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City of San Diego Advances First Comprehensive Update to Heritage Preservation Program in 25 Years

‘PRESERVATION AND PROGRESS’ STREAMLINES PROCESSES FOR NEW HOMES AND OTHER USES WHILE PROTECTING PLACES OF HISTORIC, ARCHITECTURAL AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

SAN DIEGO – The San Diego City Council today approved the first of two policy-reform packages for “Preservation and Progress,” the first phase of the City’s first comprehensive update to its Heritage Preservation Program in more than 25 years. A second future package of reforms to be considered by the City Council is still in development and will be the final phase of Preservation and Progress.

“San Diegans want a city that protects what makes our neighborhoods special while also making it easier to build homes and invest in our future,” Mayor Todd Gloria said. **“We’re pursuing these reforms to cut unnecessary red tape, create clearer rules, and speed up decisions so projects can move forward with confidence. We’re showing that historic preservation and efficient government can go hand in hand when we focus on results and accountability.”**

The Heritage Preservation Program identifies and protects buildings and places that are historically, culturally or architecturally significant to San Diego. Through [Preservation and Progress](#), the City is updating policies and regulations to better protect historic resources while aligning with its housing, equity, sustainability and resilience goals.

“Much has changed in the 25 years since the City’s Heritage Preservation Program was last comprehensively addressed and updated, including historic preservation best-practices, a growing climate and housing crisis, and the better awareness of the need to foster equitable outcomes across all planning efforts, including historic preservation,” said City Planning Director Heidi Vonblum. **“Preservation and Progress will prioritize preservation of important historical resources, provide clearer guidance on how those resources can be adaptively reused and expanded to continue to meet our housing needs, streamline review processes for properties that are not historically significant, and build a more inclusive and equitable Heritage Preservation Program that serves everyone.”**

Among the policy reforms approved today is an update to the historical designation appeal process. This process now includes a fourth appeal ground of “Findings Not Supported” that the City Council can consider when hearing an appeal of historical designation. This allows the City Council to look at the information presented to the Historical Resources Board during the designation hearing and determine if the findings made by the Board when designating the property are supported by the information presented to them. The amendment does not allow the City Council to overturn a historical designation without a specific reason and must be based on whether the property meets the City’s criteria for historic designation.

Other items approved today include:

- Amendments to the Historic Preservation Element of the General Plan that include updates that align with Federal and State regulations as well as new and revised policies addressing tribal resources and consultation, equity, sustainability, resilience, public outreach and education and interpretation.
- Amendments to the Complete Communities Housing Solutions program to clarify that the affordable housing program is allowed in thematic and emerging historical districts if the property is not designated as a contributing resource.
- Repurposing of the Historic Preservation Fund to serve primarily as a source of small grant funding for preservation work in traditionally underrepresented and marginalized communities.

San Diego is home to over 1,500 individually designated historical resources and 24 locally designated historic districts, including landmarks such as Balboa Park, the El Cortez Hotel and the Star of India. Preservation and Progress builds on this legacy while positioning the City to meet the needs of current and future generations.

To learn more about Preservation and Progress, provide input on the second package of reforms and sign up for updates, visit sandiego.gov/PreservationAndProgress.



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