



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: September 11, 2025

REPORT NO. HRB 25-040

HEARING DATE: September 25, 2025

SUBJECT: **ITEM #2 – CLAIREMONT COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMPONENT**

APPLICANT: City of San Diego

LOCATION: Clairemont Community Plan Area, Council District 6

DESCRIPTION: Review and consider for the purpose of making a recommendation to the City Council the final drafts of the Clairemont Community Plan Area Historic Context Statement, the Cultural Resources Constraints and Sensitivity Analysis for the Clairemont Community Plan Update, and the Clairemont Community Plan's Historic Preservation Element.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommend the City Council adoption of the Clairemont Community Plan Area Historic Context Statement, the Cultural Resources Constraints and Sensitivity Analysis for the Clairemont Community Plan Update, and the Clairemont Community Plan's Historic Preservation Element.

### BACKGROUND

In 2016, the City Planning Department began a comprehensive update to the Clairemont Community Plan which was last updated in 1989. The community of Clairemont is located in the north-central portion of the City of San Diego and encompasses approximately 11 square miles. There are currently two locally designated historical resources within the community planning area, including the Stough-Beckett Cottage ([HRB #146](#)), and the Aizo and Komume Sogo Farm ([HRB #1305](#)).

The Clairemont Community Plan Update (CPU) establishes an updated vision and objectives that align with the SANDAG Regional Plan, the City's General Plan, the Climate Action Plan, the Parks Master Plan, and Climate Resilient SD. The first public meetings for the Clairemont CPU were held in January 2017. In February 2018, the City Planning Department contracted with ICF Jones & Stokes and Urbana Preservation & Planning to complete a Historic Context Statement for the Clairemont Community and contracted with ICF and Helix Environmental Planning to prepare a Cultural Resources Constraints and Sensitivity Analysis the following year.

In May 2021, the first draft of the Clairemont CPU was presented to the HRB. Supporting information from that meeting has been incorporated into this memo as well as a revised historic context statement. In the summer of 2021, the Clairemont CPU was paused for alignment with San Diego's comprehensive growth strategy, Blueprint SD. The Blueprint SD initiative amended the City's 2008 General Plan, establishing a citywide policy framework for future growth and development focusing on achieving housing, climate, and equity goals by identifying a land use strategy and policies that promote increased housing and job opportunities in areas with high transit accessibility. The City Council adopted the Blueprint SD Initiative amendment to the General Plan in the summer of 2024.

The Clairemont CPU process was restarted after the adoption of Blueprint SD. In alignment with the City Planning Department's greater emphasis on addressing equity in our initiatives, the August 2019 draft Historic Context Statement was revised to address the exclusionary and discriminatory aspects of the various New Deal housing initiatives. Following Board Member comment from the 2021 HRB hearing, a discussion on the G.I Bill (formerly known as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944) was completed and added to the Historic Context Statement as well. Based on further research, City staff also added in content on the discriminatory practice of redlining and the effect of the discriminatory implementation of the G.I. Bill on racial disparities in homeownership and wealth accumulation. Content was also added to address the scope of San Diego's wartime housing shortage.

The Cultural Resources Analysis, the revised Historic Context Statement, and the draft policies of the Historic Preservation Element of the drafted, updated Clairemont Community Plan were presented again to the HRB as an informational item in June 2025. Information presented included an overview of the CPU process, summaries of the Cultural Resources Analysis and the Historic Context Statement, and the Historic Preservation Element of the draft Community Plan. The staff memo and video from the HRB meeting are included as Attachments 1 and 2, respectively. Comments received from board members and the public are summarized below and addressed in the analysis section of this report.

No public comment was received during noticing for the June HRB hearing. No public testimony was received at the June HRB hearing.

Comments from board members was limited to the following:

- Question regarding whether the Bayview Terrace military housing project was a part of the "Bay View" subdivision.
- Question regarding public outreach to the Asian American and Pacific Islander community in the CPA.

City Staff followed up directly regarding the Bayview Terrace military housing project and confirmed that it was located in the Pacific Beach community planning area and is not related to the Bay View subdivision or the Clairemont community plan area. In regard to public outreach to the Asian American and Pacific Islander community within the CPA, targeted outreach to various cultural groups was not within the scope of the Historic Context Statement. However, broader outreach for the CPU itself, which included the Historic Context Statement and Historic Preservation Element of the Plan, employed a blend of workshops, stakeholder meetings, an online platform, and formal

presentations to various community groups to ensure broad and inclusive engagement on the planning effort.

Only minimal changes were made between June and August 2025 and include clarifying historic preservation policies in the historic preservation element and providing information on public outreach.

## ANALYSIS

### **Historic Context Statement**

A Historic Context Statement (Attachment 4) was prepared by Urbana Preservation & Planning and presents an overview of the history of the community, with a specific emphasis on describing the historic themes and patterns that have contributed to the community's physical development. It presents the history of the community's built environment from its earliest modern development to the present in order to support and guide the identification and evaluation of historic properties throughout the community, as well as to inform future planning decisions. No formal reconnaissance or intensive level survey was scoped for the Clairemont Community Plan Update due to budget constraints.

The Historic Context Statement presents the history of the built environment from the Spanish Period to the present day including a brief discussion of San Diego's early history including Spanish settlement with the establishment of the Mission San Diego de Alcalá and an American period beginning in 1850 with the platting of "New Town San Diego" in present-day downtown. The community's formative development history is encapsulated by a post-World War II suburban development boom and by the vision of its initial developers in creating a large-scale residential community with lands allocated for schools, shopping centers, parks and other civic uses following the latest planning principles. The community has three prominent development themes summarized below:

- Morena Townsite, Victorian-Period Development Patterns, & Subsequent Development Stasis, 1888-1929
- Bay Park Village, Community Building, and FHA Principles, 1936-1950
- San Diego's Premiere Suburb: Clairemont, a Village Within a City, 1950s-1970s

The themes discuss early improvements in the CPA, specifically within the Morena townsite and surrounding tracts, discusses the impetus for affordable housing constructed consistent with FHA principles, and financed by the FHA, with a particular focus on the development of Bay Park Village at the western edge of the CPA and post-WWII suburbanization and the founding of Clairemont, San Diego's premier suburban community.

A Historic Context Statement Study List was drafted based upon information uncovered in the Historic Context Statement research and windshield survey of a portion of the community, along with relevant public comment about historic places. The Study List provides examples of some of the property types identified in the community and can represent a starting point for future investigation.

Based on the work completed for the Clairemont Historic Context Statement, several recommendations are offered to support ongoing preservation efforts and guide historical resource management within the Clairemont community. First, reconnaissance-level surveys should be undertaken for Bay Park Village (developed 1936–1950), Clairemont (1950–1956), and East Clairemont (1957–ca. 1973). Using the context, significance, and integrity thresholds established in the Historic Context Statement, these surveys would provide a preliminary assessment of historical resource eligibility and integrity across each of these planned suburban communities, with results informing future preservation planning in the CPA.

In addition, an intensive-level survey should be completed to evaluate Contemporary-style commercial and public-serving buildings, as well as Tract Ranch and Contemporary Tract dwellings. This survey should include, but not be limited to, the properties identified in Tables 8 and 9 of the Historic Context Statement. Findings from this work may also support the creation of a Multiple Property Listing to better recognize and manage these resources.

These recommendations included in the Historic Context Statement were used to inform the historic preservation element of the Community Plan update.

### **Clairemont Community Plan Cultural Resources Constraints and Sensitivity Analysis**

A Cultural Resources Constraints and Sensitivity Analysis report (CRCSA report, Attachment 2) was prepared by Helix Environmental Planning. Cultural resources are the tangible or intangible remains or traces left by prehistoric or historic peoples who inhabited an area. Cultural resources investigations are prepared by professional archaeologists as part of the CEQA analysis. CEQA also requires evaluation of potential impacts to cultural resources that have value to California Native American tribes. The report provides a discussion of the natural environmental and cultural settings within the planning area; defines archaeological and tribal cultural resources; summarizes the results of archival research and outreach to the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) and local tribal representatives; analyzes the cultural sensitivity levels; and provides recommendations to best address archaeological and tribal cultural resources.

San Diego County's cultural setting encompasses three prehistoric periods of human occupation and an ethno-historic period reflecting the events, traditions, and beliefs of local Native American groups following European contact. During the Mission era, the Luiseño occupied the northern portion of the county, while the Diegueño (Kumeyaay) inhabited the southern region, including present-day Clairemont. The Kumeyaay have lived in San Diego County continuously to the present day, maintaining a rich cultural heritage expressed through oral traditions, songs, and stories. Their cosmology centers on the creation of their people in the sea alongside the earth's formation, with spiritual beliefs tied to sacred landscapes. Traditionally, the Kumeyaay were loosely patrilineal and organized into clans, each associated with a specific locality. Settlements often located near springs, river valleys, or coastal estuaries featured tule shelters and central dance grounds.

Kumeyaay lifeways followed seasonal subsistence cycles, traveling east-west between the coast and desert in pursuit of plant foods, supplemented by hunting and shellfish gathering. Winter camps were in the foothills near the Colorado Desert, spring in the mountains, and summer in inland valleys, with movement along corridors such as Rose Canyon, the San Diego River valley, and Los Peñasquitos Canyon. At the time of Spanish colonization in the late 1700s, major Kumeyaay villages

near present-day Clairemont included Jamo, along Rose Canyon near Mission Bay, and Cosoy, near the San Diego Presidio and first Mission de Alcalá site. Both were inhabited when visited during the 1769 Portolá expedition. Today, the Kumeyaay are recognized as the Most Likely Descendants of all Native American remains found in the City of San Diego.

A records search of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) was conducted in support of the CPU. Approximately 44 percent of the planning area has been covered by previous cultural resource studies. However much as this coverage can be attributed to overview studies and does not reflect cultural resources investigations that included a pedestrian survey or other fieldwork such as monitoring. It is unknown how much of the study area has been subject to an intensive pedestrian archaeological survey. Much of the remaining portion of the planning area not covered by a cultural resources study is situated on the mesa areas of the community characterized primarily by residential development constructed before the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The CHRIS records search results identified that 129 previous cultural resource studies have been conducted within the study area. No significant archaeological resources have been documented; however, the Sacred Lands File search was returned with positive results, indicating that sacred lands or Native American cultural resources may be present within the study area. Including the prehistoric components of the multi-component sites, a total of 10 prehistoric cultural resources have been documented. These are primarily located within the canyon drainages of Tecolote, Rose and San Clemente Canyons.

The CHRIS records search also retrieved 147 previously evaluated built environment resources consisting of residences, commercial and industrial buildings, educational and religious facilities, bridges, and possible historic districts which are listed in Appendix D of the report.

The cultural sensitivity analysis categorizes the planning area into three cultural resource sensitivity levels rated as either low, moderate or high based on the results of the archival research, the NAHC Sacred Lands File record search, regional environmental factors, and historic and modern development (Cultural Resources Sensitivity Map, Attachment 3). The analysis also incorporates relevant aspects of the existing cultural resources sensitivity analysis contained within the Complete Communities Program EIR and the analysis prepared for the Blueprint SD Initiative PEIR.

The analysis concluded that most of the planning area has a low cultural sensitivity level for the presence of prehistoric and historic archaeological resources. These areas occur within the mesa tops that have been previously mass or rough graded when siting development. A low sensitivity rating indicates areas where there is a high level of disturbance or development and where no previously recorded resources have been documented and the soil type does not indicate a higher likelihood of containing buried resources. A moderate sensitivity rating is generally applied within canyons or larger drainages that are either undeveloped or less intensively developed historically. These areas may have provided reliable water sources or a high concentration of subsistence resources. The bottoms of the canyons and drainages are typically where young (Holocene) alluvial floodplain deposits are present and are identified as having high sensitivity.

Staff reviews this map as part of the project review process to ensure that cultural resources are avoided and/or impacts are minimized in accordance with the City's Historical Resources Guidelines.

If there is any evidence that the project area may contain archaeological or tribal cultural resources, then an archaeological evaluation consistent with the City's Historical Resources Guidelines is required.

The report recommends future discretionary projects conduct a site-specific assessment to determine the presence/absence of cultural resources and evaluate their historical significance per the Mitigation Framework in the report. Generally, projects located in the areas identified with a moderate sensitivity level as well as undeveloped sites would be evaluated by a qualified archaeologist to determine historical significance and propose adequate mitigation as appropriate. Resources determined potentially significant would be required to avoid or minimize any adverse impacts to the resource. Historical sites would be referred to the Historical Resources Board for possible designation on a case-by-case basis. Draft CPU policies are intended to incorporate this recommendation (see policies numbered 2, 3 and 4 below).

Due to previous continual use and development, it is assumed that many of the cultural resources within the planning area have been disturbed. However, it is possible that intact cultural resources are present in areas that have not been previously developed or are buried in alluvial deposits especially within the areas categorized as moderate or high sensitivity. Buried deposits offer a unique opportunity to broaden our understanding of the lives, culture, and lifeways of the diverse occupation of the community through time. For these reasons, future discretionary projects within the planning area would be evaluated by a qualified archaeologist to determine the presence/absence of buried archaeological resources in accordance with the mitigation measures.

For projects located on undeveloped land, a site-specific cultural resources study will be conducted in accordance with the Historic Resources Guidelines. If cultural resources are identified during a field reconnaissance survey, their significance under CEQA and eligibility for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) and City Register must be evaluated through a testing program. For projects on previously developed land with no ground surface visibility, but within areas identified as having moderate to high sensitivity, a project-level construction monitoring program may be considered to minimize potential adverse effects to cultural resources. Additionally, for projects involving excavation, a construction monitoring program will be implemented that includes a notification process and a cease-work requirement until the resource can be properly evaluated by a qualified archaeologist and Native American representative(s). A treatment and/or recovery plan must then be reviewed and approved by qualified City staff in the Development Services Department.

Mitigation measures would be initiated for all significant sites, either through avoidance or data recovery. All phases of future investigations, including survey, testing, data recovery, and monitoring efforts, would require the participation of local Native American tribes. Early consultation is an effective way to avoid unanticipated discoveries and local tribes may have knowledge of religious and cultural significance of resources in the area. In addition, Native American participation would ensure that cultural resources within the planning area are protected and properly treated.

## Historic Preservation Element

The General Plan intends that historical and cultural resources be integrated into the larger land use planning process and that historic preservation concepts and identification of historical resources in the community are part of the community plan update process.

Because community plans are intended to work in concert with the General Plan, [content and policies from the General Plan](#) are not replicated in new community plan updates. Instead, the community plan elements focus on issue areas and policies that are unique to the needs of each community. Staff has prepared a draft Historic Preservation Element for the update to the Clairemont Community Plan (Attachment 5). This element provides a summary of the prehistoric and historic development of the community based upon the Cultural Resource Constraints and Sensitivity Analysis and the Historic Context Statement. The specific goals of the Clairemont Historic Preservation Element are the identification and preservation of significant and important historical resources in the Clairemont community and provision of educational opportunities and incentives related to historical resources.

The draft policies for Clairemont emphasize early and meaningful tribal consultation during the development review process to ensure that archaeological sites and resources of cultural or religious importance to Native American communities are appropriately identified, protected, and treated in compliance with all applicable regulations. Project-specific investigations will be undertaken to identify potentially significant tribal cultural and archaeological resources, with a focus on avoiding adverse impacts where possible and minimizing and mitigating effects under the guidance of a qualified archaeologist and Kumeyaay monitor when avoidance is not feasible. Policies also call for the evaluation and potential designation of significant archaeological and tribal cultural sites, as well as other historic resources within Clairemont, in accordance with local, state, and federal criteria. Priority will be given to properties identified in the Study List of the Clairemont Historic Context Statement, and additional surveys will be considered to document contemporary commercial and public buildings and to evaluate potential districts and individual resources. Finally, the policies encourage public education and interpretation of Clairemont's history through accessible tools such as mobile applications, brochures, walking tours, signage, exhibits, and art, highlighting both extant and non-extant resources.

## Environmental Analysis of Historical Resources

In 2024 the City amended the General Plan under the Blueprint SD initiative to create an equitable and sustainable framework for growth to support current and future San Diegans and support San Diego's priority to develop homes near public transportation and job centers. The amendments aligned the General Plan with the City's adopted [Climate Action Plan](#) and established new goals and policies that support the City's objectives for climate action, fair housing, and equity. The environmental impacts of Blueprint SD were addressed in the [Final Program Environmental Impact Report for the Blueprint SD Initiative, Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment, and University Community Plan Update \(SCH No. 2021070359\) \(Blueprint PEIR\)](#), which was certified by the City Council with adoption of Blueprint SD.

The Blueprint PEIR includes an analysis of potentially significant impacts to cultural resources (prehistoric, historic archaeological, tribal cultural and built environment historical resources), which

is detailed in Section 4.4, Cultural Resources and Section 4.15, Tribal Cultural Resources. A mitigation framework is provided in the PEIR to reduce these impacts. All development projects with the potential to affect cultural resources, such as designated historical resources, historical buildings, districts, landscapes, objects, and structures, important archaeological sites, Tribal Cultural Resources, and traditional cultural properties are subject to site-specific review in accordance with the Historical Resources Regulations and the Historical Resources Guidelines of the Land Development Manual. Further, a specific mitigation measure (MM-HIST-1) would be required of all development projects that could directly affect historic resources and another measure (MM-HIST 2) for discretionary projects impacting archaeological and tribal cultural resources.

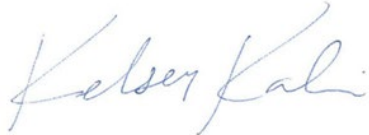
The General Plan and Community Plan policies call for identification and preservation of historical, archaeological, and tribal cultural resources, the SDMC regulations implement those policies through regulation and protection of designated and potential historical resources, and the PEIR mitigation measures provide mitigation to reduce impacts to historic, archaeological and tribal cultural resources. Despite the policies, regulations, and mitigation in place to protect cultural resources (historical, archaeological and tribal cultural resources), it is not possible to ensure the successful preservation of all cultural resources within the project area at a programmatic level. Therefore, the PEIR concludes that potential impacts to historical, archaeological, and tribal cultural resources from implementation of Blueprint SD would remain significant and unavoidable. Impacts to human remains were identified as less than significant with the application of state and local regulations.

The Clairemont Community Plan Update establishes an updated vision and land use and policy strategy to guide future growth and development within the Clairemont community. The proposed Community Plan Update aligns with the City's amended General Plan (Blueprint SD) land use and policy framework and the City of Villages land use strategy as well as the City's Climate Action Plan. The Environmental Review Section of the City Planning Department reviewed the Clairemont Community Plan Update and determined that the adoption of the Clairemont Community Plan Update would not result in new or more severe significant impacts over and above those disclosed in the previously certified Blueprint PEIR, certified by the City Council on July 23, 2024 (Resolution No. R315701). This determination was documented in a [July 2025 memo](#). Therefore, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162, 15164, and 15168, an addendum to the Blueprint PEIR is the appropriate environmental document. The addendum for the Clairemont Community Plan Update will be finalized prior to the City Council hearing and does not require review by HRB.



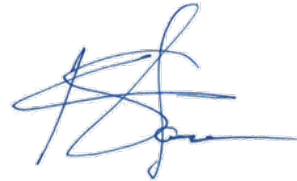
## CONCLUSION

The information provided in the Historic Context Statement and Cultural Resources Constraints Analysis have been incorporated into the planning process for the Clairemont CPU and are reflected in the goals and policies of the Community Plan's Historic Preservation Element. Based upon our analysis, staff believes that documents that comprise the Clairemont Community Plan Update Historic Preservation Component achieve General Plan historic preservation goals for this community and recommend HRB recommend City Council adoption as described above.



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Attachments:

1. [Memo for Information Item to HRB on Clairemont Community Plan Update Historic Preservation Component](#)
2. Link to [Digital Recording of HRB Meeting of June 25, 2025](#) (Item 1 begins at 32:30)
3. [Clairemont CPA Historic Context Statement](#) (2021, updated 2025)
4. [Clairemont CPU Cultural Resources Constraints and Sensitivity Analyses](#) (Page 11)
5. [2025 Updated Draft Historic Preservation Element of the Clairemont CPU](#)