, hotels, historic and cultural attractions, and housing to enhance the historic character of the community and that maintains the historic block pattern.
- A Community Connected to its Heritage and Open Space Areas. The Community Plan seeks to strengthen historical relationships between Old Town State Historical Park, Presidio Park and the San Diego River Park with pedestrian and bicycle connections.

FIGURE 1-1: COMMUNITY LOCATION



1.2 Purpose

The Community Plan provides:

- A vision with goals and policies to guide the future growth and development within Old Town San Diego, consistent with the General Plan;
- Strategies and implementing actions to accomplish the vision;
- Guidance to design and evaluate development proposals and improvement projects;
- The basis for implementation including zoning, development regulations, and a public facilities financing plan;
- Specific direction for implementing actions that may need to be developed further and/or carried out by the City, or another governmental agency.

1.3 Plan Organization

The Community Plan is organized into nine Elements, an introduction chapter and an implementation chapter. Each element contains an introduction section and is further divided into sections that discuss specific topics. Each element contains one or more goals that express its broad intent, and community-specific policies that provide guidance and direction to implement those goals. These community-specific policies supplement the relevant citywide General Plan policies.

1.4 Planning Process

PLANNING HISTORY

In 1966, following the passage of the 1964 Cameron-Unruh Beach, Park, Recreational and Historical Facilities Act, the State of California took steps to initiate the creation of a State Historic Park at Old Town in San Diego. The City of San Diego agreed to assist in the effort to create Old Town State Park, through funding a portion of the land acquisition costs and establishment of the Old Town San Diego Architectural Control District Ordinance regulations designed to ensure building designs compatible with the historical context of the community. In June 1966, the Old Town San Diego Community Planning Committee, comprised of interested residents, property owners, business owners, historians, and others, was officially recognized and began development of a long range development plan for Old Town jointly with City staff. The first Old San Diego Community Plan was adopted in 1968. The Old San Diego Architectural and Site Development Standards and Criteria, a supplement to the Architectural Control District Ordinance (renamed the Planned District Ordinance), were adopted in 1973 to provide visual illustrations of the historically compatible architectural and urban design vision for Old Town.

Development outside of the State Park in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily commercial and hotel uses, was often larger in scale than the pre-1872 historical building precedents in Old Town and incorporated a mix of historical and modern building characteristics. In response to these development trends, an updated Old Town San Diego Community Plan and Planned District Ordinance were prepared by City staff and Old Town stakeholders and adopted in 1987 to provide updated community goals and objectives to achieve the vision of the 1968 Community Plan.

2018 COMMUNITY PLAN

This Old Town San Diego Community Plan provides a framework of land use and urban design policies to assist development in Old Town over the next 20 to 30 years to realize the goal of the 1968 Old San Diego Community Plan: a historically compatible and vital community with an appearance reflective of the community's history prior to 1872.

The Community Plan has been prepared in a collaboration between Old Town stakeholders and City staff to address the community's development needs and improve the available policy and regulatory tools (Community Plan, Old San Diego Architectural and Site Development Standards and Criteria, and Old Town San Diego Planned District Ordinance) that define the architectural styles and public realm elements which together create the desired Old Town community character.

The Old Town San Diego Community Planning Group, along with additional stakeholders, formed a Community Plan Update Advisory Meeting that convened in a series of public meetings to identify issues and land use concepts to be explored during the development of this Community Plan. Public input was obtained through workshops where residents, property owners, business owners and operators, advocacy groups, and stakeholders weighed in on issues and provided recommendations.

Key features of this Community Plan are:

- Updated plan organization, discussions, and policies to improve the reader's understanding of the historic context of Old Town and the architectural and urban design standards and requirements for new development in the community;
- Incorporation of the content of the 1973 Old San Diego Architectural and Site Development Standards and Criteria document into the Community Plan to improve implementation of the Old Town architectural and urban design requirements; and
- Updated photographs, illustrations, graphics, and maps that: capture examples of historically compatible architecture and urban design within Old Town; clearly illustrate the Community Plan discussions and policies; and enhance the appearance and function of the Community Plan.

1.5 Historical Background

Old Town San Diego is the birthplace of the State of California. Old Town San Diego's geographic location at the confluence of San Diego Bay and the San Diego River made it ideal for food gathering for early settlers, such as the Native American tribe of the Kumeyaay. The Kumeyaay established the village of Kosaii (also known as Cosoy or Kosa'aay), which was generally located along the San Diego River. This same location was the site of the first permanent European settlement on the Pacific Coast of the United States in 1769, when Don Gaspar de Portola and Padre Junipero Serra established the first mission and Presidio in California as part of the Spanish colonization of Alta California.

In 1822, San Diego became part of the Mexican Republic, following the independence of Mexico from Spain. The Mexican residents of Spanish ancestry in Alta California were known as Californios. By 1827, as many as 30 homes existed around the central plaza in Old Town San Diego. Old Town and the ship landing area, La Playa, were the centers of activity of San Diego. Old Town remained the largest development in San Diego County, as its architecture began to display eastern American influences as trade with foreign ships increased. Following the

American takeover of Alta California in 1846, the influx of non-Hispanic people and culture from the United States as well as other countries steadily increased.

Anecdotal tales of gold rush success and a growing confidence that the new California territory would not join the slave states began to attract free African-Americans in larger numbers, though primarily to northern counties. In major California cities, newly arrived African Americans served predominantly in service, food, and menial occupations, although Black businessmen and businesswomen were increasingly successful in large urban centers like San Francisco. In San Diego, African-Americans Allen B. Light and his partner Richard Freeman were residents and businessmen in Old Town San Diego in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Richard Freeman, originally from the eastern U.S., joined the settlement within what is now Old Town in 1847. Allen Light, a naturalized Mexican citizen born in Philadelphia, was a shipmate of Richard Henry Dana on the ship Pilgrim as well as an otter-hunter who had been appointed by the Mexican government as an agent to prevent illegal otter hunting near Monterey before he came to San Diego.

Freeman purchased the one-story Ponciano property that came to be known as the Freeman-Light house in Old Town. Freeman and Light resided together in the house, in which they also ran a combination dry goods store and saloon. The structure has been reconstructed in Old Town State Historic Park and is now known as the San Diego House. In later years, Freeman and Light purchased another home across the street from the Whaley House and Freeman served as the small village's unofficial postmaster until 1850. Richard Freeman also served as the community's first African American deputy sheriff, which subsequently made him the first African American lawman in California. Freeman died in 1851 and Light subsequently disappears from the historical records, yet these two represent the early presence of African-Americans in the settlement of Mexican-era San Diego.

In 1850, California officially became part of the United States and San Diego County was formally organized. At that time, the San Diego County census records only eight African-Americans in a total population of 798 individuals. This almost certainly represents an under reporting given



Couts Survey map of Old Town, 1849. Image courtesy of the San Diego History Center.

the tendency of African-Hispanics to be listed as white or as Mexican rather than as Black. During the course of the decade, however, the Black population doubled and began to shift to other parts of the state.

The discovery of gold in California was also a significant factor in drawing thousands of Chinese immigrants to the state. The association of California with gold was the reason that the early Chinese immigrants used to refer to it by the Cantonese term “Gum Saan” or “Gold Mountain.” However, many who wanted to mine for gold were met with hostility as well as a foreign miner’s tax that made it difficult to find success in “Gold Mountain”; eventually, most early Chinese immigrants settled into jobs they were familiar with back in their homeland, like agriculture or fishing, while others were employed as domestic servants, gardeners, and launderers.

While it is possible that some Chinese immigrants could have sailed directly to San Diego from China, it is more likely that the Chinese began their fishing activities in and around the San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas. It wasn’t long before they moved down the coast from the north in the late 1850s and found San Diego Bay to be an ideal base for further development of the California

fishing industry, which the Chinese would continue to dominate until the 1890s. In 1860, local merchant logs reflect that there were transactions with Chinese fishermen at the Old Town Mercantile Shop. While the group of Chinese fishermen at the time mostly operated from Ballast Point, they oftentimes came to Old Town to sell their catch to local merchants and would go door-to-door selling fish to residents.

In the 1850s more settlers began to arrive in San Diego including some of the first settlers of Jewish heritage. Louis Rose, a Jewish settler originally from Germany, arrived in San Diego in 1850 by wagon train after residing for periods in New Orleans and Texas. On the wagon train from Texas, Rose met James Robinson, a self-taught attorney who had been acting governor of Texas in 1836 and a judge after resigning that position, and Sarah Robinson, his wife. Both Rose and the Robinsons settled in Old Town, and the Robinsons built a two-story home on the plaza in 1853 that was later acquired by Rose. The home has been reconstructed in Old Town State Historic Park and is now known as the Robinson-Rose House. Louis Rose’s civic duties included serving on the first Grand Jury, City Trustee, charter member of Masonic Lodge 35, Treasurer of the San Diego & Gila Railroad, volunteer militiaman in the Garra uprising, Postmaster, and founder of Roseville in San Diego’s Peninsula community. His business enterprises included a butcher shop, a tannery that equaled “the best article in the markets of Philadelphia and Boston,” mattress manufacturer and real estate investor. Judge Benjamin Hayes called Rose in 1856 “a stupendous speculator of the ‘make or break’ order.”

In the post-Civil War years, freemen and Blacks recently freed from slavery increasingly came to San Diego for the same reasons others did: to start a new life, to find economic gain, and, although not always realized, to experience the supposed freedom offered by the western frontier. The alleged openness of the West and of the frontier may have been overstated by noted historian Frederick Jackson Turner, but in relative terms, the west offered a modicum of freedom and opportunity when compared to the South. As a result, Black settlers and émigrés in this period came largely from the South and settled throughout San Diego County. It has been



Chinese characters carved into a door of the Derby-Pendleton House’s adobe wing provide a glimpse of the diversity of Old Town’s early residents.

suggested that the rural back country was an attraction to Black pioneers because of the availability of cheap land and the sparse population. Rural areas also offered a degree of isolation and anonymity not available in urban areas. In 1869, gold was found in San Diego by African American Fred Coleman, who panned gold from present-day Coleman Creek southwest of Julian. Coleman had come to San Diego from the northern California gold mines, and resided with an Indian family. He was responsible for establishing Coleman City as well as attracting thousands of miners of mixed races to present-day Julian.

In 1869, the administrative and economic center of San Diego shifted from Old Town (Old San Diego) to New Town (Downtown). In March of 1870, the first plat map of Old Town San Diego was made under the direction of the Board of City Trustees. Old Town's overall physical structure reflects its history and evolution from a Spanish settlement to an early American town site. It is defined by its unique grid pattern with square blocks and narrow streets, except for San Diego Avenue which is wider and partially bisects the grid.

The first transcontinental train arrived in San Diego in 1885. The expansion in trade this development brought resulted in an increase in the availability of building materials, and consequently wood buildings gradually began to replace adobe structures. In 1886, the first electric streetcar transit system debuted in San Diego, running from Downtown to Old Town, and eventually expanding to Balboa Park. Residential, commercial, and institutional development outside of the original core likely occurred as a result of the construction of the San Diego and Old Town Railway and the expansion of the San Diego Electric Railway into the area.

In the early 1900s, with the construction of U.S. Highway 101 (Pacific Highway) connecting Los Angeles to the Mexican border in San Ysidro, Old Town residents began to see preservation as an opportunity to increase tourism and commerce which led to restoration activities and to the reconstruction of previously demolished buildings. Old Town began documenting its historic resources in the 1930s, shortly following the establishment of the Historic American Buildings Survey program in 1933.

In the 1960s, the construction of Interstate 5 and Interstate 8 created rigid boundaries between Old Town, its adjacent communities, and the San Diego River. Old Town's historic structures were degraded and in need of restoration and repair, and historic buildings were lost among incompatible or architecturally contrasting developments. In 1965, the City established the Historical Site Board to focus on the protection, retention, and preservation of historic sites, including the Old Town San Diego Historic District. The Board documented all historic sites, buildings and structures, initially only addressing buildings of the Mexican period that fronted on the Plaza, which would later become the State Historic Park.

In 1966, the City adopted the Old Town San Diego Architectural Control District Ordinance in recognition of Old Town's historic character, and created an Architectural Control Board to administer the zoning ordinance. The regulations placed architectural restrictions on new structures as well as the alteration or relocation of existing buildings to assure building designs compatible to the historical context of the community.

Also in 1966, the City established the Old Town San Diego Community Planning Group to work with City staff to prepare a Community Plan to provide a long-term vision to restore Old Town's historical character. The City adopted the Old Town San Diego Community Plan in 1968, which proposed the creation of the State Historic Park.



Old Town State Historic Park preserves historic structures from early San Diego and recreates the atmosphere of the town from the period of 1821 to 1872.

In 1968, the State, along with City and County, transformed the central core of Old Town into the State Historic Park. The State purchased the land and restored the buildings with State, City and County funding. In 1969, the County established Heritage Park, and between 1969 and 1978 seven Victorian buildings were relocated to the Park.

With the exception of the State Historic Park and Heritage Park, much of the development in later years was out of scale with the historical precedent of the late 1800s, counter to what was originally envisioned by the Community Plan. The Community Plan was updated in 1984 to address the development during the 1970s and 1980s that was inconsistent with the original Community Plan's intent for building scale and character.

In 1996, the Old Town Transit Center was established between Pacific Highway, Congress Street and Taylor Street and led to the realignment of Congress Street. Since its construction, the Transit Center has brought many visitors and transit-riders to the Old Town community.



The Old Town Transit Center provides convenient access to Old Town State Historic Park (in background) and other regional destinations.

1.6 Legislative Framework

RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan provides a policy framework to guide the City's growth and development into a sustainable citywide development pattern while enhancing quality of life. The Old Town San Diego Community Plan provides policies that address community-specific goals that aim to maintain and enhance its historic character and to provide a balance between its residential and visitor-oriented uses. The Community Plan is consistent with the General Plan, and the two documents work together to establish the framework for development and improvements that enhance the livability of Old Town San Diego. Consistency between the Community Plan and the General Plan will be ensured through periodic comprehensive reviews with the Old Town San Diego Community Planning Group.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE MUNICIPAL CODE

The Municipal Code implements the Community Plan policies through zoning, development regulations, and other controls within the Old Town San Diego Planned District Ordinance pertaining to land use density and intensity, building massing, landscape, streetscape, and other development characteristics due to the historical significance of Old Town San Diego. With the exception of public projects on property owned by other government agencies, all development in Old Town San Diego must comply with the Municipal Code.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Government-owned property (not including streets and freeways) within Old Town comprises approximately 116.6 acres and is described in Box 1-1. This includes City-owned property, which comprises 63.1 acres or 27 percent of the land area contained within the Community Planning area. Generally, the City does not have land use authority over the property within the jurisdiction/ownership of other government agencies.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) is intended to ensure the City of San Diego achieves Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reductions through local action. The CAP identifies five primary strategies implemented by a number of targets and actions, which together will meet GHG reduction target for 2020, as well as an interim target set for 2035 that is on the trajectory to the 2050 statewide goal established in former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s Executive Order S-3-05. One of the five primary strategies identified in the CAP is to implement bicycling, walking, transit and land use strategies that promote increased capacity for transit-supportive residential and employment densities and provide more walking and biking opportunities in these areas. The Old Town Community Plan takes a multi-modal approach to improving circulation and access through and within the community. These mobility policies and recommendations in the community plan build from the General Plan’s Mobility Element and ultimately propose a mobility strategy that improves access to transit through better pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that complement the increased residential capacity of the community. The Community Plan enhances the community’s character and access to its many attractions by improving pedestrian and bicycle connections between the community core, Old Town State Historic Park, Presidio Park, and the San Diego River. Other recommendations include improvements to streetscapes and the urban forest and identifying opportunities for pocket parks, plazas, and courtyards to create a more friendly and active urban environment.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

As described above, the Old Town San Diego Community Plan provides goals and policies intended to inform the design of development and public improvements in the community by private citizens, businesses, and government agencies. These goals and policies will also inform land use recommendations and decision-making for projects within Old Town by the Old Town San Diego Community Planning Group, City officials, the City’s Planning Commission and the City Council. As the City’s

BOX 1-1: GOVERNMENT JURISDICTIONS

Federal Government

The federal government owns the U.S. Navy Public Works complex (approximately 3.1 acres) on Pacific Highway.

State of California

The State owns approximately 39.2 acres, including the Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, located between the Taylor Street, Twiggs Street, Congress Street and Juan Street; the Old Town San Diego State Historic Park – Transit Center parking lot, which also includes the State Parks Department’s San Diego Coast District office on Pacific Highway; and the California Department of Transportation District 11 Offices, located on Taylor Street.

County of San Diego

The County owns Heritage Park, the parking lot located at Juan and Harney Street, and the Whaley House (approximately 6.5 acres).

San Diego Unified School District

The School District owns the Ballard Parent Center (formerly Fremont Elementary School), which is 4.34 acres in size.

Metropolitan Transit System

Metropolitan Transit System leases the land for the Old Town Transit Center from the State Parks Department, and owns a small area adjacent to the Transit Center (approximately 0.4 acres).

City of San Diego

The City of San Diego owns the Old Adobe Chapel, the parking lot on Twiggs Street, El Campo Santo Cemetery, and Presidio Park (63.1 acres in total).

officially recognized community planning group, the Old Town San Diego Community Planning Group is tasked with providing the continuity and oversight needed for effective implementation of the Community Plan.

The policies in the Community Plan supplement the relevant citywide policies in the General Plan. Both documents should be referred to for land use and development planning direction for Old Town, and all applicable General Plan policies may be cited in conjunction with the policies of the Community Plan.

The Community Plan is not a static document and amendments may be recommended in the future to respond to unanticipated development changes affecting the community. Any proposed amendments to this plan should be carefully reviewed for consistency with the guiding principles and goals in this Community Plan and the General Plan.

1.7 Environmental Review

The Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) provides a programmatic assessment of potential impacts that could occur with the implementation of the Community Plan, in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City will determine whether potential impacts of proposed development or improvement projects were anticipated in the Community Plan PEIR analysis or whether the project will require additional environmental review. Projects consistent with the Community Plan PEIR may not need further environmental review.



Heritage Park on Juan Street preserves excellent examples of Victorian architecture from various neighborhoods in San Diego.