



# **SAN DIEGO**

## **DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY PLAN**



**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
**URBAN INNOVATION DIVISION**  
[SANDIEGO.GOV/DOWNTOWN](http://SANDIEGO.GOV/DOWNTOWN)

**AMERICA'S OUTDOOR DOWNTOWN**

UPDATED MAY 2026



# DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY PLAN

**ADOPTION, 2006**

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Prepared by

# DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY PLAN

**AMENDMENTS**

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Prepared by

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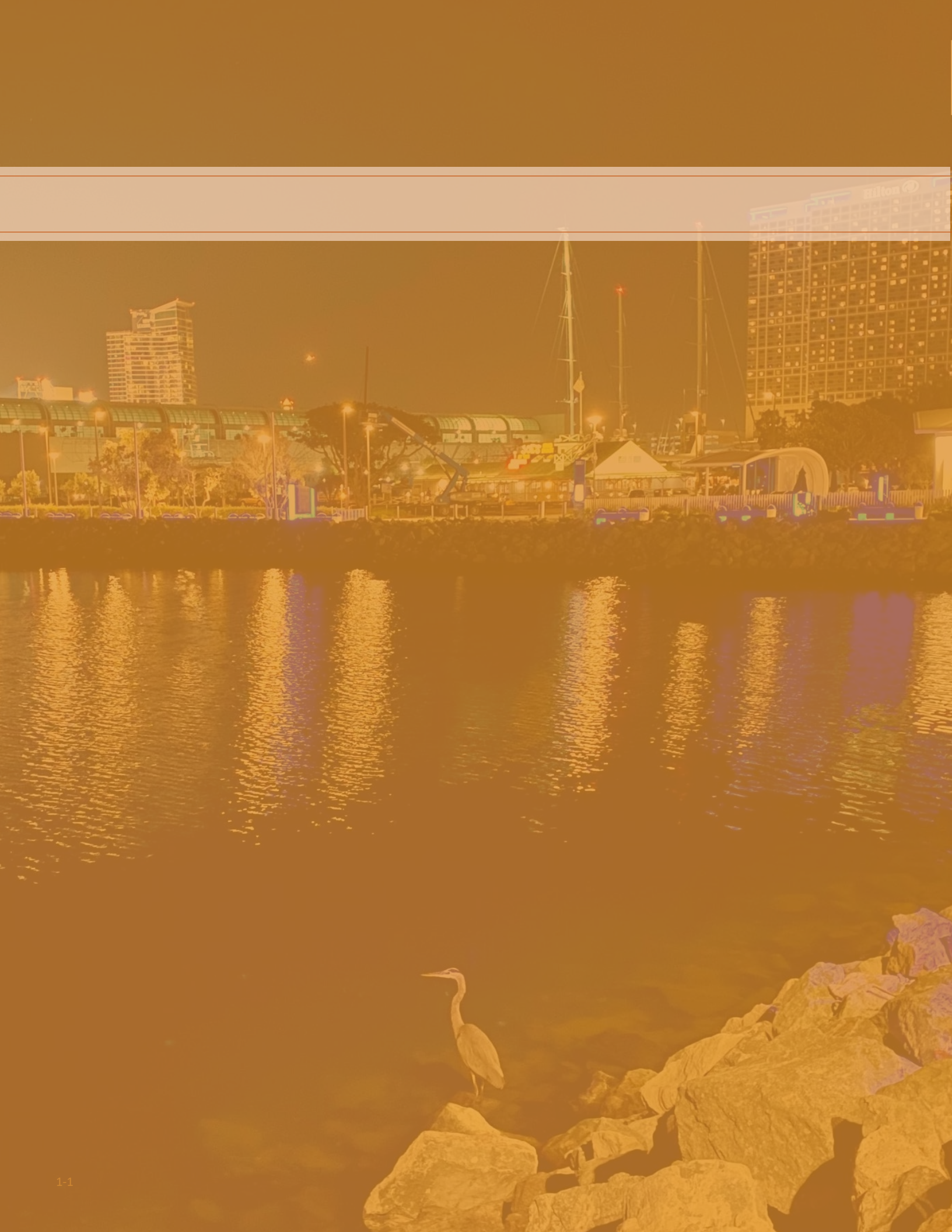
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# 1



## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Downtown San Diego is evolving into one of the most exciting urban districts anywhere. Poised between sparkling San Diego Bay and Balboa Park—the largest cultural park in the country—and bestowed with a balmy Mediterranean climate, downtown is ideally positioned as the center of regional economic, residential, and cultural activity, and as a center of influence on the Pacific Rim. This Community Plan establishes the policy framework that will shape further development in pursuit of this vision.

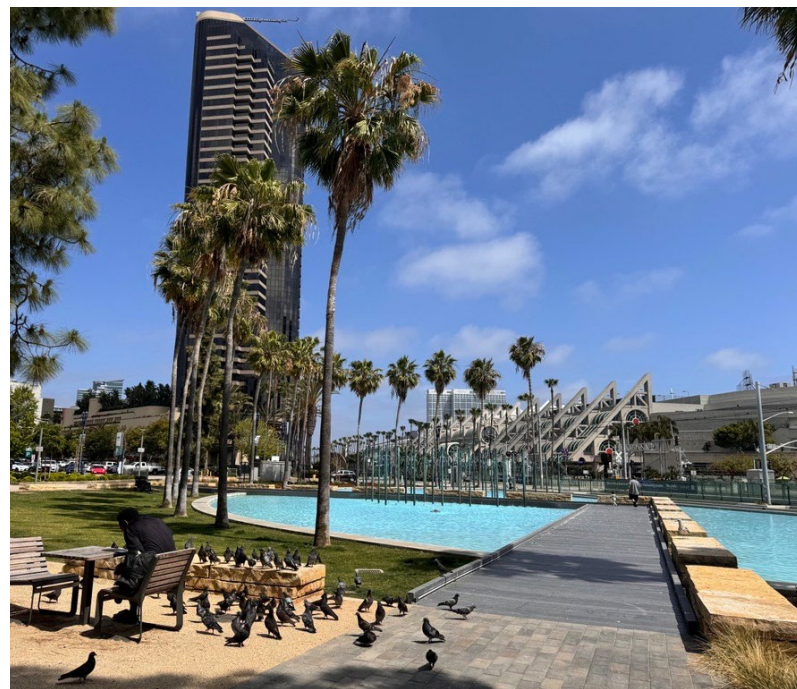
Downtown has experienced a renaissance from a state of blight and decline in the mid-1970s following significant redevelopment efforts that began with Horton Plaza and the Gaslamp Quarter in the 1980s. The continued success of these is evident in the vitality and energy of the area's streets, its emergence as a shopping and entertainment destination, and its booming residential growth – with a current population of more than 50,000 and more than 33,000 housing units. Its position as a business, cultural, and civic center are bolstered by the convention center and the ballpark that draw thousands of visitors, and have spurred the development of hotels and supporting businesses.

The Community Plan capitalizes on the current momentum by guiding development of a magnificent, vital urban setting. It seeks to ensure that intense development is complemented with livability through strategies such as the development of new parks and Neighborhood Centers, and emphasis on the public realm. Downtown will contain a lively mix of uses in an array of unique neighborhoods, a refurbished waterfront, and a walkable system of streets, taking full advantage of its climate and setting.

Many of downtown's neighborhoods, including Gaslamp and Marina, are now established and not expected to change significantly as downtown matures. Other areas—particularly in East Village—will undergo major transformations with increasing residential and commercial activity. The Community Plan is consistent with the Strategic Framework Element of the City's General Plan, accommodating in an urban environment a significant portion of the growth expected in the San Diego region over the coming years.



*Downtown is a collection of exciting experiences and activities. It enjoys a unique waterfront location and climate, and is currently undergoing a residential boom.*



## 1.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Guiding Principles are at the heart of the Community Plan. They express a vision for downtown and its emergence as a major center “Rising on the Pacific”, together creating the overarching goals that the Plan strives to achieve. The Principles are the target for the future, and provide the platform for the detailed policies of the Plan and implementing ordinances. They have been shaped by input from community members and stakeholders, research into overall existing conditions and opportunities, enduring historical and cultural attributes, and specific issues such as economic and market conditions.

### Box 1-1: Community Plan: Guiding Principles

- **A distinctive world-class downtown, reflecting San Diego’s unique setting.** San Diego has evolved into a desirable place to live, work, shop, learn, and play. The Community Plan builds upon downtown’s magnificent waterfront setting and its location as a transportation hub, and promotes outdoor and creative lifestyles.
- **The center of the region.** Downtown is envisioned as the physical and symbolic heart of metropolitan San Diego. It will be the regional administrative, commercial, and cultural center, and downtown’s urban form will be an integral aspect of San Diego’s identity.
- **Intense yet always livable, with substantial and diverse downtown population.** An intense downtown is central to not only fostering vibrancy, but also to curtailing regional sprawl—a key tenet of San Diego’s City of Villages strategy—and minimizing growth pressures in mature neighborhoods. Increased residential population will contribute to downtown’s vitality, improve economic success, and allow people to live close to work, transit, and culture.
- **A nucleus of economic activity.** The Plan bolsters downtown’s position as the regional economic and employment center by ensuring availability of employment land, and development of regional destinations. The creation of jobs easily accessed via transit, bicycle, or on foot will also further regional mobility goals.
- **A collection of unique, diverse neighborhoods with a full complement of uses.** The organizing concept of the Community Plan is walkable neighborhoods with a mix of uses and easy access to open space, shops, services, amenities, and cultural attractions that create opportunities for true urban living.
- **A celebration of San Diego’s climate and waterfront location.** The Plan fosters vital public spaces and active street-life. Building massing has been orchestrated to ensure that sunlight reaches parks and Neighborhood Centers. Open spaces are located to enable residents to live within an easy walk of a park, and streets are designed for pedestrian comfort, walking, and lingering.
- **A place connected to its context and to San Diego Bay.** The Plan seeks to connect downtown’s neighborhoods to the waterfront with new streets and view corridors, re-establish Balboa Park’s relationship to downtown, and integrate downtown with the surrounding neighborhoods. It also fosters better linkages within downtown.
- **A memorable, diverse, and complex place.** The need for a diverse downtown is reinforced by its relatively large size – about 1,500 acres. Neighborhoods with their own unique characters and scales, distinctive streetscapes, and a tapestry of places and experiences will ensure that downtown is memorable and explorable. All of downtown will be alive with arts and culture.



*This comparison of downtown San Diego 2006 (above) and in the future (page1-6) shows transformation of the urban fabric, with the greatest change occurring in the eastern neighborhoods, including some of the highest building intensities, mix of uses, and new open space.*

*NOTE: This image shows building heights and massing that may result from Community Plan policies, solely for illustrative purposes.*



## 1.2 DOWNTOWN: A CAPSULE HISTORY

Downtown San Diego has changed dramatically since its founding over 150 years ago, from a failing outpost to hub of the eighth largest U.S. city, enduring booms and busts, war and peace, and Old West and modernity. This section provides an overview of downtown’s history, focusing on the built environment and development planning efforts.

### Early Efforts

The first European settlements in San Diego were the Mission and Old Town, established by Spaniards along the San Diego River in Mission Valley north of where downtown lies today. Shortly after the U.S. gained Alta California from Mexico in 1848, Andrew Gray and William Heath Davis attempted to settle the land that is now downtown San Diego, looking upon its natural port and the region’s favorable weather as optimal conditions for growth. They purchased 160 acres between the waterfront, Front Street, and Broadway; imported pre-framed houses from the East Coast in preparation for new residents; and built a wharf at the foot of what is now Market Street. One of the original houses is now the oldest surviving downtown structure, relocated to Fourth and Island Avenues. The early investors dedicated San Diego’s first park, now Pantoja Park, in the center of “New Town”. Plans did not develop as intended, however, and the area, also known as “Davis’ Folly”, underwent decline during the following 20 years.

### Horton’s Heyday

Alonzo Horton arrived to a largely abandoned New Town in 1867, bought 960 acres of land, and began promoting growth. In order to maximize valuable corner properties, Horton’s Addition was platted in small 200- by 300-foot blocks, each containing twelve 50- by 100-foot lots. Streets were 80 feet wide, with the exception of two generous boulevards – Broadway and Market Street. A wharf was built at the end of Fifth Avenue, which was to become the primary retail and business street. Horton established downtown’s primary hotel at Fourth Avenue and Broadway, later replaced by the U.S. Grant Hotel; the building faced a small plaza that is now Horton Plaza Park. The courthouse was moved from Old Town in 1871, to a site a few blocks from what is now the Civic Center.

Horton’s efforts and hopes for a railroad line fueled a boom that lasted into the late 1880s. Two newspapers, electric street lights, telephone and gas companies, and a streetcar system were established during this time. A cable car ran along Sixth Avenue, C Street, and Fourth Avenue and the railroad arrived in 1885.

### Temporary Setback

The boom of the 1860s to 1880s was followed by a real estate market collapse, and disappointment in railroad plans as freight traffic was won over by Los Angeles. San Diego was aided significantly during the

bust by John D. Spreckels, who invested in projects including dams and water works; modernizing the streetcar system; and building the Spreckels Theater, San Diego Union building, Hotel San Diego, and the Bank of America Building at Sixth and Broadway.

### Here to Stay

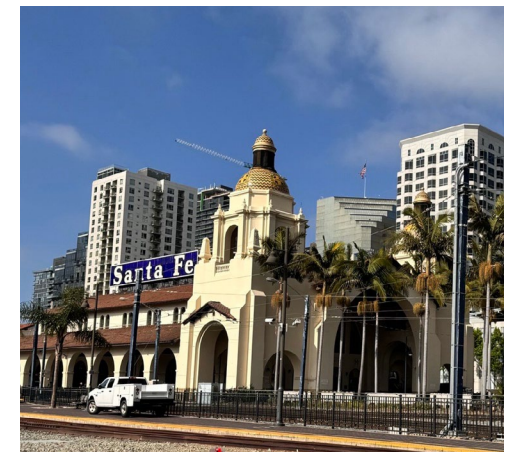
Despite the bust of the late 1800s, city commerce was firmly centered in New Town by the early twentieth century. The area was heavily involved in the transportation and distribution of items ranging from building materials to food, leading to the construction of many warehouses that still give character to parts of downtown today. Another important activity for San Diego’s center was power generation. Fifth Avenue remained a strong commercial corridor, and the Broadway/Fifth intersection was the retail center for the region. Chinese immigrants had settled here, and Italian and Portuguese newcomers were on the way.

In the early 1900s, John Nolen contributed to some of the efforts to formally organize San Diego. The planner’s ideas included improving the bayfront, enhancing links between the waterfront and Balboa Park, designing a Civic Center and plaza, and improving gateways such as railroad stations and waterfront arrival points. Although the “Nolen Plan” was never fully implemented, creation of a clear hierarchy of streets, an open space system linked by parkways, and inclusion of small open spaces are enduring principles that remain pertinent to the contemporary context.

At the turn of the century, San Diego was ready to promote itself on a regional and national level. The Panama-California Exposition opened in 1915, and Balboa Park was improved for the occasion with Spanish-Moorish style cultural buildings, and a cohesive landscape design. The Exposition was a chance to showcase San Diego to the rest of the country.



Historically, downtown business focused along the 5th Avenue and Broadway corridors (Broadway shown at top), and residences to the north of this (7th and Ash St. below). The Gaslamp Quarter has changed substantially from its early days to the present, while keeping a historic character in the heart of downtown (above).



Balboa Park (left) and downtown (Santa Fe Depot; above) contain several buildings in the Spanish-Moorish style, dating to the 1915 Panama-California Exposition.



It prompted an expansion in the City's economy from port-related activities to include service-oriented businesses. After the event, businesses relocated to central downtown where many new office buildings were constructed. Neighborhoods containing both single- and multi-family homes were also built on Cortez Hill and in Civic/ Core during this time.

### The War Years

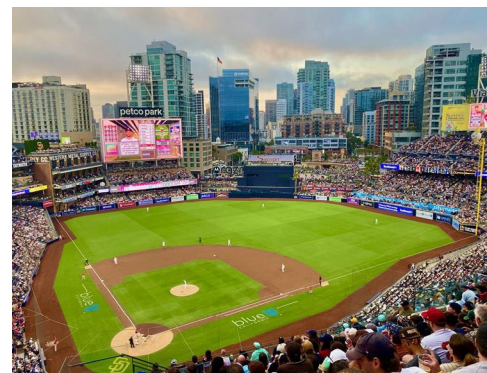
San Diego was made home to the Navy's Pacific fleet following World War I, and the aircraft industry got its start when the plane that Charles Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic to Paris was built here. World War II brought further growth in these areas, with the aerospace industry clustering near the airport and in the Kearny Mesa area to the north of downtown. Downtown was busy with changes during the war years – Lindbergh Field was dedicated, the County Administration Center was built, the El Cortez Hotel opened, and the Star of India arrived during the 1920s and '30s. The area's colorful red light district, known as the Stingaree (now Gaslamp Quarter), was subject to numerous raids beginning in the 1910s, through the 1930s, when the sex trade began to move elsewhere. By the end of World War II, the Padres had begun playing on Lane Field, the Broadway and B Street piers and Tenth Avenue Terminal had been added to the waterfront to serve a booming fishing industry, and buses replaced aging street car lines.

### Decline and Rebirth

Following the wars, suburbanization took growth away from downtown into outlying areas in the region. While the Navy continued as a cornerstone of the economy, by the 1970s downtown had become depressed. Vacancies escalated, property values declined, and the resulting physical and social blight created a downward spiral. The government presence helped keep a semblance of professional and service businesses but the area emptied out at the end of the workday, becoming lonely and bare after 5 p.m. The Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) was founded in 1975 to initiate a turnaround.

The opening of Horton Plaza in the 1980s attracted shoppers to an area they had not visited in decades. This was followed by restoration of the Gaslamp Quarter, now a National Register Historic District and one of San Diego's most successful entertainment destinations. The trolley opened in the 1980s, as did a renovated U.S. Grant Hotel. The arrival of downtown's convention center in the late 1980s spurred growth in hotel development and tourist activity. High-rise office development saw a wave of activity at the end of the 1980s as well. Artists and design firms additionally moved into the warehouse districts in East Village and Little Italy, helping to reclaim these areas.

Beginning in the early 2000s, an unprecedented boom in residential development occurred, driven by opportunities for waterfront and urban living. The Convention Center doubled in size, and Petco Park opened in April 2004. Downtown is in the midst of a revitalization that is once again making it a vibrant center. With growth come new challenges, such as re-establishing the area's prominence as the center



Horton Plaza (top) was an early catalyst of downtown renewal, and Petco Park (above) has been a recent one.

for business and employment, providing amenities and an environment supportive of dense residential populations, maintaining the uniqueness and cultural attributes of the evolving neighborhoods, and conserving historical assets and distinctive attributes.

### 1.3 CONTEXT

Ensuring that new development is appropriate to downtown's setting is a central purpose of the Community Plan. Downtown's context is central to this goal, forming an integral part of setting, and contributing significantly to a distinct character.

#### Regional

San Diego County and the City of San Diego occupy the southwestern corner of California, adjacent to the Pacific Ocean and U.S./Mexico international border. A mild Mediterranean climate and coastal position make this a highly desirable location. Downtown San Diego, located approximately 120 miles south of Los Angeles and 30 miles north of Tijuana, Mexico, sits on San Diego Bay in the southern half of the county. Downtown is shown in relation to the surrounding region in Figure 1-1.

#### Citywide

The City of San Diego encompasses approximately 330 square miles with a population of approximately 1.37<sup>1</sup> million, making it the eighth most populous on a national level. Downtown, historically known as Centre City, covers about 1,500<sup>2</sup> acres. It has a population of approximately 50,000<sup>3</sup>.



Reconnecting downtown to the surrounding neighborhoods is an important goal of the Community Plan. Downtown viewed from Sherman Heights (top), and the Barrio Logan neighborhood (above) at downtown's southeastern edge.



Downtown's waterfront is a key asset and significant influence on character.

<sup>1</sup> Population and Housing Estimates City of San Diego provided by SANDAG, 2022

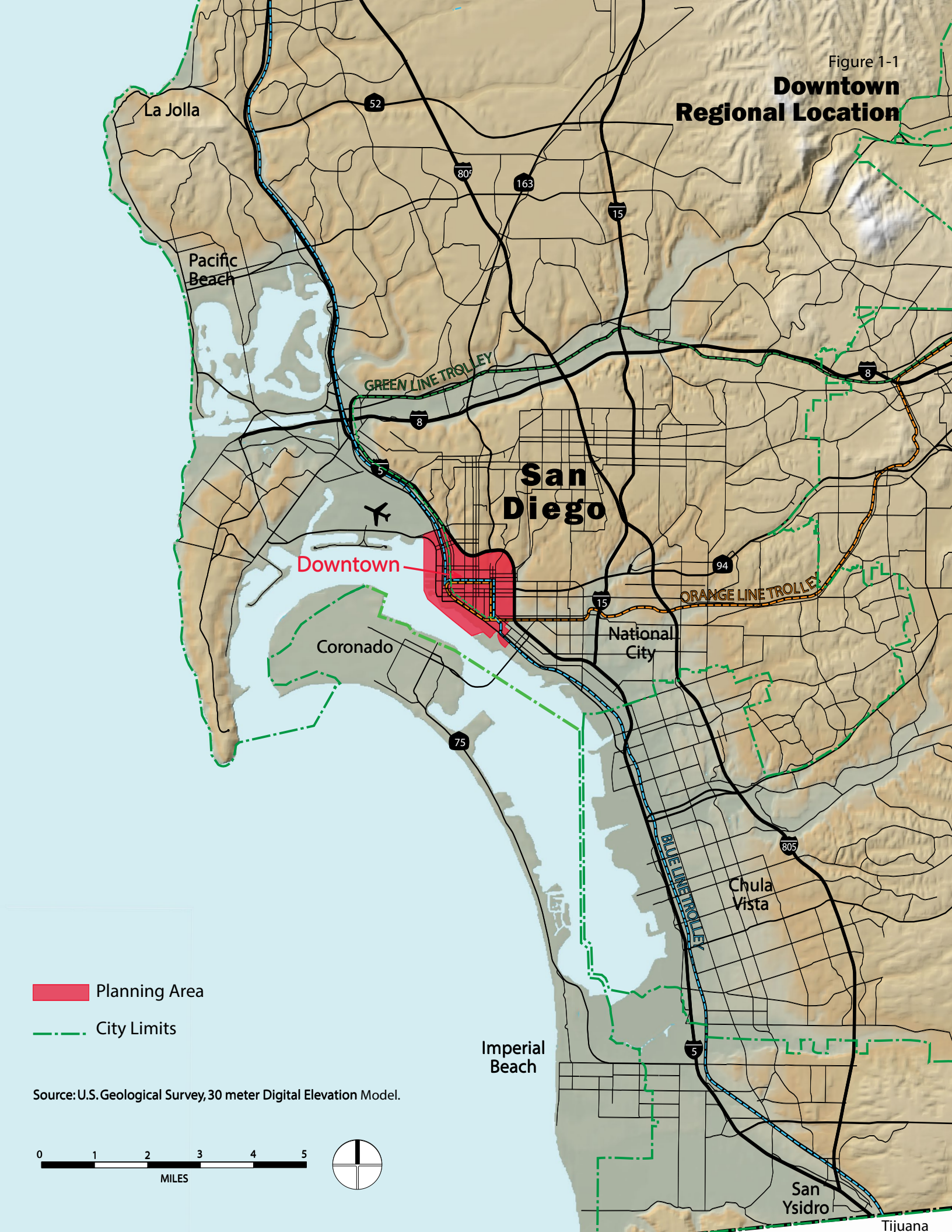
<sup>2</sup> Regional Forecast Downtown Community Planning Area provided by SANDAG

<sup>3</sup> Downtown Community Planning Area Population and Housing Estimates provided by SANDAG, 2023

Figure 1-2  
**Surrounding Neighborhoods**



Figure 1-1  
**Downtown Regional Location**





As shown in Figure 1-2, downtown's boundaries are defined by the I-5 freeway on the north and east, and San Diego Bay on the south and west. The city is superimposed on a natural topography of canyons and mesas, and downtown slopes down from surrounding mesa-top communities to the waterfront.

Downtown's location at a crossroads of transportation systems adds to its influence. The I-5, SR-94, and SR-163 freeways meet here, providing east-west and north-south vehicular access. Rail service includes Amtrak and the Coaster, and the San Diego Trolley light-rail service and multiple bus routes extend north, east, and south out of the area. San Diego International Airport is located immediately north and the San Diego Bay is home to terminals for both cruise and container ships.

### Surrounding Neighborhoods

Five neighborhoods border downtown: Uptown, Midtown, Golden Hill, Sherman Heights/Logan Heights, and Barrio Logan. While they share some common history, each has developed as a unique area with its own sense of community and individual relationship with San Diego's center.

With the exception of Balboa Park, the surrounding neighborhoods developed as residential enclaves – the first suburbs of San Diego. In the late 1950s, construction of I-5 nearly severed them from downtown, and over time their prestige diminished, coinciding with downtown's decline. With renewed interest in urban living and citywide policy emphasis on infill development, growth pressures have returned to the surrounding neighborhoods. These areas are undergoing renaissances of their own, a trend that will likely increase as downtown develops further, and as planning strategies emphasizing investments in existing neighborhoods are implemented.

Re-connecting downtown to these areas is an important goal of this plan, as is planning for compatible development at edges with surrounding neighborhoods.



Balboa Park lies to the north of downtown, and is an important amenity for the area.



Downtown San Diego is a vibrant urban center shaped by its history, setting, and connection to surrounding neighborhoods.



# 2



## THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Community Plan is based on research and analysis of existing conditions and trends, changing regional and local conditions, and new city-wide growth management policies. It is a result of a two-year collaborative partnership with community members and intense work by a Steering Committee of 35 civic, business, and neighborhood leaders. More than 1,500 people have participated directly in workshops and other forums or offered suggestions for inclusion in the Plan.

The Community Plan is one component of a hierarchical system of plans and development regulations that range from the expression of vision to adopted policy and enforceable building codes and standards. The multiple agencies with development jurisdiction add complexity to downtown development. In this chapter, the planning process for downtown is described, starting first with the Community Plan's purpose and organization, followed by an explanation of agency jurisdictions, and then related plans and ordinances.



## 2.1 SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNITY PLAN

The Community Plan is a key document among the system of plans that governs downtown, being targeted directly toward growth and development in the whole of the downtown area. This section outlines its purpose and explains its organization.

### Purpose

The Downtown Community Plan is a document adopted by the City Council that serves several purposes:

- Establishes land use vision and development policies for downtown, as a component of the City of San Diego’s General Plan and Progress Report (see Section 2.4: Relationship to Other Plans, Development Regulations, and Guidelines);
- Provides strategies and specific implementing actions that will allow this vision to be accomplished;
- Establishes a basis for evaluating whether specific development proposals and public projects are consistent with Plan policies and standards;
- Allows the City of San Diego and/or other public agencies, and private developers to design projects that will enhance the character of the community, taking advantage of its setting and amenities; and
- Provides the basis for detailed plans and implementing programs, such as the Centre City Planned District Ordinance (PDO), and Downtown Design Guidelines.

A wide range of planning topics—including land use and housing, parks and open space, urban design, transportation, arts and culture, and history—are addressed in the Plan, encompassing the full spectrum of issues related to downtown’s physical development.

While the Community Plan articulates a vision for downtown, it is not merely a compendium of ideas and wish lists. The Plan is both general and long-range. Plan policies focus on what is concrete and achievable and set forth actions to be undertaken by the City of San Diego.

### Plan Organization

The Community Plan is organized into four parts and 14 chapters, as outlined in Table 2.1. Each chapter contains an approach section at the beginning that describes its contents and relationship to the Plan. Many chapters are divided into sections that deal with specific topics. Each chapter also contains goals and policies (excluding the two introductory ones, and Chapter 6, which only contains goals). These describe major objectives and implementing actions to be taken in order to realize them:

- **Goals** express broad intent;
- **Policies** reflect specific direction, practice, guidance, or directives. In some instances policies may need to be developed further and/or carried out through implementing plans by the City. Where appropriate, standards—items that can be mapped or measured—are also articulated; these standards may be fixed (such as building height) or be performance-based (such as noise level).

Table 2-1: Community Plan Organization

Part	Chapter	Contents
I. Overview	1. Introduction and Overview	Guiding Principles, history, context
	2. The Planning Process	Purpose and scope of the Plan; public participation; planning jurisdictions; relationship to other plans, development regulations, and guidelines; related documents
II. Physical Development	3. Land Use and Housing	Key features of downtown’s structure; land use diagram; intensity and incentives; introduction to neighborhoods and centers; residential development; affordable housing, and large facilities
	4. Parks, Open Space, and Recreation	Overall concept for open space system including possible new public parks and plazas
	5. Urban Design	Street grid and views; centers and main street configurations; building bulk, skyline, and sun access criteria; streetscape design; urban design at the waterfront; links to surrounding neighborhoods; wayfinding and signs; sustainable development
III. Transportation and Public Facilities	6. Neighborhoods	Background, vision, structure and form of each neighborhood
	7. Mobility	Downtown’s street system; bicycles and pedestrians; transit; parking; demand management
	8. Public Facilities and Amenities	Facilities and amenities related to educational resources; police and fire; other community facilities; the civic center; and libraries
IV. Community Development	9. Historic Resources	Description of resources in the downtown area and preservation mechanisms
	10. Arts and Culture	Arts resources and methods to support and enhance the presence of arts
	11. Economic Development	Patterns and trends in different sectors; economic development and strategy
	12. Health and Human Services	Resources and integration in downtown neighborhoods
	13. Safety and Noise	Geologic and seismic hazards; hazardous materials; airport influence; and noise
	14. Planning Process and Implementation	Process for implementation and amendment, and five-year reviews



## 2.2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE 2005 COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE

This Community Plan is the product of a two-year relationship with downtown community members and stakeholders structured around issue identification, vision and goal setting, alternatives analysis, and synthesis. Central to the process was the 35-member Steering Committee which formulated the planning and design principles. Broad public input was obtained through a series of workshops where downtown residents, employees, property owners, as well as representatives of advocacy groups and the surrounding neighborhoods, weighed in on issues and provided recommendations.

Ideas and comments were also gathered via a project website, newsletters, stakeholder interviews, and media coverage. Because of the participation of hundreds of people, the Community Plan comprehensively responds to the needs of the wide variety of downtown activities, balanced around the vision of urban culture articulated by the Guiding Principles.



## 2.3 DOWNTOWN PLANNING JURISDICTIONS

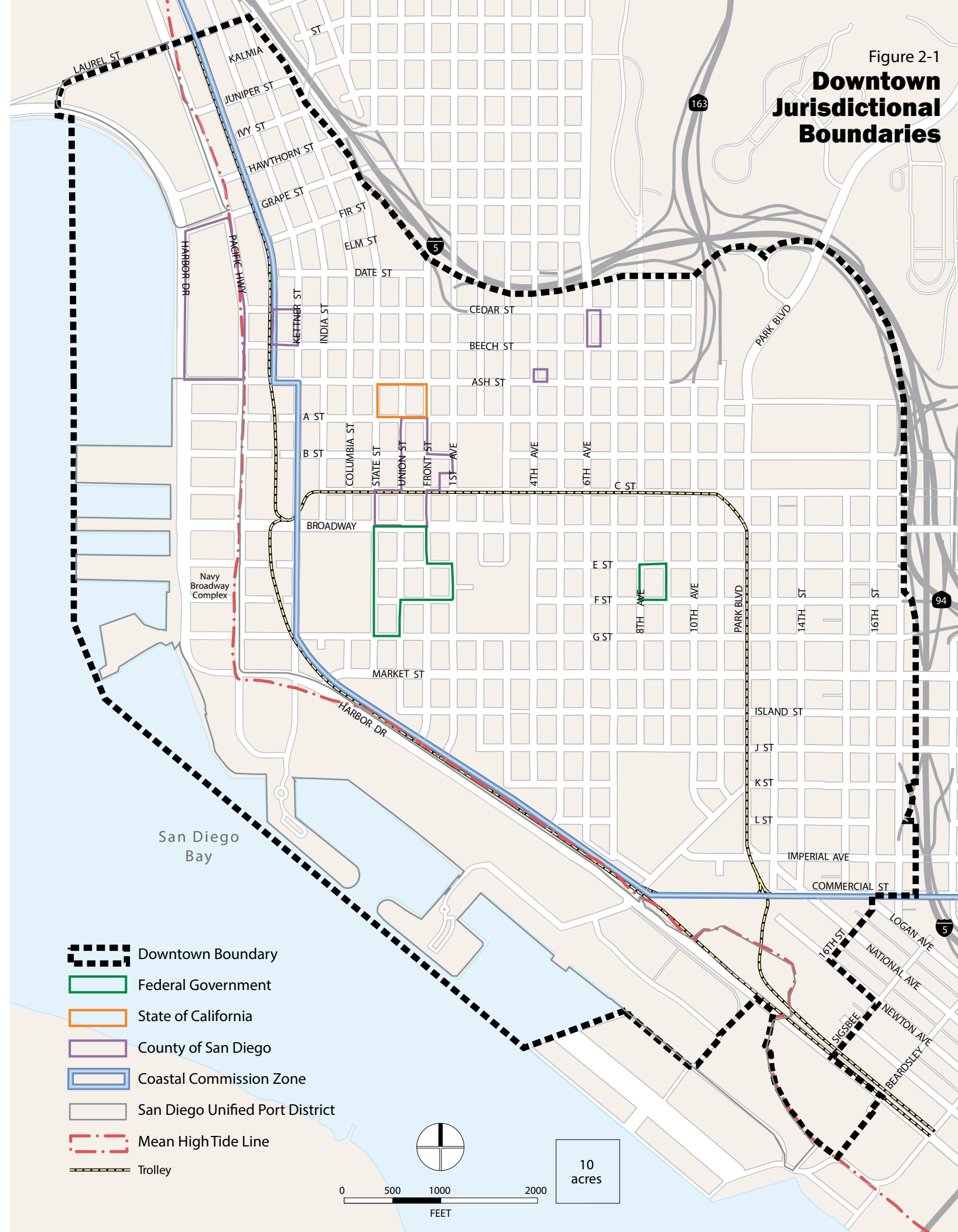
While the Community Plan applies to all of downtown, several federal and State agencies own property in the area, and the Port of San Diego has planning jurisdiction along the waterfront as shown in Figure 2-1. Sites owned by the County, State, and federal government, and Navy may be exempt from certain planning regulations based on primacy or inter-governmental immunity. Prominent ownerships include:

- **Federal Government.** The federal government maintains jurisdiction over lands in its ownership, most notably the Edward J. Schwartz Federal Building and adjacent land being used for the expansion of the Federal Courthouse.
- **U.S. Navy.** The U.S. Navy maintains a significant presence on the downtown waterfront with the Navy Broadway Complex, between Broadway, Market, Pacific Highway, and Harbor Drive.
- **State of California.** The State of California currently occupies an office building and parking areas in the north-western section of Civic/Core, between State, Front, Ash, and A streets.
- **County of San Diego.** The County of San Diego owns several downtown sites including the County Administration Center on Pacific Highway and the County Courthouse and Jail on Broadway between First and State streets.
- **San Diego Unified Port District.** The majority of the downtown waterfront to the west of Pacific Highway and south of Harbor Drive is subject to the San Diego Unified Port District Act and the Port District Master Plan.



*Input from community members and stakeholders was pivotal in formulation of the Plan's development vision, design principles, and civic emphasis. Many hours of discourse occurred at interactive public workshops and meetings and field work conducted by the 35-member Steering Committee.*

Figure 2-1  
**Downtown Jurisdictional Boundaries**





In addition to these agencies that have direct jurisdiction or own property, the Coastal Commission is a compliance agency in areas adjacent to the San Diego Bay. Other agencies, such as the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), which provides transit, and Federal Aviation Administration have a direct interest in downtown as well.

For purposes of the Downtown Community Plan and Local Coastal Program, the plan may provide guidance, but the development standard and land use plan policies only pertain to properties within the City of San Diego, and exclude those within the San Diego Unified Port District or federal lands.

## 2.4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS, DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, AND GUIDELINES

The Downtown Community Plan is subject to and must comply with all of the provisions of the City of San Diego General Plan and Strategic Framework Element and Action Plan as may currently exist or as may be amended in the future by the City of San Diego. The provisions thereof are specifically adopted herein by reference.

In addition to the various jurisdictions with influence downtown, several other plans, development regulations, and guidelines apply to the area. These include documents—such as the Centre City Planned District Ordinance (PDO)—that directly implement the Plan, and plans—such as the Port Master Plan—prepared by other jurisdictions. In the following section, relationships between the Community Plan and these other plans and regulations are explained, along with descriptions of intent and applicability.

### Relationship to Redevelopment Plans

The entire downtown area is covered by two redevelopment projects adopted pursuant to California Redevelopment Law. The Horton Plaza Redevelopment Project extended from Union Street to 4th Avenue, and Broadway to G Street. It remained in effect until 2012.

The Centre City Redevelopment Project included the extents of downtown outside the Horton Plaza Redevelopment area, excluding selected parcels on B Street. The Columbia, Marina, and Gaslamp redevelopment projects were merged as the Centre City Project in a 1992 action, which also included expanding the project boundaries to include East Village, Little Italy, and Cortez. It remains in effect through 2032 (2042 for the purpose of indebtedness).

The Mayor and City Council served as the City's Redevelopment Agency Board, and the Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) was the non-profit corporation charged with implementing redevelopment projects in downtown on behalf of the Redevelopment Agency.

Some of the purposes of the redevelopment plans for Horton Plaza and Centre City were:

- Elimination of blighted conditions, including small and irregular lots, incompatible land uses, obsolete dilapidated buildings, and sub-standard and deteriorated public improvements;
- Rehabilitation of buildings and preservation of architecturally significant historic sites and buildings;
- Planning, redesign, and development of areas that were stagnant and underutilized;
- Participation of owners and tenants in the revitalization of their properties; and
- Provision of low- and moderate-income housing.

### Relationship to the General Plan

San Diego's Progress Guide and General Plan directs the future growth and development of the entire city. As required by State of California planning law, a general plan must contain at least seven elements: land use, circulation, public safety, noise, housing, open space, and conservation. Policies, standards, and implementation programs are established for each element. The Community Plan is part of the City's General Plan.

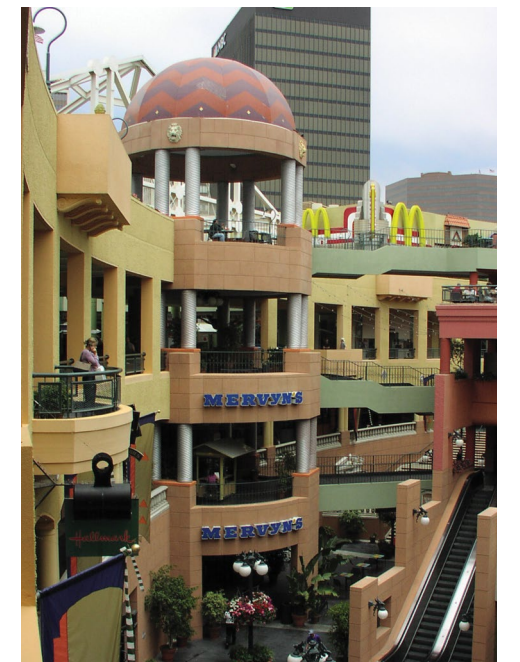
The Strategic Framework Element of the General Plan establishes city-wide growth management and distribution policy. This strategy calls for focusing new development in mixed-use transit nodes and corridors, and designates downtown as the single regional center for employment, commerce, and residential development. Thus, the Community Plan establishes a realistic program for enhancing downtown's role as the regional center, pursuant to the Strategic Framework Element.

The City's Local Coastal Program (LCP) guides development and improvements in the city's coastal zones under the jurisdiction of the California Coastal Commission. In downtown, this encompasses the area roughly three blocks inland from the San Diego Bay, as shown in Figure 2-1. The overarching goals of the LCP (mandated by the Coastal Commission) are to protect public shoreline access, coastal resources, and views, and ensure sufficient visitor-serving and recreational uses. The Community Plan along with the applicable PDOs for downtown together comprise the LCP for Centre City. The November 17, 2020, version of the [Downtown Community Plan](#) applies within the area of downtown located in the Coastal Zone.

As a component of the General Plan, the Downtown Community Plan is consistent with the policies, standards, and implementation programs established for the seven elements. Similarly, the Community Plan, along with the revised Centre City PDO, meets the California Coastal Commission requirements for the LCP.



The high level of activity downtown is reinforced by the operations of multiple levels of governments, such as the County Courts (top), Navy Broadway Complex (middle), and Port of San Diego facilities (above), all of which have individual long-term development goals and plans.



Downtown's history as a Redevelopment Project began with the Horton Plaza project, successfully redeveloped with shopping, hotel, cultural, and open space uses that together served as early catalysts for downtown's renaissance.



### Relationship to Planned District Ordinances

The Centre City PDO contains regulations and controls pertaining to land use, density and intensity, building massing, sun access, architectural design, landscaping, streetscaping, lighting, and other development characteristics, with the intent of implementing the policies of the Community Plan and applicable redevelopment plans. Gaslamp Quarter regulations are administered through the Gaslamp Quarter PDO, while the remainder of downtown is subject to the Centre City PDO.

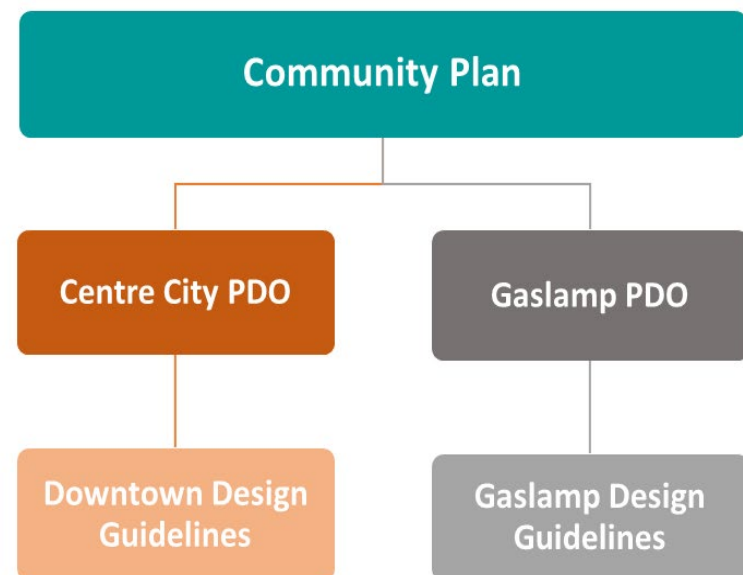
With the exception of projects occurring on Port, Navy, and County property, all development in downtown must comply with the regulations set forth in the downtown PDOs (Centre City and Gaslamp Quarter). These documents supersede the conventional citywide zoning in the Land Development Code. For those development matters where the PDOs are silent, the regulations of the citywide zoning apply.

### Relationship to Design Guidelines

Downtown San Diego is a collection of unique neighborhoods with their own histories and culture, development trends, and environmental characteristics. The Downtown and Gaslamp Design Guidelines elaborate on implementation of the policies and regulations in the Community Plan and PDOs, for the purpose of protecting and nurturing qualities of the Downtown and Gaslamp. While the PDOs are regulatory, the Community Plan and Design Guidelines are policy documents; they are advisory and to be used as the basis for review by the City. Preparation of the Design Guidelines will follow adoption of the Community Plan.

The Design Guidelines fulfill three major purposes:

#### Community Plan and Related Documents



- **Serve as a companion to the Community Plan and the PDOs.** Complementing the policies in the Community Plan and quantified development and design standards defined in the PDOs, the Guidelines address qualitative aspects related to design and development (such as color, building materials, and facade articulation).
- **Provide greater detail, where appropriate, on streetscapes, parks, and other aspects of the public realm.**
- **Help identify priorities for streetscape and other public improvements within the Downtown and Gaslamp Quarter.**

All aspects of the Guidelines will be fully consistent with all aspects of the Community Plan and the PDOs.

### Relationship to Waterfront Plans

#### Port of San Diego Master Plan

As shown in Figure 2-1, downtown's waterfront is under the jurisdiction of the San Diego Unified Port District (Port) and subject to the Port Master Plan. All tidelands are public lands, and the State Legislature has designated the Port District trustee for the people of California in San Diego County Tideline areas.

Corresponding regulatory duties and proprietary responsibilities include the development, operation, maintenance, control, regulation, and management of the harbor, and promotion of commerce, navigation, fisheries, and recreation. In addition, the Port may use its powers to protect, preserve, and enhance physical access, natural resources, and water quality to and in the bay. The Port may lease the land under its jurisdiction, but cannot develop residential uses, although there are examples of tidelands being swapped through legislation at the state level. Any development on tidelands may be subject to permits from government agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers, California Coastal Commission, U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, and California Department of Fish and Game.

#### North Embarcadero Alliance Visionary Plan

The North Embarcadero Alliance Visionary Plan is the outcome of a unique association of government agencies with significant jurisdictional and/or ownership interests in the North Embarcadero area, City of San Diego, County of San Diego, Port District, and the U.S. Navy.

This cooperative venture, originally implemented through a Memorandum of Understanding, and more recently in a Joint Powers Authority among Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC), the Port, and the Redevelopment Agency, reflects the potential of the North Embarcadero as a bayfront district for the city and the region at large. The Visionary Plan deals with view corridors, public open space provision, parking, streetscape improvement, and the plan area's relationship to the rest of downtown. Key components of the Visionary Plan are incorporated in the Community Plan and the Port Master Plan.



Redevelopment of North Embarcadero pursuant to the North Embarcadero Alliance Visionary Plan will help to knit downtown with the waterfront, opening up views and connections, adding new open space and promenades, and establishing new compatible development activity.



## 2.5 RELATED DOCUMENTS

Several documents have aided preparation of the Community Plan. These do not represent adopted policy, but are described below for reference.

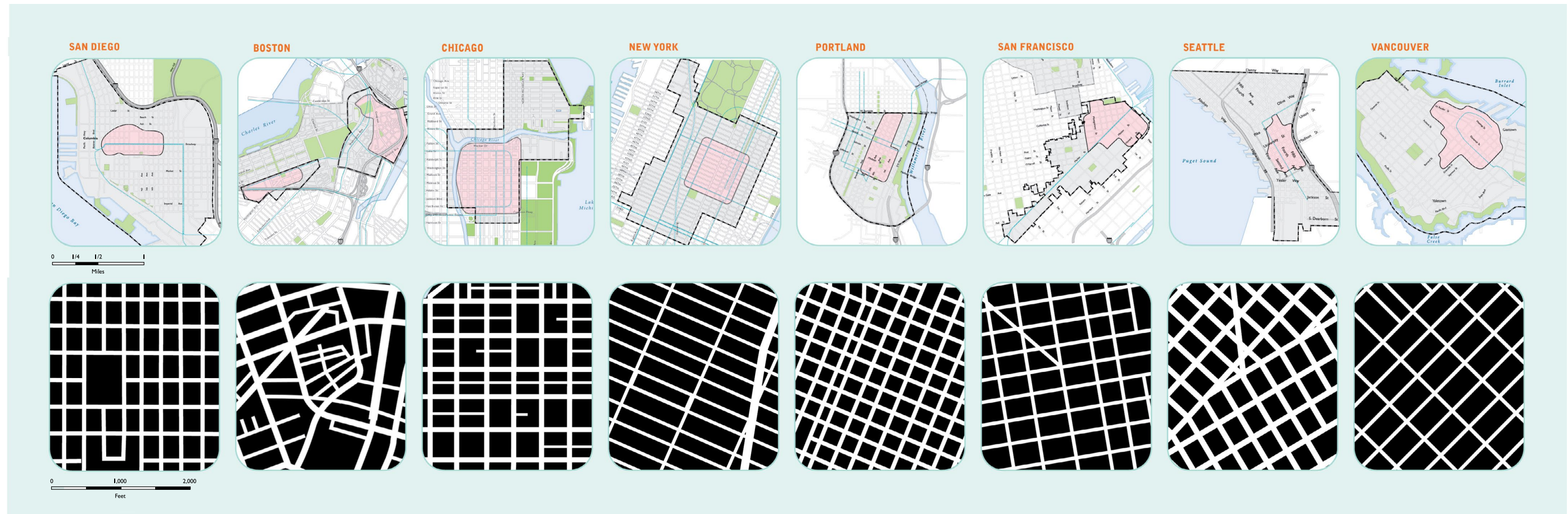
### Environmental Impact Report

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) provides a programmatic assessment of potential impacts occurring with the implementation of the Community Plan, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Because downtown is an urban area, the nature of impacts directly relates to the changes in intensity and traffic rather than effects on natural resources. Potential impacts were anticipated during preparation of the Community Plan, and many of the policies and implementing regulations are designed to reduce or avoid such impacts.

### Existing Conditions, Opportunities, and Challenges

A key step in the preparation of the Downtown Community Plan was preparation of Working Paper #6: Downtown Opportunities and Challenges, which evaluates background conditions and development prospects. It focuses on key components relating to downtown's physical structure: land use, urban design, parks, connections and linkages, arts and culture, social service facilities, public health and safety, and historic and environmental resources. Maps depicting opportunities and challenges related to these planning components are included as well.

This working paper served as one of the bases for preparing the land use and urban design alternatives considered during preparation of the Community Plan.



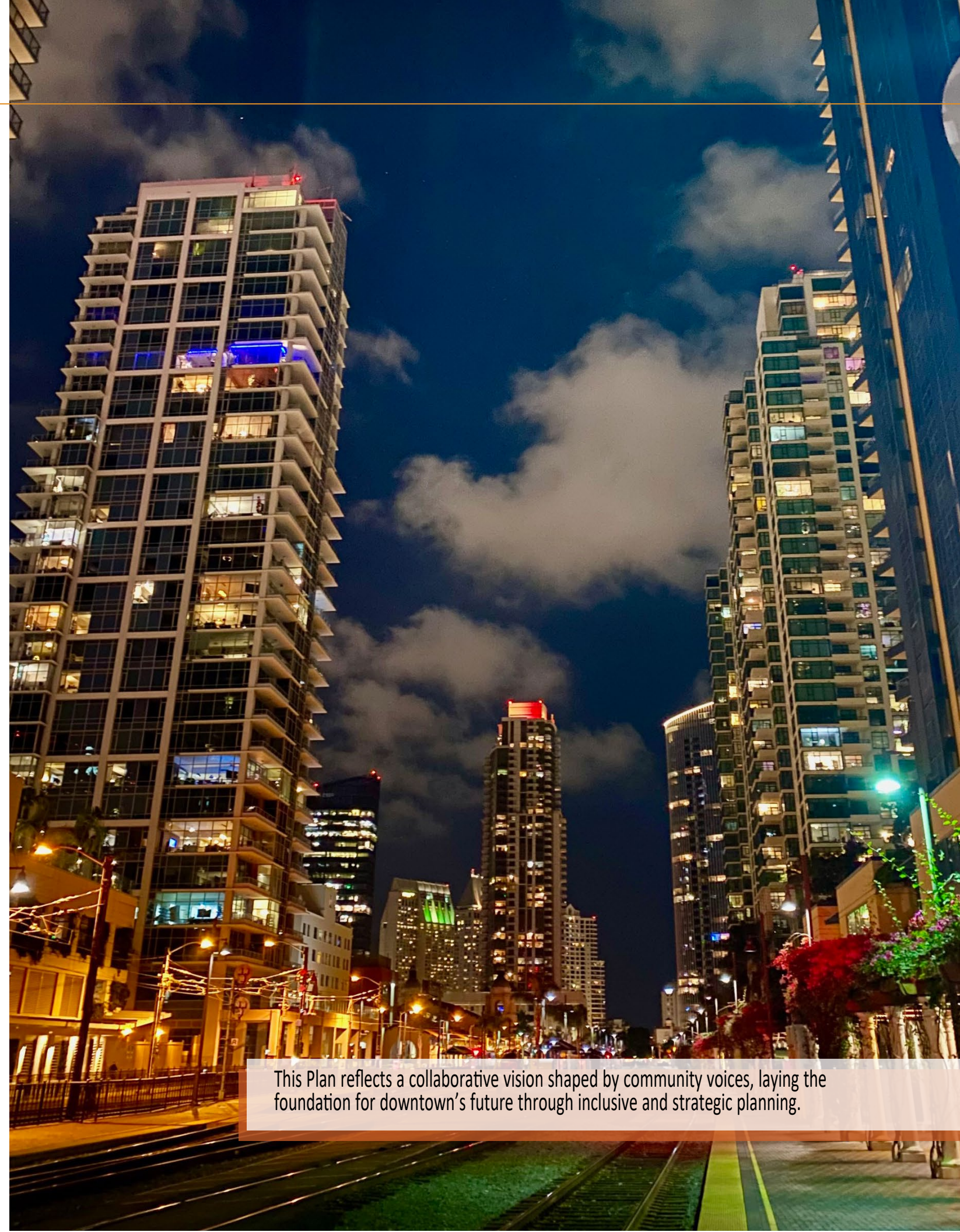
New ideas and inspiration for downtown San Diego came out of Working Paper #5: San Diego Downtown Comparison, which highlighted similarities and differences in development patterns, open spaces, densities, cultural facilities, transit use, and other essential urban components among major North American waterfront downtowns.



### Other Working Papers

A series of working papers and studies gathering community input, compiling background information, and comparing downtown to other major city centers was prepared as part of the Community Plan update. They are:

- Working Paper #1 – Report on Stakeholder Interviews
- Working Paper #2 – Report on Public Workshops, Planning Issues, and Vision
- Working Paper #3 – Draft Planning Principles
- Working Paper #4 – Demographic and Market Assessment
- Working Paper #5 – San Diego Downtown Comparison
- Working Paper #6 – Downtown Opportunities and Challenges
- Working Paper #7 – Alternatives
- Downtown Arts Facilities Demand Study
- Preliminary Draft Preferred Plan



This Plan reflects a collaborative vision shaped by community voices, laying the foundation for downtown's future through inclusive and strategic planning.



# 3



## LAND USE AND HOUSING

Downtown San Diego is poised to emerge as a major North American downtown, with access to all forms of transportation, magnificent waterfront setting, and the planned rich complement of uses, significant development intensities, and population and employment increases.

The Community Plan envisions downtown as a multi-use regional center, with strong employment and residential components. Downtown will be structured with an intense core that is predominantly employment-oriented and supports residential uses within a tapestry of neighborhoods, each anchored with one or more mixed-use centers, parks and open spaces, and a variety of amenities to support urban, walking lifestyles. The neighborhoods will be connected to the western waterfront, which will become downtown's front porch. Building intensities will be modulated to support urban design and livability goals highlighted in *Chapter 5: Urban Design*, including letting sunlight into parks and streets, and building height and bulk scaled down stepping toward the northern waterfront. Geologic faults provide a unique pattern of siting opportunities for new parks and open spaces.

This vision builds upon downtown's dramatic transformation underway. While downtown has long been a center of federal, State, county, and local government, and has had an office core for decades, these uses have grown little in the last 15 years. Spurred by the development of Horton Plaza and the Convention Center, the early 1990s saw downtown become a dining and entertainment, retail, meeting, and visitor destination. With the majority of new residential development in the city currently occurring in downtown—an astounding feat for the eighth largest city in the country—downtown is in the midst of a residential renaissance. The ballpark, major waterfront improvements, courthouses, and cruise ships and visitors are adding to downtown's diversity and its attractiveness as a destination.

These changes are also providing downtown with a diversity of people, and vitality during non-work hours. The increasing residential population needs a complement of uses—parks, schools, neighborhood shopping and services—to ensure livability. The success of destination and visitor-oriented uses necessitates demand for hotels, transportation and other infrastructure improve-



ments, as well as parking. The synergies between various uses will draw new workers and residents; support an increasing array of museums, theaters, and arts; and enable sharing of infrastructure and resources.

Achieving the vision for downtown requires continued redevelopment with an array of uses; ensuring balanced neighborhood development; expansion of arts and culture; improved connections; more “people places”; and better integration of downtown with the waterfront, Balboa Park, and surrounding communities. This chapter of the Community Plan focuses on strategies to:

- Ensure an overall balance of uses that furthers downtown’s role as the premier regional population, commercial, civic, cultural, and visitor center;
- Foster a diverse mix of uses in each neighborhood to support urban lifestyles;
- Achieve building intensities that ensure efficient use of available land;
- Attain an overall employment level of approximately 165,000 quality jobs to reflect downtown’s role as the premier employment center in the region;
- Target a residential buildout population of approximately 90,000 people of diverse incomes to create vitality, a market for a broad array of supporting stores and services, and opportunities for living close to jobs and transit; and
- Enhance livability through arrangement of land uses and development intensities, including development of a system of neighborhoods sized for walking.

### 3.1 STRUCTURE AND LAND USE

#### Size and Physical Structure

##### Size

Downtown encompasses 1,500 acres, and its population could reach approximately 90,000 under this Plan. A walk across the area takes approximately one half hour from the waterfront to 16th Street or from Little Italy to the ballpark – longer than most people would usually spend to run an errand. Of the eight downtowns compared in *Working Paper #5: San Diego Downtown Comparison*, San Diego’s was one of the largest.

Smaller neighborhoods sized for walking will support overall downtown legibility and complexity, especially critical given downtown’s size. Locating parks and open spaces along fault lines, and distinct land use concentrations, building intensities, and bulk requirements will help establish differentiation, so that the urban panorama, character, and sense of space, will change across different neighborhoods. In addition, Design Guidelines—customized for individual neighborhoods—will help establish distinction and identity.

##### Physical Structure

Downtown’s overall physical structure reflects its history and evolution. Key components include a land-filled waterfront dominated by large-scale maritime-related uses, which over time have given way to other large non-residential uses, such as the convention center and hotels; a core adjacent to the North Embarcadero, dominated by governmental use and office towers; and a fine-grained system of streets that extends throughout downtown inward of Harbor Drive – with accessibility to the water blocked in many places by large-scale waterfront uses. Finer areas of residential, small office, and light industrial uses surround the Core, stretching between I-5 and the waterfront. The most populated neighborhoods that have seen the greatest amount of the recent construction, such as Little Italy, Columbia, and Marina, extend along the north and central Embarcadero close to the Bay.

The Community Plan envisions maintaining some aspects of downtown’s structure, while modifying others. The Core will acquire a greater mix of uses, and most importantly, will be complemented by seven Neighborhood Mixed-Use Centers distributed throughout downtown. The fine-grained street system will be maintained, and extended to the waterfront in places where reuse is envisioned. Larger parcels at the western waterfront will be broken up, creating a fine-grained mixed-use district and land uses that provide vitality and are a draw. Downtown’s street grid will be reinforced with a typology that emphasizes the pedestrian realm and connectivity. Streets at the waterfront, civic center, and bus yards that are currently closed will be re-opened to facilitate movement. Finally, as new development pushes inward, a substantial increase in building intensity is anticipated and encouraged. The basic components of downtown’s structure are shown in Figure 3-2.



Downtown - aerial view from San Diego Bay, 2004



Figure 3-1  
**Downtown Aerial**

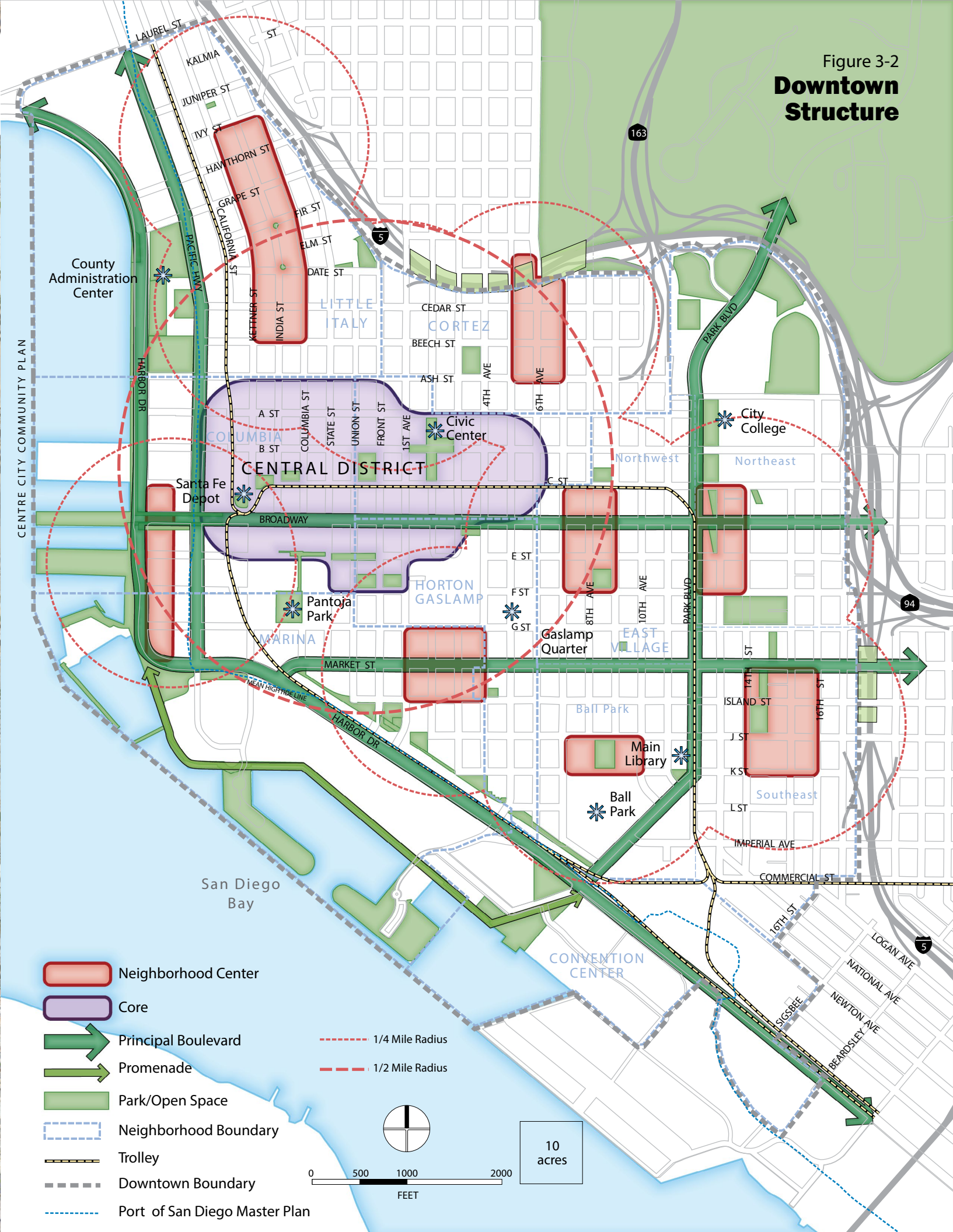


Figure 3-2  
**Downtown Structure**



### Existing Land Use

Downtown contains a variety of functions reflected in the area’s land uses, as shown in Table 3-1 and Chart 3-1. Streets and public rights of way comprise the largest land use, occupying 714 acres, or about half of the land area. The extensive transportation infrastructure facilitates mobility within the downtown core and connects it to other parts of the city. Commercial and office activities, occupying 286 acres, are the next largest use, supporting economic and employment opportunities. As the commercial real estate market evolves, existing office space provides opportunities for adaptive reuse to create more housing.

Residential uses occupy 135 acres, with a residential density of 196 housing units per developed acre.

About 7 percent of land is vacant, so most development opportunities involve reuse of sites occupied by surface parking lots or very low intensity uses rather than construction on vacant land.

### Land Use Diagram

The Land Use Diagram (Figure 3-4) designates the proposed location, distribution, and extent of land uses. The legend of the Land Use Diagram abbreviates the land use classifications described below. For greater specificity on allowed land uses on specific sites, the pertinent Planned District Ordinances (Centre City and Gaslamp Quarter) should be consulted.

### Land Use Classification System

The classifications in this section represent adopted policy and are meant to be broad enough to provide flexibility in implementation, but clear enough to provide sufficient direction to carry out the Community Plan.

In addition to the direction related to the uses provided here, public uses, including parks, government offices, police and fire stations, and public schools, are permitted in all land use classifications.

#### Ballpark Mixed Use

Mixed uses in the Ballpark District will accommodate major sporting facilities and visitor attractions. The classification contains a broad array of other uses, including eating and drinking establishments, hotels, offices, research and development facilities, cultural and residential uses, live/work use, and parking.

#### Core

This classification is primarily intended to encourage, support, and enhance the Core as a high-intensity office and employment center with residential opportunities. Areas with this designation include

Civic/Core and most of Columbia. The Community Plan supports the Core’s role as a center of regional importance and as a primary hub for business, communications, office, and hotels, with fewer restrictions on building bulk and tower separation than in other districts. The Core accommodates mixed-use (office combined with hotel, residential, and other uses) projects as important components of the area’s vitality. Retail, cultural, educational, civic and governmental, green or open leisure space, and entertainment uses are also permitted. All development is required to be pedestrian-oriented, which limits vehicle clutter and parking, reduces vehicle speed and throughput, and increases the space devoted to outside leisure, walking, and sidewalk-level commerce.

#### Employment/Residential Mixed-Use

This classification provides synergies between educational institutions and residential neighborhoods, or transition between the Core and residential neighborhoods. It also encompasses Horton Plaza. The classification permits a variety of uses, including office, residential, hotel, research and development, and educational and medical facilities.

#### Mixed Commercial

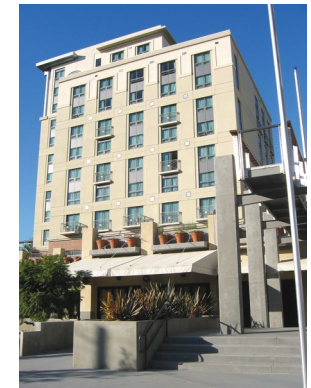
This classification is intended to accommodate a diverse array of uses, including residential, artists’ studios and live/work spaces, hotels, offices, research and development, and retail, and allow continuing operation of existing service and industrial uses – including light industrial and repair, warehousing and distribution, transportation, and communication services. Any new industrial and service use will be required to demonstrate that air quality in surrounding residential uses and neighborhoods (such as Barrio Logan) is not adversely impacted.

#### Industrial

This classification permits a range of industrial uses such as light manufacturing, repair, and storage, as well as energy-generation facilities, subject to performance standards.

#### Neighborhood Mixed-Use Center

This classification is intended to ensure development of distinctive centers around plazas or “main streets” that provide a focus to the neighborhoods. It supports mixed-use (residential/non-residential) projects that contain active ground-floor uses. A broad array of compatible uses, including retail, restaurants and cafes, residential, office, cultural, educational, and indoor recreation are permitted, with active ground floor uses. Building volume restrictions apply to allow sunlight to reach streets and public spaces, and design standards seek to establish highly pedestrian-oriented development.



Downtown has a comprehensive range of uses, including hotels (top), mixed-use developments (offices, hotel, and Symphony Hall; middle), and courthouses (bottom).

Table 3-1: Existing Downtown Land Use Distribution(2022)

USE NAME	ACREAGE
Streets and Public Rights of way	714
Commercial and Office	286
Residential	135
Vacant Land	106
Public Institutional	88
Open Space	73
Mixed Use	68
Industrial	42
Total	1,515

Source: Series 15 Regional Forecast Downtown Community Planning Area provided by SANDAG

Chart 3-1: Existing Downtown Land Use Distribution (2022)

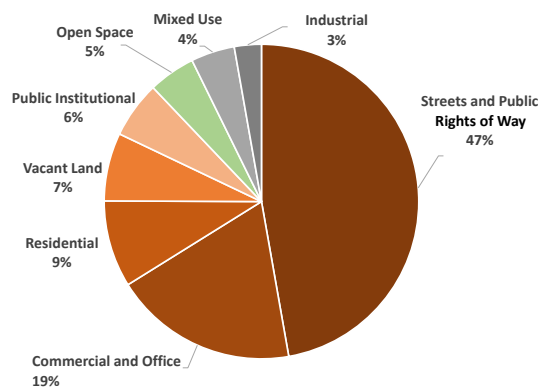




Figure 3-4  
**Land Use**





### Park/Open Space

Public parks and open spaces. Below ground parking facilities and small cafes are also permitted, subject to performance standards.

### Public/Civic

The classification provides a center for government, civic, cultural, educational, and other public uses.

### Residential Emphasis

The Residential Emphasis areas will accommodate primarily residential development. Small-scale businesses, offices, and services, and ground-floor commercial uses (such as cafés and dry cleaners) are also allowed, provided they do not exceed 20 percent of the overall building area.

### Employment Overlay

In addition to the land use districts, Figure 3-6 identifies Employment Overlay areas where 50 percent of the area will be devoted to office, education, retail, and other commercial uses. That is, residential use cannot exceed more than 50 percent of the area.

### Transportation

This district accommodates uses related to trolley, passenger and freight rail operations, maintenance and repair, and associated activities.



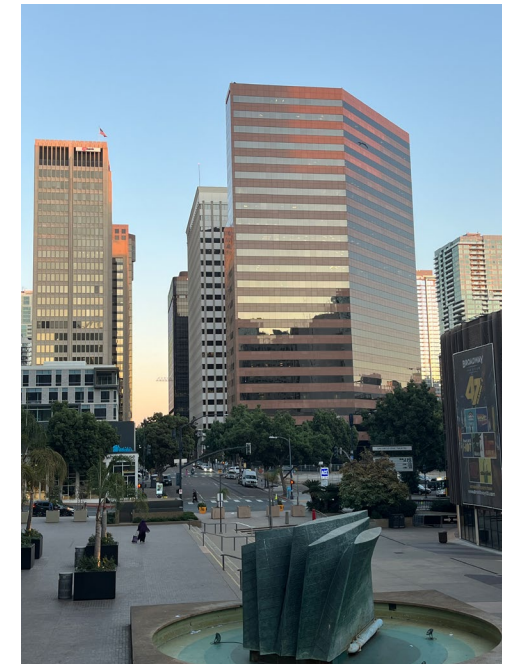
New residential development – high rise in Columbia (top) and low rise in Little Italy (above).

### Goals: Structure and Land Use

- 3.1-G-1 Provide a land use and development framework to guide downtown's evolution as a premier regional and global center of commerce, residence, arts, education, and recreation.
- 3.1-G-2 Provide for an overall balance of uses—employment, residential, cultural, government, and destination—as well as a full compendium of amenities and services.
- 3.1-G-3 Allow service and support commercial uses—such as small hospitals, produce markets that serve restaurants, and repair shops—in specific locations to ensure availability of essential services within downtown.

### Policies: Structure and Land Use

- 3.1-P-1 Foster development of the Core into a compact but high-intensity office and employment hub of downtown, with a strong government, financial, commercial, and visitor-serving orientation, while permitting residential development to provide vitality during non-work hours.
- 3.1-P-2 Permit a broad range of uses in the Neighborhood Mixed-Use Centers, including office uses, provided they meet overall urban design criteria for the centers. Allow smaller hotel and visitor-service establishments.
- 3.1-P-3 To ensure vitality, develop concentrations of retail centers and streets as shown in Figure 3-7 with:
  - Required retail, restaurants, and other similar active commercial uses at the ground level along designated Main Streets.
  - Required commercial (such as offices, live/work spaces, galleries, hotel lobbies, retail, or other business establishments) at the ground level along designated Commercial Streets.
  - Limitations on retail in other areas in accordance with the designated Land Use Classification
- 3.1-P-4 Allow a diverse range of retail establishments of any size in the Main Streets and Neighborhood Centers, provided they are integrated with the centers, maintain a pedestrian orientation and active street frontage, and discourage block consolidation or street closure.
- 3.1-P-5 Encourage a maritime-supporting and diverse mix of uses along the waterfront; allow residential uses where not prohibited by State tidelands restrictions.
- 3.1-P-6 Accommodate public and/or open space uses on the freeway lid bridging between Cortez and Uptown, and open space uses on the lid between Bayside and Sherman Heights. Public uses might include arts or civic facilities.



The Civic/Core (top) and Columbia (above) will be fostered as downtown's high-intensity hub.

Figure 3-6  
**Employment ,  
 Large Floorplate, and  
 Fine Grained Areas**

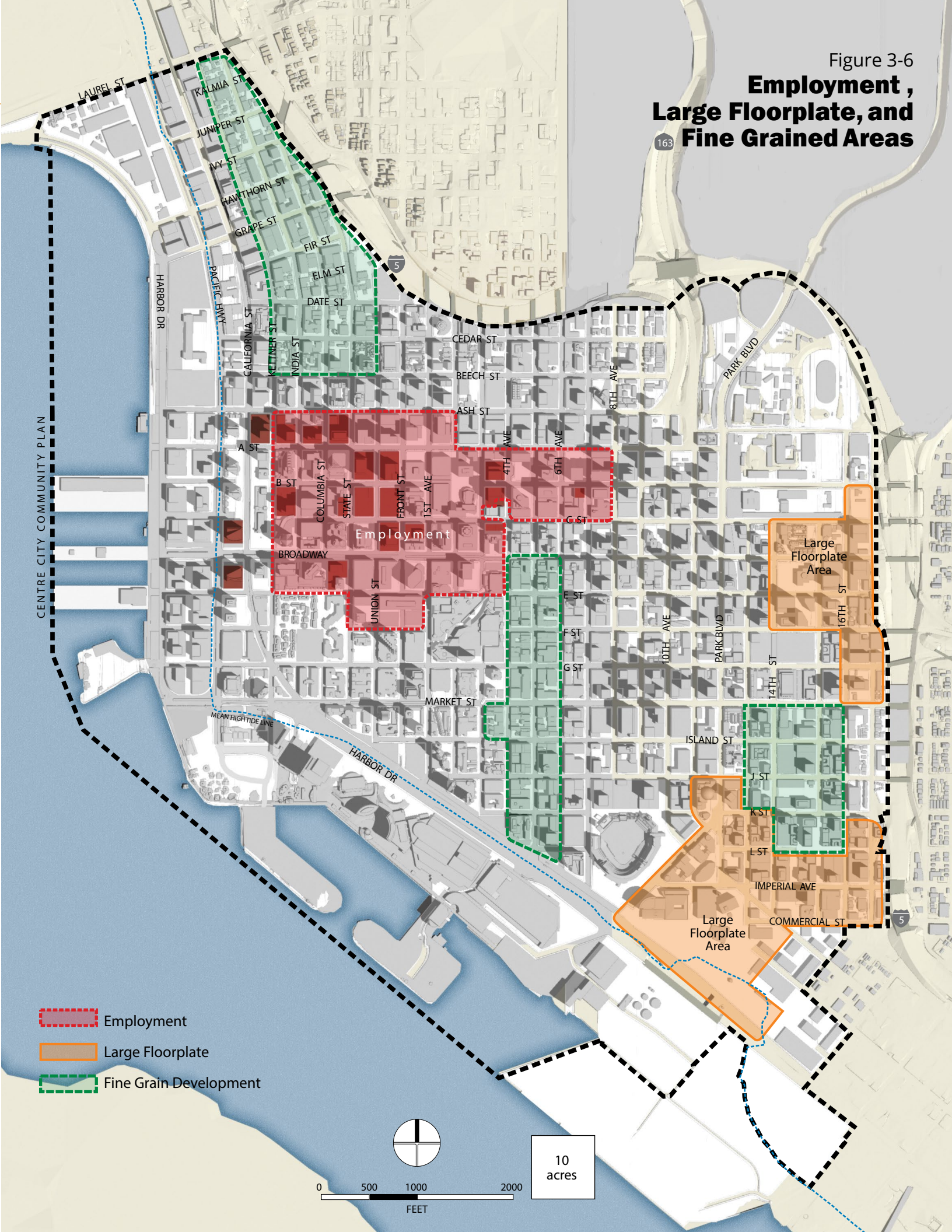


Figure 3-7  
**Street Level  
 Active Frontage  
 Requirements**





## 3.2 DEVELOPMENT INTENSITY AND INCENTIVES, AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTIONS

### Development Intensity

The Community Plan establishes intensity standards for various parts of downtown. Intensity is measured as Floor Area Ratio (FAR), obtained by dividing gross floor area by lot area. The implementing zoning regulations (Centre City and Gaslamp Quarter Planned District Ordinances – “PDOs”, as well as the Land Development Code, define in detail how gross floor area is measured; in general, all floor area above grade (including that devoted to parking) is included. Development intensity is only regulated through FARs – no separate residential density standards are established.

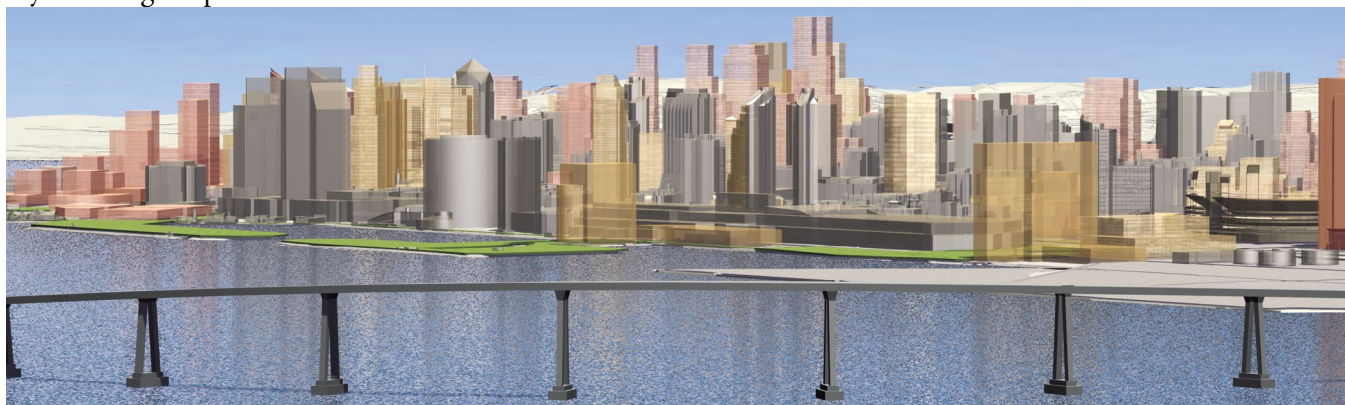
Figure 3-9 shows the allowable minimum and maximum FARs for various sites. Proposed base development intensities in the Community Plan range from 2.0 to 10.0, modulated to provide diversity of scale, as well as high intensities in selected locations.

Within the northern portions of the Little Italy and Cortez neighborhoods, development intensities may be restricted due to the location of the San Diego International Airport approach path even below the Base Minimums shown in this Plan. Intensities will be restricted in these areas according to the Centre City Planned District Ordinance provisions consistent with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans (ALUCPs).

### Incentives

#### Intensity Bonuses and Exemptions

The Centre City Planned District Ordinance establishes numerous incentives/exemptions to promote desirable civic benefits and encourage maximum development potential. These include incentives related to affordable housing, public spaces, sustainability, family-friendly housing and amenities, street activation, employment and other downtown policy goals. Developers are encouraged to maximize the use of incentives by stacking them together to achieve unlimited density and height up to the FAA allowance.



*Downtown (circa 2030) as seen from across the Coronado Bridge. Similar massing and heights may result from Community Plan policies; view is solely for illustrative purposes*

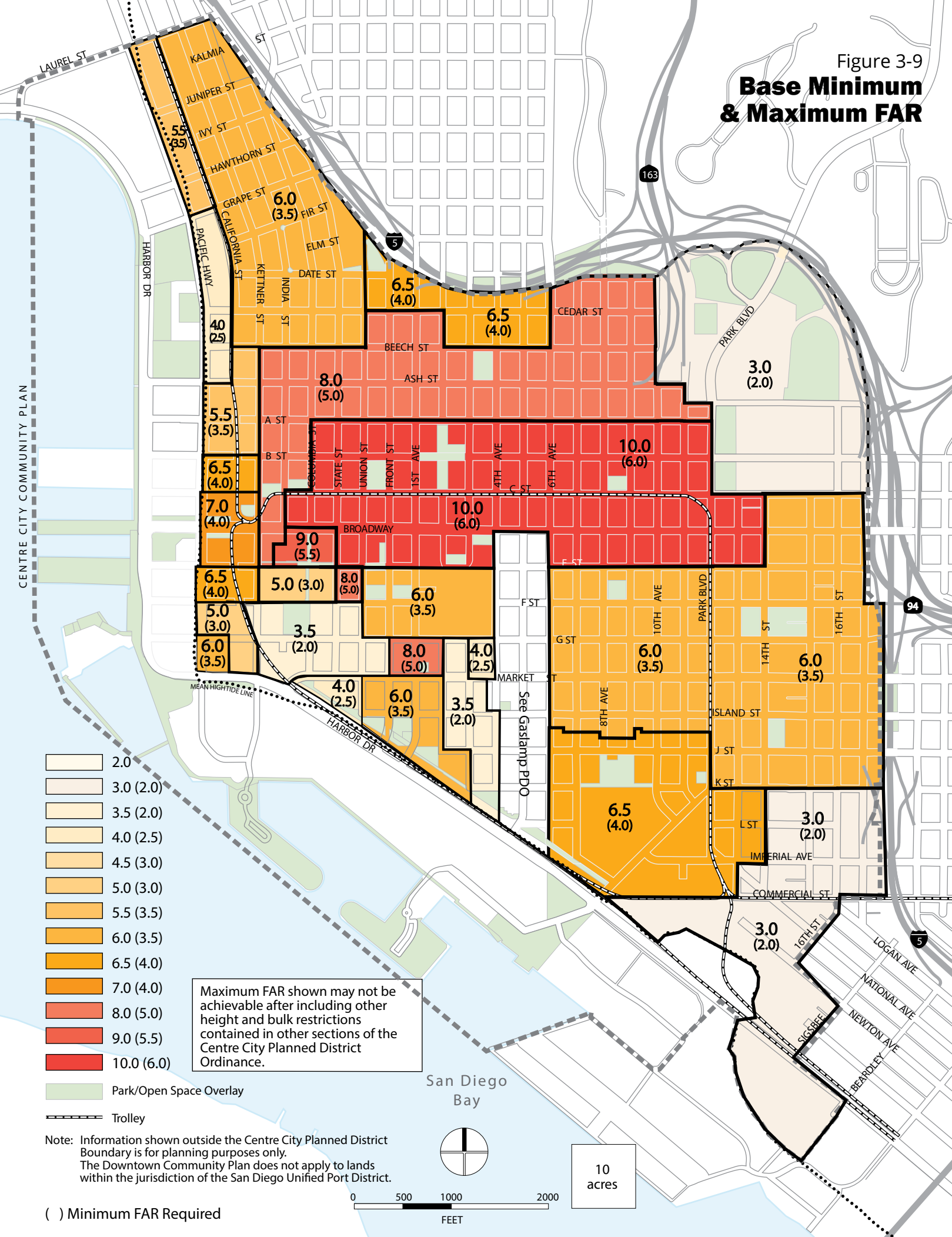


*Looking toward the San Diego Bay – 2003.*

### Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program for Parks and Historical Resources

The TDR program is designed to encourage opportunities for the design, construction, and operation of additional publicly accessible parks while also incentivizing the construction of additional housing and the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historical resources. Receiving sites are those zoned as residential, commercial, or mixed-use, and sending sites are those where a development designs and constructs an onsite publicly accessible park or where there is a designated historical resource. Historical resources are those designated on the National, State, or San Diego registers. All the allowable gross floor area on a sending site, minus that which is within a designated historical resource, may be transferred in its entirety to a single receiving site or in separate increments to several receiving sites. Sending and receiving sites are not required to have the same owner.

Figure 3-9  
**Base Minimum  
 & Maximum FAR**



Three-bedroom units are encouraged through the Family-Style Housing Incentive Program to help create a family-friendly downtown.

Figure 3-10  
**Maximum FAR Through Bonus Payment**

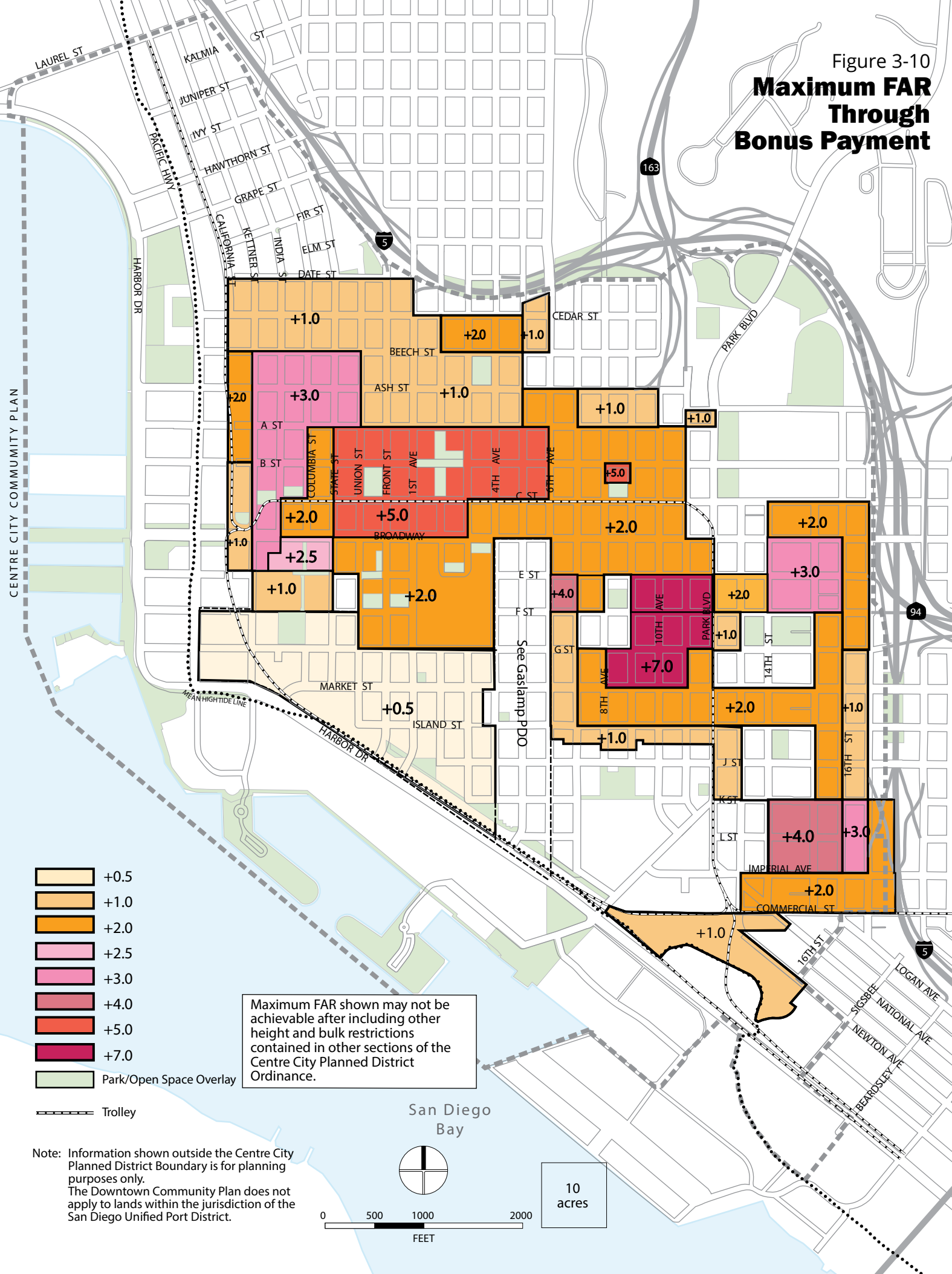


Figure 3-13  
**Potential Buildout Intensities**



Note: Information shown outside the Centre City Planned District Boundary is for planning purposes only. The Downtown Community Plan does not apply to lands within the jurisdiction of the San Diego Unified Port District.

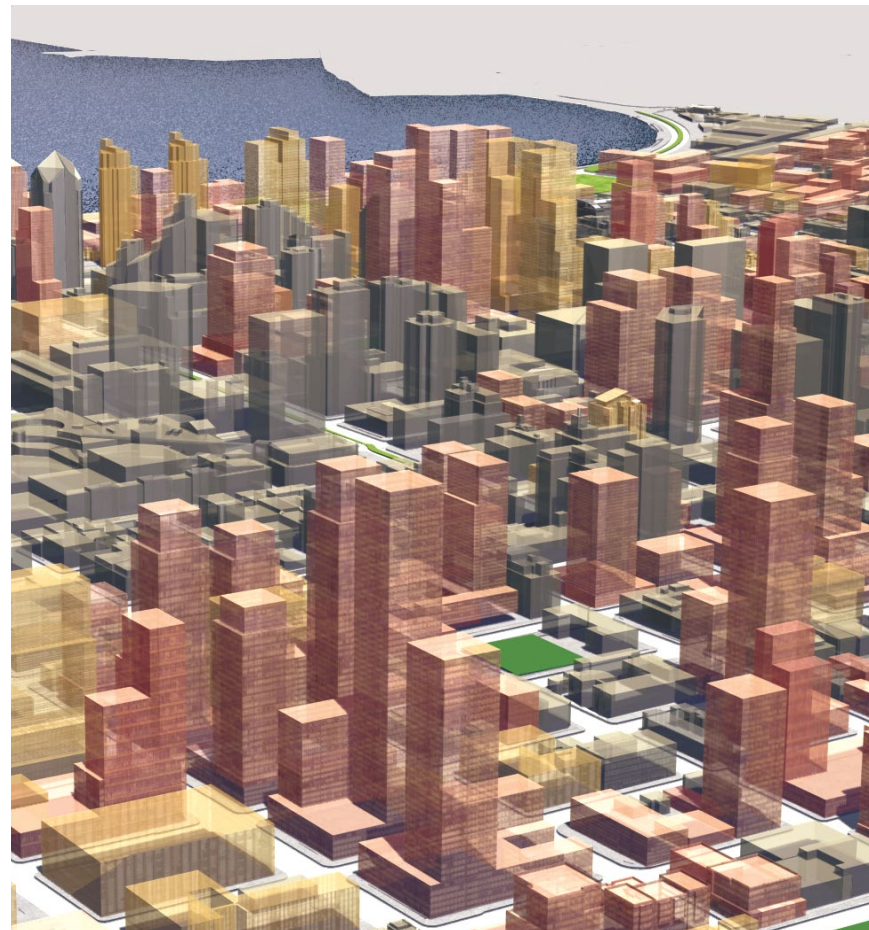
NOTE: This image shows building heights and massing that may result from Community Plan policies, solely for illustrative purposes.



### Development Projections

Development consistent with the Community Plan resulting from application of assumed average intensities for the different land use classifications to vacant land and sites with potential redevelopment/intensification opportunities is described in Table 3-2. Designation of a site for a certain use does not necessarily mean that the site will be built/redeveloped with the designated use within the horizon of the Plan. Similarly, sites that are not anticipated to be redeveloped may actually be reused.

For the purposes of calculating projected population, it has been assumed that 1.6 persons reside in each household, and that there is a 95 percent occupancy rate downtown. These residential density assumptions are simply used to calculate potential development projections—neither the density nor the household size assumptions constitute Community Plan policy.



Looking from East Village toward the Core 2003 (above) with potential buildout condition. This view is purely for illustrative purposes.

Table 3-2: Estimated Development Projections as of August 2004, CCDC GIS Database

	Existing	Pipeline	Community Plan	Total
Population	27,500	13,900	47,700	89,100
Employment	74,500	15,900	77,300	167,700
Residential (units)	14,600	9,200	29,400	53,100
Office (s.f.)	9,473,000	932,000	11,623,000	22,028,000
Civic Office (s.f.)	3,671,000	1,279,000	2,843,000	7,793,000
Culture and Education (s.f.)	1,508,000	519,000	533,000	2,560,000
Retail (s.f.)	2,658,000	679,000	2,733,000	6,070,000
Hotel Rooms	8,800	3,500	7,700	20,000
Other (s.f.) <sup>1</sup>	2,180,000	–	600,000	2,780,000
Total non-residential <sup>2</sup> (s.f.)	24,350,000	5,508,000	23,372,000	53,231,000
Parks and Open Space (ac.)	78.9	25.5	26.4 <sup>3</sup>	130.8

Note: Existing square foot totals include only building area to remain after proposed changes, not total existing square footage. The exception to this is on parcels currently used for civic purposes, where total existing square footage is shown. Numbers are rounded.

<sup>1</sup> Composed of convention center and ballpark square feet.

<sup>2</sup> Hotel rooms are counted at 600 s.f. per room.

<sup>3</sup> Parks and open space acres include up to 11.2 freeway lid acres.

Table 3-2 shows:

- **Projects with current development approvals.** This includes the various projects that were in the development pipeline at the time the plan was developed in August 2004.
- **Additional development under the Community Plan.** This results from application of average assumed intensities to vacant sites and sites/areas deemed to have potential redevelopment/intensification opportunities. Net units are expected to be approximately 29,400, accommodating a population of 47,700. New non-residential development could total close to 22.8 million s.f.
- **Combined approved development and additional development.** This reflects the total of the two above categories, and represents the expected Community Development Projections. Estimated development projections will result in an increase of 38,600 housing units and 28.9 million s.f. of non-residential space to downtown's current inventory of an estimated 14,600 housing units and 24.4 million s.f. of non-residential space expected to remain.



Downtown San Diego is well-positioned for significant growth for decades to come given that most development can be achieved through a by-right, ministerial approval process with no limit on density offered through numerous incentive programs.



### Goals: Development Intensities and Incentives, and Development Projections

- 3.2-G-1 Target a residential population of approximately 90,000, and downtown employment of over 165,000 by 2030, to create vitality, a market for a broad array of supporting stores and services, opportunities for living close to jobs and transit, and support regional growth strategies.
- 3.2-G-2 Maintain a range of development intensities to provide diversity, while maintaining high overall intensities to use land efficiently and permit population and employment targets to be met.
- 3.2-G-3 Provide incentives to encourage development of public amenities, retail, and other active uses in Neighborhood Centers, and promote affordable housing and conservation of historical resources.
- 3.2-G-4 Use transfer of development rights as a mechanism to create new parkland/open space and preserve historic resources.

### Policies: Development Intensities and Incentives, and Development Projections

- 3.2-P-1 Require a minimum FAR on all development sites, as shown in Figure 3-9, avoid exceptions unless conditioned on finding of hardship, exceptional circumstances, or public health and welfare.
- 3.2-P-2 Exempt the following from intensity calculations:
  - Required active ground level uses, as well as publicly owned and used facilities, on the first floor, in areas where ground level active uses are required, as shown in Figure 3-7.
  - Area included in a designated historic structure on a specific site, so long as the historic and/or architectural character of the structure is rehabilitated and not adversely affected.
- 3.2-P-3 Allow intensity bonuses for development projects in specific locations established by this plan that provide public amenities/benefits beyond those required for normal development approvals.
- 3.2-P-4 Establish a TDR program for parkland creation, and historic resource preservation.
- 3.2-P-5 Restrict building intensities underneath the approach path to San Diego International Airport consistent with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans (ALUCPs).
- 3.2-P-6 Work proactively with the transit agencies to prioritize the redevelopment of the four block site located at K, Imperial, 14th and 16th streets by relocating the bus yards to an area of more compatible uses.

### 3.3 HOUSING

Downtown San Diego has traditionally possessed a strong residential component, mixed with the office, shopping, entertainment, and warehousing/manufacturing sectors. Blight conditions resulting from the decline of the downtown economy in the 1960s and 1970s significantly diminished downtown’s appeal for residents. As a result, downtown’s housing stock significantly deteriorated, leaving few options other than affordable and institutional housing.

One of the essential underpinnings of downtown’s renaissance is an intense and wide-range of housing choices, meeting the various needs of a mixed population. Diversity among residents—by age, income, family status, ethnicity, and vocation—is one of the hallmarks of great urban environments. By establishing downtown as the center for the highest residential densities in the region, housing options will be available for the multitude of downtown employees consistent with the Strategic Framework Element of the City’s General Plan population distribution and economic development framework. In addition, the strong presence of residents will enliven the various downtown neighborhoods and districts, and create day and night vitality that makes downtown attractive to visitors and commerce.

Housing takes many forms in downtown—from luxury penthouses with panoramic views to single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels, studios, lofts, living units, and rental and ownership multi-room units. While mostly concentrated in neighborhoods with residential emphasis, housing is also considered an integral part of mixed-use centers and districts. Achieving residential population goals requires new neighborhood-oriented parks and open spaces and local shopping and services, as discussed in Section 3.3 above; *Chapter 4: Parks, Open Space, and Recreation*; and *Chapter 6: Neighborhoods*.

### Goals: Housing

- 3.3-G-1 Provide a range of housing opportunities suitable for urban environments and accommodating a diverse population.
- 3.3-G-2 Ensure supplies of housing for downtown employees commensurate with their means to reduce automobile trips and achieve related air quality benefits.

### Policies: Housing

- 3.3-P-1 Establish minimum FARs to achieve city and regional goals for making downtown a major population center.
- 3.3-P-2 Allow residential activity in all land use classifications (with exception of tidelands pursuant to the Port Master Plan and lands classified as Industrial). Allow for higher standard of review for residential development adjacent to industrial land use districts.
- 3.3-P-3 Achieve a mix of housing types and forms, consistent with FAR and urban design policies.
- 3.3-P-4 Promote construction of a supply of larger units suitable for families with children.
- 3.3-P-5 Encourage a diverse mix of housing opportunities within residential projects.



### 3.4 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The availability of diverse, affordable housing options will encourage people to live and work in the Centre City area, which benefits the entire region by reducing traffic congestion, urban sprawl and air pollution. One of the main goals of downtown's development is to expand and preserve the supply of affordable housing. Specifically, the goal is to ensure that downtown provides housing options for all income levels and promotes income diversity within projects and in neighborhoods.

The recent development boom in downtown has consisted mostly of residential units, a good portion of which are market-rate, balancing the historically prevalent affordable housing downtown. Continued compliance with State and local affordability requirements will help to ensure that affordable housing will continue to represent a portion of overall housing production. By allowing for a variety of housing densities and types, the Community Plan, in part, facilitates continued affordable housing production in compliance with applicable policies and regulations. Concerns about reductions in housing opportunities for moderate income households—due to rising land values and past emphasis on housing production for the lowest income brackets—need to be addressed when establishing assistance priorities for future affordable housing projects.

The Community Plan establishes goals and policies intended to complement effective State and local affordability laws to maximize affordable housing production. Solutions address housing needs where the private market is not providing enough affordability. The policies include land use tools for the City of San Diego to facilitate an economically and socially balanced population. Given the need for a broad range of affordable housing options, the Community Plan's focus is on incentives for the private sector to provide affordable housing without public subsidy.

A closer look at downtown's affordable housing inventory reveals some challenging policy issues:

**Affordable For-Sale Housing** – Many of downtown's affordable housing units are rental units. Ideally, more new condominiums and other home ownership opportunities would be available to moderate income households.

**Housing for Middle Income Households** – The City of San Diego's General Plan Housing Element identifies that there is significant need for housing for persons between 120% and 150% of area median income, which is above the income levels eligible to receive public subsidies. There is a need to include lower-priced, market-rate housing for middle income households among the priorities for future downtown housing.

**Income Diversity** – The majority of downtown's affordable housing units are for very low-income households. Given that a large number of downtown workers earn more than minimum wage and would fall into a broader range of income categories, downtown could benefit from having more units affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

**Family Housing** – The majority of downtown's affordable housing units are studio or one-bedroom units. Some observers say that

downtown should have larger affordable units to provide options for families with children. Rising land and development costs often make it economically infeasible to develop family housing projects, even as market-rate projects, in downtown.

In addition, goals for downtown affordable housing production must take into account policies to maximize downtown density and growth. The City Council has adopted policies to boost average housing density in new housing being developed to maximize downtown residential growth. With few exceptions, affordable family housing projects are developed utilizing low-rise, wood frame construction (Type III or V), which produce less expensive units but are limited to about five stories in height. High-rise construction requires the use of steel and/or concrete (Type I) construction, which increases the cost per unit. Downtown may not reach targets for residential population if a large number of low-density, affordable family housing projects are developed on the shrinking supply of land available for redevelopment.

**Single Room Occupancy Units** – The City of San Diego currently has about 4,500 residential hotel rooms, also known as SRO units, which serve as an important source of affordable housing for very low-income persons. In 2005, 90% of the units were located in downtown. Since 1977, the City has had regulations intended to protect the supply of SRO hotels. The regulations have been amended several times, most recently in 2000, but have retained a primary feature to require that SRO rooms be replaced upon conversion or demolition, and that displaced tenants receive relocation assistance.

SROs serve as an important source of housing affordable to very low-income persons. They provide small, furnished rooms with utilities included in the weekly or monthly rent. SRO rooms are occupied by students, seniors, and downtown workers representing occupations such as housekeepers, waiters, construction workers and security guards.

Between 2000-2005, about 600 of the approximately 4,000 SRO units located in downtown were demolished or closed to facilitate the expansion of the federal courthouse and other development projects. Local regulations intended to require one-for-one replacement of demolished or converted SRO units have been difficult to enforce due to overriding exemptions under state and federal laws. This has sparked numerous discussions among policy-makers and community groups about how to preserve and expand the supply of SRO units.

**Homelessness** – Affordable Housing is one of several crucial components to reducing the street population. Three types of housing are needed to serve downtown's diverse homeless population:

- Emergency shelter beds (housing for up to 60 days)
- Transitional housing beds (housing for up to 2 years); and
- Permanent supportive housing (rental housing linked to social services)

Most of downtown's existing homeless facilities would be classified as transitional housing, often catering to a specific target population (i.e. battered women, homeless families with children, mentally ill persons, etc.) In recent years, homeless population experts and funding agencies have urged policy-makers to prioritize the expansion of permanent



supportive housing. Rental units with affordability for extremely low income persons and links to services for substance abuse recovery, job placement, and employment training are considered a necessary long-term solution to homelessness.

### Goals: Affordable Housing

- 3.4-G-1 Continue to promote the production of affordable housing in all of downtown's neighborhoods and districts
- 3.4-G-2 Create affordable home ownership opportunities for moderate-income buyers.
- 3.4-G-3 Increase the supply of rental housing affordable to low-income persons.
- 3.4-G-4 Preserve and expand the supply of single room occupancy ("SRO") and living units (small studio apartments) affordable to very low-income persons.
- 3.4-G-5 Support the development of projects that serve homeless and special needs populations
  - Prioritize service enriched rental apartments to meet the housing needs of the chronically homeless.
  - Assist in the development of affordable, permanent supportive housing projects in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. These would serve working families identified in need of transitional housing. Apartment leases would be for a minimum of six months.

### Policies: Affordable Housing

- 3.4-P-1 Utilize land-use and regulatory tools to facilitate the development of housing affordable to all income levels, including:
  - Development intensity bonuses for builders creating affordable units.
  - Agreements to secure long-term affordability restrictions
- 3.4-P-2 Encourage the development of for-sale housing with long-term affordability restrictions for low- and moderate-income households earning up to 120% of area median income. Encourage the development of moderately priced, market-rate (unsubsidized) housing affordable to middle income households earning up to 150% of area median income.
- 3.4-P-3 Encourage the development of rental housing, with emphasis on creating one-, two- and three-bedroom units affordable to households earning up to 80% of area median income.
- 3.4-P-4 Encourage preservation and construction of SRO and living units with the following actions:
  - Allow construction of new SROs, living units, and other similar forms of housing in all appropriate mixed use districts.
  - Allow reduced parking for projects with rent-restricted units.
- 3.4-P-5 Encourage the development of housing linked to supportive services for homeless and other special needs populations.



Affordable housing development downtown.

### Box 3-1: Affordable Housing Strategies

#### Affordable For-Sale Housing

**Strategy:** To address the need for more affordable for-sale housing, the Community plan includes development intensity bonuses to encourage developers to build more units on a site. The City of San Diego will secure price restrictions in perpetuity when possible, and offer homebuyer assistance programs to expand affordability.

#### Income Diversity

**Strategy:** To achieve income diversity within projects, the Community Plan prioritizes the development of mixed-income rental projects with a mix of market rate and affordable units restricted to different income levels.

#### Family Housing

**Strategy:** To address the need for family housing, the Community Plan sets a goal to incentivize the development of affordable two and three-bedroom units to provide options for families.

#### Single Room Occupancy Units

**Strategy:** To address the need for more SRO units, the Community Plan expands the zones where builders can construct new SROs, and sets a goal to preserve existing units through historic preservation and rent restrictions.

#### Homelessness

**Strategy:** To address the need for housing for downtown's homeless population, the Community Plan prioritizes development of permanent supportive housing to provide rental apartments linked to supportive services for both families and individuals.



### 3.5 NEIGHBORHOODS AND CENTERS

Neighborhoods unique in history and setting are one of downtown's finest assets, offering a diversity of experiences and lifestyle choices. The neighborhoods not only provide a sense of place and community for many downtown residents, an important value in a downtown as large as San Diego's, but also an opportunity to ensure richness and complexity that makes downtown an exciting place both to live and to visit. Focusing on neighborhoods is also useful in ensuring that residents have convenient, walkable access to a diverse array of shops and services, parks, and schools.

#### Distinct and Different Neighborhoods

The need to focus planning attention on each of the neighborhoods has been a theme during outreach efforts for the Plan. The vision of downtown as a tapestry of distinctive neighborhoods is embodied in the Guiding Principles, in recognition of the importance of developing distinct and unique neighborhoods, with their own identity and culture.

The downtown neighborhoods are based on existing character and expected new development types. Elements such as history, building volumes, parks and open spaces, land use emphasis, design, texture, and light will further define different neighborhoods, fostering distinction and a sense of individual identity, and emphasizing a human scale. Each neighborhood is served by, or shares, at least one Neighborhood Center that provides amenities necessary for daily life, and a focal core of activity. The Neighborhood Centers are located within a convenient, five minute walking radius within the various neighborhoods.

The specific boundaries of Columbia, Core, Marina, Gaslamp, and Horton Plaza are retained from pre-existing redevelopment areas. Each district depends on its individual character, urban design qualities, and Neighborhood Center or Centers to distinguish it from other areas of downtown. The boundaries can blend characteristics of adjacent neighborhoods.

#### Neighborhoods

A brief description of each of the neighborhoods envisioned by this plan follows below. *Chapter 6: Neighborhoods* contains detailed outlines of development planning for each, and the Neighborhood Design Guidelines (a separate document) should be consulted for direction on design character.

**Civic/Core.** Many aspects of this district are already established. It will remain a focus area for offices and a regional employment center especially for city, county, state, and federal government, as well as a place for hotels and theaters. Intensities will be among the highest downtown, and redevelopment of the Civic Center is a key component of enhancing the public realm.

**Columbia.** Located between Civic/Core and the waterfront, Columbia

caters to visitor-serving uses and includes large hotels and office buildings. Recently, the district has seen high-rise residential development as well. Improved waterfront connections are a major thrust in planning for Columbia.

**Marina.** Marina encompasses a portion of downtown's active waterfront as well as one of downtown's most established residential neighborhoods and the historic Pantoja Park. Large parcels at the waterfront will become available at the Navy Broadway Complex, affording an opportunity to develop a new, mixed waterfront district and create new Bay connections and views. The Port's proposed redevelopment of the historic harborfront will help forge new waterfront connections as well.

**Gaslamp Quarter/Horton Plaza.** This area experienced the first wave of downtown redevelopment in the 1980s and continues to grow and change today as the business, tourism, and residential mixes of the neighborhood have changed. It contains the historic Horton Plaza shopping center, now reimagined as a mixed-use center with retail, office and lab space, and the historic Gaslamp Quarter mixed-use entertainment district, protected by its designation on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, the Federal Building lies in Gaslamp/Horton.

**East Village.** East Village is a large neighborhood encompassing the eastern portions of downtown. These areas have traditionally been less developed than those closer to the waterfront or the business core of downtown, and are poised to experience some of the most significant changes under the Community Plan. East Village is defined by four different sub-districts: Ballpark, Southeast, Northwest, and Northeast.

- **Ballpark.** Containing the area around Petco Park, this portion of East Village is envisioned as an entertainment, cultural, and residential district. Key amenities include the ballpark, Central Library, and Park at the Park. Intensities are comparatively low, respecting the central open space of the outfield, and proximity to the historic structures of the Gaslamp Quarter. Re-use of historic warehouses will contribute distinct character to the sub-district.
- **Southeast.** Located between Ballpark and I-5, Southeast presents significant opportunities for low- to mid-intensity residential development centered on a central park/plaza. The sub-district also includes a flexible zone to accommodate light industry and artists' live/work lofts, a fine-grained district where development will occur on smaller parcels, and limited sites for larger floor plate buildings. A freeway lid bridging I-5 from Market Street to Island Avenue in Southeast will improve connections between downtown and the Sherman Heights and Barrio Logan neighborhoods beyond I-5.
- **Northwest.** Located between Civic/Core and the new residential neighborhoods of eastern downtown, Northwest will be a high-intensity residential zone served by a Neighborhood Center with a cultural focus, and two public open spaces. Intensities will parallel those of Civic/Core, serving to create a second prong in downtown's skyline as very large buildings develop. Northwest is located at the center of downtown and has efficient access to many of the area's principal destinations.



*The Civic/Core will be emphasized as downtown's heart and will have the highest intensities. The Civic Center will be redeveloped, focused on a new civic park (top). Gaslamp Quarter will retain its historic character (middle). Marina (bottom) is not expected to change much, except along the waterfront.*



*Illustrative view of how Neighborhood Centers and open spaces may develop in Southeast (top) and Northeast (above) East Village.*



- **Northeast.** This sub-district includes the City College and San Diego High School campuses and will be influenced by campus activities. Major new residential development is expected, mixed with institutional uses, smaller hotels, and retail. Buildings with larger floor plates are allowed to accommodate uses that may have synergies with the academic institutions. Northeast is a gateway between downtown and Golden Hill and Balboa Park.

**Cortez.** Located adjacent to Balboa Park, this neighborhood includes Cortez Hill, home of the historic El Cortez and both older and more recent residential development, and “Lower Cortez”, which also contains residential along with a mix of office, civic, and institutional uses. A “main street” Neighborhood Center will focus on 6th Avenue. It is envisioned that open space character would be expanded by a new park across from St. Joseph’s church and new connections from Downtown to Balboa Park.

**Little Italy.** The historic, waterfront Italian neighborhood—dating back to the early 1900s fishing industry—still retains strong ethnic ties, as expressed in the series of cafes, restaurants, and shops lining India Street. Little Italy has experienced strong mid-rise residential development in recent years. Future development will be similar in scale and height, due to restrictions associated with airport operations and sun access protection goals. The Community Plan accommodates the mix of light industry, artists’ studios, and services in northern Little Italy, which contribute to neighborhood synergies.

**Convention Center.** This district lies along the southern edge of downtown, and houses Phase II of the convention center, the rail switching yards, Tenth Avenue marine terminal, and the South Embarcadero and Campbell hotels and parking. It has a mixed character overall, with significant large-scale uses. Future development is possible in its inland eastern portion, closest to Southeast.



Cortez with a growing residential inventory (top) will gain open spaces, including a new park (above).

### Goals: Neighborhoods and Centers

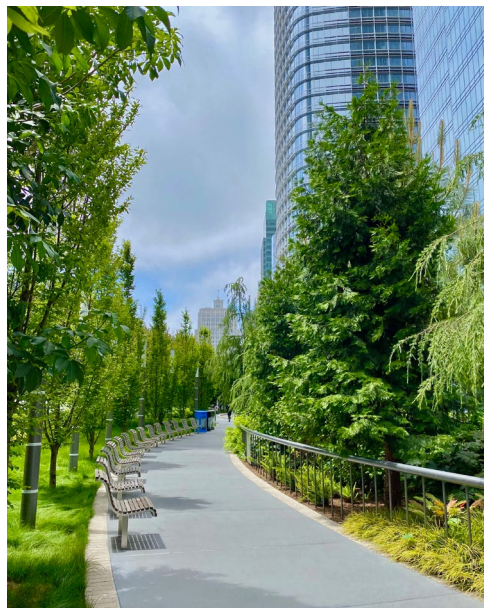
- 3.5-G-1 Develop a system of neighborhoods sized for walking, with parks and concentrations of retail, restaurants, cultural activities, and neighborhood services in mix with residential and other commercial uses.
- 3.5-G-2 Foster a rich mix of uses in all neighborhoods, while allowing differences in emphasis on uses to distinguish between them.
- 3.5-G-3 Diversify existing single-use districts.
- 3.5-G-4 Link neighborhood cores with pedestrian corridors and express-transit service.
- 3.5-G-5 Reduce driver speeds and vehicle street stress and clutter in neighborhood cores

### Policies: Neighborhoods and Centers

- 3.5-P-1 Apply the system of neighborhoods as shown in Figure 3-2 as an organizing element for downtown.
- 3.5-P-2 Emphasize neighborhood character in each district, to promote diversity and complexity.
- 3.5-P-3 Facilitate the development of Neighborhood Centers according to the urban design principles of this plan described in Chapter 5: Urban Design.



Fill the City’s urban core with life by creating vibrant and active parks filled with recreational amenities to serve all ages.



San Francisco's Salesforce Transit Center and its rooftop park



The Convention Center – the largest single facility downtown.

### 3.6 LARGE FACILITIES

Through the years of downtown's redevelopment, several major facilities have improved the overall appeal of downtown and boosted visitor rates. Horton Plaza, the San Diego Convention Center (Phase I and II), and Petco Park fall within this category of projects that have contributed to redevelopment success. While the economic benefits of these projects have been documented, they have come at the cost of major and long-term disruptions in the urban fabric. Impacts have included blockage of water views, interruption of the street grid and connections between neighborhoods, and massive structures that depart from prevailing building forms in other parts of downtown.

For example, large infrastructure near the Convention Center, including MTS rail maintenance yards and storage areas, create barriers between downtown and the bay. However, advances in construction scale and methods and urban demand have overcome these design legacies throughout the world. This is well illustrated by New York's 28-acre Hudson Yards project, built atop one of the City's most active rail yards and containing approximately 4,000 new residential units, millions of square feet of commercial space, and 15 acres of open green space, and San Francisco's Salesforce Transit Center. A new centralized transit center could include a relocation of MTS's bus operations yard from the East Village Neighborhood and incorporate a new rooftop park. By way of comparison, the MTS' railyard footprint is roughly 20 acres and located adjacent to the burgeoning East Village and Ballpark districts.

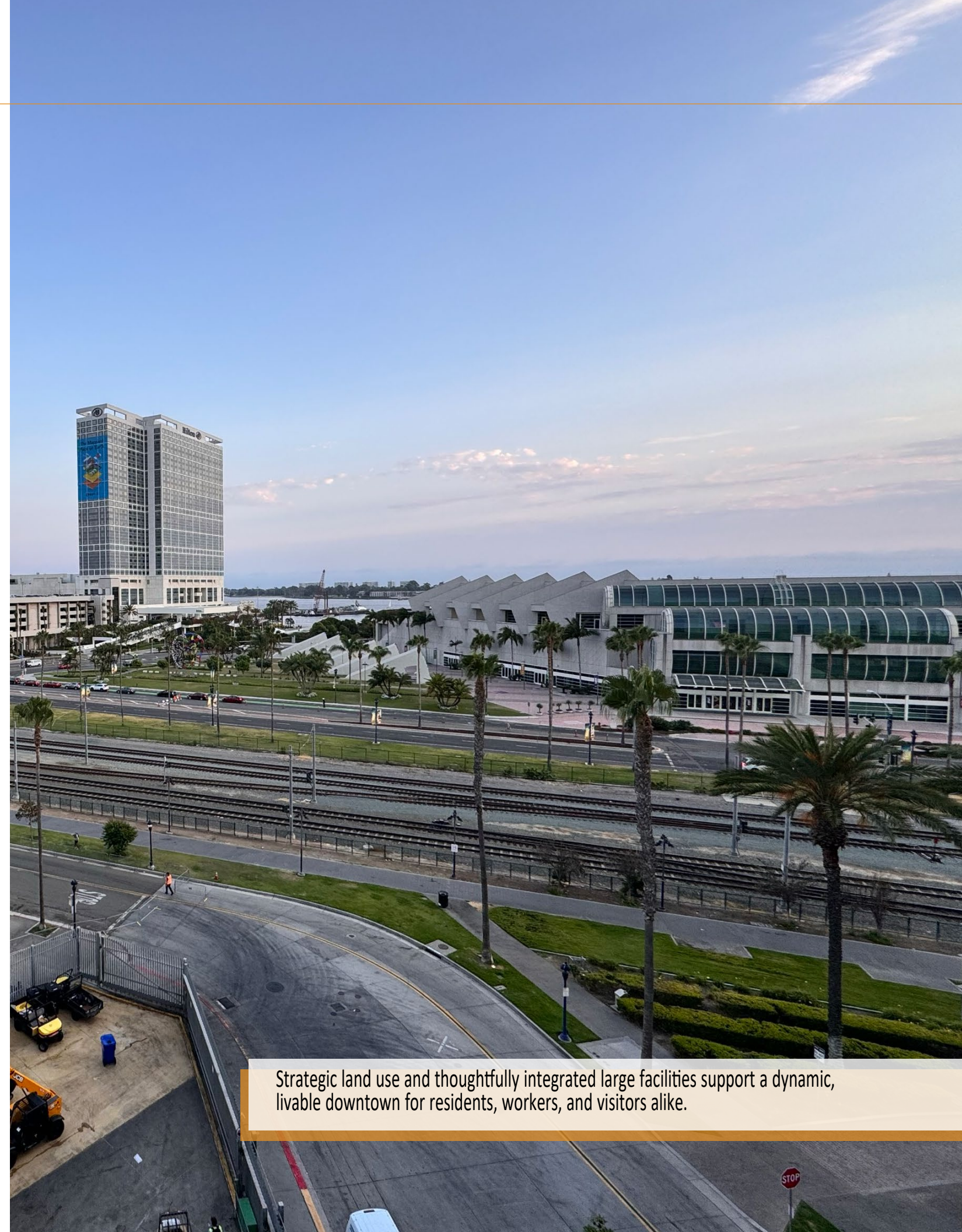
This section establishes policies directed towards large facilities, defined as projects with footprints exceeding one block.

#### Goals: Large Facilities

- 3.6-G-1 Allow large facilities only in appropriate locations, and provided that projects do not interrupt community fabric, street grid, designated public views, or the viability of Neighborhood Centers, and that facilities are designed to be compatible in scale and texture with surrounding uses.
- 3.6-G-2 Require new large projects to be designed as multi-use facilities to the extent feasible, with parking and other amenities shared between various uses and with other adjacent developments.

#### Policies: Large Facilities

- 3.6-P-1 Ensure that all large facilities maintain or reinstate the street grid (see Figure 5-2), and through design and development standards, that they are seamlessly integrated with the surroundings



Strategic land use and thoughtfully integrated large facilities support a dynamic, livable downtown for residents, workers, and visitors alike.

# 4

## PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION

Parks, open spaces, and plazas are critical in satisfying the diverse outdoor recreational needs of downtown residents, visitors, and the workforce. They are vital to filling the urban core with life, fostering social interactions, and meeting the recreational needs of a diverse population. By prioritizing investments that serve the most people, downtown's comprehensive parks and greenways system will attract residents from the entire region, creating "America's Outdoor Downtown".

Two magnificent open space assets—the waterfront and Balboa Park—border downtown. The northern waterfront is being developed with public parks, cultural amenities, and activity nodes strung along a continuous pedestrian promenade. Balboa Park, although separated from downtown by the I-5 freeway, is the country's largest urban cultural park, containing a multitude of cultural amenities and hundreds of acres of open space, and will remain a cultural and recreational destination for downtown.

In planning downtown's open space system, several factors require consideration:

- Accessibility to Balboa Park is limited because of grade differential and the I-5 freeway. The

experience of Balboa Park can be expanded to downtown through implementation of the John Nolen Greenway Loop providing inviting pedestrian connections across both the Park Boulevard and 6th Avenue overpasses through vehicular lane reductions, removal of auxiliary turn lanes, and the addition of active recreational gateway amenities welcoming downtown residents into Balboa Park.

- Some of the new emerging neighborhoods were originally developed with commercial and warehouse emphasis, without any provision for parks.
- Strategic park siting and development is essential to maximize accessibility and use and make efficient use of limited municipal resources for land acquisition.





## 4.1 OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

Downtown's planned open space system emphasizes physical and functional linkages between residential areas and parks and Neighborhood Centers, and improved connections to Balboa Park and the waterfront. Several exciting new public open spaces, located to enable virtually all residents to live within a five-minute walk of at least one park (and a majority within a two-and-a-half minute walk), will be created under this Community Plan.

The Recreation Element of the General Plan sets forth a series of goals and guidelines for the provision of recreation opportunities in both existing and new communities. The City has used a standard of 2.8 acres of park per 1,000 residents, encompassing community parks, neighborhood parks, mini-parks, and joint-use facilities. While this standard guided prior planning, the updated approach in the Parks Master Plan includes a Recreational Value-Based Standard, which targets 100 points per 1,000 residents. This standard emphasizes recreational value, encompassing accessibility, park amenities, and community-specific needs, rather than relying solely on acreage. At least 20 percent (or 20 points per 1,000 residents) of the recreational value should be achieved through land acquisition to continue expanding accessible recreational spaces for all San Diego communities. These figures serve as flexible benchmarks rather than strict requirements, allowing recreational facilities and spatial arrangements to be tailored to the unique needs and usage patterns of each community, supporting adaptable design and responsive planning.

A range of parks and plazas tailored to the needs of individual neighborhoods are provided. Box 4-1 outlines the concepts and character of these new parks and plazas, and Figure 4-1 shows their location. The public open spaces comprising the system could total 150 acres, with 97 acres of existing parks and plazas and 53 acres of approved, under-development, and planned open spaces; new pocket parks and plazas will be in addition to this total. The system consists of several components:

- **Parks.** Provided for the enjoyment of downtown residents, employees, and visitors alike, downtown's parks are designed for recreational and leisurely pursuits as well as gatherings and events, and can accommodate play areas. Locations near the waterfront, Neighborhood Centers, and other activity areas contribute to character differ-



Downtown is located between two magnificent open space assets — Balboa Park (top) and the San Diego Bay (above).



Embarcadero Marina Park South — one of the largest parks downtown, but difficult to access on foot.



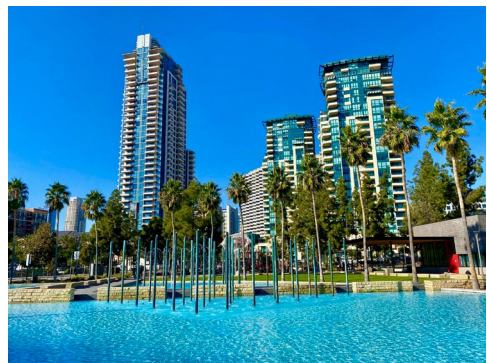
Figure 4-1  
Parks and Public Spaces



Table 4-1: Park Acreage

EXISTING PARKS	Acreages
Federal Building Parks	1
Tweet Street Park	1.2
Progress Park	1.3
Fault Line Park	1.4
Children's Park	1.5
Amici Park	1.6
Park-at-the-Park	2.8
Pantoja Park	2.9
South Embarcadero Esplanade	3.0
San Diego Bayfront Park	3.3
Martin Luther King Jr. Promenade	3.3
Ruocco Park	3.3
City College Outdoor Areas	4.0
Embarcadero Marina Park North	9.9
Embarcadero Marina Park South	10.6
CAC Open Space and County Waterfront Park	14.8
San Diego High School Recreational Fields <sup>1</sup>	21.3
Other existing parks (including Convention Center Park, Tuna Harbor Park, Civic Center Plaza, Children's Museum Park )	11
<i>Sub-total existing parks</i>	96.9
PIPELINE AND PROPOSED PARKS	
Harmony Park	0.6
Post Office Square	0.6
Horton Plaza Park	1.2
St. Joseph's Park	1.4
Civic Square	1.4
East Village Green	4.1
Freeway Lids (up to)	11.2
North Embarcadero Esplanade	11.8
Others	10.6
<i>Sub-total pipeline and proposed parks</i>	52.9
<b>Total Parks (up to)</b>	<b>149.8</b>

1 The facility may only be open to the public on a limited basis



Existing open spaces downtown include Courthouse Plaza (top) and Children's Park (above).



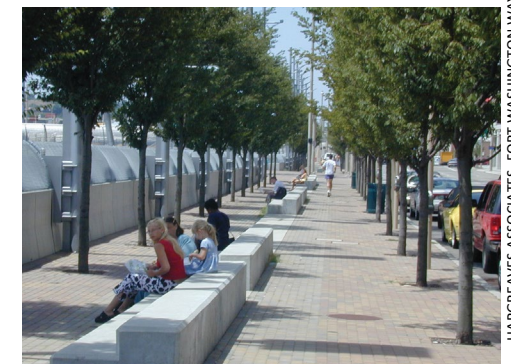
Active recreational amenities can be added to existing parks and public spaces to create a family-friendly downtown.

tiation. Most parks are large enough to efficiently accommodate underground parking. Height restrictions on southern and western blocks around most of these new open spaces will allow infiltration of sunlight (see Figure 5-3).

- **Plazas and Places.** To be created in conjunction with a development project, these smaller public open spaces consist of portions of blocks. The smaller size still allows for some seating, attractive landscaping, and possibly play areas, and gives breaks in the intense built landscape. They may also provide connections between larger parks and activity nodes. "Finger parks" following faults, "linear parks" stretching across multiple projects, and "pocket parks" on corners or mid-block fall into this classification. These open spaces are accessible to the public but will likely be privately owned and maintained. The acreage from new plazas and places will vary according to future project proposals, and therefore are not accounted for in the total acreage figures above. Some specific locations for these are shown in Figure 4-1, while others will be located as individual projects are designed.
- **Freeway Lids.** These will reconnect downtown to Balboa Park and Sherman Heights, and provide new open spaces serving downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The "lid" connection to Balboa Park, especially the portion between 6th and 8th Avenues, should be the priority. Certain areas of the lid could provide potential development sites.

In addition to the public open space system, all residential projects will be required to incorporate common open spaces—such as courtyards and terraces—on-site to provide more private and sheltered open air retreats for residents.

Designated Greenways (described in Chapter 7: Mobility) that serve as paths connecting downtown parks, the waterfront, Neighborhood Centers, and other activity areas will support the open space system. Wider sidewalks and richer landscaping on Greenways will extend the open space presence through the neighborhoods.



The Community Plan calls for a lid over I-5 to reconnect downtown to Balboa Park (top), improvements along streets spanning I-5 that connect downtown to surrounding neighborhoods (illustrative example in Cincinnati shown in the middle), and improvements to existing open spaces, such as the Horton Plaza Park (above) to make them more accessible and usable.



### Goals: Open Space System

- 4.1-G-1 Develop a comprehensive open space system that provides a diverse range of outdoor opportunities for residents, workers, and visitors.
- 4.1-G-2 Provide public open space within walking distance of all residents and employees.
- 4.1-G-3 Improve accessibility to recreational, leisure, and cultural opportunities on the waterfront and at Balboa Park.
- 4.1-G-4 Make the new public parks and plazas harmonious, inspirational, and sources of community pride and character through community participation and design excellence.
- 4.1-G-5 A comprehensive maintenance program should be established for all parks and plazas. Ensure that all public parks are adequately and sufficiently lit at night.

### Policies: Open Space System

- 4.1-P-1 Develop new highly-amenitized parks and plazas open and accessible to the public.
- 4.1-P-2 Prioritize development of the five new major public open spaces as outlined in Box 4-1.
- 4.1-P-3 Establish a comprehensive program to obtain parkland using a variety of techniques, including but not limited to acquisition and a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program potentially allowing proposed open space site owners to sell development rights to property owners in higher-intensity areas of downtown (as discussed in Chapter 3: Land Use and Housing).
- 4.1-P-4 Where ever possible, incorporate parking under all new parks and open spaces greater than a half-block in size. Design underground parking, so access ramps do not isolate the park from adjacent pedestrians.
- 4.1-P-5 Continue efforts to improve the waterfront open space network according to the North Embarcadero Visionary Plan and connecting to the redeveloped Seaport Village.
- 4.1-P-6 Encourage Port efforts to include open space, landscaped streets, and improved pedestrian connections to the existing Embarcadero Marina Parks, especially at Kettner Boulevard, Pacific Highway, Park Boulevard extension, and any future possible locations.
- 4.1-P-7 Coordinate with Caltrans and other agencies on the construction of “lids” over I-5 to re-establish access to Balboa Park and Sherman Heights, as well as to create new open space areas.
- 4.1-P-8 Pursue new smaller open spaces—including public plazas and places, fountains, and pocket parks—on portions of blocks throughout downtown and on geologic faults to supplement the larger public open spaces, provide local focus points, and diversify the built environment.
- 4.1-P-9 Improve Greenways as an essential element of the open space system – as connections to the waterfront, Balboa Park, activity centers, and

parks and plazas; as tree-lined open spaces; and as continuous recreational paths.

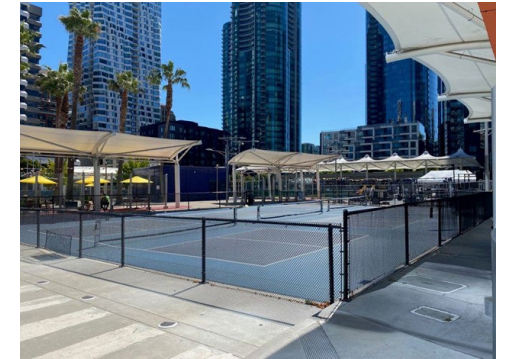
- 4.1-P-10 Require private common open space as part of all large new residential developments.
- 4.1-P-11 Implement a program to reclaim open spaces that have deteriorated, have design features that limit access and use opportunities, and/or are in need of activity and revitalization.
- 4.1-P-12 Expand and develop shared use programs and agreements for existing recreation and open spaces with San Diego High School, City College, and other future school playgrounds/open space.
- 4.1-P-13 Unify, strengthen, and continue the Bay to Park Paseo , especially along the San Diego High School and City College edges, and develop an enhanced “Green Bridge” at the I-5 overpass.
- 4.1-P-14 Work to secure a site for an additional park in southeastern downtown, near Barrio Logan.
- 4.1-P-15 Encourage the position of outdoor seating and/or cafés where appropriate.
- 4.1-P-16 Public spaces of half a city block or more in size should have well-maintained public restrooms.



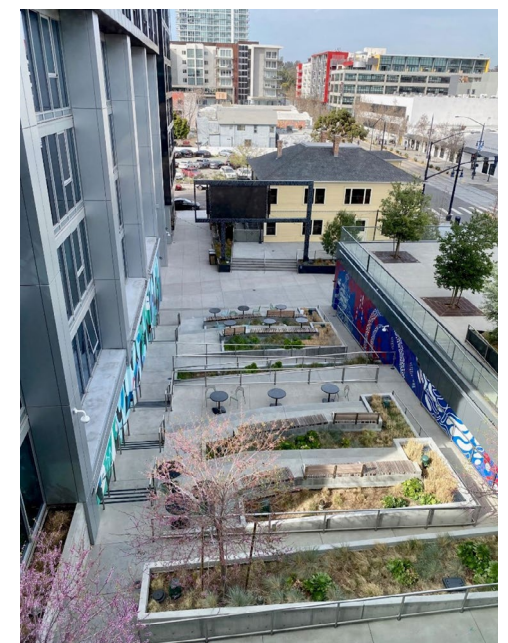
Outdoor Use Areas provide opportunity for both permanent and temporary placemaking activities all across Downtown’s neighborhoods.(above).



Pantoja Park in Marina neighborhood – downtown’s oldest park.



Temporary activation of vacant lots can include private recreational uses such as pickleball courts.



Incorporating public plazas into new development is encouraged through the Public Spaces Incentive Program.



The segment of J Street between First and Second Avenue could be transformed into a future linear park.

## Box 4-1: Potential Park Elements

### East Village Green

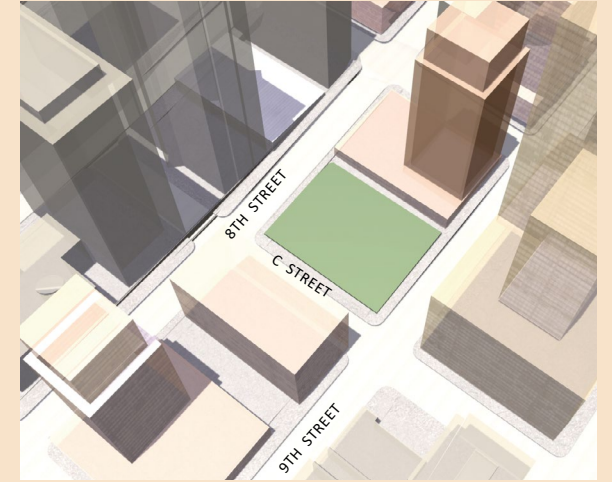
- 4.1-acre, multi-block park, the largest in eastern downtown.
- Majority for active areas for recreation.
- Informal amphitheater (sloping land, without steps) for special events.
- Closure of 14th Street during special events and on weekends.
- Possibility for café, seating, shade trees, and play lot, but only located on periphery to maintain expansive grass fields. Perhaps a smaller paved area in the western portion (between 13th and 14th streets) for farmers' market and other events.
- Southern anchor for Neighborhood Center, with potential extension of 13th Street commercial uses to embrace the northern edge of the park.
- Active ground-floor uses, such as cafés and shops, on surrounding street fronts.
- Traffic calming on F and G streets, and pedestrian crossings for connection to the planned linear park stretching from G to Island, to Fault Line Park (see below).



## Box 4-1: Potential Park Elements

### Harmony Park

Harmony park is envisioned as an approximately 24,000 square foot urban park that is a highly-amenitized, family-friendly park that includes active-recreational components and other urban park amenities. The project will also include the construction of the 8th Avenue greenway improvements.



The accompanying photo is conceptual.

## Box 4-1: Potential Park Elements

### St. Joseph's Park

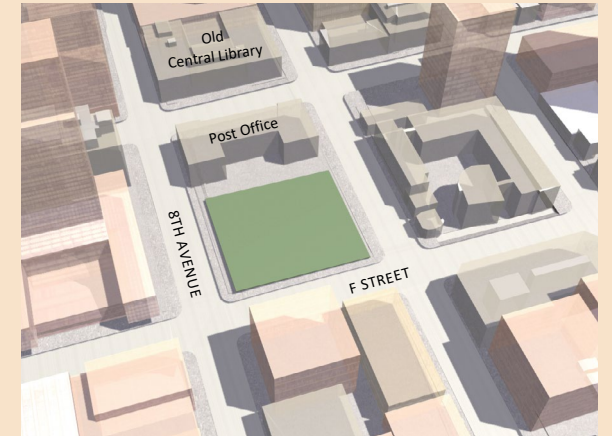
- 1.4-acre, full-block active park, with St. Joseph's Cathedral as iconic backdrop.
- Flexible spaces, with potential play area for kids.
- Ample space for active recreation.
- North-south linear allée for peaceful strolling and sitting, enhancing orientation towards church.
- Serves Civic/Core workforce and visitors in addition to Cortez residents.



## Box 4-1: Potential Park Elements

### Post Office Square

- 0.6-acre, partial-block plaza, directly south of historic Post Office structure.
- Anchor of the surrounding Neighborhood Center, with active ground floor uses around open space.
- Opportunity for outdoor performance space, relating to new cultural facilities in Post Office building and old Central Library.
- Public art.



Post Office Square

### Civic Square

- 1.4-acre, full block park in Civic/Core, with combination of green and active areas and plazas.
- Centrally located amidst government activity.
- Gathering area for workers at noontime as well as people with government business.
- Iconic venue for public events, gatherings, and demonstrations.
- Variety of different shaded seating areas plus open grounds for events.
- Opportunities for some food vendors.



Civic Square



# 5

## URBAN DESIGN

This chapter focuses on issues of public realm, identity, character, and experience – for residents, workers, and visitors. Another important thrust is fostering livability for downtown’s burgeoning population.

San Diego enjoys a favorable climate, the most moderate of any major North American metropolis. Downtown has a magnificent setting, occupying a strategic location between the sparkling San Diego Bay and the green expanse of Balboa Park. The Community Plan capitalizes on these unique assets, creating an outdoor-focused, Mediterranean ambiance that emphasizes vitality and street life, and gathering places that reflect San Diego’s natural setting.

The Community Plan envisions downtown as a quilt of distinctive, walkable neighborhoods with unique identities. Diversity in scale, design, texture, and light will help build complexity and an engaging human experience. This chapter seeks to:



- Maximize the advantage of San Diego’s climate and downtown’s waterfront setting by emphasizing the public realm—streets and public spaces—more so than individual buildings;
- Foster vital and active streetlife, and maximize sunlight penetration into streets and open spaces;
- Build upon natural features and historic assets to promote richness and diversity;
- Ensure that development is designed with a pedestrian orientation;
- Promote fine-grained development where appropriate, while enabling desired development intensities to be achieved; and
- Provide direction for more detailed guidelines and capital project designs.

Many of the urban design components addressed in this chapter directly relate to transportation topics covered in Chapter 7: Mobility. These include street grid, street design, and special street designations.



## 5.1 STREET GRID AND VIEWS

### Street Grid

Downtown’s street pattern was established by William Heath Davis and Alonzo Horton in the 1850-60s. Horton created an orthogonal grid of streets along cardinal directions, with small blocks (measuring 300 feet x 200 feet) without alleys, allowing for a larger number of more valuable corner lots to be sold. Most streets—with the exception of ceremonial streets such as Broadway, Market, Pacific Highway, and Harbor Drive—were laid to be exactly 80 feet wide.

This street grid has survived largely intact over a 140-year period, while much else in downtown has changed. The regular grid and frequent intersections enable easy connections within downtown and exploration on foot, and facilitate access to amenities such as parks, neighborhood centers, and cultural and entertainment facilities. The system of assigning letters to east-west streets and numbers to most north-south streets contributes to navigation ease.

The street grid is interrupted by some larger developments, such as federal facilities, Horton Plaza, Petco Park, the County Administration Center (CAC), the Convention Center, and rail and bus yards. By far, the most severe of these disruptions occurs along downtown’s southern waterfront, where the grid terminates at Harbor Drive, with large structures such as the Convention Center severing the rest of downtown from the water. This also occurs to a lesser extent along much of the western waterfront; however, here there are opportunities to fully re-establish the grid as several large blocks are contemplated for redevelopment. These opportunities have been evaluated in the North Embarcadero Visionary Plan, which forms the basis for policies included here.

Many of the larger multi-block developments—such as Horton Plaza, Petco Park, and the Convention Center—have been catalysts of downtown renaissance. However, as downtown increasingly evolves into a rich urban place, with an increasing residential population and emphasis on pedestrian movement, there is a need to ensure that new large developments do not create street grid interruptions.

Potential sites where the street grid can be re-extended include:

- A, B, and C streets through the western portion of downtown;
- L and 15th streets through the existing bus yards site and;
- L and 13th streets through Tailgate Park.

### Views

Views and vistas of the San Diego Bay, Balboa Park, parks, and landmark buildings are significant downtown assets. Distant views and a sense of expansiveness are especially critical to balance the planned high development intensities.



Downtown’s grid system and short blocks permit easy connections and vistas to the San Diego Bay to the west and south.

The Community Plan designates view corridors (Figure 5-1) and outlines design criteria to preserve and reinforce existing views—of the water, such as can be had from Broadway and Market Street, or of landmark buildings, like the County Administration Center building at the foot of Cedar Street—and capture new views as redevelopment on some of the larger waterfront parcels occurs. View policies focus on streets and public spaces, rather than on private views from buildings.

### Goals: Street Grid and Views

- 5.1-G-1 Maintain the downtown’s street grid system, and extend it to the waterfront and other larger sites as they are redeveloped.
- 5.1-G-2 Protect public views of the San Diego Bay by establishing view corridors which accentuate key public rights-of-way with appropriate setbacks, stepbacks, and design standards, and capture new public views where possible as waterfront sites are redeveloped.

### Policies: Street Grid and Views

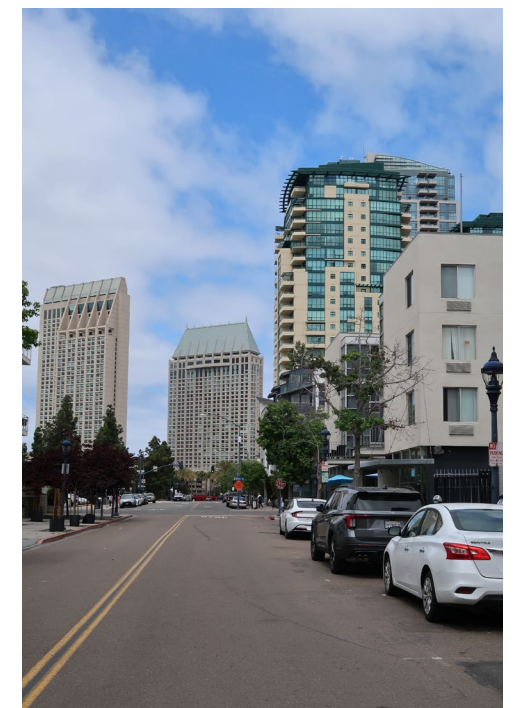
#### Street Grid

- 5.1-P-1 Do not allow full or partial street closures by new buildings, utilities, ramps, or transportation improvements. The only allowable use enabled through a street closure is park or open space. Where a street closure to vehicular traffic may be essential, access for pedestrians and bicycles must still be maintained.
- 5.1-P-2 Re-establish the street grid as redevelopment on larger sites occurs.

#### Views

- 5.1-P-3 Protect public views of the water, and re-establish water views, in the corridors shown in Figure 5-1, with the following two-tiered system:
  - Within the system established in Chapter 7: Mobility, including existing streets and new street segments to be created when future development proceeds (such as G); and
  - In instances where the view corridors have been designated on Figure 5-1 but a street will not be built, view/public access easements or dedications shall be required where the ground-level right-of-way width will be the same average dimension as the existing street right-of-way for street segments comprising the view corridor, including Date, Beech, A, B, C, and E streets.

(Policies continue on page 5-6)



Downtown’s street grid is interrupted by larger multi-block developments. The interruption along the western waterfront by the Convention Center (top and middle) and hotels (above) severely impacts views.



Table 5-1: View Corridor Stepbacks

Street (refer to Figure 5-1 for applicable locations)	Required Stepback (Feet)	Stepback Elevation (Feet)
Laurel Street	15	30
Juniper Street	15	30
Ivy Street	15	30
Hawthorne Street	15	30
Grape Street	15	30
Fir Street	15	30
Date Street		
– West of Pacific Hwy	20	Ground Level
– East of Pacific Hwy	15	30
Cedar Street		
– West of India Street	15	Ground Level
– India Street to First Avenue	15	50
Beech Street		
– West of Pacific Highway	20	Ground Level
– Pacific Highway to Kettner Boulevard	15	30
– Kettner Boulevard to Sixth Avenue	15	50
Ash		
– West of Kettner Boulevard	25	50
– Kettner Boulevard to Sixth Avenue (south side only)	15	50
A Street	25	50
B Street	25	50
C Street	25	50
Broadway		
– Harbor Drive to Pacific Hwy (W ½ block)	65	Ground Level
– Harbor Drive to Pacific Hwy (E ½ block)	55	Ground Level
– Pacific Hwy to Kettner Boulevard	40	Ground Level
– Between Kettner Boulevard and Park Boulevard	15	Ground Level
E Street	25	50
F Street	25	50
G Street	25	50
Pacific Highway	25	45-130
Park Boulevard (south of K Street)	10	60
	30	90
Kettner Boulevard	25	50

Figure 5-1  
View Corridors





(Policies continued from page 5-3)

- 5.1-P-4 Encourage City College and San Diego High to respect and continue street right-of-way alignments and not place buildings in those view corridors.
- 5.1-P-5 Prohibit the construction of “sky-walks” or any visible structure in view corridors. Discourage “sky-walks” above all streets. If they occur, make them minimal in size and encourage open-air construction or transparency.
- 5.1-P-6 Ensure that streetscape design in the designated corridors is sensitive to views.
- 5.1-P-7 Work with the Port to maintain open view corridors to the water – that is, free of structures and landscaping that would restrict the views. Encourage the Port to create view corridors extending southward along Pacific Highway and Kettner Boulevard at such time that redevelopment of the Seaport Village site is undertaken.



View Corridors with potential downtown buildout. (Building massing and heights are purely for illustrative purposes).

## 5.2 CENTERS AND MAIN STREETS

The Community Plan provides concentrations of activity that will offer focus, as well as retail, services, and other amenities. The Core will be reinforced as the regional commercial hub. Horton Plaza, the Gaslamp Quarter, and the Ballpark sub-district of East Village will continue as regional draws as well. Complementing these and newer districts will be Neighborhood Centers, in the form of Main Streets or plazas.

Anticipated downtown development will support a broad array of shopping and services. Contemplated high intensities will allow centers to be closely spaced to support walking, urban lifestyles.

The need for neighborhood centers is evident in contrasting two of downtown’s neighborhoods. While India Street is Little Italy’s popular main street, a comparable center is missing in another downtown neighborhood, Marina. A similar gap exists in the mature Cortez Hill. The Community Plan seeks to fill existing gaps and provide new centers for all of downtown’s neighborhoods, to ensure that virtually all residents will be within less than a ten-minute walk from everyday amenities.

Through its framework of neighborhoods and Neighborhood Centers, downtown will become a quilt of distinct and urban experiences attractive to residents, workers, and visitors alike.

*For detailed descriptions of the individual centers, see Chapter 6: Neighborhoods.*

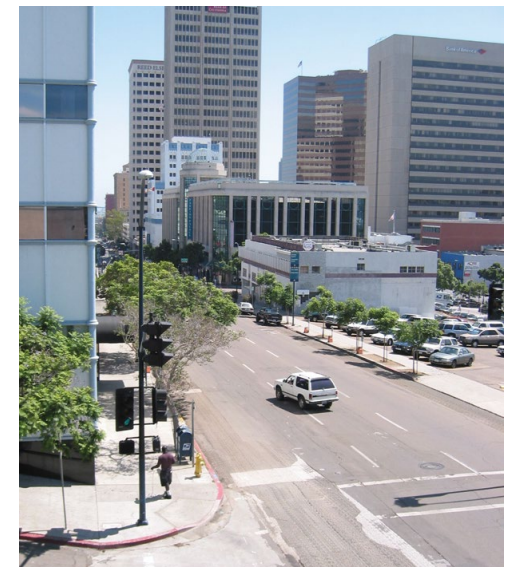
### Structure of the Centers

The centers will be bustling nodes of activity. Availing of reuse opportunities, they are organized around small plazas or as main streets. Plaza-oriented centers will follow the concept of the Spanish-Colonial square, in which a landscaped block is surrounded by mixed-use buildings with commercial functions on the ground floor. Main Streets—all in a North-South axis, taking advantage of the long side of downtown blocks and maximizing daylight on streets—will provide for three- to five-block long linear strolling.

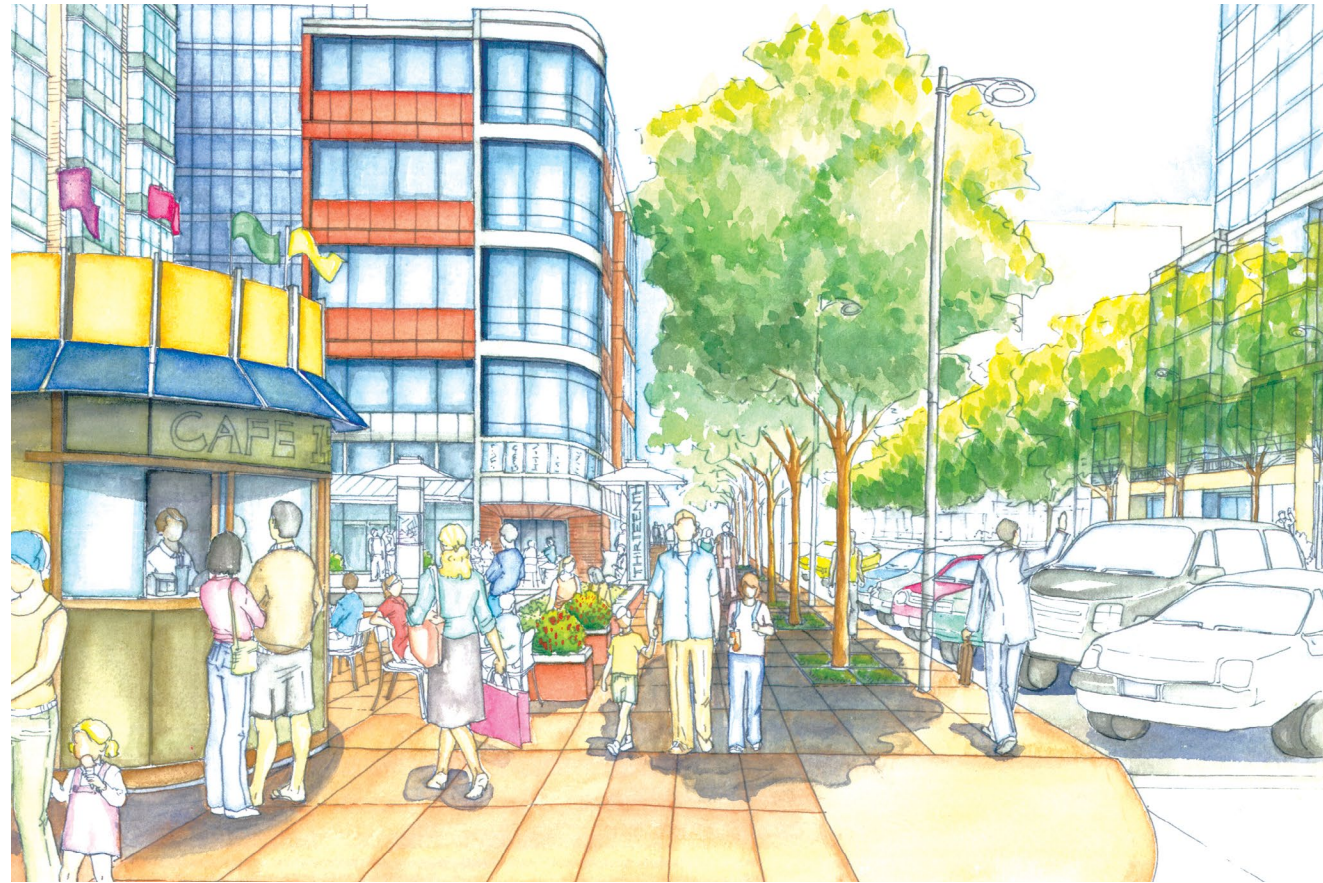
Streetscape improvements will be essential to activate both neighborhood center types, and are intended to foster pedestrian comfort and emphasize neighborhood character. The system of Neighborhood Centers will be linked by landscaped Green Streets.

Neighborhood Centers will be active at street level, lined with buildings that engage the pedestrian. They are practical destinations for errand-running, nodes for local public functions such as libraries, and gathering areas for social and recreational use. Strategic height limitations and building massing requirements will maximize sun exposure. *Chapter 7: Mobility* designates both Main Street and Greenway typologies.

To ensure the vitality of the centers, limitations on retail uses outside of them are established (see *Chapter 3: Land Use and Housing*).



An example of an existing successful Main Street is India Street in Little Italy (top). The Community Plan seeks to create eight new Neighborhood Centers, such as along 6th Avenue (above) in Cortez.



Streetscape at typical Neighborhood Center.

Table 5-2: Neighborhood Centers Locator and Descriptions

Location	Neighborhood (keyed to map)	Type	Existing or New	Description/Key Features
1 India St	Little Italy	Main Street	Existing	Mixed shops and services catering to traditional neighborhood; with restaurants, cafes, and boutiques drawing visitors. Streetscape improvements underway.
2 Harbor Dr	Columbia and Marina	Expanded Main Street	New	Waterfront retail/restaurant district, serving workers, residents, and visitors.
3 Market St	Marina	Main Street	New	Stretching along the re-landscaped boulevard, incorporating current site of Ralph's supermarket. Reinforce retail and pedestrian character along G and Market Streets.
4 6th Ave	Cortez	Main Street	New	Active frontages lining two-way connecting street. Linking Balboa Park/freeway lids and Core, stitching West Cortez and Cortez Hill together.
5 7th, 9th Ave, C and F St	East Village – Northwest	Plaza	New	Cultural focus and retail along main street. Half-block park providing backdrop to historic Post Office building. Center also includes plaza facing C street transit corridor.
6 Park-at-the-Park, J St	East Village – Ballpark	Combined Main Street, Plaza	New	Focusing on Park-at-the-Park and along J Street. Incorporating historic buildings, ballpark-centered activities.
7 13th St	East Village – Northeast	Main Street	New	Parallel parks along fault lines where feasible. Active frontages lining parks and street.
8 14th, 15th, Island, and J St	East Village – Southeast	Plaza with adjacent Main Street	New	Large plaza lined with retail uses on surrounding streets and adjacent buildings, and providing recreational opportunities, linked via linear park to East Village green. Combined with active frontages along 15th Street.

**Goals: Centers and Main Streets**

- 5.2-G-1 Create focal nodes for neighborhoods, giving each at least one center for local services and amenities, and a distinct identity within downtown.
- 5.2-G-2 Promote walkability by providing amenities in proximity to every downtown worker and resident and linking Neighborhood Centers with Greenways.

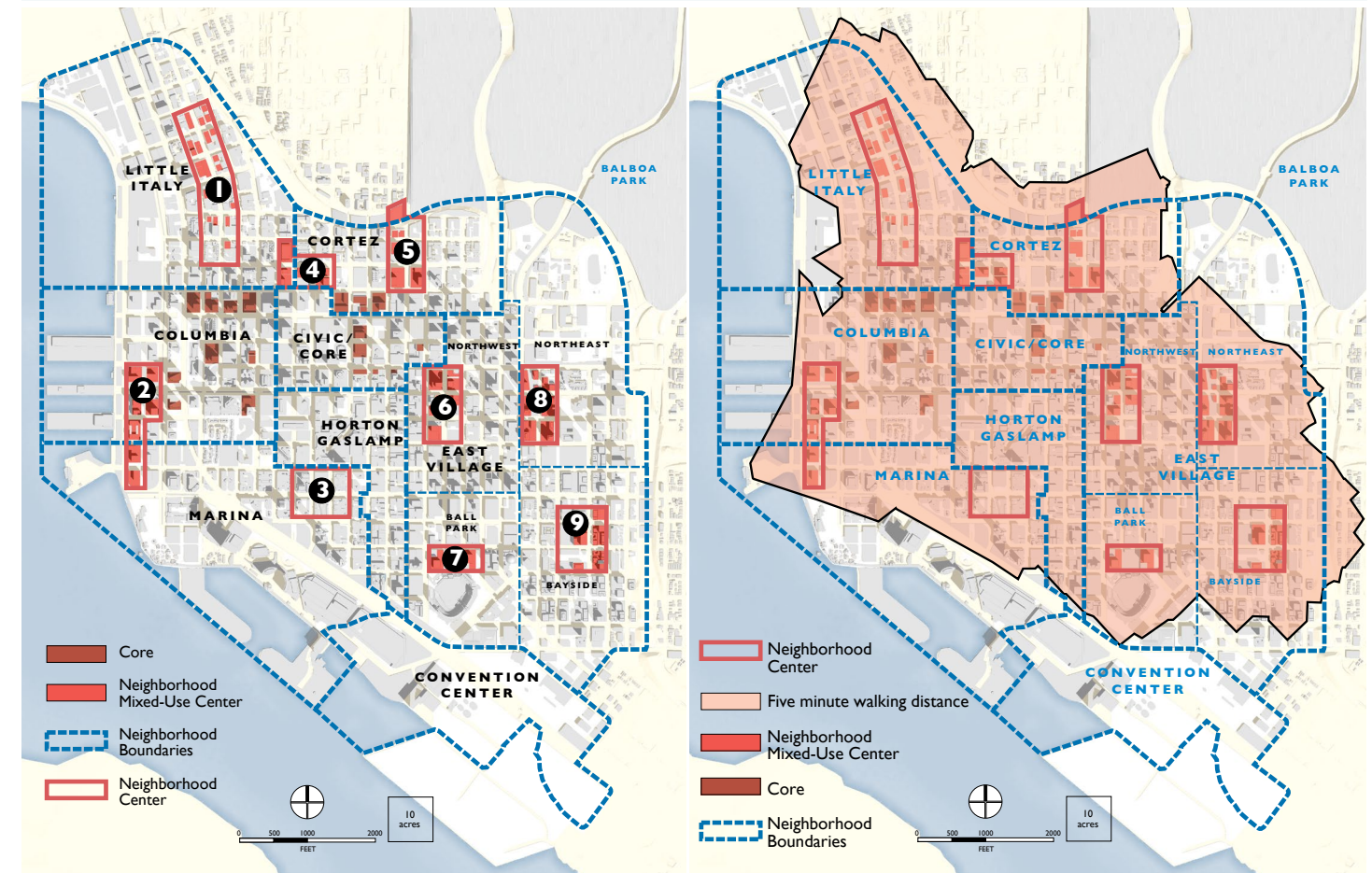
**Policies: Centers and Main Streets**

- 5.2-P-1 Foster development of new Centers and Main Streets, as described in Table 5.2 below, and shown in Figure 3-2.
- 5.2-P-2 Ensure that centers are attractive destinations, offer pedestrian comfort, and maximize sun access to streets and sidewalks through a variety of implementing mechanisms, including:
  - Streetscape improvements, including consistent street trees, widened sidewalks, seating and lighting, and maximum on-street parking.
  - Sun access standards; and
  - Fine grain development.

(Policies continue on page 5-10)



An illustrative view showing how 13th Street might be transformed into a new Main Street in East Village.

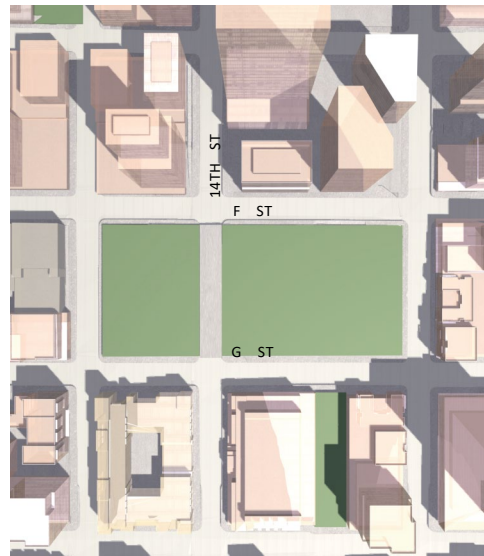




*(Policies continued from page 5-8)*

- 5.2-P-3 Require street-level uses reinforcing Neighborhood Center streets and allow a vertical mix of a diverse range of land uses—including offices, hotels, and residential uses—compatible with Neighborhood Center function.
- 5.2-P-4 Allow large floorplate towers in the northernmost blocks of main street Neighborhood Centers, and on the north sides of Neighborhood Center plazas.
- 5.2-P-5 Ensure developments immediately adjacent to Neighborhood Center parks or squares create an integrated and memorable relationship of architecture and open space – in Fault Line Park, Civic Square, Harmony Park, etc.

Shadows: 11 a.m. September 21.



Shadows: 3 p.m. September 21.



Shadow Studies: Building height and massing has been orchestrated to maximize sunlight in parks and streets. Shown above: the new East Village Green and shadows at 11 a.m. (top) and 3 p.m. (bottom) on September 21.

### 5.3 BULK, SKYLINE, AND SUN ACCESS

#### Sun Access

A key tenet of the Community Plan is to ensure that sunlight reaches the most frequented public spaces – parks and Neighborhood Centers. Thus, building intensities, heights and volumes in the Community Plan have been “guided by light” – designed to maximize sunlight, sky exposure, and indirect daylight on public spaces and streets. Furthermore, new parks and Neighborhood Centers are located so they are not shaded by existing or approved tall buildings. The variation in sunlight across downtown—with areas of shade and light, constraint and openness—will create visual richness and diversity as well.

Sun access is regulated through a variety of fixed and performance-based measures that balance flexibility and certainty – these range from stipulated heights near large parks to performance-based measures in the mixed-use centers that provide flexibility in how building massing on specific sites is arranged. Building reflectivity standards will help bring light to the street level, in addition to bulk controls ensuring direct sunlight. Wind controls will be specified in the Planned District Ordinance (PDO), and airport restrictions may be an additional height limitation.

#### Bulk and Grain

Building bulk and grain will vary across downtown—ranging from large, full-block projects to fine-grain development with many different buildings on a single block—reflecting location, intensity, and land use mixes accommodated.

#### Bulk Control

Bulk controls address massing of specific projects to minimize visual intrusiveness, especially of tall buildings. They also help to maximize sky exposure from the streets. Detailed standards for bulk control are established in

the PDO, and address the relationship between building width and depth by specifying the maximum floorplates at various heights, correlated with FARs and site area. Additionally, the Community Plan follows the established development principle of “stepping down” to the waterfront.

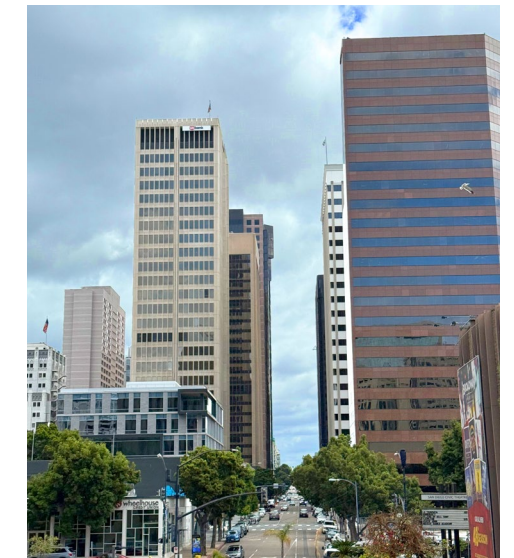
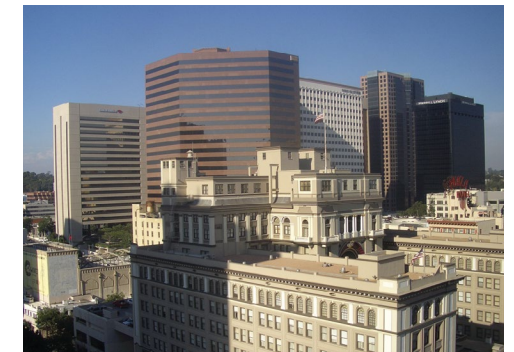
#### Large Floorplate Areas

Because full block development at lower floors will be permitted in many places downtown (the exceptions are instances where view setbacks/stepbacks at lower floors are required), large floorplates are permitted for building bases. To ensure generous light and views, towers above the base shall be slender and well-spaced apart. However, in several sections—Core and portions of East Village—bulkier buildings at upper levels (as specified later) are allowed to accommodate employment-oriented uses. Larger buildings will also be allowed north of parks and in the northernmost blocks of Neighborhood Centers. While slender residential and hotel towers will be allowed, the presence of large office, research, and medical buildings may produce areas of shadow at certain times of day. Variety of uses and floorplate sizes, as well as reflectivity standards, will prevent business-oriented streets from becoming dark canyons. Nevertheless, these areas will have a cooler, shadier atmosphere than the brightest areas in downtown.

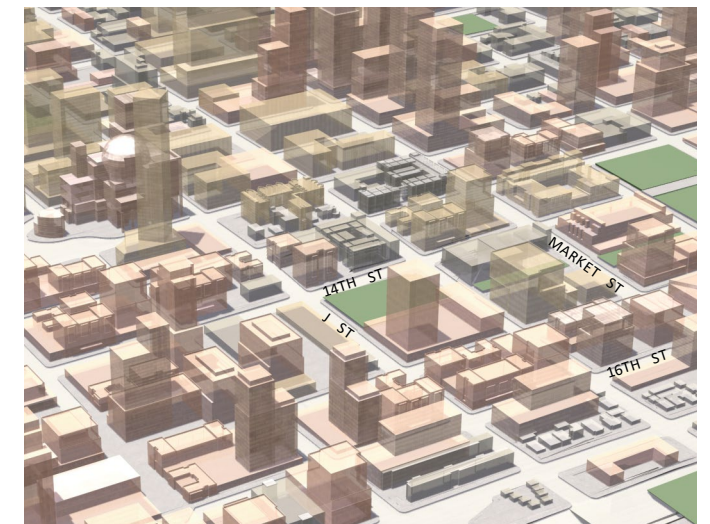
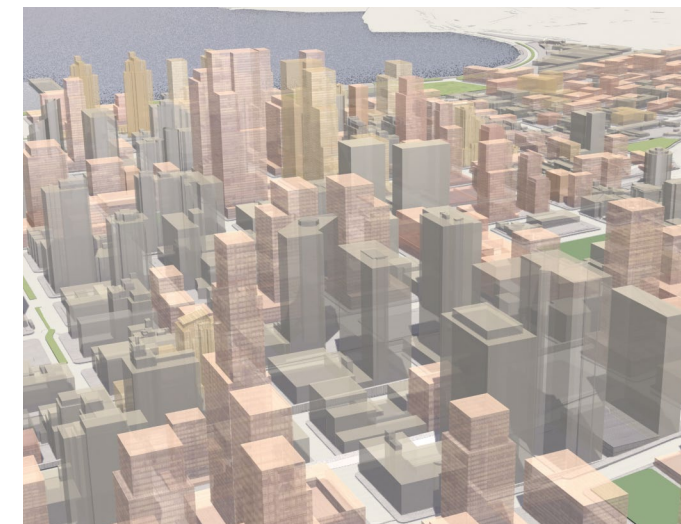
#### Fine-Grain Development

Maintaining fine grain development that engages the pedestrian—especially in retail districts and Neighborhood Centers—is essential in a high-intensity urban setting. Fine grain development refers to a diversity of architectural styles and forms within a block, and encouragement of small-lot development.

Fine-grain development will occur in several parts of downtown, including the Neighborhood Centers, and two larger areas in Little Italy and



Core (top) with bulkier office buildings, and as seen from finer-grained residential development in Little Italy (above). The Community Plan allows bulkier buildings in designated larger floorplate areas (below left), while buildings in residential areas will be slenderer. Fine-grain areas (below right) are also designated.



NOTE: Building height and massing shows potential development under community plan policies, solely for illustrative purposes.



the southeast portion of downtown designated with the Fine Grain classification as shown in Figure 3-6. In addition, the prevalence of geologic faults in East Village will force a separation between buildings and thus result in smaller building sites on many blocks. Designated historical resources will in some cases be retained—either partially or entirely—contributing to diverse scale and character.

### Skyline

Many exciting new buildings are helping to shape downtown’s skyline, giving the area an iconic façade when viewed from afar. The tallest buildings in downtown are currently 500 feet tall, concentrated in the financial core, as well as in hotels along the waterfront. However, with many new tall residential buildings underway, the downtown skyline is increasingly dispersed. While the Community Plan does not place limitations on maximum attainable building heights in downtown, by creating two zones of concentrated very high intensity (see *Section 3.2 Development Intensity and Incentives, and Development Projections*), the Plan will establish a more defined yet variegated skyline, giving focus points to the eye when gazing at the new wall of sparkling architecture rising up behind the Bay.



Downtown Skyline as seen from Coronado Bridge (above) and from the west (below).



Downtown skyline, 2004.

### Goals: Bulk, Skyline, and Sun Access

- 5.3-G-1 Permit bulkier buildings in the Core while striving for slenderer towers in the neighborhoods that permit greater sky exposure for adjacent sidewalks as well as from a distance.
- 5.3-G-2 Ensure that building height, massing, and tower spacing allows for greater visual penetration closer to the water.
- 5.3-G-3 Create a variegated skyline with peaks in the Core and high-intensity East Village residential area, stepping down to the waterfront and surrounding neighborhoods.
- 5.3-G-4 Ensure uninterrupted sunlight during designated periods on all major parks, and maintain standards to ensure adequate sunlight on sidewalks and streets in Neighborhood Centers and residential areas.
- 5.3-G-5 Maximize sky exposure for streets and public spaces.

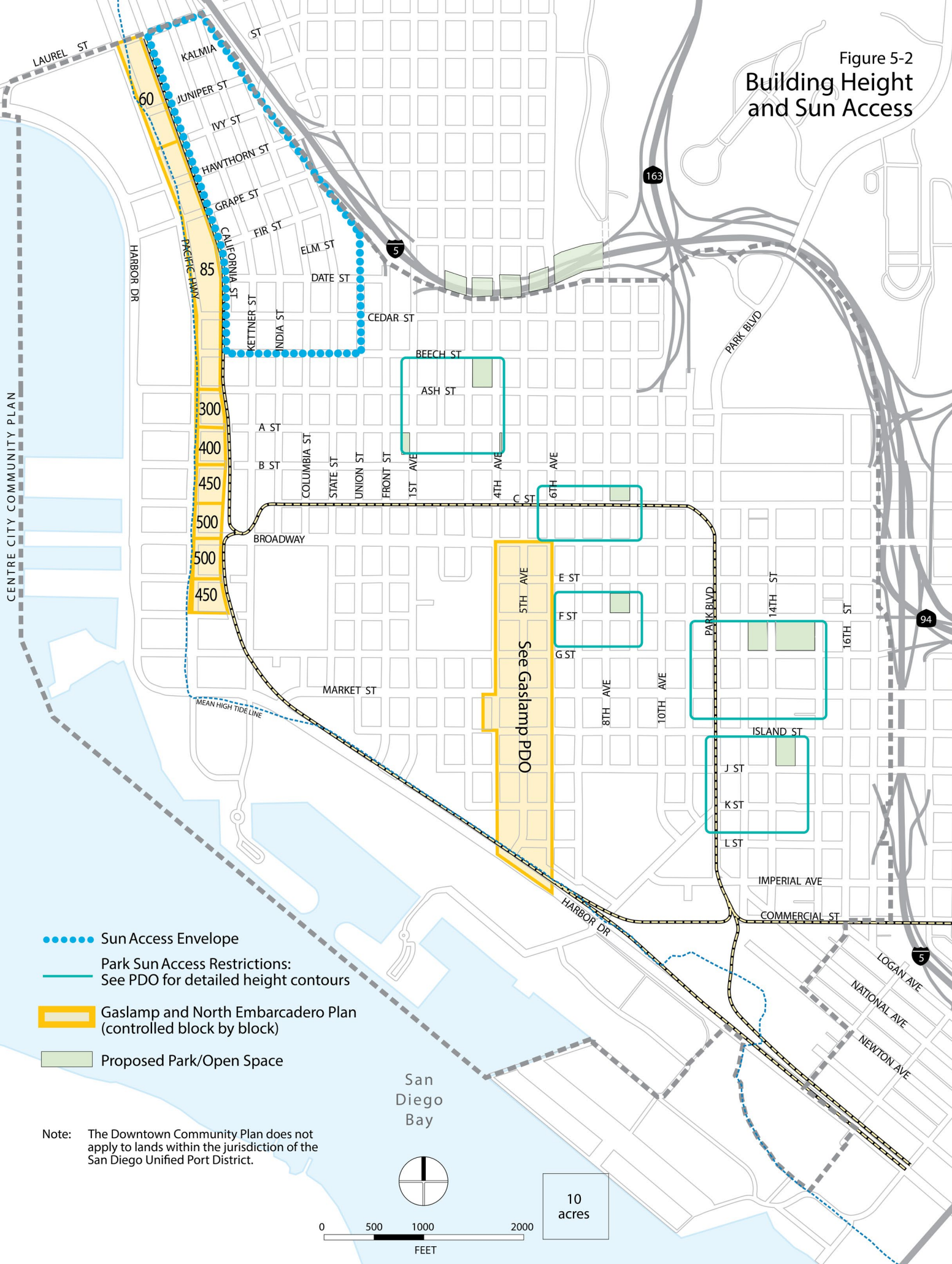
### Policies: Bulk, Skyline, and Sun Access

#### Heights and Sun Access

- 5.3-P-1 Building heights should be designed to maximize sky exposure as follows (Figure 5-2):
  - Around parks to maintain uninterrupted sunlight with specific criteria delineated in the PDO;
  - In Marina and Gaslamp for sunlight and urban design considerations;
  - Stepping down towards the water in the North Embarcadero area;
  - Surrounding the CAC; and
  - Throughout downtown, consistent with policies and regulations for airport operations established by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans (ALUCPs), and the Airport Approach Overlay Zone.
- 5.3-P-2 Apply Sun Access Envelope criteria in Little Italy, as shown in Figure 5-2, to maintain adequate sunlight and air to sidewalks.
- 5.3-P-3 Establish performance-based Sun Access requirements in the Neighborhood Centers, which provide flexibility in building massing.
- 5.3-P-4 Maintain standards for building reflectivity to maximize daylight on sidewalks and streets.

(Policies continue on page 5-15)

Figure 5-2  
Building Height  
and Sun Access



- Sun Access Envelope
- Park Sun Access Restrictions:  
See PDO for detailed height contours
- ▭ Gaslamp and North Embarcadero Plan  
(controlled block by block)
- ▭ Proposed Park/Open Space

Note: The Downtown Community Plan does not apply to lands within the jurisdiction of the San Diego Unified Port District.



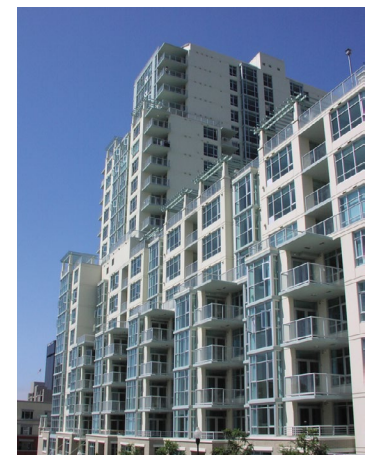
(Policies continued from page 5-13)

**Bulk and Grain**

- 5.3-P-5 Maintain volumetric building development standards in zoning regulations that:
  - Establish bulk standards based on a variety of considerations, including building height, intensity, and location;
  - Allow bulkier buildings in the Core and employment-emphasis areas while striving for less bulk in the Residential Emphasis areas to achieve greater light exposure;
  - Maximize open views of the sky and sun exposure for streets and public spaces;
  - Permit visual penetration to the water; and
  - Ensure adequate sunlight on sidewalks and streets in Neighborhood Centers and residential areas.
- 5.3-P-6 Require tower separation to increase sky exposure for developments with multiple towers.
- 5.3-P-7 Allow large floor plate buildings in areas shown in Figure 3-6. Require such buildings to adhere to building height, setback, and stepback standards, as required for view, sun access, and overflights, but relax bulk standards.
- 5.3-P-8 Promote development of an appropriate scale, grain, and texture in Fine Grain Areas shown in Figure 3-6 and Neighborhood Centers by:
  - Reducing parking requirements on sites less than 5,000 s.f.;
  - Encouraging development to preserve or incorporate remnants of designated historic structures where appropriate and feasible;
  - Requiring horizontal and vertical building articulation to engage pedestrians;
  - Requiring diversity in color, materials, scale, texture, and building volumes; and
  - Undertaking design review of development exceeding size thresholds defined in the PDO.

**Wind Acceleration**

- 5.3-P-9 Maintain review procedures in PDO to ensure that tall/bulky buildings do not result in wind acceleration that produces pedestrian discomfort.



Horizontal (top) and vertical (middle) articulation is important to lend a human scale to larger developments. The small parcels of the Gaslamp Quarter (above) produce visual variety at street level.



## 5.4 STREETScape AND BUILDING INTERFACE

### Streetscape

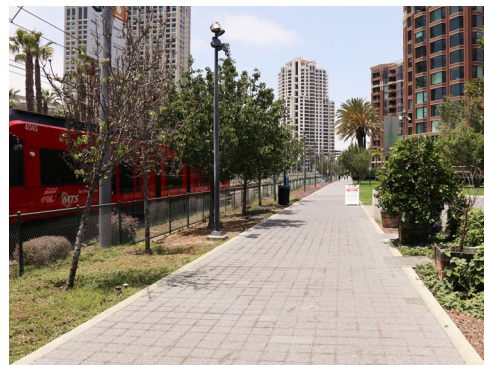
Streets are central to downtown’s identity, movement, and pedestrian comfort. Streets represent 44 percent of downtown’s land area, and provide some of the greatest opportunities for shaping the public realm.

Street design includes a wide variety of elements, ranging from benches to curbs/paving to tree grates. Many of these detailed elements can be grouped into larger categories such as pavement and sidewalk width and their relationship to each other, landscaping, parking, medians, and sidewalk amenities. Themes to consider in creating an effective street design include enclosure, continuity, character, relationship between pedestrians and traffic, shade, and light.

Many of downtown’s streets already contain the basic elements of good design, and improvements such as those along India Street, Kettner Boulevard, Park Boulevard, 14th Street Greenway and proposed for Harbor Drive are providing a higher standard for clear, attractive streetscapes. As new neighborhoods are created, there are several challenges and opportunities for downtown streetscape design:

- **Design for pedestrians.** Downtown is envisioned to have more than two times its current population, twice the employment, and manifold increase in visitors. The retail districts and Neighborhood Centers will need wide sidewalks, crosswalks, and street design and traffic signalization that gives priority to pedestrians.
- **The need for unified planting palette to knit downtown together.** This is especially critical for major streets that traverse downtown, as well as the planned Greenways that will forge linkages. Virtually all of the great streets in the world, and cities with the most distinctive streetscapes, have unified tree planting that promotes continuity, distinction, and identity.
- **Responsiveness to San Diego’s Mediterranean Climate and Development Intensities.** Given the planned high development intensities, tree species should be selected to enable sunlight to filter through along most streets, especially in the winter, while providing opportunities for shade during summer.
- **Multifunctionality.** With the surge in population and related traffic, many streets will need to be designed to do more than just handle traffic flow. They must provide for increased on-street parking in the residential areas and Neighborhood Centers, ensure smooth transit flow, and accommodate bicycle facilities on selected streets.

As neighborhoods mature and streetscape improvements are implemented, downtown’s street network will become a lush green system with improved sidewalk treatments, seating, distinctive lighting, and public art, as well as bicycle facilities (paths and lanes) in appropriate locations. Concentrated street-front activity will create errand-running and social nodes. Certain streets will become destinations in themselves, offering recreational and gathering space.



Street design is central to pedestrian comfort (top) and identity, especially along major Boulevards such as Harbor Drive (middle). San Diego’s Mediterranean climate is conducive to outdoor lifestyles (5th Avenue, above).

The Community Plan outlines the overall vision and framework for downtown streetscape design. However, specific design of individual streets will occur through implementation documents, such as the Downtown Streetscape Design Manual, and Design Guidelines, as well as detailed plans for specific areas.

Specific improvements that might be considered include using consistent species of trees to define corridors; widening sidewalks and reducing street pavement area; introducing public art sequences; creating a psychological distance between pedestrians and traffic with trees, planters, lights, and other sidewalk furniture; adding seating; improving intersections with corner bulb-outs; and providing shade. Focusing different street tree schemes in different neighborhoods will reinforce district individuality as well. In general, when neighborhood streetscape improvements take place, these can be taken as an opportunity to reinforce character through strong uniform design.

### Building/Street Orientation

In addition to the design of streets, street life and comfort is crucial to building/street interface. In older and less intense districts such as the Gaslamp Quarter, small lots and multiple buildings on single blocks provide visual diversity and a great number of street entrances. In contrast, more intense full-block developments with fewer entrances require conscious efforts to be a “good neighbors”. Methods to foster greater street friendliness include provision of habitable space at the ground level, greater number of entrances and building transparency, and horizontal building articulation.

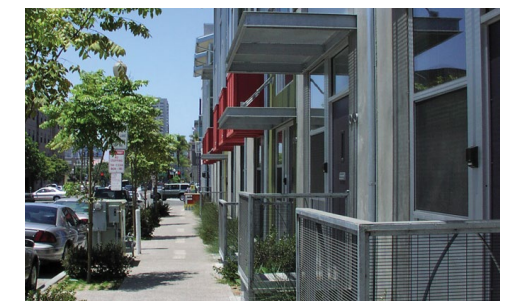
As downtown becomes more intense, conscious strategies to provide living units at the ground levels will provide “eyes on street”, and visual interest for pedestrians. Ground floor residential requires careful horizontal and/or vertical “layering” to mitigate public to private relationships. Units at the lower level with individual entrances will also provide a sense of individualism and identity, and a housing choice for some—such as families with children—who may otherwise not chose to live in downtown.



The City should actively seek partnerships with private and non-profit interests to construct and operate new public spaces such as promenades.



Underutilized public right-of-way can be repurposed through the Active Sidewalk and Green Streets Incentive Programs to create active play streets to attract and serve families, creating “America’s Outdoor Downtown.”



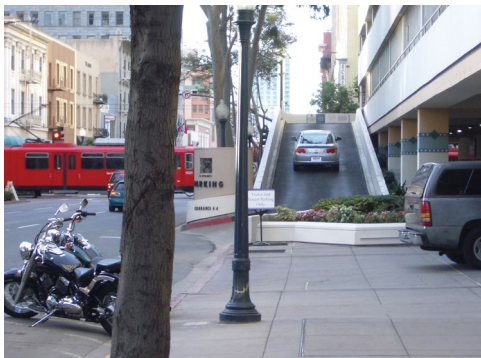
Wider sidewalks and shade during summer are essential in commercial areas (top). Along Residential Streets, the Community Plan emphasizes closer relationships between the public and private realms, and individual entrances to promote street security (above).



Living Walls should be incorporated into developments to facilitate the greening of Downtown.



Landscaped planters containing vegetation with strong pleasant aromas to create "Fragrant Streets" should be added throughout Downtown. (Left) Whimsical recreational amenities can be used to create Active Sidewalks. (Right)



Pedestrian flow on sidewalks should be continuous, and not impeded by parking ramps (top) or transformers and other structures (above).

### Goals: Streetscape and Building Interface

- 5.4-G-1 Enhance downtown through distinctive streetscapes. Promote street trees and unified landscape treatments along streets, while ensuring sunlight through species selection and placement.
- 5.4-G-2 Envision streets as extensions of downtown's open space network, presenting opportunities to linger, stroll, and gather, rather than simply as traffic movement spines.
- 5.4-G-3 Ensure development along streets offers a rich visual experience; is engaging to pedestrians; and contributes to street life, vitality, and safety.

### Policies: Streetscape and Building Interface

#### Streetscape

- 5.4-P-1 Revise the Downtown Streetscape Design Manual to include criteria for the design of street typologies specified in Chapter 7.
- 5.4-P-2 Undertake, as a priority, cohesive streetscape improvements to streets designated as Boulevards, Greenways, Main Streets, and Residential Streets in Pedestrian Priority Zones, as established in Chapter 7: Mobility.
- 5.4-P-3 Work with the other City departments and utilities to remove impediments to sidewalk safety and movement, undergrounding utilities/transformers or locating them on site where possible.

#### Street/Building Interface

- 5.4-P-5 Emphasize pedestrian orientation of buildings, especially in the retail districts and Neighborhood Centers.
- 5.4-P-6 In select locations, encourage provision of housing units with direct street access to promote individualization, identity, and street safety.

### Box 5-1: Guidelines for Design of Key Streets

#### Broadway

This thoroughfare will be studied as a Boulevard connecting the internal and eastern portions of downtown to the waterfront. The objective will be to create an elegant ceremonial corridor with consideration given to landscape treatment and pedestrian movement and comfort. Broadway will be a unifying circulation route, as well as providing a strong design statement to reinforce the identity of downtown.

#### Market Street

Improve Market Street streetscape so it presents a cohesive face as a major connector across southern downtown neighborhoods and amenities.

Because of its width, gentle slope toward the water, and unobstructed terminus, Market is one of the few major streets in downtown that has water views from its eastern portions. Another identifying feature is its 100-foot right-of-way – 20 feet wider than that of most other downtown streets. Market Street has a center divider planted with trees in its western sections; the relationship of carriageway and the need for dedicated left-turn lanes should be examined as part of the re-design efforts.

#### C Street

At present, a series of conditions contribute to making this route complicated and/or uncomfortable:

- Vehicular access is difficult given changing directionality and number of lanes almost on a block-by-block basis.
- The streetscape is uncomfortable and unattractive for pedestrians due to vacant retail, parking structures, surface parking lots, and "backs" of buildings lining the street.
- Inconsistent landscaping and above-ground utilities.

This street is a major downtown corridor connecting important neighborhoods and land uses. It provides circulation parallel to Broadway in the Core and Columbia neighborhoods, and is particularly sensitive as a transit corridor, hosting the downtown trolley. It is a Community Plan priority to improve conditions, making C Street a comfortable and pleasant route for vehicles, walkers, and transit riders.

#### 5th Avenue

A major north-south connector in downtown, 5th Avenue's character changes dramatically as it crosses the Gaslamp Quarter, Core, and Cortez districts. In its southern section, it is largely defined by the regular streetwalls and historic structures of the Gaslamp Quarter. Consistent street lighting and tree-planting help give the street a coherent identity in this area. This historic consistency should be maintained.





5th Avenue, a major north-south connection downtown.



The waterfront is downtown's front porch and presents numerous development opportunities.

## 5.5 WATERFRONT

The waterfront is downtown's "front porch" and a prime location to emphasize the area's unique setting, and enjoy its sunny climate and vistas, which on clear days can extend to Mexico.

Because of the working character of the waterfront and State tideland restrictions, divergent land uses developed inland and on the water. Smaller scale residential and commercial uses predominated inland while Navy, civic, and hotel uses lined the Bay. The prevalence of large, imposing structures on Harbor Drive has impeded access to and awareness of the water, especially south of Broadway.

The waterfront north of Market Street presents tremendous opportunities, especially given some large sites that will become available for development in coming years. The majority of the waterfront is under the direct jurisdiction of the Port of San Diego.

The Community Plan reinforces these efforts to transform the northern waterfront into a world class regional attraction that meshes an intense urban environment with the open expanse of the San Diego Bay. The waterfront is envisioned as an active, pedestrian-oriented zone with strong connections to downtown neighborhoods. The Plan encourages new projects on currently underdeveloped sites; improved streetscapes on key Boulevards such as Harbor Drive, Pacific Highway, and Broadway; links to neighboring areas via street grid connections; and re-captured bay views through newly extended streets.

The area will be bright and open in response to its setting, and contain a series of open spaces including large parks and a bayside promenade. Elegant Boulevards will replace wide, somewhat bare streets, and key amenities such as the CAC, various piers, Seaport Village, and the Maritime Museum will be emphasized and enhanced. Mixed uses will serve the visitor industry as well as downtown workers and residents, with offices, hotels, retail shops and possibly residential buildings built on the lands closest to the Bay. A retail center lining Broadway and Harbor Drive will have maritime-oriented shopping and eating activity at the water's edge. This vision is consistent with the Port Master Plan and North Embarcadero Visionary Plan, and some implementation measures may take place through those efforts.

### Goals: Waterfront

- 5.5-G-1 Develop the waterfront as an active, pedestrian-oriented zone, and as a regionwide and downtown-wide destination.
- 5.5-G-2 Promote a diversity of land uses and activities to generate vitality and 24-hour activity.
- 5.5-G-3 Foster a human scale, richness in texture and building design, and small block sizes. Emphasize views to the Bay and strong connections to neighboring districts.
- 5.5-G-4 Support development of "people places" that draw residents and visitors, and maritime-related activities that emphasize the waterfront's unique setting.
- 5.5-G-5 Coordinate planning efforts with relevant agencies including the Port of San Diego, City of San Diego, California Coastal Commission, U.S. Navy, and San Diego County.

### Policies: Waterfront

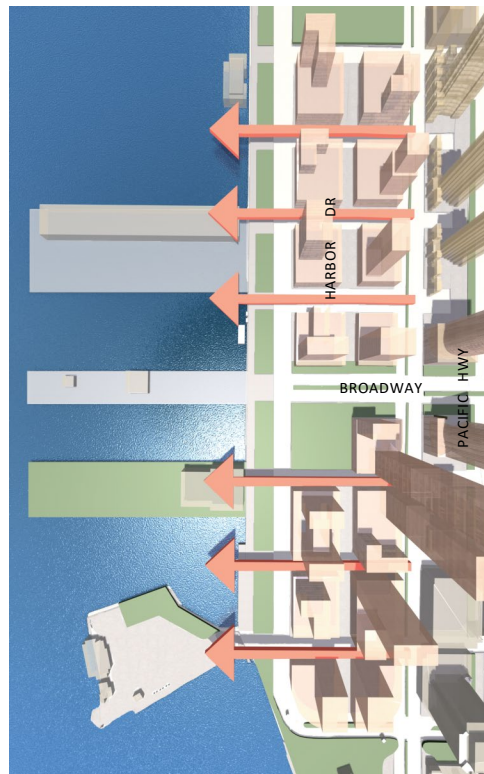
- 5.5-P-1 Require provision of new streets, as redevelopment occurs to re-establish views and waterfront access and connections.

#### Overall Form and Design

- 5.5-P-2 Ensure that development along the waterfront is low in scale and intensity, increasing in stepped building envelopes further inland. Along the waterfront, maintain the highest development intensities along the Broadway corridor, tapering down to the north and south.
- 5.5-P-3 Preserve and create views by:
  - Requiring all buildings to comply with view corridor setbacks along existing streets and future view corridors to maintain visual and physical access to the Bay.
  - Requiring buildings taller than 120 feet to be oriented so as to present the smaller face along the view corridors toward the water.
- 5.5-P-4 To emphasize the importance of the waterfront, require a high degree of architectural detail and quality for development to be specified in architectural guidelines including the following criteria:
  - Building materials should be light in color and of high quality;
  - Facades should be articulated to create variety and interest; large mirror and metal-reflective surfaces are discouraged;
  - Lower building elements should be highly articulated to create variety and to promote the pedestrian scale of the street. The first two floors of a building should be articulated with architectural detailing, storefront design, arcades and awnings. Special treatment of the cornice of streetwall buildings is encouraged. Ground level facades on major streets should be substantially transparent to maximize the sense of relationship between indoor and outdoor activities. Colorful awnings and/or arcades should be used to reinforce the pedestrian environment; and



Building heights and intensities will step down to the waterfront, peaking at Broadway.



- Mechanical equipment, appurtenances and penthouses located on roof tops must be architecturally screened, enclosed, and incorporated as an integral part of the architectural design.

Land Use and Mix

- 5.5-P-5 Foster development of an active daytime and nighttime retail/commercial district with a downtown/citywide draw and a maritime theme/orientation at Broadway and Harbor Drive, as shown in Figure 3-2: Downtown Structure. Seek continuous active uses along Harbor Drive, Broadway, and the new pedestrian street between and parallel to Harbor and Pacific, as shown in Figure 3-7: Street Level Active Frontage Requirements. Support outdoor cafés in the area.
- 5.5-P-6 Work with the Port and the County to ensure a diversity of land uses along Harbor Drive.
- 5.5-P-7 Foster unique maritime-related activities, including cruise ships, fishing, restaurants, recreational boating, and commercial uses along the waterfront.
- 5.5-P-8 Ensure that no maritime activity obstructs or closes the public pedestrian esplanade at the water's edge for an excessive amount of time.

Open Space

- 5.5-P-9 Enhance and extend the waterfront open space network, fostering the completion of ongoing and proposed projects including the proposed County Administration Center parks, Broadway Terminus, and North Embarcadero Bayfront Esplanade.
- 5.5-P-10 Continue to develop the waterfront as one of downtown's key open space, park and recreational areas, which is both physically and visually accessible to the public.

The waterfront as it exists and as proposed in the Community Plan, with new streets shown with arrows.

## 5.6 LINKAGES TO SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS

Downtown San Diego has a unique importance as the focal point of the entire San Diego region. Its role is especially pronounced in the central region of the City of San Diego, and in downtown's relationship with its surrounding neighborhoods. These surrounding neighborhoods—Balboa Park, Barrio Logan, Golden Hill, Sherman Heights, and Uptown—share a common history, and before construction of I-5, were physically integrated with downtown. In addition, each has developed as a unique area with its own sense of community, and complex relationship and individual connection with downtown. Figure 1-2 illustrates downtown in the context of the areas that surround it.

Historic, physical, visual, and social linkages still exist. Recently, as downtown has been undergoing a renaissance, development pressures have increased in the surrounding neighborhoods as well. Some of these neighborhoods, particularly Uptown and Golden Hill, have been undergoing renaissances of their own. Redevelopment will likely increase as new planning strategies that emphasize new investments in existing neighborhoods are implemented. In response, downtown's relationship to its surroundings is attracting increased attention.

Promoting these trends toward re-integration will be essential to making downtown a connected place, and is an objective of this plan; fortunately, a portion of the freeways surrounding downtown are below grade, permitting bridging or decking at grade as a potential future option.

### Balboa Park

One of San Diego's crown jewels, Balboa Park, occupies 1,200 acres directly northeast of downtown. Balboa Park is "America's largest cultural park", with 15 museums, the San Diego Zoo, and the Globe Theater. It is also home to many dedicated recreational facilities, including the Municipal Gymnasium, the Balboa Park Activity Center, and the Balboa Municipal Golf Course that forms the southeastern portion of the park, along the edge of the Golden Hill neighborhood. Morley Field is another Balboa Park activity center with a swimming pool, bocce courts, velodrome, and the Frisbee golf course. The western portion of the park, to the west of SR-163, has wide open spaces popular with local residents for volleyball, jogging, hiking and biking trails, football, picnics, sunbathing, and other impromptu activities.

Greater integration of Balboa Park with downtown has been a long-sought goal; the most recent effort—the "Bay to Park Paseo." along Park Boulevard—provides an indirect connection because of topography and street geometry. The Community Plan makes a bold gesture toward greater integration by proposing a "lid" over I-5, placed to bridge the expanse with open space and cultural amenities; preliminary feasibility of this has been evaluated as part of the Community Plan.



Pedestrian improvements to the 6th Avenue and Park Boulevard overpasses as well as artistic improvements to the San Diego High School Pedestrian Bridge, the Greening of Russ Boulevard, the construction of the Nudillo anchor at the south end of the 14th Street Greenway and the buildout and addition of active and passive recreational and interactive amenities all along the Downtown Greenways network will invite people to leave their cars behind and enjoy Downtown on foot as they take a journey along the future Nolen Greenway Loop connecting Downtown to Balboa Park, San Diego Bay, Barrio Logan and other adjacent communities.



Looking toward Uptown and Balboa Park (top) and from Balboa Park toward Little Italy (above).



The “Greening of Russ Boulevard” has been identified as a key component of the John Nolen Greenway Loop. Streetscape improvements that prioritize pedestrian connections between academic institutions can transform this dead zone from an “edge” into a “seam”. Moreover, this project symbolizes the effort to reclaim space between Balboa Park, San Diego High School, City College, and Downtown San Diego, providing an inviting experience from the park to the bay. Image courtesy of McCullough Landscape Architecture.

### Uptown

Uptown is a steadily redeveloping area to the north of downtown and west of Balboa Park. It contains a variety of single- and multi-family housing options, with well-developed local commercial uses lining transportation corridors and neighborhood centers, scattered small-scale office buildings (often in older converted homes), and medical facilities including the UCSD and Scripps hospitals. Open space is limited, although access to Balboa Park compensates to a good degree, and a series of small canyons creates a feeling of openness. The area’s topography allows spectacular vistas of the downtown skyline, San Diego Bay, San Diego International Airport, and Point Loma and the ocean beyond.

### Neighborhoods to the East/Southeast

The areas east of downtown are also largely residential in nature, although some industrial activity takes place in the south, closer to the waterfront. They include historic neighborhoods such as Golden Hill and Sherman Heights, housing stately mansions and Victorian residences. Commercial activity can be found along 25th Street and Imperial Avenue, providing amenities to local residents. In addition, the murals of Chicano Park are an important cultural attraction to the southeast of downtown. As with many older areas, open space access is limited, and new parks in downtown may become a draw for its eastern neighbors.

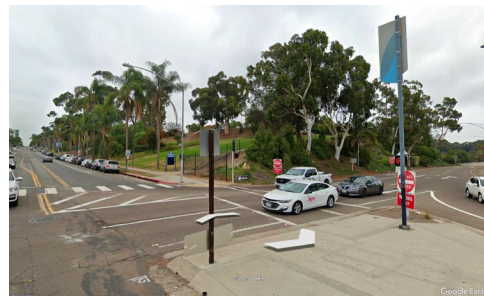
Barrio Logan, to the southeast, is an ethnically and architecturally mixed district with a strong sense of identity and a variety of land uses ranging from historic houses to industry to eating establishments.

### New Connections and Gateways

New connections will be provided through a combination of physical links and perceptual connections that will help pedestrians and others navigate easily between downtown and its surroundings. They will include freeway lids that provide a pleasant, landscaped crossing over a formidable barrier. Priority for such lids will be between 6th and 8th avenues, to connect Balboa Park and Uptown, and knit 6th Avenue back into downtown’s fabric. Additional links will include enhanced streetscapes on important connecting surface streets and establishing gateways at key access points, giving the area improved public entryways.

Residents and workers will be able to cross to surrounding areas easily and pleasantly, particularly by foot, making their presence much more tangible. The influence of nearby neighborhoods will contribute to the lively mix that will make this city center stand out.

Many downtown streets extend into the surrounding neighborhoods, both to the north and the east. In addition, many streets form freeway connection couplets/triplets – Hawthorn and Grape; Front and First; 4th, 5th, and 6th; and 10th and 11th in the north, and F and G as well



Removal of both the left and right auxiliary turn lanes on the 6th Avenue off-ramp are critical to the implementation of the John Nolen Greenway Loop which will re-connect Balboa Park to downtown.

as Commercial and Imperial to the east. Bicycles arrive from north and south on a path along Harbor Drive that connects to the promenade in the North Embarcadero area. Currently, there is nothing to call these gateways out as arrival moments into a special area; special streetscapes and landscaping will be applied to emphasize the importance of crossing into downtown.

### Goals: Linkages to Surrounding Neighborhoods

- 5.6-G-1 Foster physical and visual linkages between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, working together with adjacent communities.
- 5.6-G-2 Enhance downtown’s unique identity by emphasizing entryways.

### Policies: Linkages to Surrounding Neighborhoods

- 5.6-P-1 Work with Caltrans and other agencies to prioritize construction of a “lid” decking I-5 in Cortez extending from 2nd Avenue to east of 8th, to reconnect downtown with Balboa Park. This new space could contain a combination of parks and open spaces, and publicly-oriented uses, and other amenities that would bridge downtown and Balboa Park. Emphasize the eastern portion of the deck (east of 6th Avenue) as the initial priority, and avoid visual barriers between downtown and the park.
- 5.6-P-2 Determine the feasibility of adding additional freeway lids or bridge enhancements from Market Street to Island Avenue east of downtown. Consider portions of these lids for commercial development to create “active-use” links across I-5.
- 5.6-P-3 Undertake a program of landscape/streetscape improvements or other gestures to enhance the sense of arrival at key locations, as set out in Chapter 7.



The long-term vision for a new gateway from downtown to Balboa Park is to provide inviting pedestrian and bicycle connections across the 6th Avenue overpass with an abundance of activities to welcome downtown residents into the park. Renderings by Mike Marquez. Images courtesy of Rob Quigley for the San Diego Commons.



## 5.7 WAYFINDING AND SIGNS

### Wayfinding

To help make downtown more visitor-friendly, the City Council approved the installation of roughly 50 digital wayfinding signs on sidewalks directing pedestrians to principal destinations and providing information about nearby establishments. Additionally, as part of the wayfinding program, “Welcome to San Diego” signs featuring neighborhood maps were added at entry points to Downtown neighborhoods.



### Signs

The sign policies of the Community Plan are intended to balance the public interest—in promoting a safe, well-maintained and attractive city—with the interests of businesses and organizations in ensuring the ability to identify products, services, and ideas.



### Goals: Wayfinding and Signs

- 5.7-G-1 Maintain a comprehensive downtown-wide wayfinding system.
- 5.7-G-2 Ensure that sign regulations provide for identity without dominating downtown appearance.

### Policies: Wayfinding and Signs

- 5.7-P-1 Expand the wayfinding program to encompass nighttime use and pedestrian-oriented kiosks with maps in strategic locations.
- 5.7-P-2 Maintain appropriate regulations to ensure that signs are allowed as a means of identification, while preventing signs from dominating the appearance of downtown and its streets, avoiding and eliminating nuisances to nearby properties and protecting neighborhoods.

Signs should help communicate, without dominating the appearance of downtown. Examples include neighborhood gateway signs like the Little Italy gateway (top) and the “Welcome to San Diego” signs featuring neighborhood maps (middle), as well as Digital wayfinding signs as part of the IKE Pilot Program (bottom).

## 5.8 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development means providing for the needs of the present without jeopardizing the needs of the future. It also means ensuring that the fruits of growth and development are shared in a socially equitable and just manner. Promoting sustainability is an adopted City goal adopted in 2015 and updated in 2022, the Climate Action Plan sets forth goals and strategies for the City to increase its sustainability. This plan covers various aspects of sustainability and measures outcomes through a series of indicators.

In the context of downtown San Diego, sustainable development can be examined at three levels:

- **Planning.** This entails promoting infill, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment; reducing auto dependence by coordinating land use/transportation, promoting mixed-use development, and encouraging alternative modes (including transit and walking); and allowing high intensities to make efficient use of land. The Community Plan already does this through policies interspersed throughout the document.
- **Urban Design/Relationships.** At the scale of building groupings or individual districts, sustainability can be examined at the relationship between buildings and the public domain – will buildings allow light to penetrate through to reduce the need for artificial light? Will they cast shadows on each other? Will they provide comfort and shade when needed?

The design of streets is central to sustainability, as trees provide shade and comfort (and reduce air conditioning costs), absorb air toxins, and mitigate urban heat island impacts. Downtown will have approximately 53 miles of streets upon buildout – an average generous spacing of 30 feet between trees on either side of 75 percent of the street length could result in nearly 14,000 trees (not including trees in open spaces). Trees and new open spaces downtown, as outlined in *Chapter 4: Parks, Open Space, and Recreation*, will also result in decreased stormwater flow.

- **Green Building.** At the scale of individual buildings, perhaps the greatest contribution green design can make from a downtown perspective is to reduce urban heat island impacts through reduced ongoing energy use – by allowing air to flow through and light to penetrate into buildings (especially given San Diego’s mild climate), and through insulation, roof design, and use of heat reflecting materials. In addition, re-using structures and the use of recycled and ecologically appropriate materials can reduce life-cycle environmental impacts.

Hydrologic benefits can be achieved by roof gardens, landscaped courtyards, permeable pavement, and other techniques that reduce surface runoff pollutant concentrations and volumes.

Sustainability also encompasses non-design and construction-related activities, such as waste reduction and recycling. These will continue to be guided by citywide goals and policies.



The Sustainable Buildings Incentive Program encourages climate-friendly buildings.



Rooftop Community Gardens are encouraged through the Green Roofs Incentive Program.



## Goal: Sustainable Development

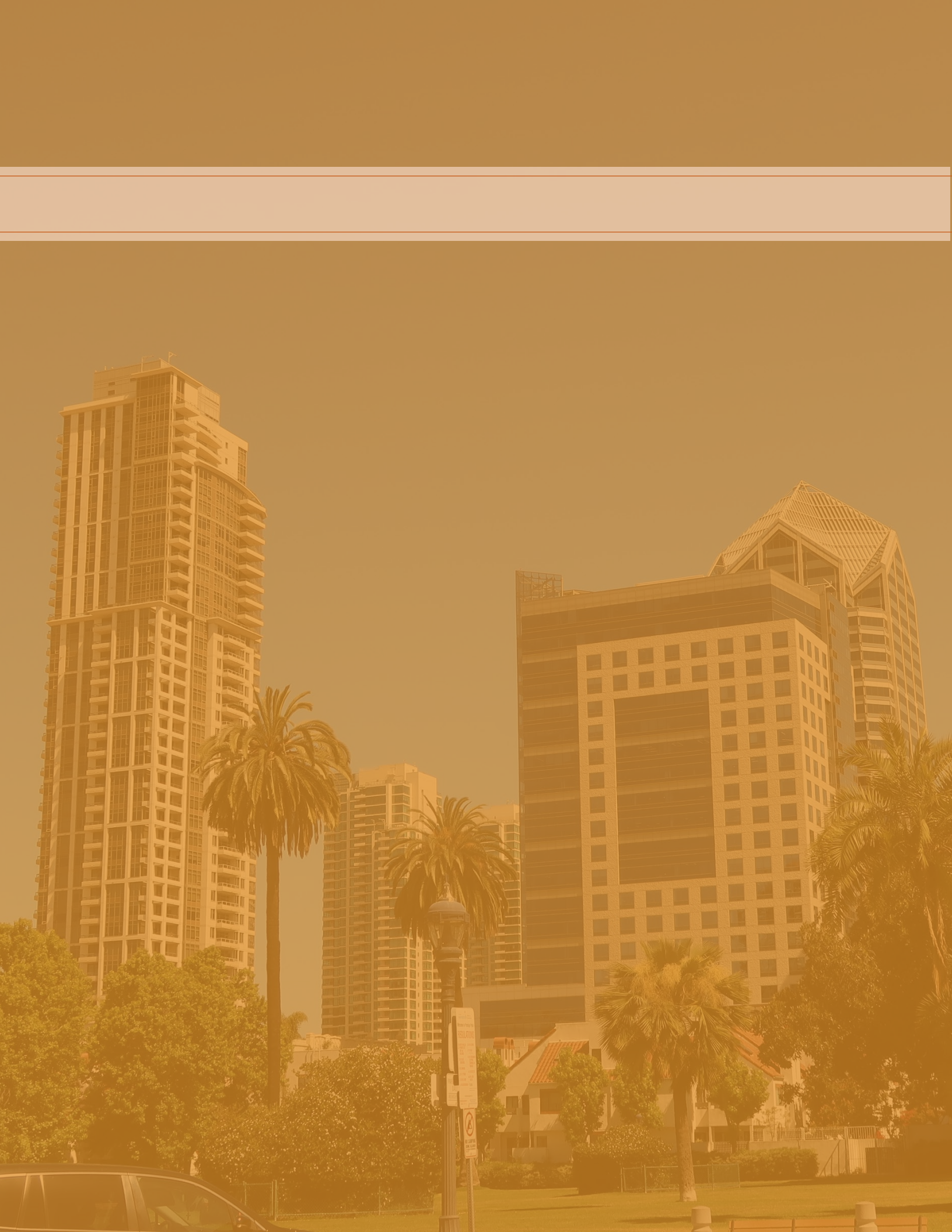
5.8-G-1 Promote sustainable development and design downtown.

## Policies: Sustainable Development

- 5.8-P-1 Prepare and implement Green Building guidelines and/or standards, appropriate to the intense San Diego downtown context, to ensure high levels of energy efficiency and reduction of life-cycle environmental impacts associated with construction and operations of buildings.
- 5.8-P-2 In cooperation with other agencies, undertake a program of street tree planting, maintaining a target of 10,000 trees downtown by 2030.
- 5.8-P-3 Maintain building volume standards that allow sunlight to reach streets and public spaces. Explore the feasibility of building reflectivity standards to maximize ambient light in streets and other public spaces, without glare.
- 5.8-P-4 Reduce auto-dependency, pollution impacts, and waste of valuable downtown real estate by encouraging shared parking, automated parking, transit-use, carpools, and non-polluting mobility nodes such as electric vehicles, pedicabs, bicycling, and walking.
- 5.8-P-5 Encourage the use of daylighting, natural ventilation, photovoltaics, district energy plants, insulation, and other energy conserving techniques and strategies.
- 5.8-P-6 In new development and re-use projects alike, encourage use of Low Impact Development principles such as eco-roofs, roof gardens, landscaped courtyards, grass filter strips, permeable pavement, and rainwater systems, to reduce surface runoff volumes and pollutants as well as reduce heat-island effects.
- 5.8-P-7 Promote biodiversity and indigenous plantings that require low or no irrigation. Encourage habitats for songbirds and non-pest animals.
- 5.8-P-8 In accordance with established City policy, ensure that public projects-including buildings, streets, and parks-incorporate sustainable design and construction practices.
- 5.8-P-9 Promote adaptive re-use of historic resources as an effective means to reduce construction materials, energy, and waste.



“Vibrant C” envisions the transformation of the C Street Corridor into a vibrant visual arts destination filled with outdoor entertainment and dining options and interactive activities implemented through cost-effective, quick-impact improvements.



# 6



## NEIGHBORHOODS AND DISTRICTS

The Community Plan envisions downtown as a collection of unique neighborhoods and sub-districts, reflecting variations in function, history, topography, location, architecture, building scale, and civic icons. Little Italy's history as home to families of fishermen, the excitement of high-rise residential towers in Marina, the mix of new and old anchored by the historic El Cortez on Cortez Hill, and the potential transformation of the Northeast sub-district area with residences, offices, and institutions fused with City College are examples of this manifestation of neighborhood character. The collection of neighborhoods and sub-districts—each sized to reflect an approximately ten-minute walk across—promotes identity, especially useful given downtown's significant size.

Many of downtown's neighborhoods and districts—such as Marina and Little Italy—are well developed. Others—such as Cortez, Core, Northeast, and Columbia—have historical assets, views, or other significant form-giving components that will be reinforced through this plan. However, large sections of eastern downtown and some waterfront areas will undergo considerable transformation. In some neighborhoods, such as Northwest and Northeast in East Village, 70-80

percent or more of the neighborhood's blocks could have new uses. The extent of contemplated change provides an opportunity to create cohesive new neighborhoods sized for walkability, and new centers and parks to support livability.

As downtown development proceeds, neighborhoods will evolve into full-service districts with synergistic mixes of employment, residential, retail, cultural, visitor-serving, and open space components. Each neighborhood will allow for a full complement of amenities to enable urban, walking-oriented lifestyles. While encouraging uniqueness, this Plan lays out some essential components for each neighborhood:

- A Main Street or Neighborhood Center with a mix of retail, services, housing, employment, civic, and/or cultural uses that reinforces distinctive neighborhood traits;
- A significant park or open space feature;
- Linkage to the rest of downtown and neighborhoods surrounding downtown via Greenways; and
- Urban form that protects sunlight in major parks and the finer grain Neighborhood Center/Main Street area.



The Community Plan incorporates these key elements into each neighborhood, with differing land use mixes, open space locations, and building intensities capitalizing on available opportunities. This framework—together with future policies and guidelines unique to each neighborhood that address streetscape, views, block patterns, development grain, and diversity of activity—will further distinction and identity. Finally, the Community Plan embraces flexibility and a certain level of spontaneity, allowing neighborhood culture to evolve over time, and permitting a wide latitude of development typologies to foster diversity at the project scale, and uniqueness and identity at the neighborhood scale.

This chapter describes the broad character of each neighborhood, and outlines goals to guide the development and evolution of the various districts. Urban design standards are included in the Planned District Ordinances (downtown's zoning), and supplemented by Design Guidelines. Goals in this chapter should be read in conjunction with those in other chapters, including:

- *Chapter 3: Land Use and Housing*, which establishes the mix and intensity of uses for downtown.
- *Chapter 5: Urban Design*, describes the various designated Neighborhood Centers, building bulk and shadow protection, and prototypes for street improvements. Additional details can be found in the separate Neighborhood Design Guidelines.
- *Chapter 7: Mobility*, establishes the circulation network for internal connectivity and linkages to the region. Boulevards are recognized in downtown's transportation planning, and a series of Greenways connect neighborhoods and activity points.



### 6.1 CIVIC/CORE

Civic/Core serves as the center of downtown, both physically and functionally, where Federal, State, County, and City government offices combine with office, cultural, hotel, and some residential activity. Planning focuses on reinforcing this role, while improving civic spaces to invigorate the public realm.

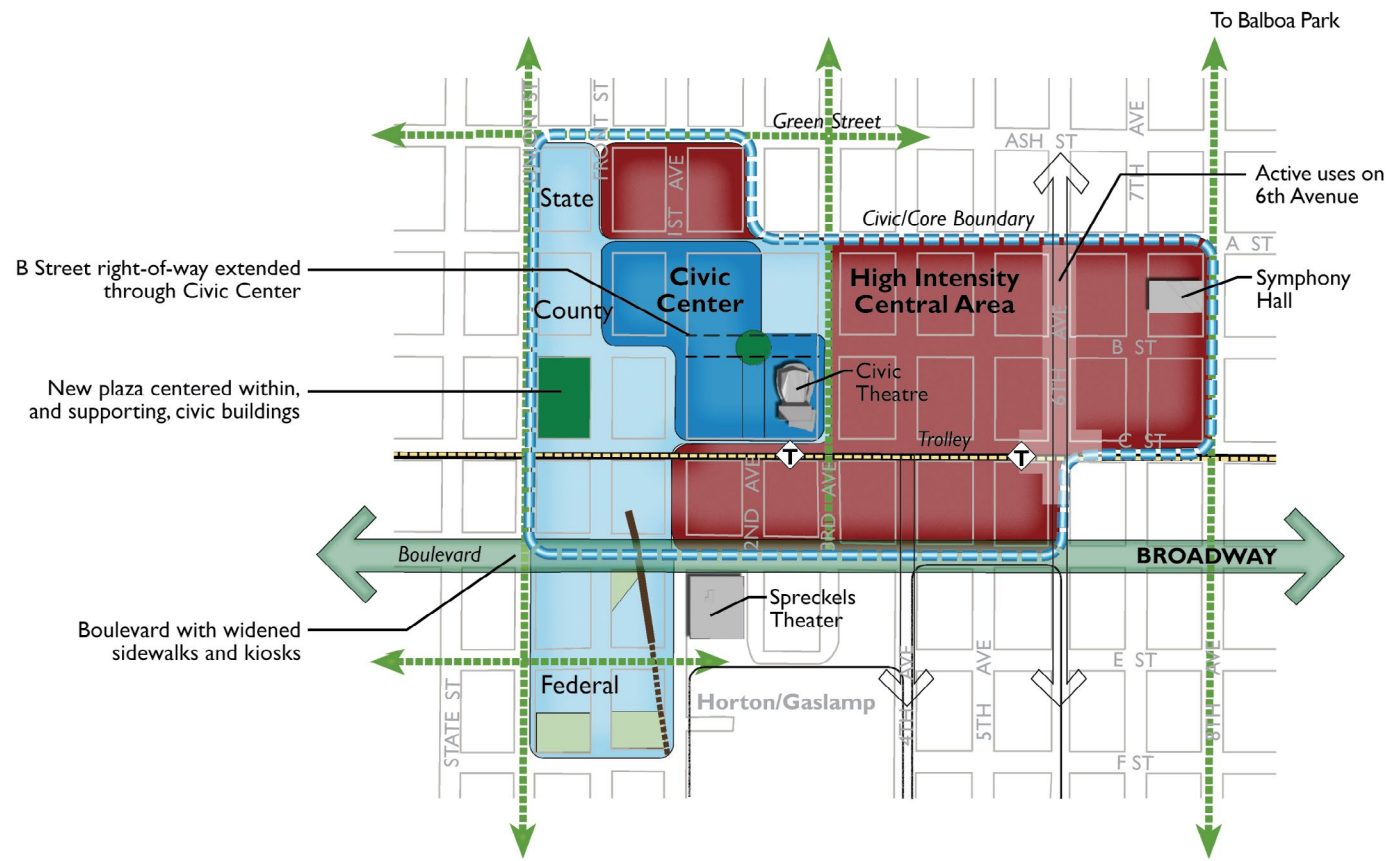
Civic/Core emerged as a business center in the early 1900s, starting with a concentration of business-related activities along Broadway. North of Broadway was predominantly residential prior to the 1915 Panama California Exposition. Diverse land uses—including hotels, office buildings, theaters, and department stores—were introduced during the Exposition era. The Community Concourse and Westgate Hotel, completed in 1964, contributed to the district's business dimension, and the City offices combined with nearby government offices have served as an important locational draw for related businesses and services.

The Civic/Core's department stores closed during the 1960s with suburbanization, which in effect re-focused its role downtown as the office center. The 1980s brought development of several high-rise office and hotel towers and renovation of Copley Symphony Hall. However, since that period, new office construction has largely occurred in the Columbia District, located west of Civic/Core.

Although perceived as an office district, Civic/Core contains a variety of uses that make it dynamic. Distinguishing features include:

- **Civic Center, Concourse, and Civic Theatre.** Merging nearly four blocks, this introverted complex contains City administrative offices, a large interior plaza, meeting facilities, and the Civic Theatre. Redevelopment of the Civic Center and renovation of the Civic Theatre are planned and under discussion; the Concourse is planned to close.
- **County Complex.** Courts operated by the County of San Diego plus related jails occupy 4.5 blocks between Broadway and A Street, and State Street and 1st Avenue. Reconstruction of some of these facilities is anticipated in the future.





*Civic/Core activity centers, open space, and connections.*



*Planned (in color) and existing (in grey) building form in Civic/Core.*

*This is a view of how downtown may develop with allowed intensities, solely for illustrative purposes.*

- **B and C Street Corridors.** Many of the Civic/Core office towers open onto B Street, which currently terminates at the Civic Center. C Street was intended as a pedestrian mall servicing the trolley, but prevalence of building “backs,” limited and inconsistent traffic access, and security concerns have resulted in low commerce activity.
- **Broadway.** As downtown’s ceremonial street, Broadway is an integral component of Civic/Core. However, the Core as a district is more oriented towards the Civic Center to the north rather than flanking Broadway. County courts (Hall of Justice) front Broadway, and federal courts are located on the southern side.
- **Performing Art Theaters.** The Civic Theatre, Symphony Hall, and Spreckels Theater—downtown’s largest stages—are major regional draws for arts and culture, as are several successful smaller venues. Balboa Theater is located nearby as well.
- **Hotels.** Westgate, Bristol and the historic Pickwick provide lodging options distinct from convention-oriented hotels and help activate streets with 24-hour activity.

Even with these significant features, Civic/Core lacks a defining center or node. In addition, there is little activity outside of weekday working hours or special theatre circuits.

### Community Plan Vision

A principal objective of the Community Plan is to reinforce Civic/Core as a center of business and civic activity for downtown and the region. The pending redevelopment of the Civic Center and Concourse as well as the adjacent County courts provide essential opportunities for re-orienting buildings and open spaces to the street, and reclaiming portions of the street grid for improved connectivity and access. A full-block plaza/park is planned to serve a range of civic needs – from event space to a lunch hour destination for employees and government visitors. Broadway will continue to anchor activity in the southern portion of Civic/Core.

The mix of uses in Civic/Core is a strength. The Community Plan calls for embracing the varied environment while prioritizing new office and other employment-generating uses to maintain Civic/Core’s unique role among downtown’s districts. Circulation and transit plans reflect Civic/Core’s role as a regional and downtown center.

### Structure and Form

Civic/Core will be a compact district, extending just over one half mile in the east-west direction. The heart of Civic/Core will be the redeveloped government complex, and a new full-block park. B Street will serve as a spine connecting the blocks in the east with the civic anchor. Broadway—with its ceremonial character and cluster of additional government facilities—will continue as a second activity focus. New high-rises containing office and mixed development will be activated by flourishing civic uses.



*Continued intensive development, with emphasis on employment uses, will reinforce Civic/Core as the hub for business and civic activity, correlated with downtown’s strong transit infrastructure.*



Civic/Core will be distinguished from the other neighborhoods with its concentration of tall buildings and generous floorplate and bulk standards.

### Goals and Buildout: Civic/Core

- 6.1-G-1 Create an intense district with large and tall buildings reflecting Civic/Core’s character as San Diego’s business and political center, while promoting a mix of uses.
- 6.1-G-2 Strengthen Civic/Core as a focus of civic uses and government activity, and reconnect government buildings and open spaces to the public realm.

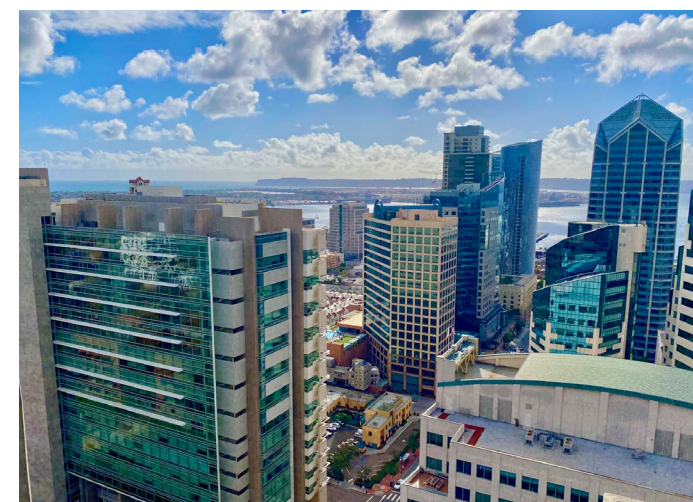
Estimated Buildout <sup>1</sup> : Civic/Core	
Population <sup>2</sup>	5,000
Employment	35,000
<sup>1</sup> Total reflects rounded numbers.	
<sup>2</sup> Includes group quarters population; assumes 1.6 persons per household and a 95% occupancy rate.	



Although visually dominated by tall office towers, Civic/Core possesses a wide mix of building forms accommodating hotel, cultural, and civic activities, such as the historic federal courts (top). B Street (above) serves as a focus for historic and contemporary development in Civic/Core, as well as a vehicular and pedestrian spine connecting to the Civic Center.



Continued enhancement of Broadway as downtown’s ceremonial boulevard will help to elevate Civic/Core’s public orientation.



### 6.2 COLUMBIA

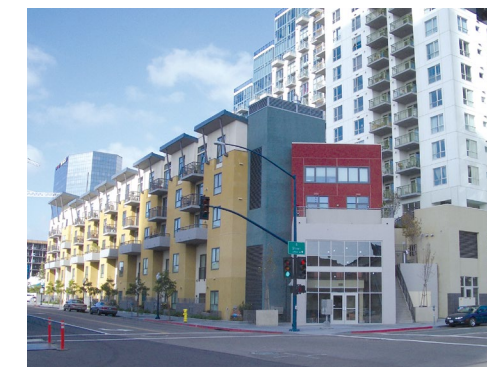
Situated on the western edge of downtown, Columbia’s distinguishing characteristic is its waterfront orientation. In 1887 a Victorian-style railroad depot was built between Broadway and California, and in 1913, the area west of Pacific Highway was filled. Construction of Broadway Pier followed. The current Santa Fe Depot replaced the original station in 1915 and municipal warehouses began to fill in the area at the foot of Broadway. By the 1930s, recreational uses were added, including Lane Field – home to the original San Diego Padres of the Pacific Coast League.

Today, Columbia has evolved into a diverse neighborhood comprising office buildings, hotels, retail uses, residential development, and museums. Already home to some of San Diego’s tallest buildings—including One America Plaza, Emerald Plaza, and the First National Bank Center, plus a number of emerging residential towers—Columbia has a high-rise concentration nearing Civic/Core’s in intensity. Additionally, Columbia’s office sector functions in tandem with Civic/Core. Waterfront uses include the Broadway Pier, the busy and expanding Cruise Ship Terminal, ferry landing, and hotels along Harbor Drive. The Santa Fe Depot remains an important transportation hub as a terminal for northbound Amtrak and Coaster trains, and a major transfer point for transit buses and the San Diego Trolley.

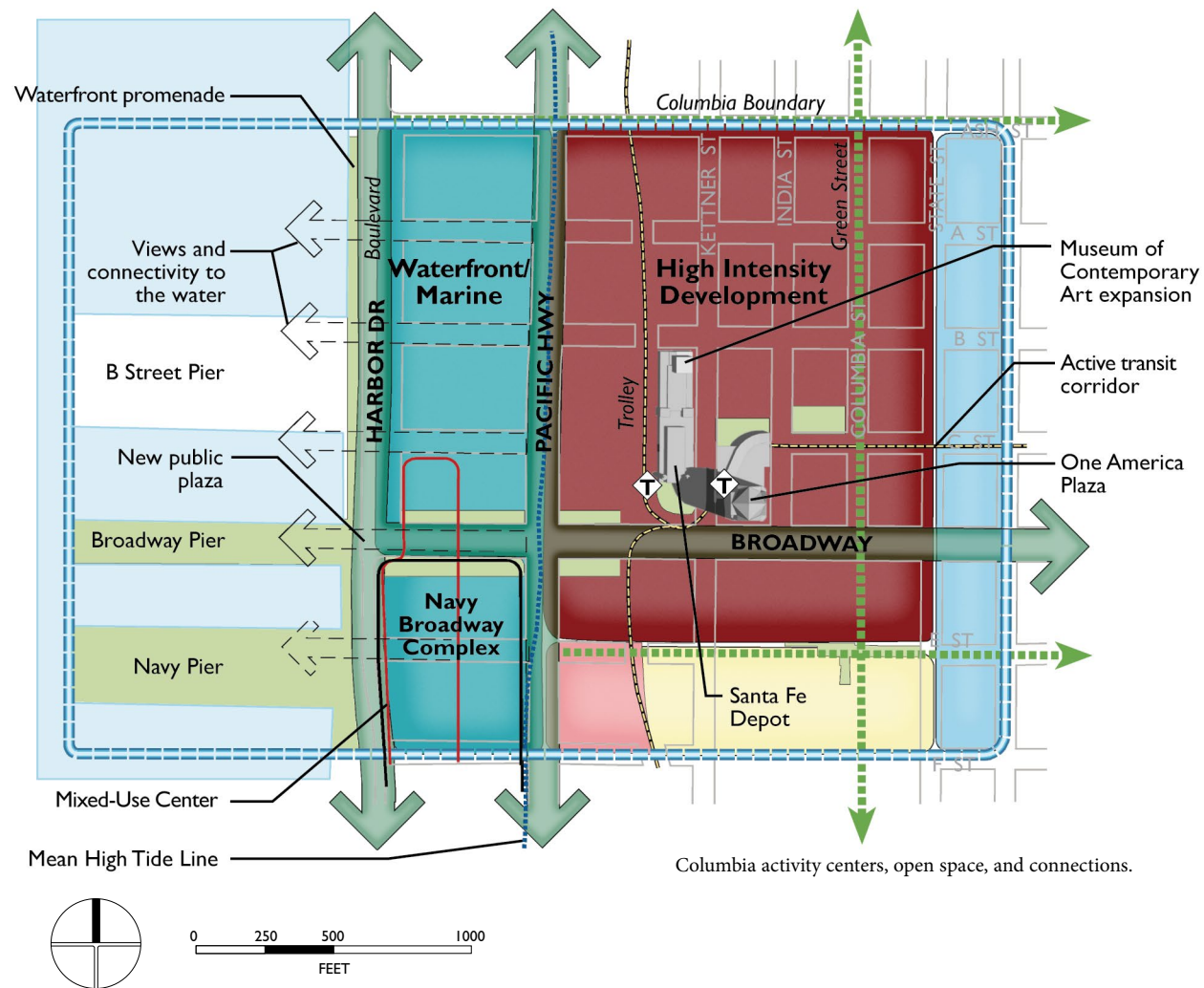
Much of the waterfront is under the purview of the Port, which has land use authority on tideland properties, and has worked collaboratively with other agencies to develop the North Embarcadero Visionary Plan (NEVP).

### Community Plan Vision

With significant development potential, Columbia offers the promise of a reinvigorated, connected waterfront.



Towers rival those in Civic/Core (top), but greater residential orientation (above) and declining building heights approaching the waterfront distinguish Columbia.



Columbia activity centers, open space, and connections.



Planned (in color) and existing (in grey) building form in Civic/Core. This is a view of how downtown may develop with allowed intensities, solely for illustrative purposes.

Two distinct yet interrelated areas within Columbia will emerge in addition to the waterfront. The high-intensity office, residential, hotel, and cultural activity inland of Pacific Highway will evolve in a largely high-rise environment. Plazas, the C Street Corridor, Santa Fe Depot, and museums will contribute variety and interest to this area. A waterfront-oriented, mixed-use center is planned between Pacific Highway and the Bay, and will serve locals and visitors alike.

Views of the water throughout Columbia will be accomplished by extending the existing street east-west grid and encouraging a stepped-down building scale approaching the Bay. The street extensions will also facilitate improved waterfront access, as will the Bayfront Esplanade and Broadway Pier improvements foreseen in the NEVP. Connections to other nearby downtown neighborhoods also plays an important role in development planning.

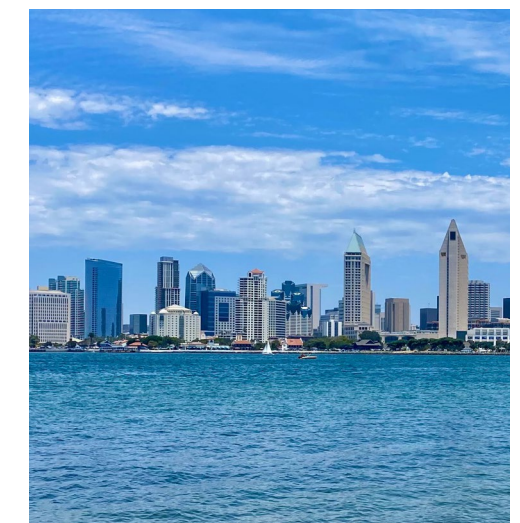
### Structure and Form

Activity and development will be organized in the high-intensity inland area, the waterfront-oriented visitor-serving commercial area, and the waterfront itself, and around the neighborhood's three major boulevards – Broadway, Harbor Drive, and Pacific Highway.

Building intensities and heights will taper down toward the Bay. Some of the highest FARs allowed in downtown—up to 14.0 with bonuses—are designated east of Kettner Boulevard. FARs drop in a transition zone between Kettner Boulevard and California Street (railroad and trolley tracks), and reach a significantly lower level west of California Street. Sunlight and views will be protected along the waterfront through design standards limiting building height and bulk.



New streets will connect Columbia to the waterfront as the Navy Broadway Complex (top) and other sites are redeveloped. Broadway (above) will be developed as downtown's principal ceremonial street.



A Bayfront Esplanade—incorporating a redeveloped Navy Broadway Complex—will become a major waterfront destination

### Goals and Buildout: Columbia

- 6.2-G-1 Develop Columbia as a mixed-use district, with an energetic waterfront that serves local needs and has a regional draw, relating to both the San Diego Bay and the Civic/Core district.
- 6.2-G-2 Establish new and improved functional and visual connections to the waterfront; enhance existing ones, especially along the entire lengths of A, B, C, E, and F Streets.
- 6.2-G-3 Step down building scale and development intensities towards the water.

Estimated Buildout <sup>1</sup> : Columbia	
Population <sup>2</sup>	7,000
Employment	45,000

<sup>1</sup> Total reflects rounded numbers.  
<sup>2</sup> Includes group quarters population; assumes 1.6 persons per household and a 95% occupancy rate.

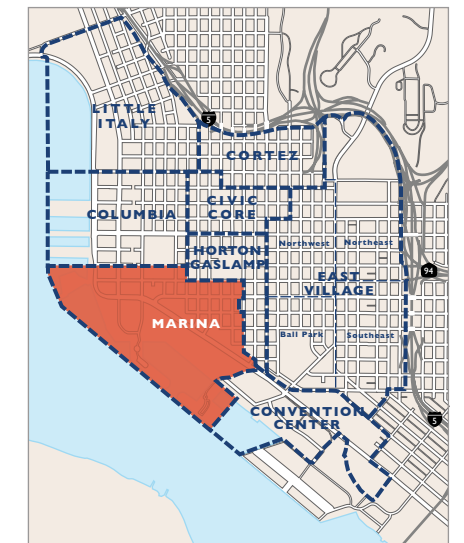


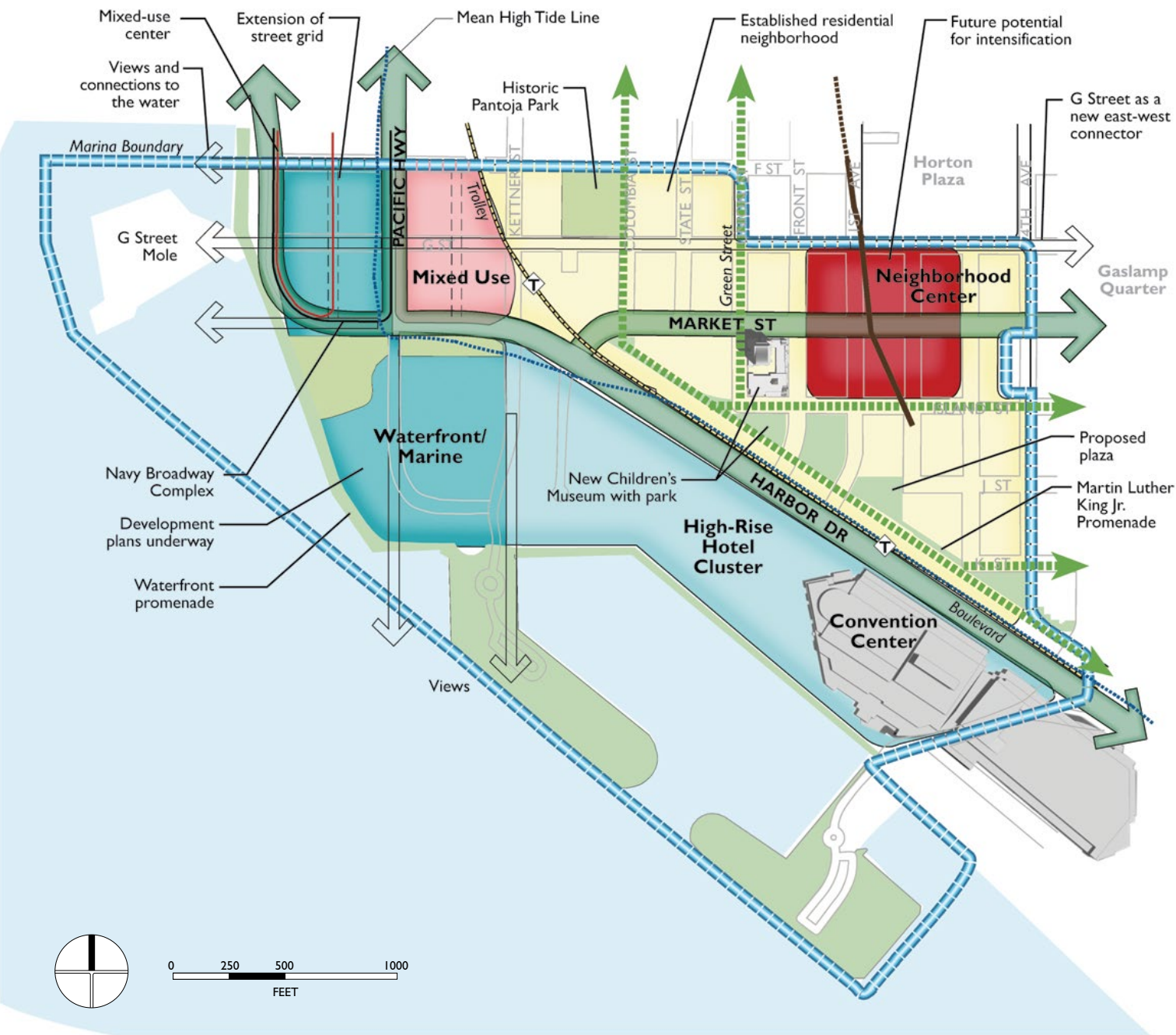
### 6.3 MARINA

Marina—also located on the waterfront—has undergone almost complete transformation as an urban residential neighborhood. While housing dominates areas east of Pacific Highway, the waterfront contains hotels, restaurants, and Navy facilities. With the exception of development on Port-controlled sites (Seaport Village and Old Police Headquarters) and the Navy Broadway Complex, Marina is not expected to accommodate significant growth. Planning focuses on completing this neighborhood with needed shopping and open space, and improving access to one of Marina’s finest assets—the beautiful San Diego Bay.

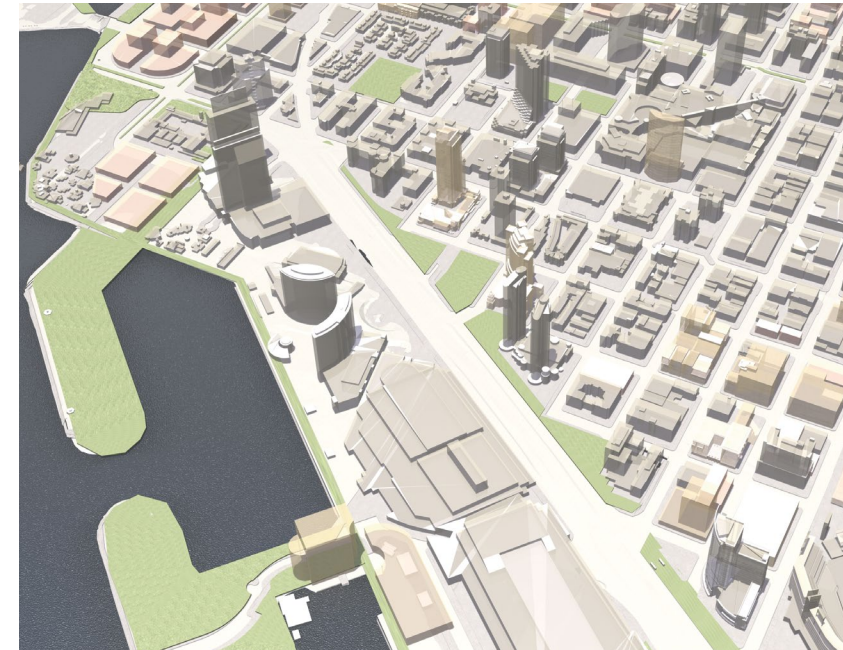
Contrary to its residential appearance, Marina originally developed as an industrial area serving the downtown waterfront. Parcels near the waterfront held the US Navy Air Station Depot, wholesale fish warehouses, truck yards, and coal yards. The neighborhood is also a home to San Diego’s original Asian American community, attracted to the area with the building of the railroad at the end of the 19th century.

The housing stock includes single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels and rental housing in addition to upscale lofts, luxury condominiums, and penthouse suites. Marina’s largely residential character is diversified by hotels and tourist commercial uses generally located along Harbor Drive. These waterfront development patterns currently impede access from the main neighborhood, and are under the jurisdiction of the San Diego Unified Port District. Cultural components are woven into the heart of Marina, such as the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District and museums. Downtown’s first major supermarket lies in Marina with sporadic street-level retail providing additional shopping opportunities.





Marina activity centers, open space, and connections.



Planned (in color) and existing (in grey) building form in Civic/Core.

This is a view of how downtown may develop with allowed intensities, solely for illustrative purposes.

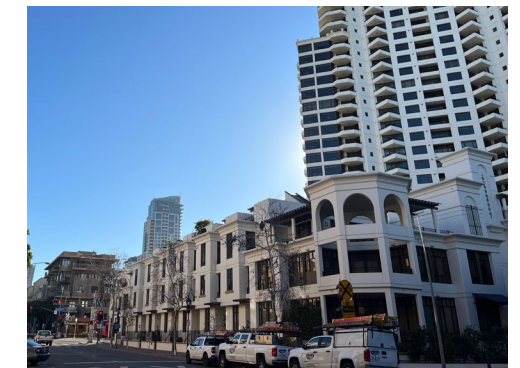
### Community Plan Vision

Marina's significant development opportunities rest along the waterfront, with potential to forge connections between the housing east of Pacific Highway and the Bay. While its character is largely established, Marina stands to improve significantly as new development proceeds – new views of the Bay will be captured, retail and other local-serving amenities will be enhanced, and the waterfront itself will become more of a destination.

### Structure and Form

This district enjoys access to the waterfront and abuts the Gaslamp Quarter, Horton Plaza, and Columbia. The majority of the neighborhood consists of mid-rise development, with waterfront edges currently occupied by large floorplate structures and open expanses of parking, separated from inland areas by Pacific Highway and Harbor Drive. To the southeast, large hotels are likely to remain, while to the west, Navy property redevelopment should stitch the inland and waterfront fabric of the neighborhood together.

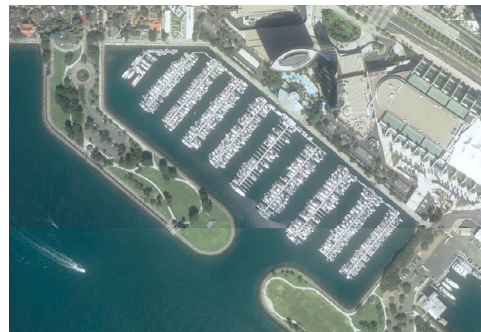
Allowable FARs east of Pacific Highway range from 2.0 to 8.0, consistent with prevalent intensities. These are relatively moderate compared to the rest of downtown.



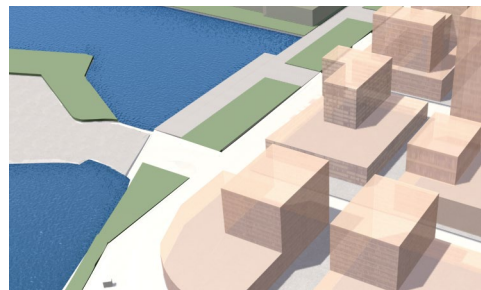
Marina's low-rise residences (top) contrast with taller hotels on the waterfront and newer residential towers (above).



Additional Promenades, such as the California Street Promenade and the Children's Museum Promenade will provide opportunities for increased physical activity and pedestrian experiences (above).



Marina enjoys significant open spaces inland, such as Children's Park (top), but nearby waterfront resources feel almost out of reach due to street grid disruptions and bayside development patterns (above).



New waterfront connections will be achieved by extending the street grid across the Navy Broadway Complex as it redevelops (above).

In general, development west of California Street is intended to step down toward the waterfront, and to decline from Broadway to the north and south.

### Goals and Buildout: Marina

- 6.3-G-1 Maintain the neighborhood's existing character and development patterns, while promoting compatible waterfront development opportunities.
- 6.3-G-2 Promote development of a fine-grained, porous waterfront, with connections between the neighborhood and the areas west of Pacific Highway and south of Harbor Drive.
- 6.3-G-3 Pursue and promote strategic opportunities for retail and other neighborhood services.

#### Estimated Buildout<sup>1</sup>: Marina

Population <sup>2</sup>	6,000
Employment	11,000

<sup>1</sup> Total reflects rounded numbers.

<sup>2</sup> Includes group quarters population; assumes 1.6 persons per household and a 95% occupancy rate.



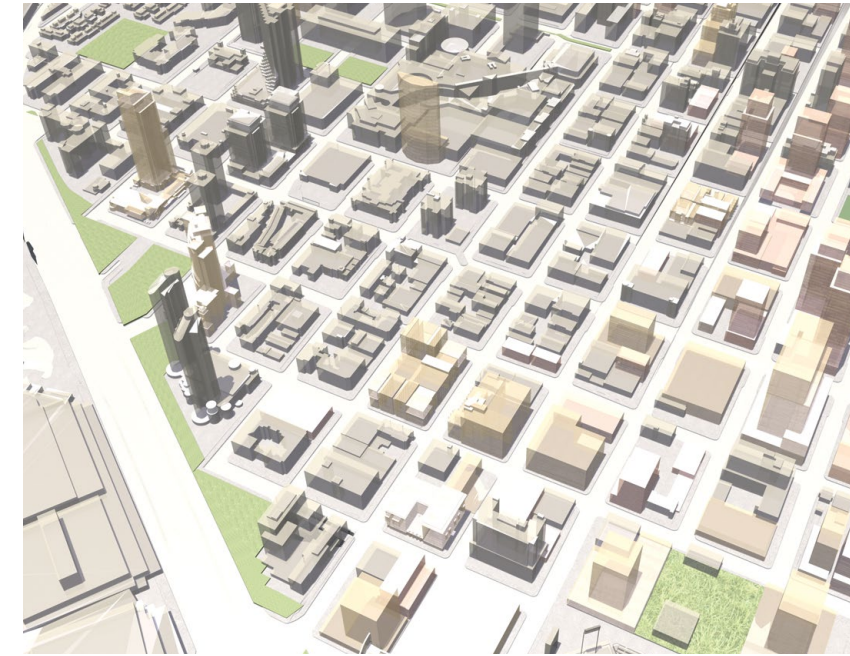
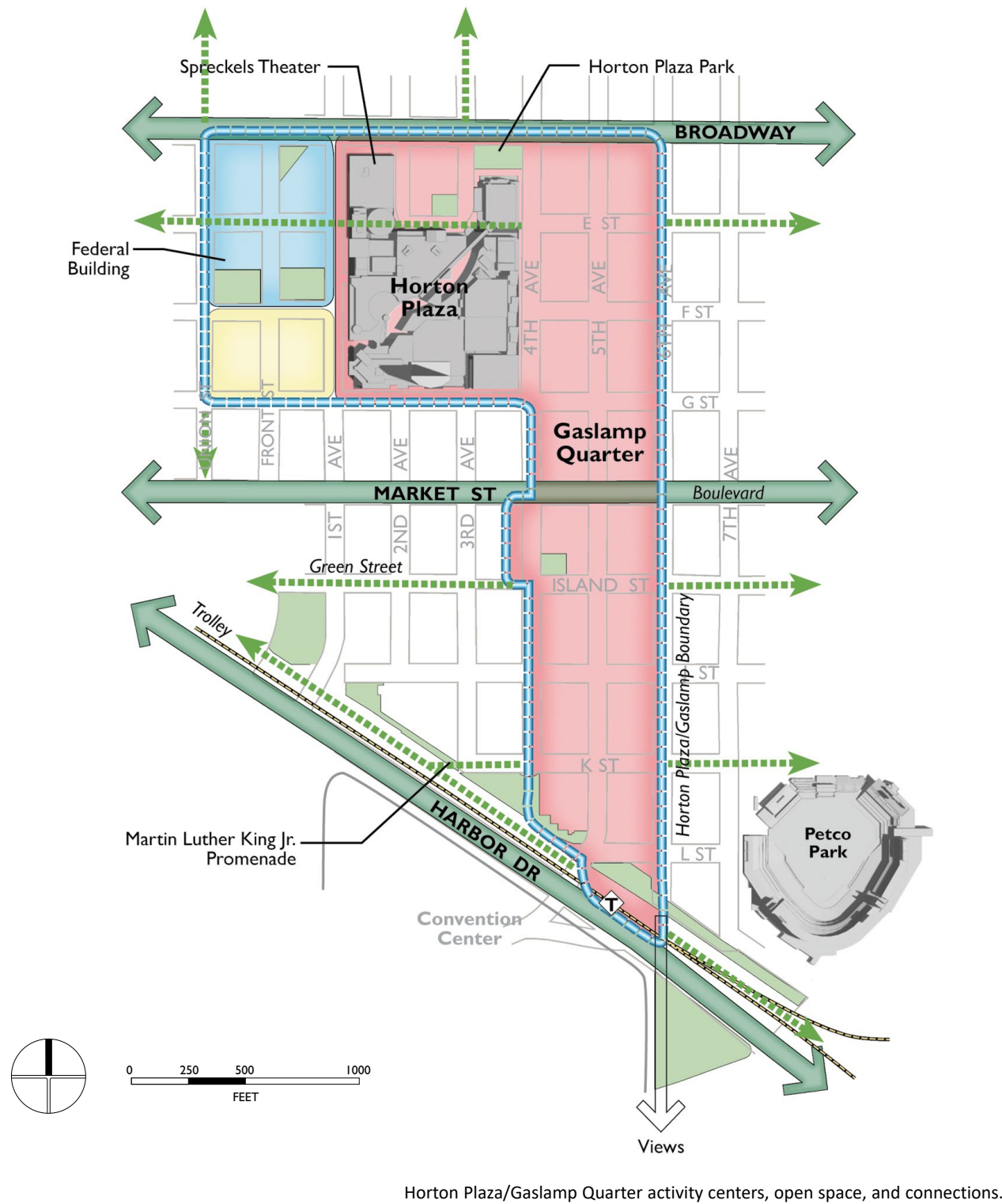
### 6.4 HORTON PLAZA/GASLAMP QUARTER

The Gaslamp Quarter and Horton Plaza represent two of downtown's earliest success stories. Both possess significant draws for entertainment, shopping, arts and culture, and dining, and have served as catalysts for redevelopment of other downtown neighborhoods. Horton Plaza—combining a contemporary shopping center with residential, theater, office, and hotel uses in an urban format—is nearing built-out status. Gaslamp Quarter, a National Register Historic District revived with nightclubs, boutiques, restaurants, residences, and offices, is almost fully built out as well.

The Gaslamp Quarter was downtown's first commercial and business center, linking to the original waterfront at the southern end of 5th Avenue. After progressing through times of ill-repute and abandonment, revitalization efforts began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and were aided by Horton Plaza's success. Today, Gaslamp has emerged as San Diego's prime entertainment and celebration destination. Conventioneers, baseball fans, and weekend diners congregate here for its lively mixture of restaurants, cafés, nightclubs, and bars. Streets are sometimes closed for special events, making this a haven for festive crowds. The entertainment uses are served well by the neighborhood's historic buildings, which provide a fine-grained, pedestrian-scaled environment and recall the district's colorful past.

Horton Plaza offers a blend of specialty retail, department stores, office, and hotels. Two performance venues are located within Horton Plaza – the Lyceum Theatre and historic Balboa Theatre. The open-air mall was built as part of downtown's first redevelopment efforts, and served to bring people back into an area that was forgotten in the early 1980s. Its inward-facing architecture and street grid closures interrupt neighborhood fabric connectivity, but were considered essential to the project's success in the pioneering years of redevelopment.





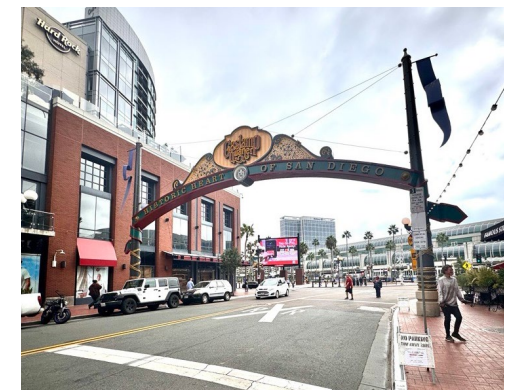
Planned (in color) and existing (in grey) building form in Civic/Core. This is a view of how downtown may develop with allowed intensities, solely for illustrative purposes.

### Community Plan Vision

Horton/Gaslamp will continue to serve both downtown residents and employees and the region at large, as well as downtown's significant numbers of tourists and conventioners, through both the popular outdoor mall and nearby historic walking streets. Petco Park and the Convention Center provide another visitor stream, for southern Gaslamp in particular. Downtown's continued attractiveness to visitors in part relies on sustaining the spark, intrigue, and entertainment qualities of Horton/Gaslamp. Planning for these two districts revolves around maintaining high activity levels, refining circulation, rejuvenating open spaces, and protecting Gaslamp's historic qualities.

### Form and Structure

The Gaslamp Quarter lies between 4th and 6th avenues from Broadway to Harbor Drive, and Horton Plaza occupies six blocks on the west of this spine. There is no separate Neighborhood Center, as the entire area is teeming with activity and amenities. Several important downtown streets border and cross the neighborhood, including Broadway, Market Street, and Harbor Drive. Building intensities are low compared to other areas of downtown, reflecting limitations imposed to protect Gaslamp's historic character and Horton Plaza's early mall development concept.



The Horton/Gaslamp neighborhood is a shopping and entertainment district drawing people around the region and beyond.



### Goals and Buildout: Horton Plaza/Gaslamp Quarter

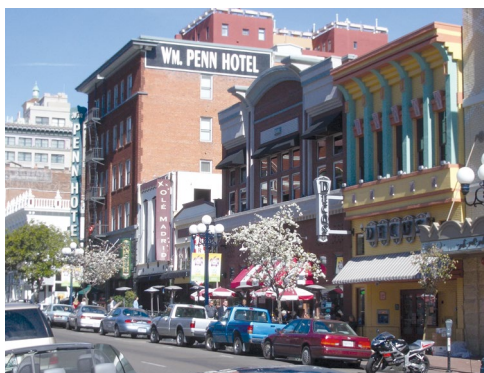
6.4-G-1 Maintain Horton/Gaslamp as an entertainment and shopping district, with broad mix of uses, high activity, and wide-ranging appeal.

#### Estimated Buildout<sup>1</sup>: Horton Plaza/Gaslamp Quarter

Population <sup>2</sup>	2,000
Employment	16,000

<sup>1</sup> Total reflects rounded numbers.

<sup>2</sup> Includes group quarters population; assumes 1.6 persons per household and a 95% occupancy rate.



Periodic street closures for special events (top) and high pedestrian activity (middle) require continued safety improvements, with special attention given to the preservation and development of the pedestrian focused Gaslamp Promenade along 5th Avenue (above).



### 6.5 EAST VILLAGE

The East Village is one of downtown's largest, fastest-changing, and most diverse neighborhoods. This area will develop as a residential district complemented by Neighborhood Centers, employment areas, flexible use zones, and public spaces. A variety of activities, ranging from academic endeavors at City College, to entertainment at Petco Park, arts at the Central Library, and human services, will ensure the area maintains the eclectic character that makes it unique. East Village is at the center of much of the growth proposed under the Community Plan, and it will continue to transform over the next 20 years.

Encompassing the area roughly east of 6th Avenue, this district has been traditionally less developed than areas closer to the waterfront and business core. Its southern portions began as a warehouse district, with manufacturing, processing, distribution, and storage enterprises operating in conjunction with waterfront trade activity. As a significant share of maritime commerce moved away from San Diego Bay and industry moved to outlying areas, this part of downtown experienced substantial blight.

East Village has evolved with a mixture of light industrial and warehousing; artists and design studios; residents in pockets of small California bungalows; and human service providers and users. The northern portions of East Village, once a part of Balboa Park, house City College and San Diego High School, anchors of an academic and institutional zone. To the south, the Petco Park baseball stadium has caused the growth of a vibrant residential, employment, and entertainment district complementing the successful Gaslamp Quarter to the west. Catalyzed by this success and by market pressures in downtown as a whole, new projects—primarily residential-oriented—are spreading throughout East Village, making it one of the most dynamic redevelopment areas of downtown.

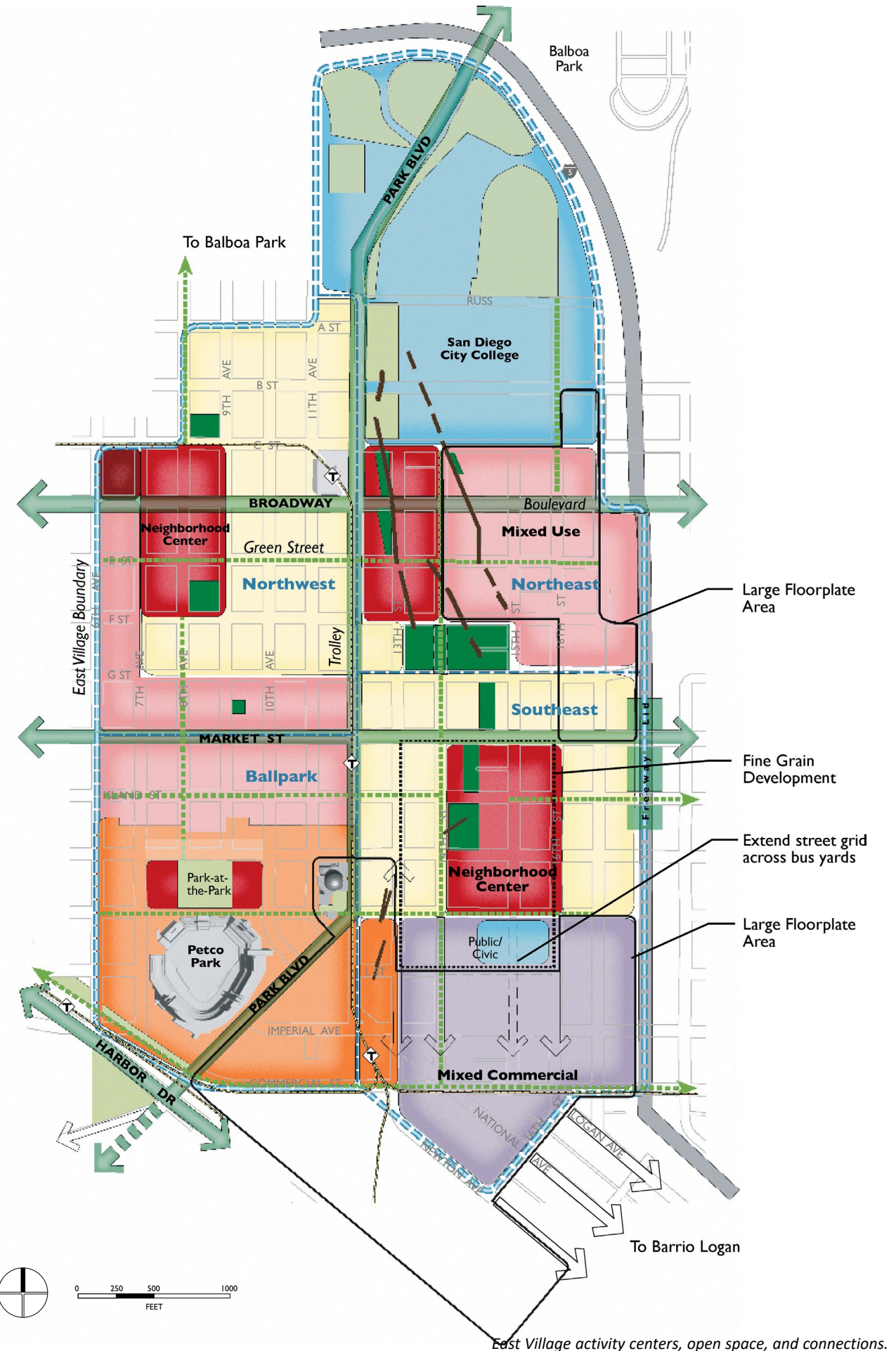
Tying Balboa Park and the northern academic areas of the neighborhood together with the ballpark district and waterfront in the south is the Bay to Park Paseo. This project consists of streetscape improvements along Park Boulevard that will make this an appealing central thoroughfare for a large, evolving neighborhood.



Historic and recent low rise development will be mixed with some of the tallest buildings outside of Civic/Core.



Planned (in color) and existing (in grey) building form in Civic/Core.  
 This is a view of how downtown may develop with allowed intensities, solely for illustrative purposes.





The trolley station along Park Boulevard has also been improved by the project.

As the eastern “frontier” of downtown, East Village is also the gateway to communities bordering downtown to the East. Golden Hill, Sherman Heights, Logan Heights, and Barrio Logan are some of the oldest residential areas in San Diego, severed from their traditional connection to downtown by the I-5 Freeway. They are experiencing growth and change as well, and there are plans to re-integrate them with the area.

### Community Plan Vision

The overall character of East Village will be transformed under the Community Plan. Almost half of the parcels considered here represent development opportunities, and pressure for growth is strong. The area is envisioned as a thriving residential and mixed use community. The highest residential intensities downtown will be attained in East Village, served by the necessary retail, commercial, and open space amenities. Mixed residential and employment uses will thrive around City College, taking advantage of the academic atmosphere for research and high-tech business opportunities. In the southwestern portions of East Village around the ballpark, entertainment, tourism, and employment are expected to flourish alongside new residents. This center of activity is reinforced by a cultural addition: San Diego’s Central Library. A mixed commercial zone in the south of East Village will allow existing industrial and warehousing activities to continue along with new uses such as residential and offices.

Estimated buildout population will be over half of downtown’s expected total buildout, and employment of 39,000 will be almost a quarter of downtown’s total. This significant new user base will be served by four distinct Neighborhood Centers, providing retail and commercial nodes for East Village. A series of parks and plazas will also be available to residents and workers. The centerpiece of the open space network will be the 4.1-acre East Village Green, offering ample active and passive recreation opportunities to serve not only this neighborhood, but downtown as a whole.

Aspects of the neighborhood’s historic character will be preserved. (see *Chapter 9: Historic Preservation*). In this way, East Village’s evolution will be apparent, adding to the richness of its urban form. Also emphasizing historic fabric and downtown’s connectivity with greater San Diego, links to surrounding communities will be underscored. A freeway lid between Market and Island streets as well as bike facilities on Island, Commercial, and K streets will be key to making such connections happen.

### Structure and Form

Activity nodes for this neighborhood will be the four evenly-distributed Neighborhood Centers, the academically-focused area around City College, and the entertainment and culture district surrounding the



As low rise warehouse and other uses redevelop with new residential, employment, entertainment, and cultural uses, vestiges of the historic character will endure.



East Village Green is sized to help meet downtown’s needs for recreational games, gatherings, and youth activities.

ballpark. Important corridors include Park Boulevard, which will link the neighborhood internally from north to south as well as providing access from Balboa Park to the San Diego Bay. Broadway will connect East Village to the western portions of downtown and to Golden Hill in the east; and Market Street will similarly connect the Marina and Gaslamp Quarter, and Sherman Heights to the neighborhood. Green Streets connecting to activity centers throughout downtown will permeate East Village.

East Village will have two nodes of intensity, allowing extremely high residential towers to develop in areas north of the ballpark and a node of lesser, but still significant, residential and commercial intensity north of East Village Green. Intensity will decrease to the south and east, as the neighborhood approaches the freeway, rail yards, and the older adjacent communities. A variety of building grain is encouraged in East Village, with larger floorplates for employment purposes allowed around City College and in the southern flexible use portions of the neighborhood, and fine grained development required in designated areas in the southeast. Building heights will be limited to the south and west of new parks to maintain afternoon sun access.

### Sub-Districts

Various portions of East Village will have substantially different characters, contributing to the eclecticism and interest of this district. For the purpose of detailed discussion, the neighborhood is thus divided into sub-districts—Ballpark, Southeast, Northwest, and Northeast—which are described in the following sections.

### Ballpark

The region’s original warehouse district, Ballpark became blighted in the second half of the 20th century as did other portions of East Village. The 1990s brought “pioneers” who took advantage of large, inexpensive building spaces for work, residences, and arts facilities. Completion of Petco Park, together with hotels and ancillary uses, has been a further impetus for redevelopment and intensification.

At present, a majority of sites in this area include residential, parking structures, and new hotels. Retail and office components coupled with the Central Library and cultural uses, complete the initial concept for this innovative district.

### Vision

Ballpark is envisioned as a downtown-wide entertainment and cultural attraction as well as a residential and commercial district with supporting amenities. The area contains a shared open space in the



Petco Park has been a transformative force in the Ballpark subdistrict of East Village.



Entertainment and hotel uses around Petco Park, such as the Omni Hotel, will boost activity levels in lower Gaslamp Quarter.



The new Neighborhood Center focused around Outfield Park will serve ballpark patrons and neighborhood residents and employees alike.



Park-at-the-Park, surrounded by commercial uses that form one of East Village’s four Neighborhood Centers, and the central focus of energy for this sub-district.

Important corridors are Market Street and Park Boulevard, providing links within downtown, to Balboa Park, and to the Bay; as well as Island and Imperial avenues and Commercial Street, which will afford pedestrian and vehicular access to neighborhoods east of downtown.

Compared to areas to the north and east, Ballpark will have low to mid-level intensity buildings, maintaining sun access at Petco Park, and a mid-rise character for a neighborhood that bridges between the historic Gaslamp Quarter and high rises expected north of Market Street. South and east of Petco Park, areas allowing large floorplates will offer flexibility for a variety of employment uses.

### Southeast

Southeast promises to become an eclectic area with a mix of housing types, and the interest and intrigue that accompany diverse environments. Much of this sub-district is intended for a “fine grain” scale of development with multiple buildings per block, and lower building intensity than in most other neighborhoods.

At present, rail, shipping yards, and the I-5 freeway surround this portion of East Village, and a mix of industrial, warehousing, transportation, and repair uses are housed in the area, largely in single-story structures. Also present are bus yards, occupying a six-block area (with two double-wide and two regular blocks), several vacant buildings, and since the late 1980s some of the region’s largest human service facilities.

The sub-district offers several distinct advantages – it is near Petco Park, next to the trolley line and trolley transfer station, and directly adjacent to the Central Library site. It is served by the Bay to Park Paseo, and quick freeway access will benefit future residents, businesses, and public activity. Additionally, Southeast provides transition to the Sherman Heights and Barrio Logan neighborhoods.

### Vision

Zoning will allow a mix of residential, office, retail, and convention center growth, while retaining light industrial uses and support infrastructure such as fabrication shops and small-scale parts manufacturers. New uses will exist in close proximity to existing ones in mixed commercial zones, creating a diverse urban environment, with residential uses throughout.

The sub-district’s energy will focus on Fault Line Park and the surrounding Neighborhood Center, potentially complemented by adjacent convention center activities. A greenway will connect to the East Village Green, and Fourteenth Street will become an important corridor. Market and J streets are strong connecting spines in the east-west direction. These, together with a freeway lid and surface streets to the south, will provide access to adjacent eastern neighborhoods.

In general, building intensity will be in the low to middle range for

downtown, and much higher than it is at present. Lower-intensity buildings with larger floorplates will occur in the southern mixed commercial. A fine-grained area, requiring articulation at the ground level and encouraging smaller development parcels, is designated in the central portion of Southeast, as shown in Figure 3-6. The neighborhood’s tallest towers will line the north of Fault Line Park, while lower buildings to the south and west will allow sun access throughout the day.

### Northwest

Northwest, defined anew in the Community Plan, makes the transition between the very-high intensity, employment-orientation of Civic/Core, and the academic and institutional synergy of Northeast. Re-use of some existing low-scale commercial and warehouse structures, along with some new residential development, has helped to activate the neighborhood in recent years.

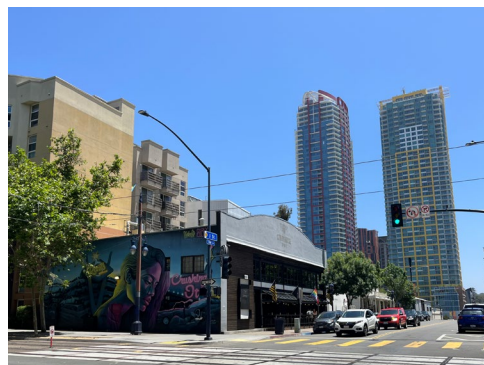
### Vision

The sub-district is poised to begin its reincarnation as downtown’s residential core, with redevelopment assumed to take place on an estimated 80 to 90 percent of its blocks. This transformation will yield downtown’s highest-intensity residential-emphasis district.

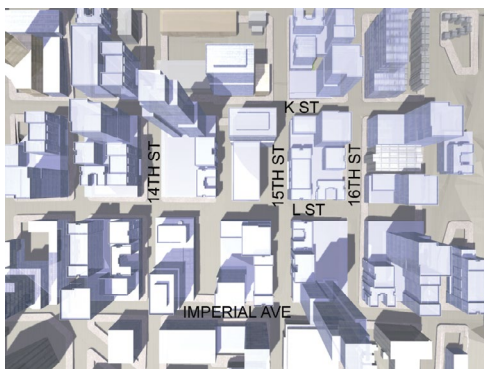
Residential towers will share the area with offices, as well as ground-level commercial uses, and residents will enjoy creative pursuits in re-used civic landmark buildings. Furthermore, many of downtown’s coveted destinations will be close at hand – Gaslamp Quarter and Horton Plaza, Petco Park, Central Library, City College, Civic/Core employment, and the East Village Green. Balboa Park will be just four blocks north of this section of East Village via the new 8th Avenue connector across I-5.

The organizing components of Northwest will be three principal Boulevards—Market Street, Park Boulevard, and Broadway—and the focus and energy of a new Neighborhood Center. Focused along the 8th Avenue spine, the center will take on a “main street” quality. The southern edge will be defined by a culturally-oriented node encompassing the former Central Library building and Post Office, with the southern two-thirds of the Post Office site—currently occupied by non-historic buildings—converted to a park. A second park is positioned at the northern end of the center.

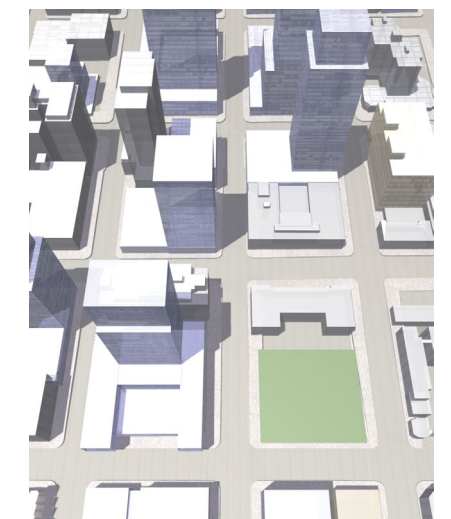
Northwest’s many opportunity sites, location at the heart of downtown, accessibility to transit, and distance from the airport overflight zone make it ideal for high-intensity building and for receiving development right transfers from sites designated for parks. At the sub-district’s eastern edge, intensities on some sites may reach as high as 20.0 FAR with purchase/transfer of development rights and other available incentives. This will result in many towers rising to heights only matched in the Civic/Core employment district. Establishing peak residential intensities in Northwest will help to maximize use of the area’s transit access.



Southeast, which currently has some of the lowest intensities downtown, will be transformed under the Community Plan.



L and 15th streets will extend across the existing bus yards site in Southeast.



Northwest’s Neighborhood Center will have a cultural emphasis anchored by new arts uses in the Central Library (top) and Post Office (above).



## Northeast

In the northeast corner of downtown, a spirit of innovation, scholarship, and progress will drive a development mix of residential, high-tech employment, and new educational institutions. This sub-district will buzz with creativity and synergistic relationships, in an environment where people live, work, and pursue learning amidst tree-lined streets and restful open spaces.

The northern reaches of Northeast house City College and San Diego High School. Low intensity development—consisting of a wide mix of storage and service uses, sprinkled with some housing—dominates areas to the south. The Police Headquarters is located on Broadway, and some building stock has been taken over by art and design professionals. Construction of new higher-density housing has occurred near the college, and more is planned or under construction.

The area's topography slopes gently down from the educational campuses, such that the majority of Northeast lies lower than surrounding neighborhoods. Distant glimpses of the Bay and Coronado Bridge are possible toward the south, providing a sense of expansiveness. Active faults, constraining construction to some degree, traverse the entire neighborhood. Balboa Park and Golden Hill lie directly across I-5.

### Vision

The Community Plan reinforces Northeast's attributes, encouraging the growth of a mixed area with a concentration of open space and an academic focus, and synergies between educational institutions, residential, and commercial uses. Proximity to the freeway will encourage office development, providing quick access for employees. Community members will benefit from an employment source, shared use of community college and high school fields, cultural activities, and classes available through the community college and high school.

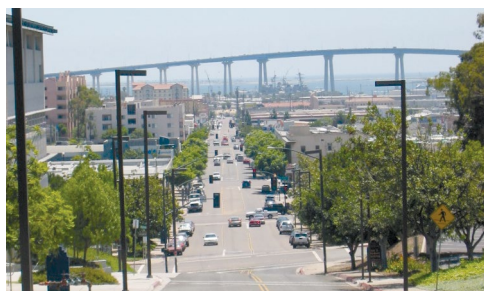
The Plan envisions a new 4.1-acre park—East Village Green—occupying one regular and one double-wide block close to residential areas. This will become the largest inland park in downtown, and a resource both for the East Village and downtown at large. A Neighborhood Center will provide needed eateries, shopping, and services for local residents, students, and employees.

Northeast lies in a small valley between the Park Boulevard ridge and I-5, and its energies will be focused around the Neighborhood Center on 13th Street. Active plazas and open spaces along faults will reinforce this center, connecting City College and the East Village Green. Another important corridor for Northeast will be Broadway, linking it to the waterfront in the west and Golden Hill in the east. The East Village Green is the southern anchor of this sub-district, and a focal point for all of East Village.

Increased intensities will allow medium to large buildings. A concentration of larger buildings will be located in the middle of the neighborhood, and will peak to the north of the East Village Green in one



The strong presence of education in Northeast including City College offers partnership opportunities for new high tech, education, and creative uses.



The San Diego Bay and the San Diego-Coronado Bridge can be seen from many places in Northeast, especially from locations north of Broadway.

of East Village's two high-intensity nodes. Smaller structures south and west will protect the park from shadows, and buildings in the Neighborhood Center will have smaller footprints because of the presence of faults. Large floorplates will be permitted on certain blocks to accommodate office, research, and medical facilities, while towers will be spaced to allow light penetration in the Neighborhood Center.

## Goals and Buildout: East Village

### Ballpark

- 6.5-G-1 Guide Ballpark's evolution into a multi-use district, including the Central Library and Bay to Park Paseo, with a regional entertainment and cultural focus.
- 6.5-G-2 Maintain the prominence of Petco Park while reinforcing the evolving high-intensity Market Street corridor.

### Southeast

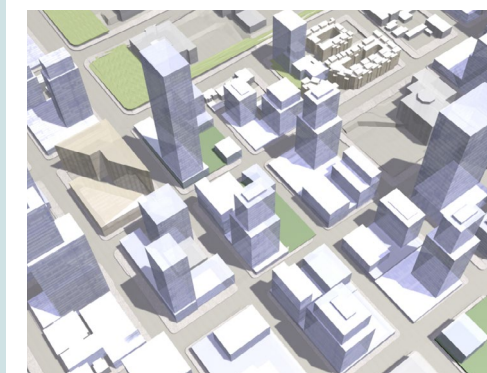
- 6.5-G-3 Foster redevelopment of Southeast with an urban mix of new residents and a variety of housing types, employees, artists, and conventioners, while preserving light industrial and commercial service functions that serve downtown.
- 6.5-G-4 Facilitate development of a Neighborhood Center that provides a focus to the residential portion of the sub-district, with parkway connections to East Village Green.
- 6.5-G-5 Promote fine-grained development through building articulation, bulk, and scale requirements.

### Northwest

- 6.5-G-6 Develop Northwest as the most intensive residential area in concert with its central location, transit access, and available redevelopment sites.
- 6.5-G-7 Establish a Neighborhood Center between 7th and 9th avenues as the activity focus for residents and with a cultural emphasis.
- 6.5-G-8 Reinforce Northwest's proximity to downtown destinations as an essential component of its character.

### Northeast

- 6.5-G-9 Foster creation of a diverse sub-district—with residential, office, and research components—and synergistic links to education.
- 6.5-G-10 Establish a Neighborhood Center along 13th street, with strategic plazas and open spaces located along fault lines, to provide a focus to the sub-district, as well as a center for adjacent portions of East Village.
- 6.5-G-11 Develop East Village Green as a recreation and event open space, serving Northeast and downtown at-large.
- 6.5-G-12 Develop cohesive, lush streetscapes to promote sub-district identity, character, and connections.



13th Street will change to become a lively center of the sub-district.

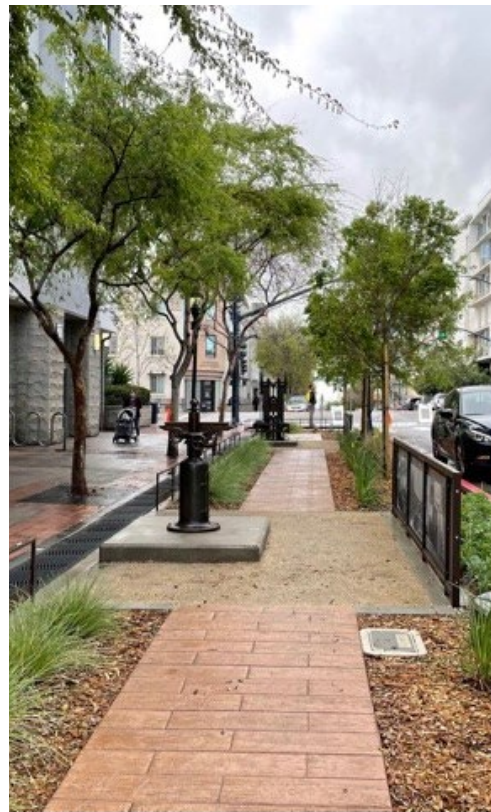


**Estimated Buildout<sup>1</sup>: East Village**

Population <sup>2</sup>	46,000
Employment	39,000

<sup>1</sup> Total reflects rounded numbers.

<sup>2</sup> Includes group quarters population; assumes 1.6 persons per household and a 95% occupancy rate.



Existing 14th Street Greenway in East Village



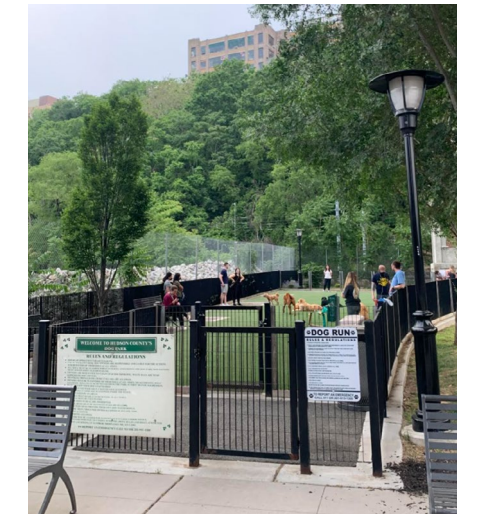
**6.6 CORTEZ**

Cortez rises north from the Civic/Core, and enjoys enviable proximity to Balboa Park. It is downtown’s oldest residential neighborhood, and home to historic landmarks such as the restored El Cortez Hotel and St. Joseph’s Church, and apartment buildings and hotels dating to the 1915 Exposition.

Cortez Hill—the eastern portion of the neighborhood—is a relatively tranquil area and the highest point in downtown. Restoration and re-use of El Cortez Hotel has, in part, catalyzed residential activity. The western portions of Cortez also contain landmark buildings and residential uses, as well as the California Western School of Law, offices, churches, and some SROs. The San Diego Bay can be seen to the west and as well as the south, giving the neighborhood some of the best inland views in downtown.

**Community Plan Vision**

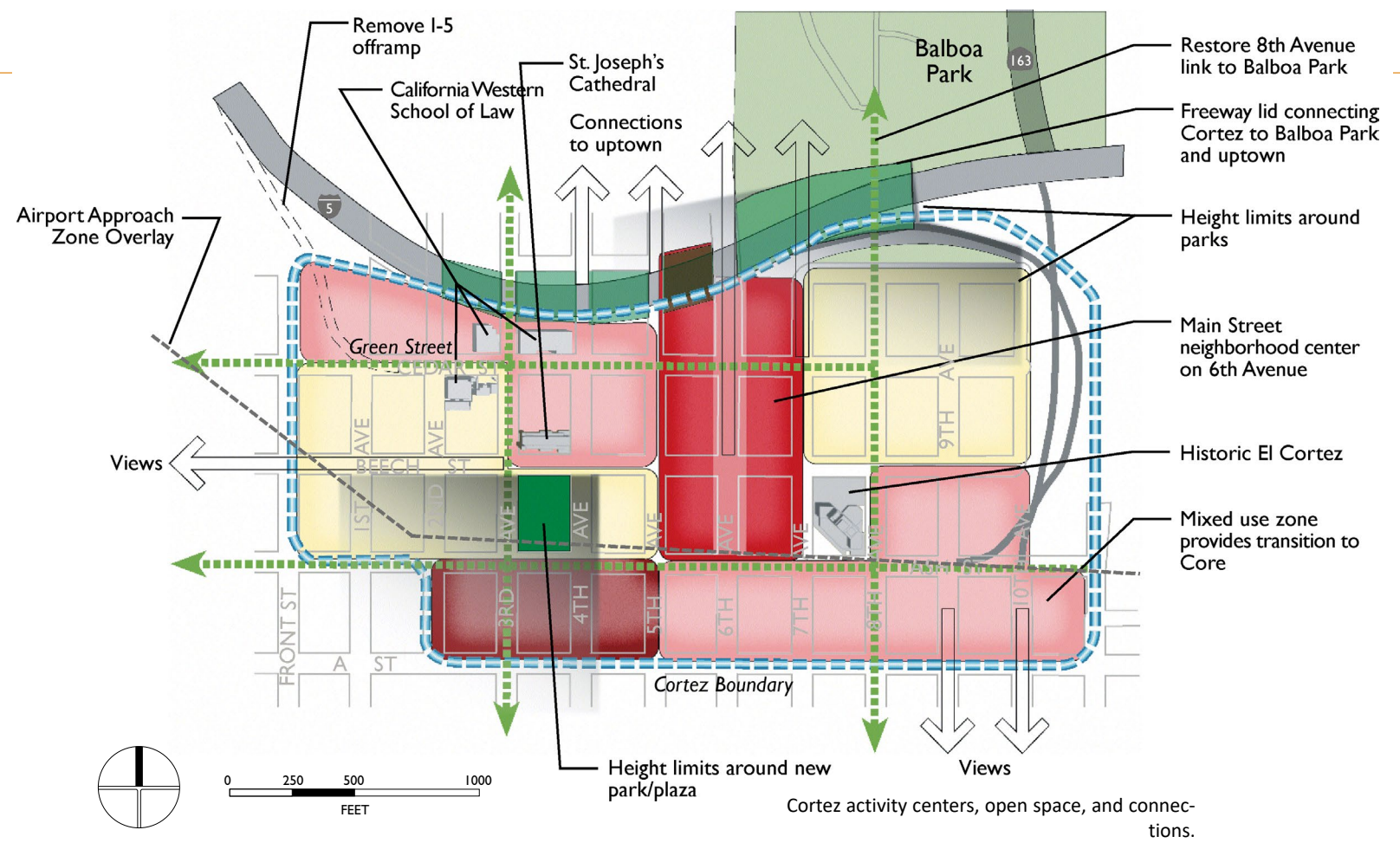
With proximity to both the high-intensity Core and Balboa Park, juxtaposition of historical landmarks and new development, a new park and vibrant Neighborhood Center, Cortez will emerge as one the most desirable urban neighborhoods anywhere.



Amenities such as small linear dog runs could be added along Downtown Streets as part of Active Sidewalk or Greenway Street improvements.



Lower Cortez



**Structure and Form**

Development planning acknowledges the different contexts of Cortez Hill and Lower Cortez and the lack of neighborhood commercial facilities and parks:

- **Cortez Hill** will likely undergo little change, with the exception of a new Neighborhood Center at the hill's western edge along 6th Avenue, building upon existing commercial uses. With the completion of a new I-5 "lid" and extension of 8th Avenue across the freeway, Cortez Hill will provide a new gateway into Balboa Park for downtown neighborhoods. The freeway lid is intended to supply additional open space and cultural amenities and restore physical linkages to Balboa Park.
- **Lower Cortez** (the portion west of 6th Avenue) has development opportunities on a majority of sites, and will be transformed under the plan. Also added will be a new park with backdrop of the historical St. Joseph's Church.

In general, mid-sized buildings with more slender profiles than those in Civic/Core will be permitted. Building heights and bulk will be curtailed to the south and west of the new open space to protect sunlight. Building heights will also be restricted by the approach path to San Diego International Airport, and building intensities will be restricted in the northern part of Cortez Hill consistent with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans (ALUCPs).



**Goals and Buildout: Cortez**

- 6.6-G-1 Emphasize development of Cortez as a primarily residential neighborhood with a center of mixed-use activity, and dual character emerging between Cortez Hill and Lower Cortez.
- 6.6-G-2 Develop connections between Cortez and Balboa Park.
- 6.6-G-3 Preserve and enhance views of the Bay to the west and south, and of Balboa Park and inland hills to the north and east.
- 6.6-G-4 Provide increased open space and neighborhood commercial amenities.

Estimated Buildout <sup>1</sup> : Cortez	
Population <sup>2</sup>	10,000
Employment	7,000
<sup>1</sup> Total reflects rounded numbers.	
<sup>2</sup> Includes group quarters population; assumes 1.6 persons per household and a 95% occupancy rate.	



6th Avenue (top and middle-top) will be redeveloped as a "main street" Neighborhood Center, while St. Joseph's Church (middle) will provide a beautiful backdrop to a new park (bottom), with grassy areas and promenades.



## 6.7 LITTLE ITALY

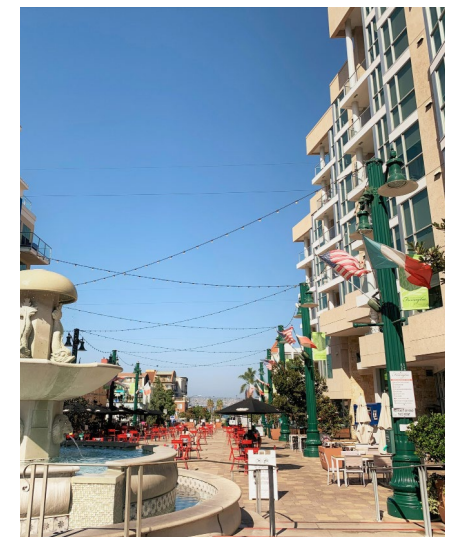
Little Italy has rich history reflected in its traditional commercial district centered on India Street and a historic relationship to the northern waterfront. A close-knit community of Italian immigrants gave Little Italy its ethnic heritage, but the neighborhood's history as home to the tuna fishermen and their families as well as decades of working class residents reinforces Little Italy's cohesiveness. Redevelopment has yielded mixed housing types from SROs to luxury units, and many commercial services, artists and designers have made use of older buildings in the northern portions. Residential components will continue to intensify, but the varied land use character in the north and commercial corridor on India will help to maintain the special character and culture.

Several environmental, locational, and cultural influences converge in Little Italy. Airport overflight restrictions, as well as solar access requirements, provide the neighborhood with light, and views from local streets to the water reinforce the Mediterranean atmosphere. India Street is a vibrant and successful main street. The historic Our Lady of the Rosary Church endures as a community hub. Another historic icon is the County Administration Center (CAC) on the waterfront, now surrounded by park space redeveloped from decades-old surface parking. Little Italy has a public elementary school, reflecting its stature as an evolved neighborhood.

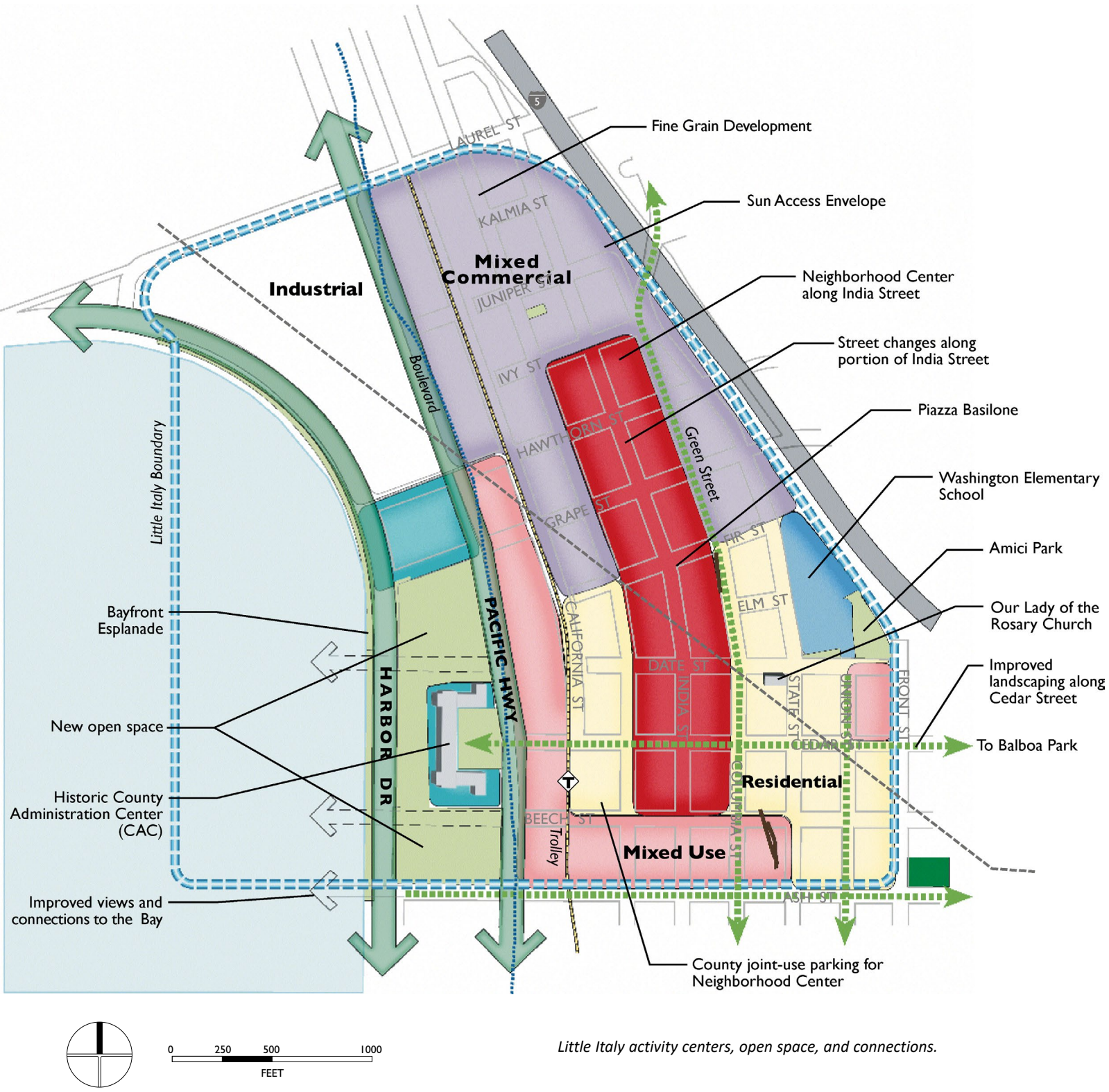


### Community Plan Vision

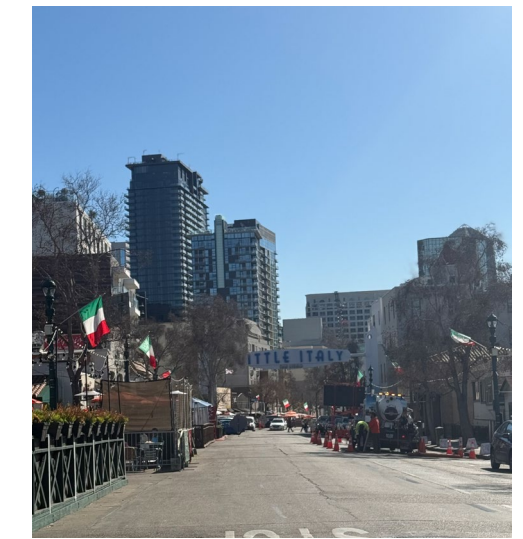
Redevelopment efforts in Little Italy will underscore the neighborhood's historic and contemporary qualities, with strategic intensification to accomplish population goals and increase neighborhood vitality. The India Street business district will be reinforced as the heart of the neighborhood, for shopping, dining, and gathering. Residential development will be intensified in the southern portion of the neighborhood, near the Civic/Core employment district, the activity apex of downtown. The prevalence of lower-scale buildings and wide mix of uses (including commercial/service uses) will continue in the north. A combination of hotel and office with residential is anticipated closer to the water, with continuation of existing industrial and civic uses at the waterfront.



Views to the San Diego Bay reflect the neighborhoods' connection to the water.



Planned (in color) and existing (in grey) building form in Civic/Core.  
This is a view of how downtown may develop with allowed intensities, solely for illustrative purposes.



India Street is the neighborhood's focal spine, and is emphasized as a center in the Community Plan.

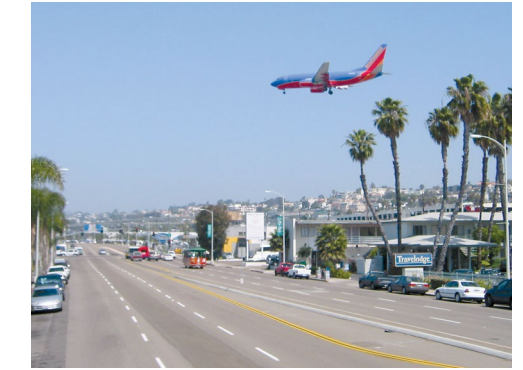
Streets play a pivotal role in Little Italy's future, as public space, pedestrian paths, connectors to the waterfront and other downtown neighborhoods, view corridors, and vehicle channels. A pivotal component of the street plan is enhanced pedestrian linkage of Balboa Park and the CAC via Cedar Street. The planned North Embarcadero Visionary Plan improvements will continue to draw residents and visitors to the waterfront as well.

**Structure and Form**

Little Italy is organized around the India Street business district, the district's Neighborhood Center. Open spaces are located rather peripherally, with Piazza della Famiglia in the heart of the neighborhood, Amici Park to the east of India Street, and the North Embarcadero and Waterfront Park to the west.

The long-term industrial tenant in the northwestern corner (Solar Turbines), also under the jurisdiction of the Port, is largely isolated from neighborhood activity. San Diego International Airport is located immediately northwest of Little Italy, and exerts influence on the neighborhood's environment.

Existing intensities in Little Italy are fairly low, although recent residential development projects have FARs reaching 8.0. The widespread low intensities are attributable to historic development patterns combined with development restrictions imposed by airport operations. The Community Plan calls for increased intensities, primarily focused in the southern portions of the neighborhood, while maintaining



Overflights and sun access requirements have resulted in relatively low heights (above).



restricted intensities in the northern portion under the approach path to San Diego International Airport consistent with the ALUCPs.

Maintaining Little Italy's sunny, open atmosphere as well as the traditional texture will be accomplished through building height restrictions, volumetric controls, and encouragement of multiple buildings per block in the majority of the neighborhood. North of Hawthorn, airport operations may result in further development restrictions, thereby allowing continuation of the eclectic mix of buildings, businesses, and people that is part of Little Italy's essence.

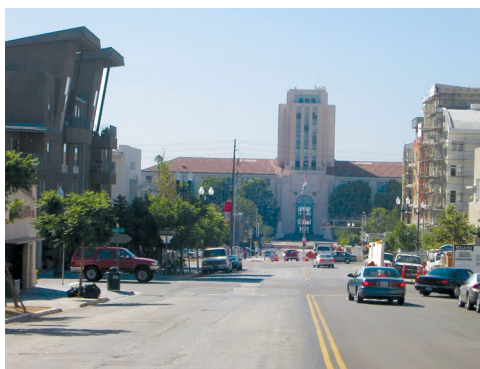
### Goals and Buildout: Little Italy

- 6.7-G-1 Facilitate Little Italy's continued evolution as a cohesive, mixed use waterfront neighborhood.
- 6.7-G-2 Reinforce the India Street business district as the heart of the neighborhood. Expand neighborhood-serving retail and services as well access to open spaces to serve the growing population.
- 6.7-G-3 Use airport-related development constraints as opportunities for unique land use and development patterns.

Estimated Buildout <sup>1</sup> : Little Italy	
Population <sup>2</sup>	12,000
Employment	12,000
<sup>1</sup> Total reflects rounded numbers.	
<sup>2</sup> Includes group quarters population; assumes 1.6 persons per household and a 95% occupancy rate.	



Building facade modulation requirements have helped maintain a fine grain in the neighborhood.



Cedar will be improved as a Greenway extending from CAC to Balboa Park.



Phase III Expansion of the San Diego Convention Center will further support San Diego's economically prosperous visitor and tourism industry.

### 6.8 CONVENTION CENTER

The Convention Center district lies in southeast downtown, at the edge of the San Diego Bay. The San Diego Convention Center facilities are visually dominant, but the district also contains storage areas and rail maintenance facilities. The district is characterized by large sites and many buildings with very large footprints which form physical, visual, and psychological barriers to the Bay. It is designed for automobile, rail, and truck traffic, not for pedestrians. Virtually all of the existing uses are here for the long-term, with the only redevelopment opportunity in the industrial area.

The San Diego Convention Center is considering a Phase III expansion, involving construction of significant new exhibition and meeting space. Various sites have been explored. Policies established in *Chapter 3: Land Use and Housing* establish the parameters for large facilities (greater in size than a single block), to ensure consistent neighborhood fabric and grain, protection of designated views, maintenance and enhancement of the street grid, and potential limits on above-ground commercial uses to avoid diminishing the viability of the Neighborhood Centers.

Except for portions of the railyards and a very small area at the southeastern edge, development in this district is regulated by the Port of San Diego; coordination between various agencies will be essential to ensure that views and access to the water are maintained.

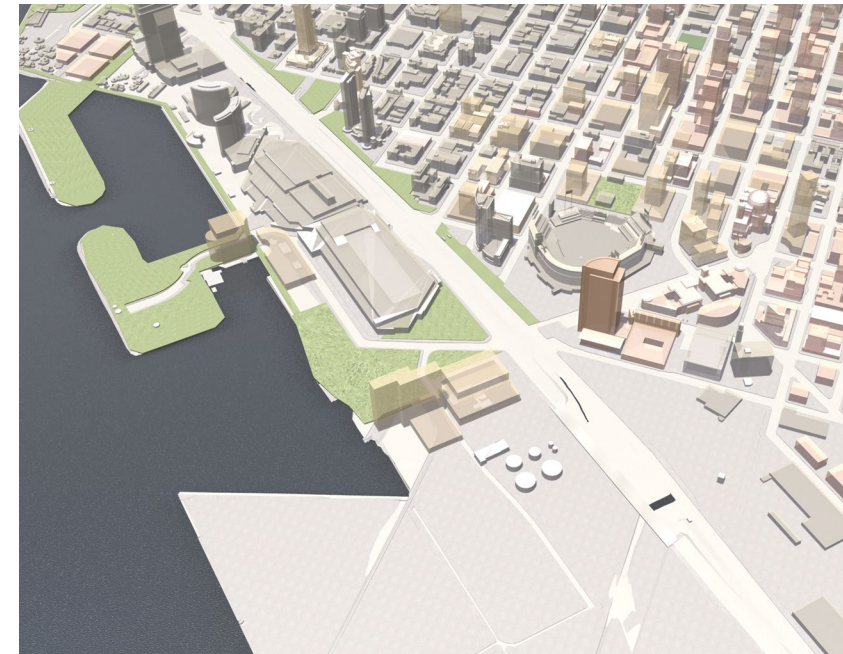
#### Community Plan Vision

While the overall character of the district will not change under the Community Plan, better linkages across Harbor Drive will be achieved with the completion of the Bay to Park Paseo, which will have a pedestrian extension by bridge in Convention Center, and planned waterfront parks and hotels; these will be built just east of the existing convention center, and will primarily serve conventioners. Improved passage to the water and bayside promenade will serve as an important





Convention Center activity centers, open space, and connections.



Planned (in color) and existing (in grey) building form in Civic/Core.

This is a view of how downtown may develop with allowed intensities, solely for illustrative purposes.

connection to those in neighboring areas as well. Other areas are expected to remain industrial in character.

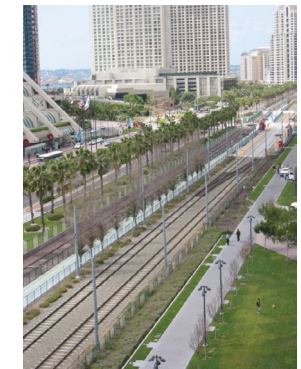
### Structure and Form

This area is largely defined by its major uses (Convention Center and industrial), and by the presence of Harbor Drive. A non-industrial activity node is likely to develop where hotels, green space, the convention center, and Bay to Park Paseo meet at the waterfront. A few sites at the very east of the district may develop as mixed/flexible use as well. These are likely to relate more to East Village and Barrio Logan, rather than constituting another activity node for Convention Center neighborhood.

The district's north edges are blurry, merging into tall convention-oriented hotels. Urban design considerations, especially the preservation of views, will be paramount in any new development.

Views to the Bay are limited. A view corridor extends along Park Boulevard to enable water views along the street near Petco Park. A park is planned at the terminus of this view corridor. Care should be taken that not only buildings, but also trees and vegetation do not obscure the views.

While the railyards site has been identified by the Convention Center as a potential location for expansion, issues related to size, scale, bulk, and neighborhood compatibility have not been examined. Because convention centers are inherently large and massive, any structure here is likely to be even more prominent. Furthermore, a structure paralleling Harbor Drive is likely to present the larger, longer face to the neighborhood (rather than



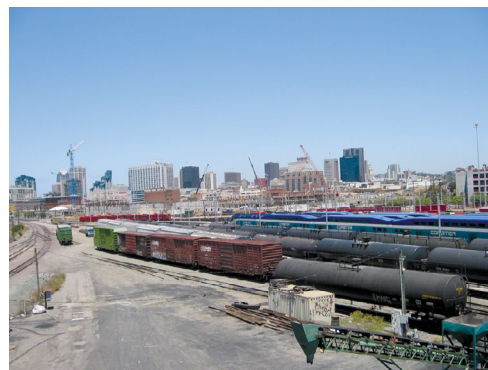
The Convention Center District is defined by the strong presence of Harbor Drive (top) and its major use – the Convention Center (above).



the narrower end) and likely foreclose any future integration of the East Village neighborhood with the water. Relocation of the railyards outside of downtown was also examined as part of the Community Plan update. While portions of this concept may be technically feasible, it is extraordinarily challenging because of regulatory and financial factors.



Connection to the water is currently difficult, whether on foot or by auto (top). It is essential that the completed Park-to-Bay link provide a pedestrian extension and waterfront access, such as shown here at the K Street Circle (above).



If the air space above or on the railyards is pursued for locating large-scale facilities, urban design issues will need to be examined.

### Goals: Convention Center

- 6.8-G-1 Work with the Port to improve physical and visual access to the water across Harbor Drive and the Convention Center.
- 6.8-G-2 Maintain a working waterfront, including marinas, and terminals and shipping facilities in the southern portions of the area.
- 6.8-G-3 Maintain and improve linkages to adjacent neighborhoods to the greatest extent possible.

#### Estimated Buildout<sup>1</sup>: Convention Center

Population <sup>2</sup>	500
Employment	3,000
<sup>1</sup> Total reflects rounded numbers.	
<sup>2</sup> Includes group quarters population; assumes 1.6 persons per household and a 95% occupancy rate.	



Each downtown district, from waterfront icons to historic blocks, contributes to a rich urban mosaic defined by identity, activity, and place.



# 7

## MOBILITY

Downtown has extraordinary access to major transportation systems including air, water, light and heavy rail, and bus, and well developed street and freeway networks. These connect the area locally, regionally, and even nationally and internationally, while the street grid system, with small blocks, facilitates easy pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle movement.

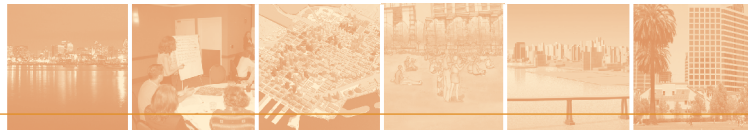
As downtown's population and employment increase, many more trips will begin and end within downtown, or even within a single neighborhood. Walking to work or to a store, bicycling to a restaurant on the waterfront, taking transit from Little Italy to East Village, or carpooling to work will become an integral part of downtown's lifestyle. Downtown's land use pattern will be intense and diverse, allowing many destinations to be reached within a short walk or bike ride. All uses downtown will be closely integrated with the transportation system.

The Downtown San Diego Mobility Plan was developed as a catalyst for short- and long-term implementation of the Downtown Community Plan. The Mobility Plan establishes goals and policies, programs and projects that will improve



overall mobility throughout the downtown area, including the development of a cohesive network of complete streets. Promoting alternative transportation is an important downtown goal, recognized in the Guiding Principles and the Downtown San Diego Mobility Plan. Given that such a large percentage of downtown's land area is dedicated to the public-right-of-way, there is an opportunity to reduce the number of vehicular travel and parking lanes and turn vehicle-accommodating spaces into destinations that activate streets for pedestrians and bicyclists. Greenways, Active Sidewalks, and Promenades should be located wherever feasible all across downtown to transform the public-right-of-way into a more healthy, sustainable, and vibrant component of the urban fabric.

Development of an efficient transportation system and well designed streets will require partnerships between various public agencies—including the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), the City and the Port, and the Metropolitan Transit Service (MTS)—and other organizations and businesses.



Downtown has extraordinary access to all modes of transportation, including air, water, rail, and vehicular access (top and middle). Downtown's street-grid system is fine-grained, with small blocks (above).

## 7.1 STREET SYSTEM

Streets serve as conduits for walking, bicycling, buses, trolleys, and cars. They form the backbone of downtown's circulation system that connects it internally and to the surrounding neighborhoods. Because of the small block sizes, streets form nearly 40 percent of downtown's area. Since a substantial portion of people's outdoor time is spent on streets and they are the most pervasive component of the public realm, they are integral to downtown's image and experience.

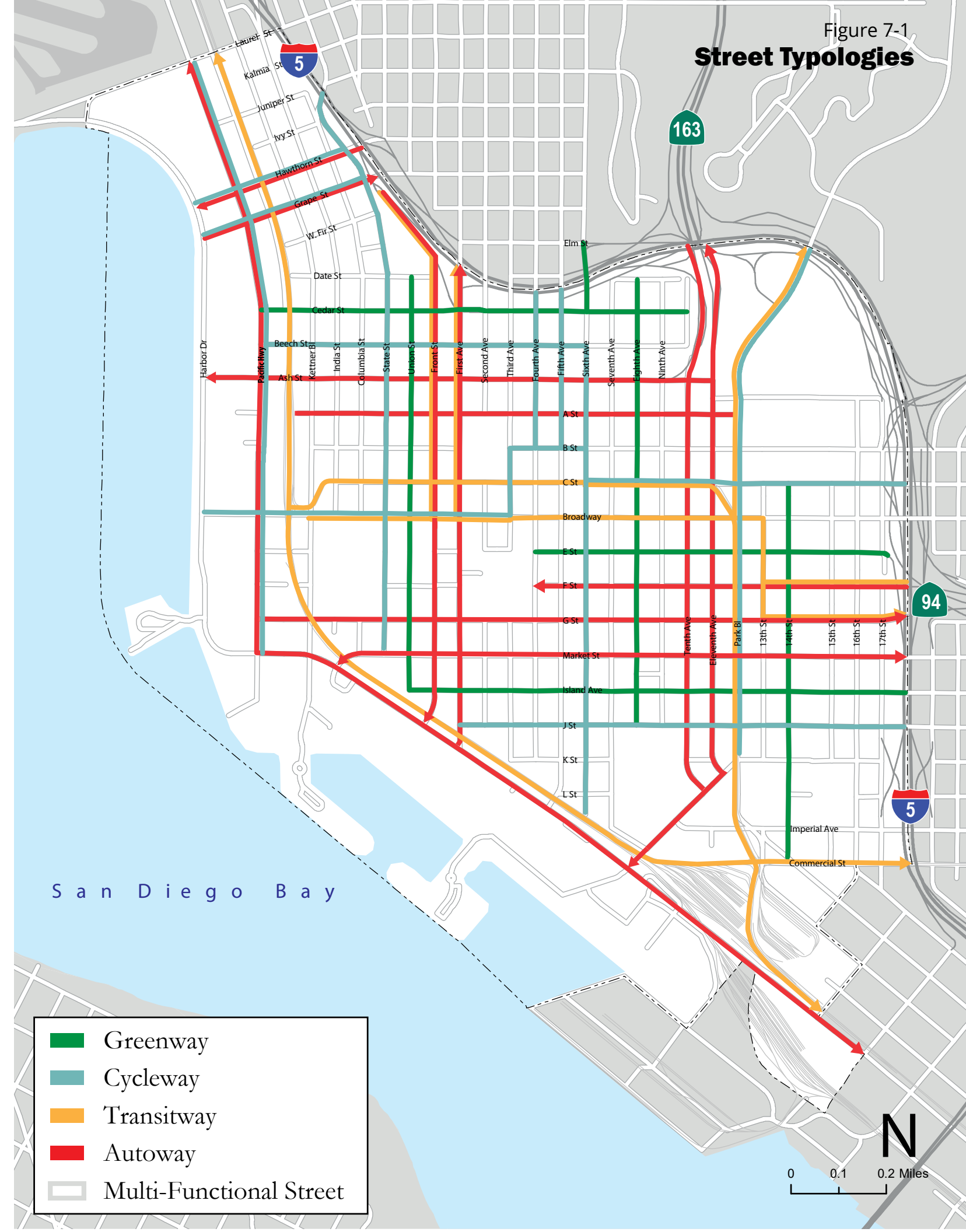
Downtown's street network consists of a grid of one- and two-way streets. Blocks are small (200 x 300 feet), allowing frequent intersections and easy connections. Most street rights of way are 80-foot wide, which is enough to accommodate three lanes of traffic, two parking lanes, and two 14-foot sidewalks. Exceptions to this width include Market Street, Harbor Drive, Pacific Highway, and Broadway, which are all wider. Widths of north-south streets between California and Front are slightly narrower at 75 feet. Despite being circumscribed by freeways, the street grid extends into the surrounding neighborhoods, except in the Balboa Park/ Cortez Hill area.

While this system is functional, legible, and practical, improvements are essential to create a comfortable and safe environment for pedestrians, bicycles, and transit. Figure 7-1 shows a system of Greenways, Cycleways, Transitways, Autoways, and Multi-Functional Streets as planned in the Downtown San Diego Mobility Plan. The multi-modal system is intended to provide well-connected "layered" networks for each individual mode across the community, in a manner that minimizes conflicts and provides for comfortable and convenient travel choices community-wide. Street typologies are summarized in Box 7-1, because street widths, number of lanes, desired sidewalk widths, etc. may vary from street to street, cross-sections for specific streets will need to be individually designed.

Figure 7-2 shows proposed roadway modifications including road diets, potential segments to be closed to vehicular travel, new street segments, and roadways to be converted from one-way to two-way. Several other roadways may have other kinds of changes (such as the addition of bicycle facilities, reconfiguration as "Greenways", narrower travel lanes, etc.) that are not shown on this map. Future modifications to the street system are anticipated to create an integrated transportation network of Greenways, sidewalks, bikeways, transit services, roadways and freeways that provides for the safety of all travelers within downtown and to surrounding communities. The transportation network will provide for convenient access to valuable community resources such as employment centers, parks and the waterfront, cultural and entertainment attractions, and civic uses. More significant changes include:

- Where feasible, reconfiguring streets in residential neighborhoods and in Neighborhood Centers to accommodate diagonal parking, widen or provide sidewalks, and improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- Improvements to Broadway consistent with its role as downtown's principal Boulevard – the "main street" terminating on a pier, and improvements to C Street.
- Reinforcement of the role of Park Boulevard as a pedestrian corridor and green link, providing the long-desired "Park-to-Bay" connection.

Figure 7-1  
Street Typologies





A comprehensive Greenway Streets network consisting of pedestrian-oriented active recreational amenities, will connect Downtown residents to parks, urban plazas, museums and other destinations, as well as provide connections to residents of adjacent communities. (above)

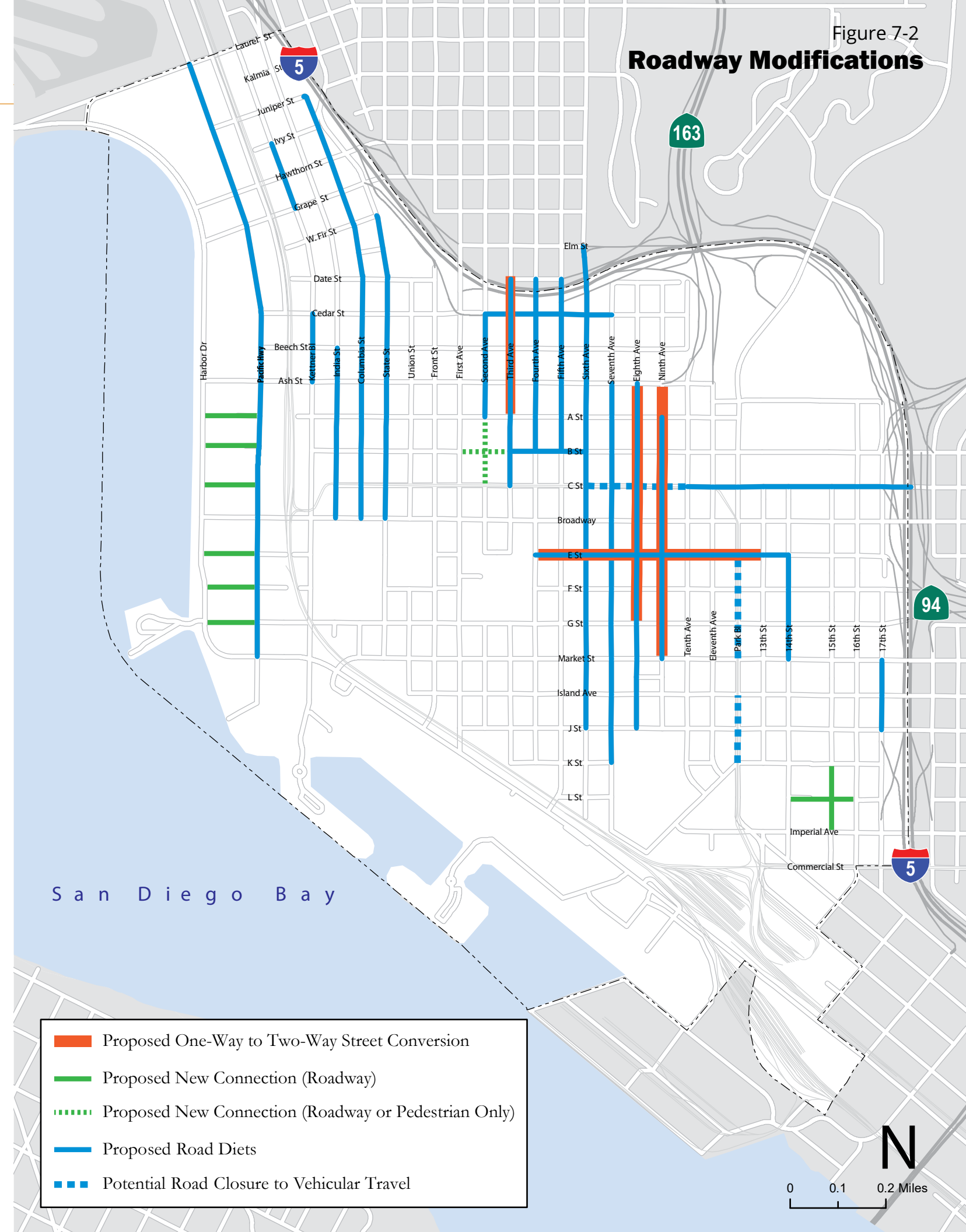


A range of street typologies—including Autoways, Greenways, and Cycleways—as conceptualized.

### Box 7-1: Street Typologies

- Greenways.** Greenways prioritize pedestrian travel, but allow for automobile, transit and bicycle travel. They are intended to showcase landscaping features and roadway designs that slow vehicular traffic and prioritize walking. Greenways link downtown parks, the waterfront, and various outdoor destinations. A key feature of Greenways is the inclusion of enhanced landscaping, including double rows of trees, and wide sidewalks with ample public amenities. Greenways provide a necessary respite from urban life and allow the downtown to ‘breathe’.
- Cycleways.** Cycleways prioritize travel by bike and include facility types such as cycle tracks, buffered bicycle lanes, and bicycle boulevards. They are intended to showcase high quality, comfortable cycling environments with low vehicular travel speeds, volumes, and conflicts. Cars, transit and pedestrians will also be accommodated. The Cycleway typology does not identify every existing or planned bicycle facility, but rather identifies a network of “high-quality” facilities that are physically separated from vehicular traffic or provide an increased dedicated right-of-way, such as buffered bicycle lanes and cycle tracks.
- Transitways.** Transitways identify segments where public transit takes priority over other modes either through transit dedicated corridors, such as the Green Line corridor; a wider dedicated right-of-way, such as C Street west of Park Boulevard or Park Boulevard south of Broadway; transit signal priority and bus lanes, which should be implemented in certain corridors such as Broadway between Harbor Drive and Park Boulevard; or rapid bus corridors. Vehicular traffic, bicycles and pedestrians may also be accommodated on these roadways. Emergency vehicles will be able to use bus lanes to improve response times. Additionally, the pedestrian environment requires increased attention along Transitways, especially near transit stops, to improve user safety and encourage ridership, and expand mobility through universal access. Streetaries are not permitted on transitways.
- Autoways.** Autoways include roadways that primarily facilitate vehicular movement. Autoways are generally identified in pairs, or couplets, due to the one-way movements along many downtown streets. These roadways provide connections to the regional freeway network or adjacent communities. Traffic signals are synchronized to allow for optimal vehicular movement. Streetaries are not permitted on autoways.
- Multi-Function Streets.** Streets that serve a variety of purposes and do not emphasize any single mode. These streets provide access within neighborhoods and generally experience relatively lower vehicular volumes. Like all downtown streets, the pedestrian environment and pedestrian safety is of great significance.

Figure 7-2  
**Roadway Modifications**





- Examination of the feasibility (as part of a new Civic Center plan) of extending B Street and Second Avenue through the existing Civic Center to increase connectivity.
- Evaluate the feasibility of removing the Cedar Street off-ramp, and switch Cedar from one- to two-way traffic to improve pedestrian safety and re-establish the historic connection between Balboa Park, Cortez, Little Italy, and the waterfront.
- Re-establish the street grid, extend streets in waterfront areas and across bus yards when redevelopment occurs, and extend 8th Avenue across I-5 in conjunction with freeway lid construction.

### Goals: Street System

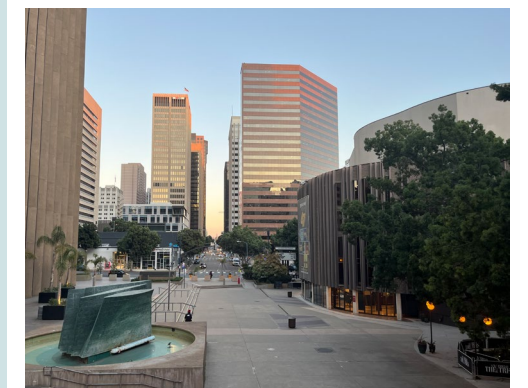
- 7.1-G-1 A street typology based on functional and urban design considerations, emphasizing connections and linkages, pedestrian and cyclist comfort, transit movement, and compatibility with adjacent land uses.
- 7.1-G-2 An enhanced street grid that promotes flexibility of movement, preserves and/or opens view corridors, and retains the historic scale of the streets.

### Policies: Street System

- 7.1-P-1 Implement the street typology shown in Figure 7-1 when carrying out streetscape improvements.
- 7.1-P-2 Prohibit and discourage any interruption of the street grid.
- 7.1-P-3 Forge new connections and view corridors as larger sites are redeveloped, opening rights-of-way at the waterfront, through the Civic Center and along Cedar Street, among others. Require full vehicle and pedestrian access in new connections except where precluded by existing plans and projects.
- 7.1-P-4 Work with appropriate transportation agencies on freeway improvements in and near the downtown area.
- 7.1-P-5 Implement the proposed improvements within the Downtown San Diego Mobility Plan, with specific reductions in vehicular travel lanes on certain streets, which can then facilitate enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- 7.1-P-6 Evaluate and provide specific vehicular travel lane configurations for all streets (number of travel lanes, one-way vs. two-way circulation).
- 7.1-P-7 Provide for sustainable street designs including storm water infiltration and reduction in storm water runoff as well as flooding.
- 7.1-P-8 Encourage street designs that allow for temporary street closures for public and community events.



The removal of the Cedar Street off-ramp and conversion to a one-way surface street is a top priority for pedestrian and bicycle mobility.



Plan policies call for extension of the grid to the waterfront as redevelopment occurs (top), and extension of B Street right-of-way through a redeveloped Civic Center (above).



As pictured above, Downtown's growing population and employment will lead to many more pedestrians. Promoting pedestrian comfort and safety is a key goal of the Community Plan. California Street through the Little Italy neighborhood is envisioned to be transformed into an active pedestrian and bicycle promenade, closed to vehicular traffic, except for emergency vehicles and railroad maintenance access.



Greenway Streets may include passive elements such as artwork and historical interpretive elements but should also include active recreational elements, such as a Greenway Fitness Trail as pictured below. Greenways emphasize that physical activity is a way of life for Downtown residents and visitors, promoting walking and bicycling while providing interesting experiences along the way.

## 7.2 PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MOVEMENT

One of the main attractions of downtown will be the ability to move freely and accomplish everyday tasks without a car.

Downtown's growing population will lead to many more pedestrians. Pedestrians will include more children, strollers, wheelchairs, and seniors, so sidewalks and crosswalks will need to be smooth and generous. Potential future walkers will be encouraged through the provision of sidewalk amenities and a pleasant walking environment where vehicle traffic is safely buffered, signalized, and calmed.

To further improve the pedestrian environment, a system of Greenways are proposed along selected corridors, linking to existing and planned parks and improving connections to adjacent communities, as well as the waterfront. Greenways are sidewalks that can serve as linear parks, providing needed open space and placemaking opportunities. Greenways will be designed individually within the available public right-of-way, but all will help create streets that are more pedestrian oriented with prominent landscaping and expanded sidewalk widths. A uniform set of street furnishing (benches, trash cans, street lighting, tree grates, and signage) should be present along these pedestrian corridors to differentiate them from other streets.

Greenways, Active Sidewalks, and Promenades will create places of interest that encourage people to walk and are encouraged all throughout downtown. Wherever feasible the number of vehicular travel lanes and parking lanes should be reduced to accommodate these vital pedestrian spaces. These spaces should include both active and passive recreational amenities within the public right-of-way to promote a family-friendly downtown. In addition to the proposed Greenways identified on Figure 7-3, the C-Street Promenade, Children's Museum Play Street Promenade, Gaslamp Promenade, and the John Nolen Greenway Loop (connecting downtown to Balboa Park and the Bay via 6th Ave and Park Blvd) will all contribute to creating "America's Outdoor Downtown".

Recognizing the relatively high volume of vehicles that travel within downtown and to/from adjacent communities, the proposed bicycle network relies heavily on protected bicycle facilities such as cycle tracks and multi-use paths which provide physical separation between vehicular traffic and cyclists. The protected bicycle facilities will provide an increased level of safety and comfort for cyclists, which likely increase overall cycling levels, decrease the amount of cyclists riding on the sidewalk, and reduce the reliance on vehicles. The goal of improving streets for pedestrians and cyclists coincides with downtown structure and street hierarchy clarification, promotion of a mix of uses in every neighborhood, responding to climate, improving street design, and encouraging quality building design.

Of particular importance in enhancing pedestrian and bicycle safety is reducing and controlling traffic speeds in downtown's system of freeway couplets, the various pairs of streets that direct traffic to and from freeway ramps. This will involve measures such as signal synchronization modifications and on-street parking that serves as a buffer to traffic, with allowances for parking restrictions during peak travel hours to create additional lanes during very limited portions of the day.

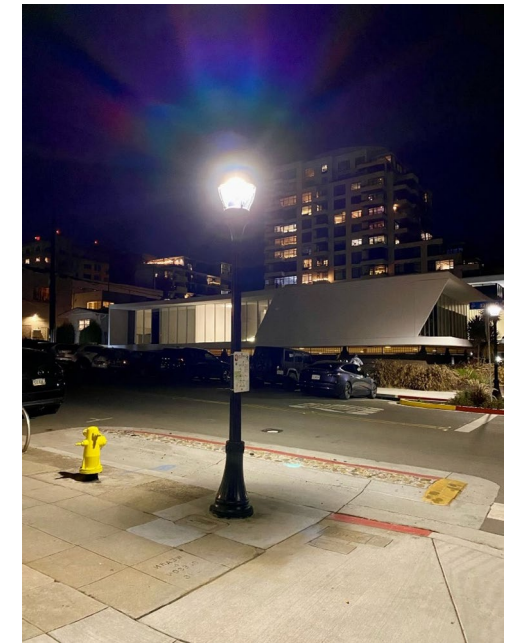
Figure 7-3 shows proposed Greenways along with existing and planned park space. Roadways where cycle tracks are proposed, or Cycleways, are shown in Figure 7-1, with the detailed proposed bicycle network displayed in Figure 7-4.

### Goals: Pedestrian and Bicycle Movement

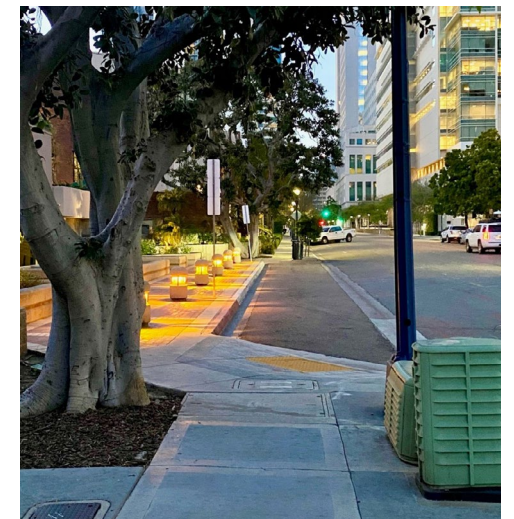
- 7.2-G-1 A cohesive and attractive walking and bicycle system within downtown that provides linkages within the area and to surrounding neighborhoods and public transit services.
- 7.2-G-2 Mixed-use neighborhoods, with open spaces, services, and retail businesses within convenient walking distance of residents, to maximize opportunities for walking.
- 7.2-G-3 Safe, walkable neighborhoods with improved street crossings, sidewalks and pedestrian amenities.
- 7.2-G-4 A network of Greenways that provides a natural respite for downtown residents, employees and visitors, and allows for calm travel along greened corridors.
- 7.2-G-5 Eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries in Downtown San Diego consistent with the Vision Zero resolution adopted by City Council in October 2015.
- 7.2-G-6 A cohesive and well connected bicycle system within downtown that provides linkages within the area and to surrounding neighborhoods, including the waterfront and Port District tidelands.
- 7.2-G-7 A community where bicycling is a viable and appealing travel choice for people of all ages and skill levels.
- 7.2-G-8 Increased bicycle commute mode share for downtown residents.

### Policies: Pedestrian and Bicycle Movement

- 7.2-P-1 Throughout the entire Downtown San Diego community:
  - Undertake strategic streetscape improvements (such as sidewalk widening, bulbouts, enhanced lighting and signage);
  - Lengthen traffic signal walk times for pedestrians, and explore feasibility of "all walk" signalization at intersections with heavy pedestrian demands, where needed; and
  - Accept lower levels of automobile traffic level of service at intersection locations across downtown along Greenways and Cycleways.
  - Prioritize safety improvements in high collision areas.
- 7.2-P-2 Designate specific enhanced pedestrian improvements on certain "pedestrian prioritized" streets, including but not limited to, widened sidewalks, corner bulb-outs that reduce pedestrian crossing distances, and linear park promenades.
- 7.2-P-3 Install missing sidewalks and improve all curb ramps to be ADA compliant.
- 7.2-P-4 Provide marked crosswalks and pedestrian countdown signals at all signalized intersections. . (Policies continue on page 7-12)

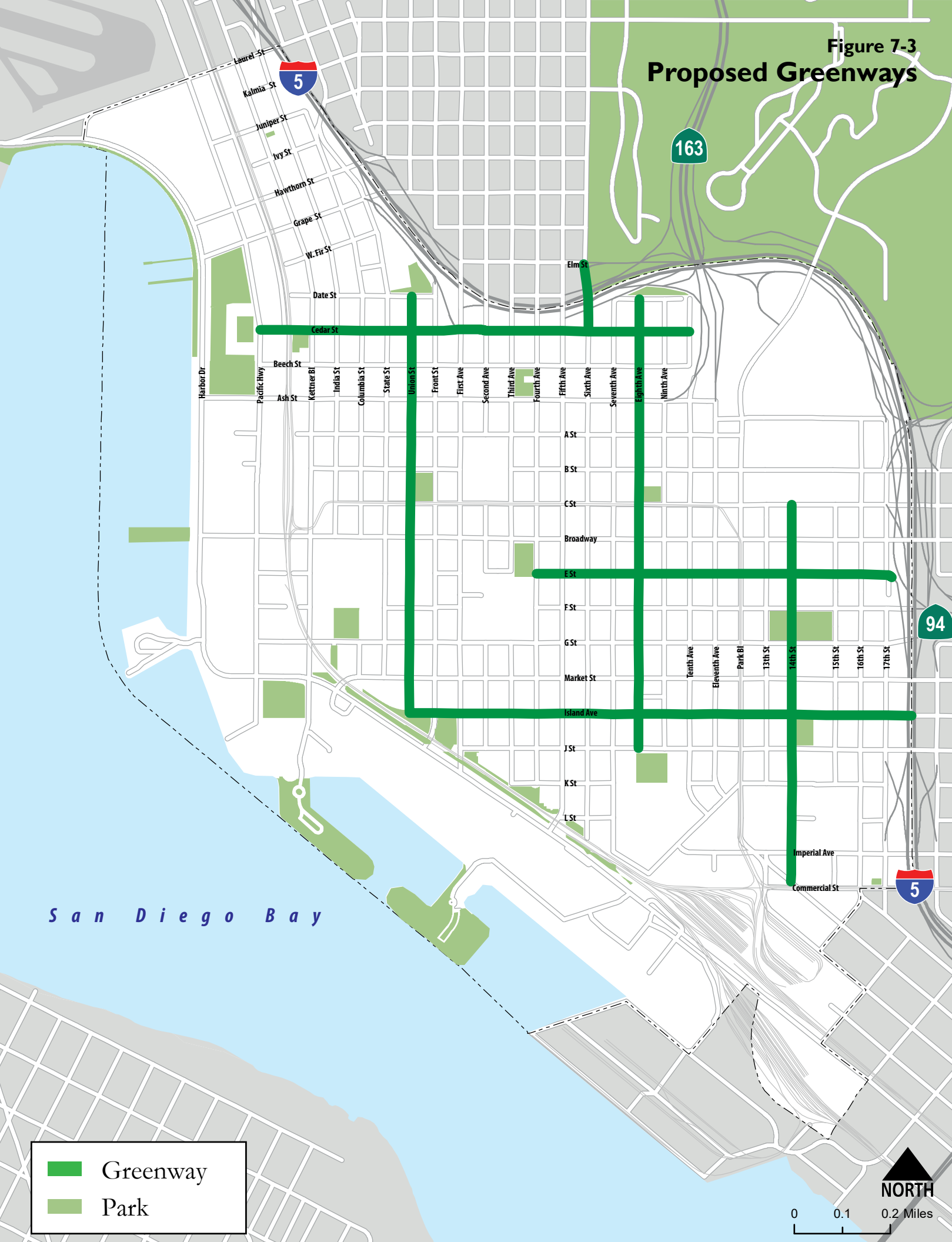


High-visibility pedestrian street lights should be installed at all corners of all intersections.

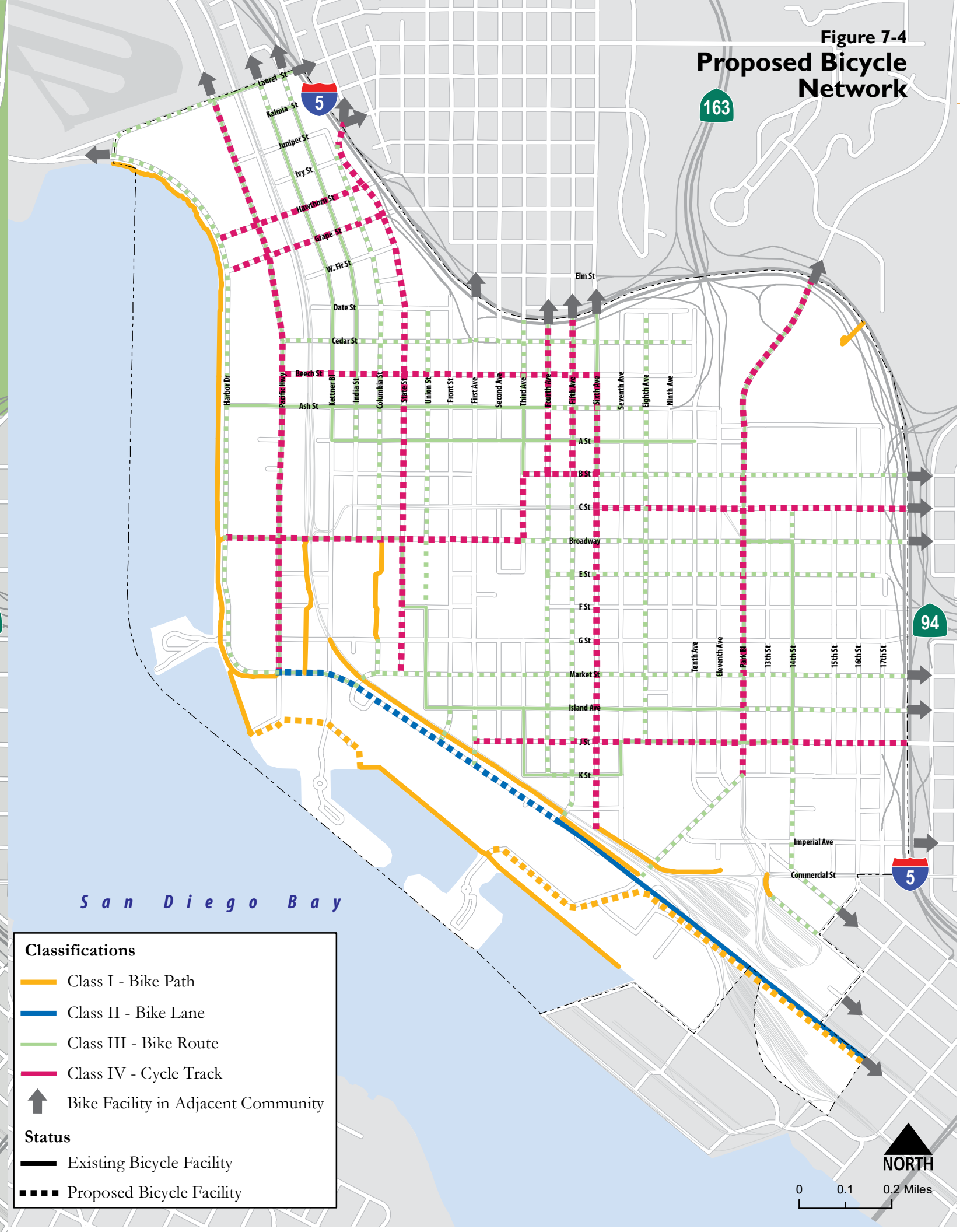


Sidewalks should not be interrupted by drop-off or loading zones that cause a meandering path of travel for pedestrians. (above).

**Figure 7-3  
Proposed Greenways**



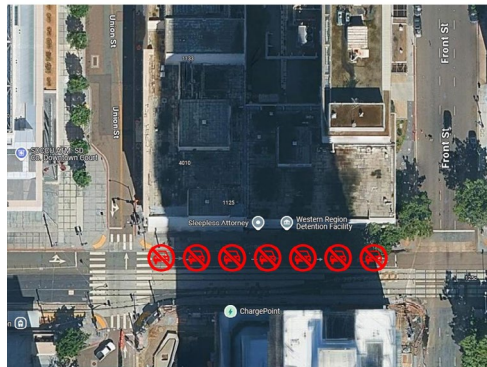
**Figure 7-4  
Proposed Bicycle Network**



Classifications	
	Class I - Bike Path
	Class II - Bike Lane
	Class III - Bike Route
	Class IV - Cycle Track
	Bike Facility in Adjacent Community
Status	
	Existing Bicycle Facility
	Proposed Bicycle Facility



- 7.2-P-5 Take necessary funding and regulatory steps to build Greenways identified in the Downtown San Diego Mobility Plan and Figure 7-3.
- 7.2-P-6 Collaborate with Caltrans to enhance safety and aesthetics at freeway ramps.
- 7.2-P-7 Create a well-connected network of Cycleways, as shown in Figure 7-1, and encourage linkages to regional bicycle corridors, including the Bayshore Bikeway, Central Coast Corridor, Centre City-La Mesa Corridor, Clairemont-Centre City Corridor, Coastal Rail Trail, North Park-Centre City Corridor, and the Park Boulevard Connector, as designated in the San Diego Regional Bike Plan.
- 7.2-P-8 Require bike racks and/or lockers in all residential projects, multi-tenant retail and office projects, and government and institutional uses.
- 7.2-P-9 Provide a range of alternative bicycle improvements throughout downtown.
- 7.2-P-10 Connect downtown's Cycleways with surrounding communities, the waterfront and Port District tidelands, and transit facilities to encourage everyday commute and recreational bicycle trips within the region.
- 7.2-P-11 Implement the Cycleway improvements according to the Downtown San Diego Mobility Plan as shown in Figure 7-4.
- 7.2-P-12 Support future exploration of cycle track implementation along the length of Market Street and Broadway within the downtown community to provide a direct east-west bicycle connection.
- 7.2-P-13 Encourage on-going monitoring of real-time ridership levels along the Cycleway network.



Over time, the remaining sections of C Street open to vehicular traffic will be closed to prioritize pedestrian, bicycle, and transit.

### 7.3 TRANSIT SYSTEM

Downtown is blessed with a rich array of transit, consisting of heavy rail lines serving commuters (Coaster), regional travelers (Amtrak), and freight from working areas of the Port; two light rail trolley lines serving downtown residents, workers, and visitors; and an extensive network of buses connecting the area to the rest of San Diego. The current downtown transit mode split for workers at peak hour is estimated to be 13 percent.

The centerpiece of the downtown transit system is the historic 1915 Santa Fe Railroad Depot on Broadway and Kettner Boulevard. This restored rail station serves both commuters and regional travelers, and is much used during the day.

The depot works particularly well because of its proximity to downtown office towers; the Coaster delivers significant pedestrian traffic to Broadway in the form of rail commuters.

Many rail transit stops are well designed, such as the Gaslamp Quarter and Seaport Village stations. Bus stops are more utilitarian than attractive, and do not have a uniform design. Many of them lack shade. The C Street and Park Boulevard corridors need improvement to increase transit service potential and improve ground floor activity.

### Looking Ahead

To accommodate residential and office growth, more and better transit should be added by the appropriate transit agencies. Recent and anticipated system improvements include trolley service and capacity upgrades, plus Rapid Bus service, both with regional connectivity. Downtown Rapid Bus service is part of a regional initiative for an attractive, contemporary bus service system making connections between major employment and residential centers. It is anticipated that it will reduce the number of vehicles entering downtown on a daily basis and alleviate the impact of transit on Broadway.

There is a need for local shuttle services to fill the critical need for quick, convenient transport between various downtown locations and Balboa Park. Between various downtown locations, an on-demand shuttle system is contemplated. Downtown's large size can make walking between distant places difficult, and local shuttles will provide residents, visitors, and employees with an option other than driving. Figure 7-5 shows the 2050 Revenue Constrained Transit Network as identified in San Diego Forward, The Regional Plan, and Box 7-2 describes the various components.

Improving transit corridors will also help promote use. Park Boulevard, an existing trolley corridor, has been enhanced as the Park-to-Bay Link. Improved streetscapes on such boulevards and transit corridors make them more pleasant, attracting users to ride the trolley. Similar streetscape improvements will take place through the Downtown San Diego Mobility Plan, linking existing and future parks with Greenways to maximize their attractiveness.

Correlating development and transit availability is one of the underlying premises of downtown land use planning. Downtown's highest intensities will follow the trolley route "L" pattern, making downtown a preeminent example of transit-oriented development.

The high intensity business district consisting of Civic/Core and Columbia straddles the C Street trolley and some of the highest residential intensities will occur in the areas surrounding the Park Boulevard trolley corridor.

The street typology illustrated in Figure 7-1 is designed to facilitate implementation of the planned transit system.



Downtown's proposed transportation network is comprehensive, and includes heavy and light rail, buses, BRT, and shuttles.



Broadway (top and middle) is a major bus route. The railyards (above) serve the Coaster, Amtrak, and the trolley.

### Box 7-2: Transit Network

- San Diego Trolley.** Three trolley lines operated by MTS run to downtown, forming a loop within the downtown area. The Blue Line connects to America Plaza in the north, and to National City, Chula Vista, and Imperial Beach in the south; it ends at the Mexican border in San Ysidro. The Orange Line runs from El Cajon, La Mesa, and Lemon Grove in the northeast, terminating downtown. The Green Line provides a connection between Santee, San Diego State University, Mission Valley, Oldtown, and downtown, terminating at the 12th & Imperial Transit Station.
- Coaster.** The Coaster is a commuter rail service connecting the Oceanside Transit Center, Carlsbad Village, Carlsbad Poinsettia, Encinitas, Solana Beach, Sorrento Valley, the Old Town Transit Center, and downtown. It uses the historic Santa Fe depot, located at the center of Columbia and Civic/Core business activity, as its downtown terminal.
- Buses.** There are currently 28 bus routes serving downtown from east to west and north to south. Comprehensive bus coverage will continue to serve the area.
- Rapid Bus.** Rapid Bus services provide high-frequency, limited stop service with dedicated branding, buses, stations and electronic next arrival signs. Rapid Express is high-frequency peak-hour service. Both services make few stops and travel on freeways or dedicated lanes. Its key components are dedicated rights-of-way; flexible stations; signal priority; a variety of vehicle options; pre-paid fares; frequent service; flexible route structure due to lack of tracks; and use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), which tracks vehicle locations, controls traffic signals, and updates passengers on travel times.
- Downtown Circulator Shuttle.** Civic San Diego is currently in the process of implementing a downtown circulator shuttle that would reduce the demand for parking on interior streets and surface lots. The proposed downtown circulator shuttle will provide a free on-demand shuttle service (similar to rideshare programs like UBER) to and from any location within the downtown area. The service will provide visitors convenient and accessible mobility throughout downtown thereby encouraging them to park in the peripheries of the parking district or to use public transportation to travel downtown.

### Goals: Transit System

- 7.3-G-1 A land use pattern that supports a flexible, fast, frequent, and safe transit system, providing connections within downtown and beyond.
- 7.3-G-2 An attractive and convenient transit system that is the first choice of travel for many trips made within, to, and from downtown.
- 7.3-G-3 Increased transit use among downtown residents, workers, and visitors. (*Policies continue on page 7-16*)

Figure 7-5  
2050 Revenue Constrained Transit Network  
Based on SANDAG San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan





### Policies: Transit System

- 7.3-P-1 Locate the highest intensity developments in or near trolley corridors to maximize the level of activity with strong transit accessibility.
- 7.3-P-2 Work with other agencies to support planned street improvements to accommodate transit.
- 7.3-P-3 Coordinate with agencies responsible for planning, implementing, building, and operating public transportation infrastructure and services, such as SANDAG, MTS, NCTD, and Amtrak to provide:
  - Rapid Bus service, improving the commuter and long-distance transit network with state-of-the-art technology to provide more frequent and faster trips in and out of downtown.
  - Bus service modifications to improve service, and to increase transit accessibility when the internal shuttle and Rapid Bus services begin.
- 7.3-P-4 Work with all relevant agencies to eliminate or mitigate adverse impacts of freight train traffic on adjacent pedestrians, land uses, and residents. Impacts include blocked intersections and horn noise. If impact mitigation strategies fail, reconsider the feasibility of undergrounding freight lines through all strategic portions of downtown.
- 7.3-P-5 Enhance streetscapes within Transitways to increase attractiveness for all users and promote shared transit, pedestrian, and cyclist use.
- 7.3-P-6 Encourage SANDAG to develop real time information and signage systems for all downtown transit facilities.
- 7.3-P-7 Coordinate transit station design with the transit agency to ensure inviting, enjoyable places, with shade, public art, landscaping, and memorable design features reflective of the surrounding environment.
- 7.3-P-8 Cooperate with the transit agency on public programs and campaigns to increase transit use for various types of trips, especially work, shopping, and entertainment
- 7.3-P-9 Coordinate with regional rail and transit planners to monitor intra-city passenger and freight concepts and potential impacts on downtown.
- 7.3-P-10 Implement a demand response shuttle system within the downtown area to provide a point-to-point experience which could be requested from a mobile device. The shuttle system will maintain and enhance public access to and along the waterfront for residents, workers and visitors of downtown. The shuttle system should include linkages to the airport, mobility hubs, and key downtown destination points.

*(Policies continue on page 7-17)*



The land use/transportation relationship will be strengthened under the Community Plan. While development intensities in portions of Civic/Core and Columbia (top and middle) reflect transit accessibility, the Community Plan calls for some of the highest intensities downtown in the eastern portions (above).

*(Policies continued from page 7-16)*

- 7.3-P-11 Work with SANDAG and MTS to ensure transit routes maximize efficiency through the avoidance of angled parking along main transit routes.
- 7.3-P-12 Work with SANDAG and MTS to ensure bus routes, bus stops and bus turning radii are evaluated in the design of street and sidewalk improvements.
- 7.3-P-13 Ensure future installation and replacement of traffic signals in downtown incorporate multi-ring controller units with advance traffic controller logic for complex intersection and network operations that promote efficient transit mobility.
- 7.3-P-14 Encourage increased transit capacity into Downtown.

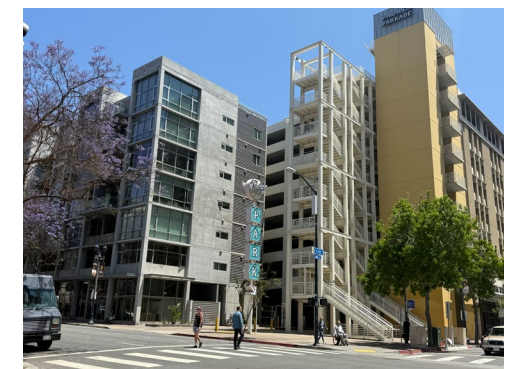
### 7.4 PARKING

An important component of downtown's transportation is parking. Reflective of southern California trends, a large proportion of downtown employees, residents, and visitors rely primarily on the automobile for transportation. However, downtown parking is increasingly expensive because it is provided in multi-level structures, as surface lots give way to new development, and people are acclimating to walking several blocks to their desired destination after parking.

Parking influences development downtown, from efficient circulation to urban design, transit ridership, and economic development. Vision and goals for parking construction and location sometimes compete when these issues merge. For example, above-grade parking structures are less costly to build, but the resulting bulky and sometimes unattractive buildings can impede views and negatively affect the street environment. The higher cost of underground parking can avoid these impacts but also deter prospective downtown tenants and visitors who might be accustomed to suburban rates or even free parking. Expansion of parking in general can raise concerns about maintaining dependence on automobiles and diminishing people's motivation to use transit, carpool, bike, or walk to accomplish local trips and commuting.

As residential, commercial, and civic activity intensifies, the resulting traffic generation will coincide with greater need for parking. Carpooling and transit improvements, as well as enhancements to promote walking and biking, could help to reduce the increased parking demand, but nevertheless new parking must be built to continue downtown's growth and evolution as the regional center. The Community Plan seeks to balance the diversity of these issues. Additionally, rather than simply accommodating additional parking, more efficient use of available spaces is essential.

Some of the pedestrian, bicycle, and Greenway improvements included in the Downtown San Diego Mobility Plan may require the removal of on-street parking spaces due to right-of-way constraints. In many instances, these losses can be mitigated by converting parallel on-street parking to angled parking on nearby streets. Additionally, Civic San Diego is in the process of implementing the following parking management programs within the downtown community:



Surface lots in downtown (top) are increasingly giving way to parking structures (above) and other development. Integration of the structures with the pedestrian realm is essential.



- *Reconfiguration of Existing On-Street Parking to Increase Parking Capacity* – A downtown-wide study should be conducted to reconfigure and convert existing on-street parking. The objective is to reconfigure or convert vacated driveways, obsolete curb zones (red zones, white passenger loading zones, etc.) in order to maximize on-street parking availability. Additionally, opportunities to increase on-street parking supply by converting parallel parking spaces to angled parking spaces on roadways which are not classified as Autoways, Cycleways or Greenways should be pursued.

Creative financing solutions could be sought to avoid high parking costs that could thwart critical business retention and economic development efforts. While integration of new parking into the downtown environment is anticipated, encouraging transit, ride sharing, and nurturing downtown’s pedestrian appeal remain goals of this Plan.

### Goals: Parking

- 7.4-G-1 Parking accommodations that serve growing needs by improving the management of parking demand through the promotion and use of several alternative forms of travel, such as transit, carshare, bikeshare, carpool, and other ridesourcing options.
- 7.4-G-2 New parking structures that accommodate parking needs from multiple land uses to the extent possible and allow shared parking where possible.
- 7.4-G-3 New public garages throughout downtown, in locations contributing to efficient circulation, and convenient and proximate to eventual destinations.
- 7.4-G-4 Public parking resource(s) near each Neighborhood Center that provide short-term parking for merchants and businesses.

(Policies start on page 7-19)



*Driving will continue as a major means of transportation in the San Diego region, but transportation demand management techniques—particularly ridesharing and carpooling—can significantly reduce vehicle trips and associated impacts on the downtown environment.*

### Policies: Parking

- 7.4-P-1 Require a certain portion of on-site motorcycle and bicycle parking in addition to automobile spaces.
- 7.4-P-2 Emphasize shared parking approaches, including:  
Development of parking facilities that serve multiple uses, to enable efficient use of space over the course of the day;  
Parking under new parks that are full-block or larger in size, where not limited by geologic or other constraints; and  
Enhanced on-street parking through restriping streets where appropriate.
- 7.4-P-3 Allow off-site and/or shared parking arrangements where appropriate to maximize efficient use of parking resources.
- 7.4-P-4 Work with developers of high-intensity developments unable to accommodate parking on site to allow development/use of parking under public parks, where appropriate and feasible.
- 7.4-P-5 Work with the Port to provide public parking in the Waterfront/Marine area, and with the City, County and other agencies in Civic/Core.
- 7.4-P-6 Ensure that all public parking structures maximize the potential for subterranean parking and incorporate other uses at higher, visible building floors where feasible. Explore the use of technological advancements (robotic parking, parking lifts, etc.) to improve cost/parking efficiencies in new public garages.
- 7.4-P-7 Maximize the efficiency of on-street parking by managing metered time limits and pricing to correspond with daily activity patterns.
- 7.4-P-8 Provide for parking designs and solutions that maximize public on-street parking and also enhances pedestrian and bicycle environments.
- 7.4-P-9 Strive to maintain on-street parking availabilities by converting parallel parking to angled parking where possible.
- 7.4-P-10 Evaluate curb space allocations with management of metered time limits to assist with achieving an efficient balance between loading/passenger drop-off, valet parking needs, and short- and long-term parking.
- 7.4-P-11 Maintain a comprehensive marketing and communications strategy to inform residents, business owners, employees, and visitors of all parking policy updates.
- 7.4-P-12 Consider additional guidance on implementation of parking management strategies that are included in the SANDAG Regional Parking Management Tool.
- 7.4-P-13 Promote the provision of adequate commercial loading zones to discourage the double-parking of delivery vehicles.



## 7.5 TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Transportation demand management (TDM) seeks to provide alternatives to single occupancy vehicular (SOV) transportation, reducing the number of vehicles using the street network at a given time, as well as parking need. TDM programs can be especially effective in large intense districts such as Downtown San Diego, and when coordinated through large institutions and companies<sup>1</sup>. Public agencies can provide leadership in efforts such as ridesharing and carpooling, especially given that federal, State, and local government employees together comprise approximately 40 percent of the downtown workforce.

### Goals: Transportation Demand Management

- 7.5-G-1 A downtown transportation demand management program that minimizes energy consumption, vehicle miles traveled, and vehicular traffic contributions from new and existing development.
- 7.5-G-2 A viable set of joint use parking arrangements for evenings, weekends, and holidays that is coordinated with regional transportation planning and demand management programs.

### Policies: Transportation Demand Management

- 7.5-P-1 Implement TDM approaches and participation in existing TDM programs, including but not limited to those implemented by SANDAG and MTS, in order to:
  - Encourage rideshare and carpool in all levels of government with offices and facilities downtown as well as other major downtown employers.
  - Designate preferential, conveniently located car/vanpool parking areas.
  - Provide transit reimbursement and other benefits to other users of non-motorized travel.
  - Establish a car/van-pool matching service that could use mechanisms such as sign-ups at individual buildings, or via electronic mail or an Internet website.
  - Continue SANDAG's guaranteed ride home for workers who carpool.
  - Work with public and private entities to encourage car share programs in downtown.
  - Provide flextime and telecommuting opportunities to employees.
  - Provide designated shuttle stops for the publicly accessible shuttle serving the downtown area, with routing to include key destination points, such as the airport, hotels, and visitor-serving facilities.
- 7.5-P-2 Provide incentives for developers to incorporate additional Transportation Demand Management practices in new residential and commercial developments, including facilities for bicyclists.



The Community Plan encourages a variety of Transportation Demand Management strategies to help reduce reliance on single occupancy vehicular trips.



An efficient, connected mobility network makes downtown more accessible, sustainable, and supportive of active, car-free lifestyles.

<sup>1</sup> As an example, the State of California maintains an aggressive TDM program for State employees in downtown Sacramento. Only 40% of state workers drive alone to work, and a very high share of employees (32%) carpool. While similar information is not available for Downtown San Diego, for the City of San Diego as a whole, 74% of residents drove alone to work and only 12% carpooled in 2000 (U.S. Census 2000).

# 8



## PUBLIC FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

The Downtown Community Plan is subject to and must comply with all of the provisions of the City of San Diego General Plan and Strategic Framework Element and Action Plan as may currently exist or as may be amended in the future by the City of San Diego. The provisions thereof are specifically adopted herein by reference.

An essential component for accomplishing downtown's potential as a livable place and a regional center is a strong framework of public facilities and amenities. Parks and open spaces and schools are vital to support the growing population; police and fire stations are essential for safety. Facilities such as the Civic Center, Convention Center, and institutions of higher learning also act as catalysts for redevelopment and economic activity.

This chapter focuses on educational facilities, police and fire emergency facilities, community facilities, the civic center, and libraries. Additional types of public facilities are addressed in other chapters of the Community Plan:

- *Chapter 3: Land Use and Housing;*
- *Chapter 4: Parks, Open Space, and Recreation;*
- *Chapter 7: Mobility;*
- *Chapter 10: Arts and Culture; and*
- *Chapter 12: Human Services*



## 8.1 EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

The most eclectic cluster of educational facilities in the region is located in downtown San Diego. A law school, architecture and design schools, language academies, and City College bring a spirit of scholarship, progress, and creativity to downtown. Several options are available to youth and children, including the public Washington Elementary School in Little Italy and San Diego High School and Garfield High School in the East Village neighborhood, in addition to public charter and private schools. These institutions contribute to the area’s urban culture while at the same time supporting downtown business and living. In particular, the East Village Education Armature is an important component of downtown’s identity. Park Boulevard is not only a major link between the San Diego Bay and Balboa Park, but also an important educational corridor with over a dozen public and private institutions, from the preschool to post-graduate level and life-long learning thereafter, this “educational armature” serves as an urban laboratory for students and the general public who can tap vast resources and cultural programming.

There is great potential for expanding the presence of higher learning establishments in downtown, through additional schools with special focuses (business, arts, communications, or real estate) or satellites of some of the major universities in the region. Schools and universities located in the milieu of commerce, government, and culture provide opportunities for mutually beneficial relationships, involving field training for students and the infusion of new ideas and approaches for the downtown community. Students could also have the opportunity to live within walking distance of their respective institutions.

Schools for youth and children are typically developed as the younger population grows. Since residential growth to date has been dominated by empty nesters and younger adults, pressure for new school construction has not been considerable. As the downtown population increases in future years, the number of families will grow, increasing the student population. Given the diversity of downtown activity, the interests of downtown dwellers, and land constraints, smaller public schools with special topical focuses may be more desirable than mainstream public schools. Downtown institutions could partner with charter schools to enrich curricula. Not only would such schools serve the downtown population, but they would also draw students from outlying neighborhoods.

Regardless of the type, future schools downtown will require urban designs that make efficient use of land and integrate into the dense community, rather than following low-rise, sprawling suburban models.



There are many higher learning facilities downtown including California Western Law School (top), and City College (above). Expanding and increasing the number of such institutions is an exciting opportunity for invigorating downtown commerce, government, and culture.

### Goals: Educational Facilities

- 8.1-G-1 Encourage the provision of quality and accessible educational facilities to downtown families and adult learners.
- 8.1-G-2 Expand and strengthen the presence of higher education, particularly focused in East Village and Civic/Core.
- 8.1-G-3 Seek special focus schools for children and youth that build on downtown’s offerings.

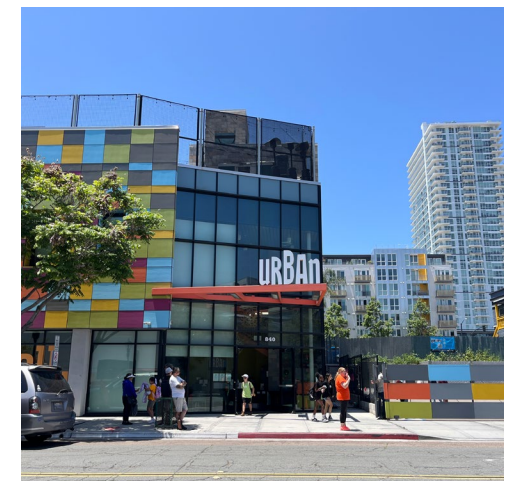
- 8.1-G-4 Integrate new school buildings and improvements with downtown’s urban environment.

### Policies: Educational Facilities

- 8.1-P-1 Attract additional higher learning facilities—such as professional schools, design institutes, and satellites of the major universities—and work with existing institutions to help maintain strong activity levels and meet expansion needs.
- 8.1-P-2 Coordinate with City College on new development, programming, and facilities that bolster its mission and contribute to downtown commerce, culture, and living.
- 8.1-P-3 Work proactively with the San Diego Unified School District and the various private educational institutes to meet the needs of downtown’s growing population and to provide quality educational opportunities to the urban population.
- 8.1-P-4 Pursue charter schools with special curricula in the areas of art, music, design, leadership, science, and the performing arts and help to identify downtown organizations and institutions that could serve as partners or sponsors.
- 8.1-P-5 Anticipate school development in areas of high expected residential growth, and focus facilities around open spaces.
- 8.1-P-6 In designing and programming new educational facilities, emphasize connections with surrounding uses, relationships to neighboring structures and streets, efficient use of land, and multi-story urban models.
- 8.1-P-7 Promote shared use of facilities such as playing fields, public parks, parking, community meeting spaces, exhibit halls, and studios.



It has been a vision many decades in the making to bring a hospital or medical center to East Village. The East Village Education Armature represents an opportunity to expand on that vision by leveraging the region’s nationally-ranked universities and research institutions to bring a medical research hospital to Downtown as a flagship academic institution that meets the medical needs of our growing Downtown neighborhoods and invigorates the nearby schools and academic organizations. A new concentration of academic activity will encourage new businesses catering to families, students, and researchers, reinforcing the Armature’s draw as a robust, amenitized destination for education and academic pursuit.



Downtown elementary schools, including the Urban Discovery Academy (above) serve children of residents and workforce alike, and continued population growth will likely generate a need for additional schools.

## 8.2 POLICE AND FIRE FACILITIES

Facilities for fire and police emergency services affect planning goals for livability and safety. The growing population downtown will increase the number of fire, medical, security, and criminal incidents requiring emergency services. New special events, commercial development, and visitor amenities will likewise raise demand. The City Police and Fire departments will need to build up staff levels, equipment (especially for high-rise development), and facilities to meet these greater needs. A new station(s) will likely be more urgent for the Fire Department, although expansion and relocation of existing community police storefront facilities may be called for as well. The presence of the Police Department headquarters in East Village benefits public safety efforts.

Careful attention to the design of buildings and public spaces can contribute to an environment that deters unlawful behavior, thereby reducing the demands upon emergency service providers. While such design measures will help to make downtown safe, by no means will they mitigate the need for adequate fire and police service capabilities.



Securing construction and operational funds for new facilities will be challenging, and require commitment, leadership, and perseverance among City officials, downtown stakeholders, and residents. Developers should be expected to help offset the incremental service demand generated by their projects.



The presence of the Police Department headquarters (above) and Fire Department station benefit public safety efforts, but additional police and fire stations will be needed to maintain service levels in future years.



Downtown has a fine collection of houses of worship, many of which provide a variety of community services. New facilities will be directed to Neighborhood Centers to strengthen community relationships and locally meet the needs of residents.

### Goals: Police and Fire Facilities

- 8.2-G-1 Maintain a safe and livable environment downtown working with the City to ensure appropriate levels of fire and police services proportionate to population and activity level.
- 8.2-G-2 Work with City fire and life safety departments to anticipate construction and expansion of fire and police facilities.
- 8.2-G-3 Consider public safety in the design of new development and public spaces.

### Policies: Police and Fire Facilities

- 8.2-P-1 Institute the collection of development impact fees for all development projects to help pay for the needed fire and police facilities.
- 8.2-P-2 Work closely with Fire and Police department representatives on facility improvement and expansion projects, paying close attention to siting and accessibility requirements. Prioritize the first new fire station in the Northeast sub-district of East Village.
- 8.2-P-3 Integrate new fire and police facilities into mixed-use development projects to the extent possible, to help achieve overall development intensity goals established for downtown.
- 8.2-P-4 In close proximity to emergency facilities, avoid special events that require street closure and/or cause severe traffic congestion that could impede response.

## 8.3 OTHER COMMUNITY FACILITIES

A functioning diverse urban environment where needs can be met without driving includes community facilities such as houses of worship, child care, and space for professional organizations, neighborhood groups, community meetings, and special events. As downtown evolves, these types of community spaces will contribute to the vitality of Neighborhood Centers. They will also strengthen community relationships and support diversity.

Recreation, cultural, and human service facilities are taken up in chapters 4, 10, and 12 of the Community Plan.

### Goals: Other Community Facilities

- 8.3-G-1 Encourage a diversity of community facilities in the downtown neighborhoods, including religious facilities, recreation centers, daycare, and youth centers.

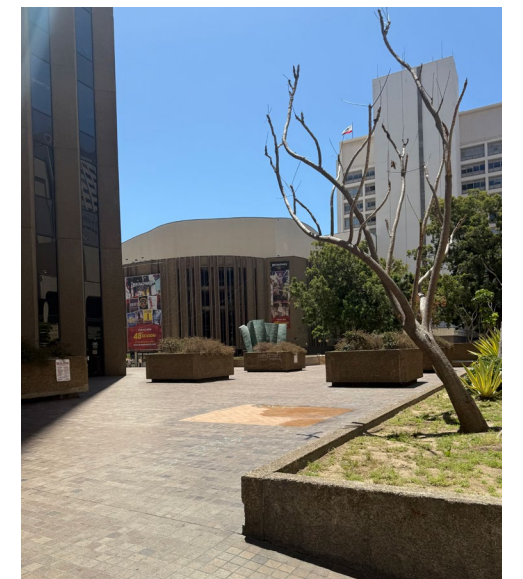
### Policies: Other Community Facilities

- 8.3-P-1 Encourage location of community facilities in mixed-use buildings in the Neighborhood Centers.
- 8.3-P-2 Provide incentives for the development of facility space for community facilities and institutions. These spaces, where provided as part of mixed use development on Main and Commercial streets on first floors, are exempt from FAR calculations, per standards in the Planned District Ordinance.

## 8.4 CIVIC CENTER

The City's Civic Center complex includes the Civic Center Theater, the Concourse, the City Administration Building, Golden Hall, and an above-grade structured parking lot. Government offices and facilities together are one of the largest employers and strongest anchors for downtown's central business district, and the Civic Center is a prominent functional and visual landmark. There is wide consensus that redevelopment of the Civic Center is needed to ameliorate faulty urban and architectural design, functional, and structural components. In addition, current uses have outgrown the facility, as can be seen by the fact that over half of the space occupied by downtown city staff is leased in private office buildings.

A redeveloped Civic Center that is physically accessible to the surrounding areas and provides an inspiring yet functional regional center for government, civic engagement, and culture is important to achieving downtown's potential. Deteriorated building conditions and inactive facilities and plazas will change when the complex is redesigned as outward-facing, welcoming, and reconnected to the street grid. Iconic architecture reflecting regional values will create a landmark status not enjoyed to date, the respectful quality of the environment will honor the diversity of interests coming together to pursue the public good, and a sunny plaza will provide an inspiring open space for employees and visitors. The improved connections to the heart of downtown will heighten the prominence of the Civic Center for public assembly and ceremony.



With the long awaited redevelopment and redesign, the Civic Center complex (seen from the air at top and from the 3rd Avenue entrance at bottom) will become outward-facing, welcoming, and reconnected to the street grid, to achieve its potential as a true center of civic engagement.

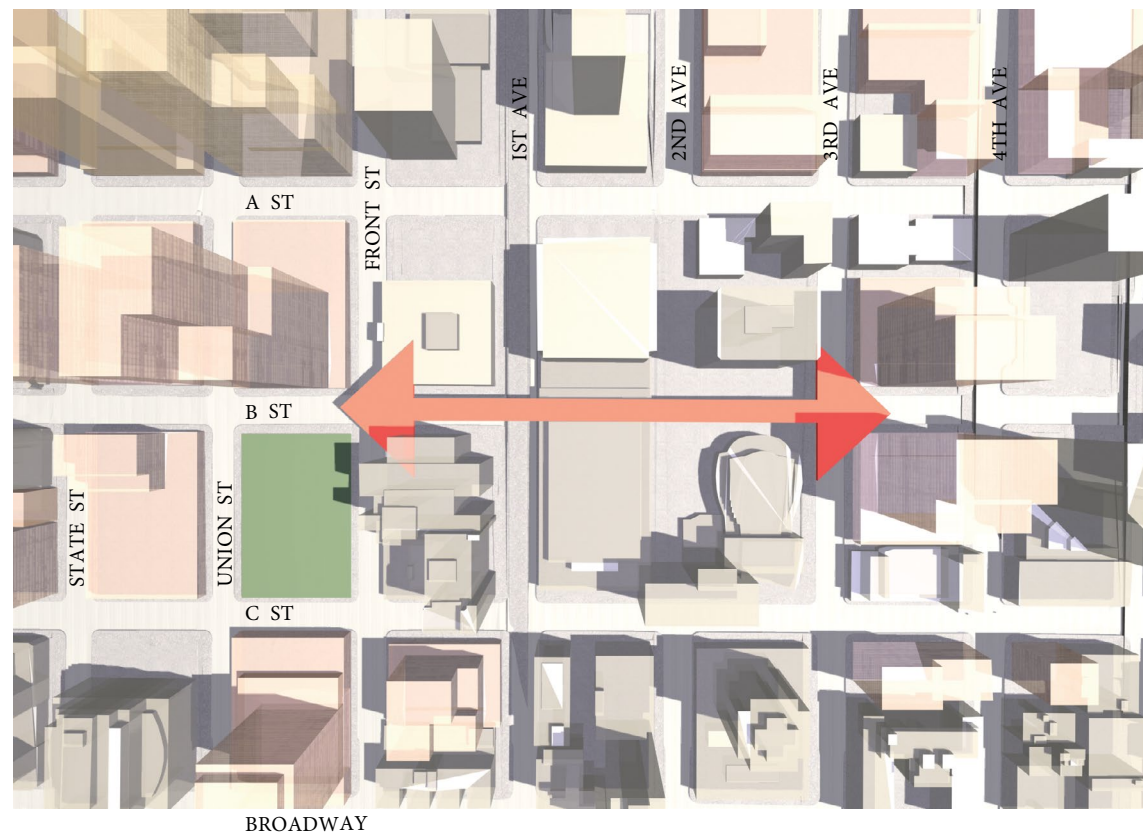


### Goals: Civic Center

- 8.4-G-1 Sustain the City Civic Center Complex as a regional center of public activity and an anchor of the government center.
- 8.4-G-2 Work with other agencies and the private sector to redevelop the Civic Center, prioritizing accommodation of space needs, integration with the downtown fabric, inspiring architecture and open spaces, and assemblage of the diversity of people and ideas that make up San Diego.

### Policies: Civic Center

- 8.4-P-1 Provide a new Civic Plaza/Park on the block surrounded by Union, B, Front, and C streets, as the focus of a revitalized, mixed use Civic Center. Allow below-grade parking at the park.
- 8.4-P-2 To integrate the Civic Center with downtown, extend the street grid across the site; and interface open spaces, plazas, and buildings with the streets.
- 8.4-P-3 Continue all efforts to obtain funding for the Civic Center redevelopment program and accelerate the schedule to the greatest extent possible.
- 8.4-P-4 Provide for large new/renovated civic meeting spaces that could be available and affordable for civic groups and non-profits to rent.



Civic Center

### 8.5 LIBRARIES

The Central Library is a cornerstone of downtown’s emerging cultural and educational community. With nearly 380,000 square feet of facility space—including reading rooms, book stacks, office space, public meeting rooms, and an auditorium—it serves the local downtown community as well as the region. The landmark architecture enhances the civic experience of visitors and reflects the evolving architectural identity of the eastern neighborhoods. In addition, Central Library contributes to the rebirth of East Village and strengthens the Bay to Park Paseo.

There are future possibilities for special-topic libraries downtown that could partner with the Central Library; serve the business, government, and academic sectors; and act as new catalysts for future creative endeavors. These could include libraries focusing on law, design, military activities, art, technology, civic leaders, and other topics of particular interest to the region, and be operated by both public and private interests. Such libraries will advance overall downtown goals for activity focuses and new cultural, academic, and economic development synergies.

### Goals: Libraries

- 8.5-G-1 Integrate the Central Library in planning for downtown connections and activity nodes.

### Policies: Libraries

- 8.5-P-1 Locate smaller topical libraries primarily in the Civic/Core and Columbia districts, Neighborhood Centers, near City College, and around the Central Library.
- 8.5-P-2 Encourage library co-location with other civic, academic, and cultural facilities for the benefit of amassing activity that draws new attention and uses.



For the region and downtown alike, the Central Library is a significant cultural, civic, and educational landmark. The iconic architecture defines southern East Village, and inspires synergistic uses in the surrounding area.



# 9

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Downtown's historical attributes, reflecting 150 years of evolution, contribute greatly to its complexity and sense of place. The fine collection of memorialized buildings—such as the El Cortez, County Administration Building, U.S. Grant Hotel, and concentration in the Gaslamp Historic District—help to convey downtown's historicity. Just as important are enduring representations of the public realm such as streets, sidewalks, parks, and neighborhood centers. This chapter of the Community Plan establishes the strategy for meaningful preservation of historic resources as part of downtown's continued growth and development.

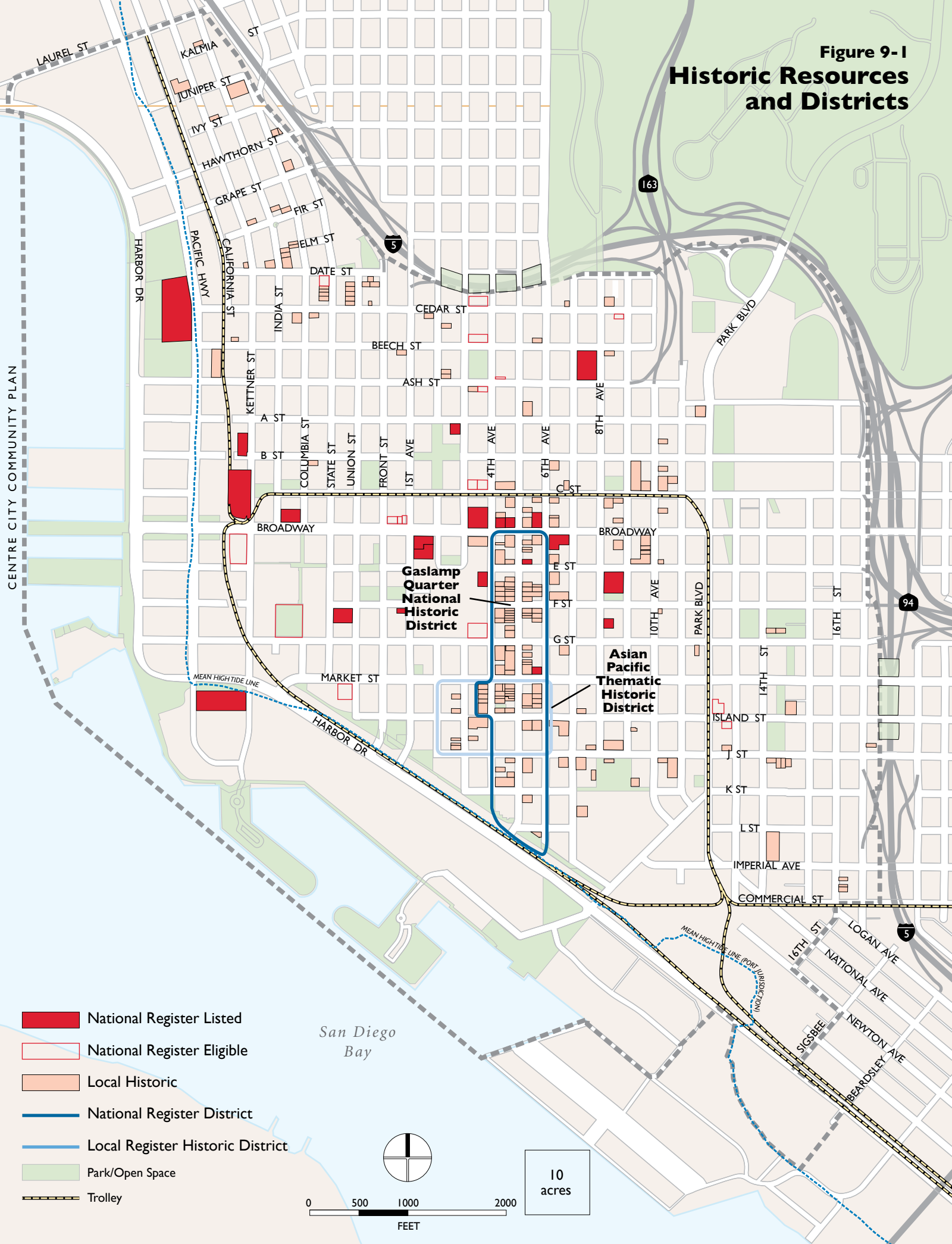
Historic buildings and districts downtown are identified under a well-defined, three-tiered system. Based on their classification, appropriate development incentives and regulations are applied. The National Register of Historic Places—representing the highest level of designation, and marking resources contributing to the nation's history—bestows the greatest protection. Listing on the California Register of Historic Resources also establishes substantial protections in recognition of the contributions



to state heritage. The San Diego Register of Historical Resources includes properties and districts deemed to have contributed significantly to regional history and culture. A variety of building types reflecting downtown's heritage are designated at the national and local levels – from the hotels, civic buildings, theaters, and commercial establishments representative of downtown's early roots as the city's center, to the warehouses associated with waterfront activity. State listings are limited to two markers and two historic vessels docked at the waterfront.

Some of the most exciting opportunities and challenges in downtown San Diego involve integrating pieces of the past into the future, while facilitating the dynamics of an evolving, contemporary high-intensity center. The Community Plan's direction for historic preservation is premised on maintaining National Register sites as downtown anchors, integrating buildings and districts of state and local historic significance into the downtown fabric, and looking at historical precedents for fostering connections with Balboa Park and the surroundings.

Figure 9-1  
Historic Resources  
and Districts

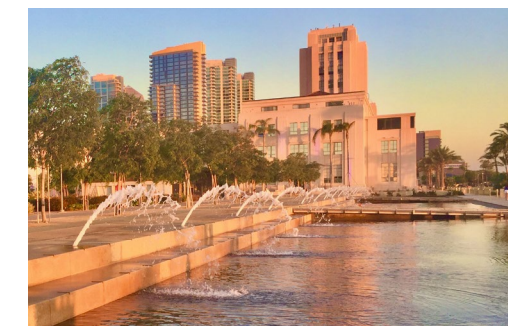


### 9.1 HISTORIC CONSERVATION

The strategy for conserving downtown historic qualities largely relies on the established process through National Register, California Register, and Local Register designations of individual properties and districts. Each designation is associated with preservation goals and development restrictions. The designated properties downtown are shown in Figure 9-1. Table 9-1 summarizes the preservation goals associated with the designations. The responsibility for designating Local Register sites and districts belongs to the City’s Historical Resources Board, while the federal Department of Interior and State Office of Historic Preservation respectively designate National Register and California Register sites and districts.

Table 9-1: Historic Designations and Preservation Goals

Designation	Preservation Goal
National Register of Historic Places – Listed	Retention on-site; any improvements, renovation, rehabilitation, and/or adaptive reuse should facilitate preservation, consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings. Historical resources contributing to a National Register District have the same protection status as individually-listed resources.
National Register of Historic Places – Eligible	Evaluate and encourage listing in the National Register through the State Office of Historic Preservation or the National Park Service. Resources determined eligible by either agency shall have the same protection status as individually-listed resources in the National Register. If not listed in, or not determined eligible for listing in the National Register, determine eligibility for listing in the San Diego Register and, if designated, provide San Diego Register protections.
California Register of Historical Resources – Listed	Retention on-site; any improvements, renovation, rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse should facilitate preservation. Resources contributing to a California Register District have the same protection status as individually-listed resources. Resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places or determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register are automatically listed in the California Register of Historical Resources.
California Register of Historical Resources – Eligible	Evaluate and encourage listing in the California Register through the State Office of Historic Preservation. Historical resources determined eligible for listing have the same protection status as individually-listed resources in the California Register. Retention on-site; any improvements, renovation, rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse shall be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings.
San Diego Register of Historical Resources – Listed	Whenever possible, retain resource on-site. Partial retention, relocation or demolition of a resource shall only be permitted through applicable City procedures. Resources contributing to a San Diego Register District have the same protection status as individually-listed resources.



Historic sites—such as the National Register listed El Cortez (top), Santa Fe Depot (middle), and County Administration Center (above)—impart our region’s heritage and downtown’s evolution as well as contribute to the richness of the environment.



Table 9-1: Historic Designations and Preservation Goals (Continue)

Designation	Preservation Goal
Potential Designation to San Diego Register of Historical Resources	The Land Development Code and Planned District Ordinances require review and processing for potential designations for resources over forty-five years of age, including those listed on applicable surveys

Downtown San Diego is characterized by diversity in neighborhoods and business districts as well as people and culture. Celebrating the unique contributions of movements and places—and preserving the living history—is in part accomplished by designated geographic and thematic districts (see Figure 9-1).

There are two existing historic districts:

- **Gaslamp Quarter District:** Encompasses the historic entertainment district centered on Fifth Avenue that extends from Broadway south to Harbor Drive near its historic waterfront terminus (now the Convention Center). As part of a National Register District, the buildings designated as contributing to the historical significance of the Gaslamp Quarter have protected status. As a geographically-based district, new infill developments must follow tightly defined design standards to create a consistent fabric of historicity.
- **Asian Pacific Thematic District:** Marks the contributions and architecture of early Asian businesses and residents, and is listed on the San Diego Register of Historical Resources. Structures contributing to the district are subject to preservation goals per the San Diego Register provisions, as well as development regulations per the San Diego Municipal Code. Diversity in infill structures is allowed in accordance with those goals and regulations. A Master Plan for the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District was adopted by the Redevelopment Agency in 1995 and remains a valuable source of historic information on the area.

Two additional thematic districts are currently under study for San Diego Register designations: the Warehouse District in downtown’s southeastern quadrant and the African-American District south of Broadway. If designated for listing on the San Diego Register, these districts will accommodate flexible integration of new development.

### Goals: Historical Conservation

- 9.1-G-1 Protect historic resources to communicate downtown’s heritage.
- 9.1-G-2 Encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of historical resources.
- 9.1-G-3 Allow development adjacent to historical resources respectful of context and heritage, while permitting contemporary design solutions that do not adversely affect historical resources.



Downtown’s designated historic districts—the Gaslamp Quarter (top) and Asian Thematic District (above)—commemorate and protect important vestiges of historic development, commerce, and culture while at the same time providing unique and popular environments for modern pursuits.

### Policies: Historical Conservation

- 9.1-P-1 Maintain review procedures for projects potentially affecting resources listed in, or eligible for listing in the National Register, State Register, or San Diego Register either individually or as contributors to historic districts.
- 9.1-P-2 Offer incentives to encourage rehabilitation and reuse of historical resources, including transfer of development rights, floor area bonuses and exceptions to parking requirements.
- 9.1-P-3 Assist in the rehabilitation of historic properties through five on-going programs:
  - Rehabilitation loans and grants,
  - Low- and moderate-income housing loans and grants,
  - Off-site improvements,
  - Façade improvements, and
  - Grants and funds.
- 9.1-P-4 Encourage the retention of historical resources on-site with new development. If retention of a historical resource on-site is found to be infeasible under appropriate City review procedures, the potential relocation of the historical resource to another location within downtown shall be explored, and if feasible, adopted as a condition of a site development permit.

## 9.2 INTEGRATING HERITAGE IN DOWNTOWN’S FUTURE

Downtown continues on a path of major transformation. Considerable strides have been made in designating, preserving, and restoring historic assets. Additional historical resources preserved through rehabilitation



A wide variety of exemplary historic building re-use and restoration projects exist downtown, including the 625 Broadway Building with ground-floor retail and upper floor residential (left) and the Balboa Theatre restoration accommodating return of its original use (right).



Integration of distinguishing features of noteworthy historic buildings into new development allows for achievement of redevelopment and population goals while retaining important ties to downtown's roots, as illustrated in the incorporation of a historic warehouse in Petco Park (top) and a landmark corner in new residential development (middle). The Community Plan gives historic open space, such as Pantoja Park in Marina (featured above), and the original street grid platting with small blocks special emphasis as public realm, an essential component of downtown's historicity.

and/or re-use will contribute to the future downtown environment. The preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, reconstruction, and retention of designated historical resources, and their incorporation into new development projects, whether in whole or in part, is strongly encouraged. However, some loss of properties listed on the San Diego Register may inevitably occur to accommodate growth and population goals. The relocation or demolition of designated historical resources shall only be permitted when alternatives are not feasible, and adequate mitigation is provided.

Several properties in the eastern portion of downtown may be eligible for San Diego Register listings. Since this is the last district to experience major redevelopment, a number of older buildings still exist, including warehouses, commercial structures and modest “worker cottages.”

Downtown's historical integrity will be preserved with a combination of rehabilitated buildings, historic districts, portions of older buildings integrated in new projects (like warehouses in East Village), emphasis on downtown's historic public realm, and on-going architectural and cultural history interpretive programs.

The places where public life takes place—the streets laid out in a grid system, sidewalks, parks, plazas, and Neighborhood Centers—are part of the historic armature. The historic platting of small block sizes and the connections to surrounding neighborhoods and Balboa Park are also important. The organization and character of these components makes downtown different from other places in the City, and convey downtown's unique development history. As downtown evolves and new neighborhoods come to life, the historic public realm will be strengthened. Reinforcing these components is addressed in *Chapter 3: Land Use and Housing; Chapter 4: Parks, Open Space, and Recreation; Chapter 5: Urban Design; Chapter 6: Neighborhoods; Chapter 7: Mobility; and Chapter 10: Arts and Culture.*

Another aspect of the historic conservation strategy is to continue interpretive programs, particularly those related to the historic districts. Such programs should target San Diegans as well as tourists who seek travel experiences enriched with cultural pursuits and ethnic connections. The goal should be to communicate downtown's evolving physical and cultural development, and to convey the factors that are attributed to change and growth.

### Goals: Integrating Heritage in Downtown's Future

- 9.2-G-1 Integrate historical resources into the downtown fabric while achieving policies for significant development and population intensification.
- 9.2-G-2 Preserve and enhance downtown's historic public realm in redevelopment planning.
- 9.2-G-3 Keep history alive through interpretive programs.

### Policies: Integrating Heritage in Downtown's Future

- 9.2-P-1 Incorporate elements of historical buildings in new projects to impart heritage.
- 9.2-P-2 Partner with business, community, cultural, and historic organizations associated with designated historical resources to prepare and implement interpretive programs, such as walking and audio tours or a “story pole,” permanent displays and signage, informational pamphlets, banners, and special events celebrating downtown's history.
- 9.2-P-3 Promote the adaptive re-use of intact buildings (designated or not) and/or significant elements, as a cultural and sustainability goal.
- 9.2-P-4 Encourage the historic interpretation of various cultural resources as they are established over time, including but not limited to Asian-Pacific, African American, warehouse buildings, etc.



# 10

## ARTS AND CULTURE

A feature that historically separates downtowns from the other districts in cities and outlying suburbs is the infusion of arts and culture, and downtown San Diego is no different. Opera, dramatic arts, visual arts, public art, music, and dance occur in large and small theaters, museums, studios, live/work lofts, schools and institutes, and on city streets. The arts not only have a positive impact on downtown's quality of life and cultural evolution, but also on the entire social and business fabric. They attract business investment, counter urban decay, revitalize struggling neighborhoods, and draw tourists.

Ticket sales and audiences generate commerce for hotels, restaurants, galleries, shops, parking garages, and more. Arts organizations themselves are responsible businesses, employers, and consumers. The City's Commission for Arts and Culture's research demonstrates the significant contributions of arts and culture to the economy, and their role as one of the top tourist magnets

for San Diego. Research at the local and national levels shows that investing in the arts yields significant economic benefits.

The potential demand for downtown arts and culture is quite strong due to the affluence and education of a good proportion of downtown residents, continued increases in downtown visitors, and growth in downtown's residential population. Expansion of arts and culture could be assisted by facility development, new live/work space, and the citywide public art program. A future civic arts high school is envisioned as a central educational and cultural institution for Downtown. The presence of arts and culture contributes to the special culture of downtown San Diego. The synergy in cultural energies will allow the arts community to flourish, so that it can continue to grow and better serve the needs and interests of the demographically diversified San Diego region.





### 10.1 PUBLIC ART

Public art provides a means of expression in the environment, a way to create spaces that have a meaningful aesthetic, educate about history and culture, and foster pride and inspiration. It takes many forms and shapes in the public realm of downtown streets and sidewalks, parks and plazas, and gateways. Murals, sculptures, and urban art trails integrated with architecture and landscape make urban environments special places that attract visitors, business, and residents.

The presence of public art in downtown San Diego could expand through the coordinated efforts of artists, civic leaders, and the City of San Diego. The combined energies of such groups have led to the installation of place-defining sculptures as part of development projects and public facility improvements through the years. A cadre of volunteer artists has also created the city's first art urban trail by giving artistic treatments to utility boxes and planters, and other objects in sidewalk corridors. Various murals add character to building walls as well.

A citywide public art program currently operating in San Diego requires private non-residential development—with valuation equal to or above \$5,000,000—to incorporate on-site public art worth at least one percent of the valuation. An on-site cultural use can be incorporated into the project in place of public art. Developers also have an option to pay an in-lieu fee of one-half of one percent of the total building permit valuation to a public art development fund, and all in-lieu fees collected for projects will be applied to creation of new public art. Certain capital improvement programs funded by the city in excess of \$250,000 are required to pay 2 percent of budget costs for public art. Artists are to be involved in the early stages of project design so that they may become an integral part of the design process.



#### Goals: Public Art

- 10.1-G-1 Continue efforts to create meaningful, memorable, and delightful public spaces in downtown integrated with public art.
- 10.1-G-2 Work toward a wide range of public art in all downtown districts and neighborhoods that celebrates diversity in history, culture, climate, environment, and people.

#### Policies: Public Art

- 10.1-P-1 Strengthen the presence of public art in public spaces downtown, including public parks and plazas; gateways; and Boulevards, Active Streets, and Greenways as shown in Figure 7-1.
- 10.1-P-2 Pursue joint public art programs with the Port of San Diego to rein-



As downtown evolves, public art will continue to reinforce identity, culture, and history in the neighborhoods, as have the Pacific Soul on the corner of Pacific Highway and Broadway (middle), and playful art in Little Italy (above).

force connections to the waterfront—such as the Bay to Park Paseo along Park Boulevard, North Embarcadero, or Broadway—as well as joint public art programs between the surrounding neighborhoods and downtown.

- 10.1-P-3 Coordinate closely with the City Commission for Arts and Culture, the Port's Public Art Committee, and representatives of the downtown arts community on public art programs, including projects funded by the city public art program in-lieu fees, to promote diverse installations that help to create and reinforce the uniqueness of downtown neighborhoods as well as reflect and celebrate the array of regional cultural and environmental influences.
- 10.1-P-4 Integrate art program with preservation/remembrance of historic elements of downtown culture and structures.

### 10.2 FACILITIES

An infrastructure of various facility types is needed to ensure longevity of the arts. The range of uses and activities is reflected in the requisite facility inventory: small, medium, and large theaters; outdoor performance plazas and theaters; gallery spaces; exhibit halls; rehearsal rooms; small and large art production studios for activities ranging from painting to industrial arts and sculpture; dance studios; museums; set production workshops; educational spaces; storage; and administrative offices.

Over the years, the downtown environment—with its mix and varied ages of building types—has been conducive to the arts. There are several large performance stages in the Core District and Horton/Gaslamp, and historic warehouse buildings in eastern downtown and Little Italy have been able to affordably accommodate a wide range of activity. However, redevelopment success has been accompanied by growing difficulties for downtown arts and culture:

- Some organizations wishing to expand could face challenges from rising rents and property values.
- As older buildings and warehouses are rehabilitated or demolished for new development, the affordable nooks traditionally used by emerging and independent artists are lost.
- Rising parking costs and the perception of parking shortages negatively affect efforts to draw regional audiences, and also affect artists and arts organization staff who need to park downtown.

Existing theaters, museums, and major cultural centers are shown in Figure 10-1, and Table 10-1 summarizes the capacity of the existing theaters. The mapped facilities are limited to public spaces and do not include downtown's many galleries, artists' work spaces, office and production spaces, and artists' residences. The largest theaters—Copley Hall and Civic Theater—are respectively homes to the San Diego Symphony and the San Diego Opera, narrowing availability for use by other groups. Mid-size and smaller venues downtown are typically booked to capacity, and the Civic



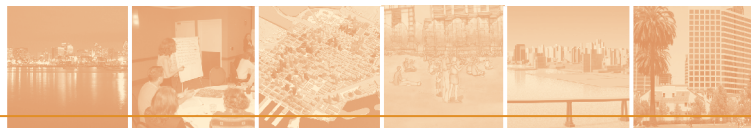
Public art enlivens communities by emphasizing culture and including resident participation.



Educational and interpretive amenities should be added all across Downtown to celebrate culture and add vibrancy.



Growth of downtown arts and culture will require new performance and facility spaces along with care of existing facilities, such as the historic Spreckels Theater.



Theatre and Spreckels Theatre need renovations. The renovated Balboa Theatre provides additional performance space.

**Table 10-1: Capacity of Existing Performance Facilities**

Performance Spaces	Seats
The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park	10,000
Civic Theatre	2,967
Copley Symphony Hall	2,255
Spreckels Theatre	1,466
Balboa Theatre	1,339
Horton Grand Theater	240
Lyceum (2 theaters)	570 and 270
Auditorium in Central Library	350
Salville Theater at City College	280
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,737</b>

Source: AMS Planning and Research



Downtown San Diego lacks the proliferation of art facilities found in many other major downtowns. While San Diego’s museums have traditionally been located in Balboa Park, there is increasing interest in new and expanded museums in downtown.

Figure 10-1 identifies some potential locations for new facilities. This list of potential locations reveals the range of potentially available sites, but it is not intended as a complete list and similarly does not include the projected retail, hotel, housing, and office developments that could accommodate additional facility spaces.

Using arts and culture facilities to reinforce downtown activity centers is essential. New facility development could also result from the city-wide public art program implementation options. An “Arts Market”—such as the Old Chicago Library or the Torpedo Factory outside of Washington D.C.—could house visual arts spaces, commercial galleries, performance facilities, and instructional areas in a single building (perhaps the Central Library or Post Office).

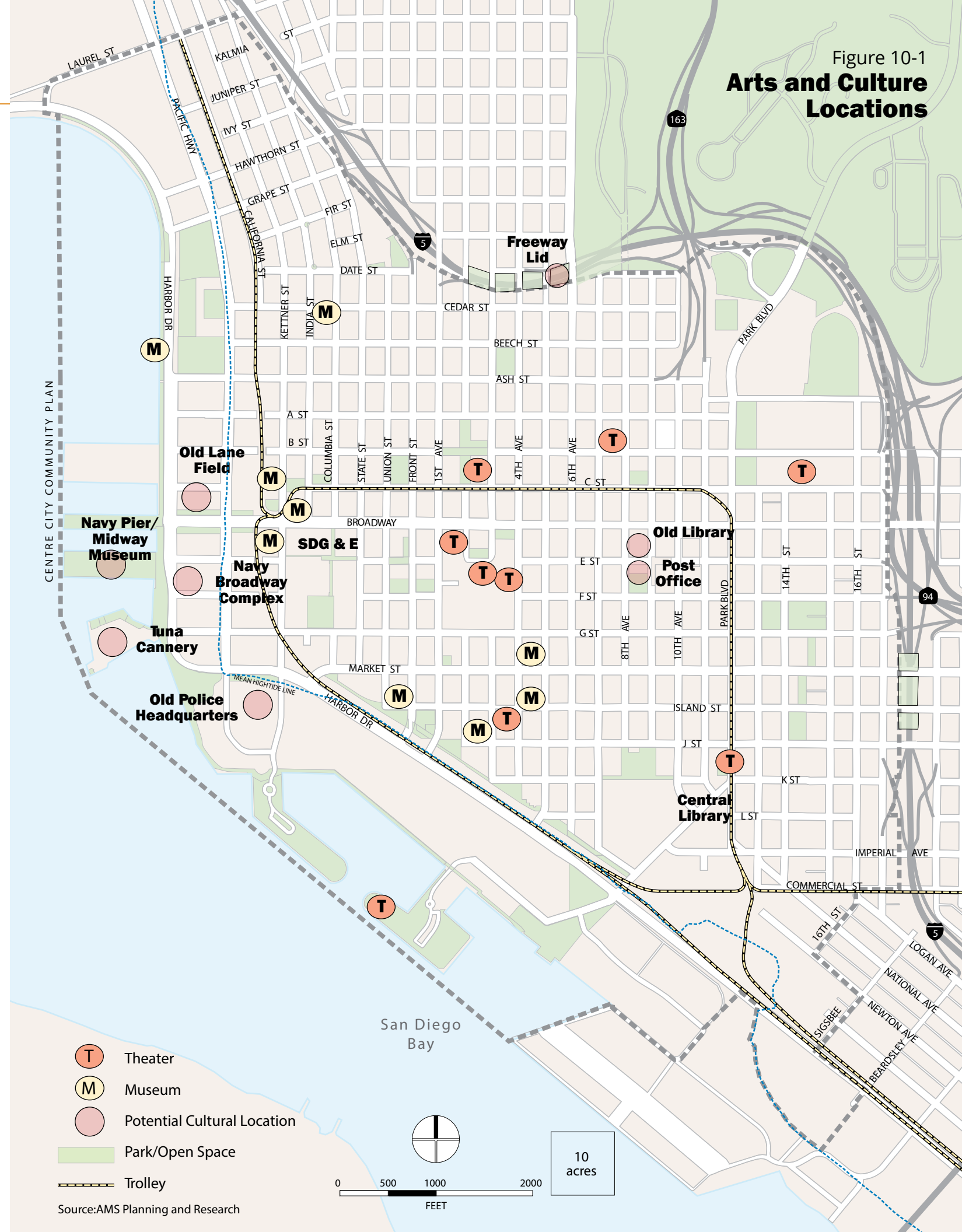
### Goals: Facilities

- 10.2-G-1 Encourage locating arts and culture facilities in downtown near activity hubs and areas accommodating highly diverse functions.
- 10.2-G-2 Assist organizations in identifying potential locations and funding for facility development.



Planned renovation of the Balboa Theatre (top) and Civic Theatre (middle) are important steps to meeting increased demands for performance venues.

Figure 10-1  
**Arts and Culture Locations**



- Theater
- Museum
- Potential Cultural Location
- Park/Open Space
- Trolley

Source:AMS Planning and Research



Entertainment and cultural amenities offer more people a reason to come and explore Downtown.



Growing downtown arts programs will need facility space for outreach, education, rehearsals, and performances.

10.2-G-3 Encourage incorporation of various arts and culture facility types in mixed-use development, especially in educational facilities.

### Policies: Facilities

10.2-P-1 Provide developer incentives for incorporation of arts and culture facility space, including exemption of non-profit art facility space on the ground level of buildings from FAR calculations, with recorded agreements requiring perpetuity of the cultural use.

10.2-P-2 Consider providing assistance in the development of major arts and culture facilities.

10.2-P-3 Encourage the development of a public “Arts Market,” a multi-use arts center designed as a major downtown attraction.

10.2-P-4 Consider incorporating arts and culture facilities in downtown way-finding systems, particularly in the areas with major arts facilities and/or cultural activity nodes such as the Civic/Core, Columbia, Horton/Gaslamp District, Asian Thematic District, and in the Neighborhood Centers with cultural orientation (such as in Little Italy and northwestern East Village).

10.2-P-5 Involve and solicit input from the Commission for Arts and Culture and members of the downtown arts and culture community in the planning for new facilities.

### 10.3 ARTIST LIVE/WORK SPACE

In order for downtown to flourish as the regional center for arts and culture, artists need access to living quarters downtown. Because artists’ working hours tend to be long and varied, living near workspaces is often a necessity. In addition to this logistical consideration, the tradition of artists initiating community interaction, creating community identity, and anchoring new retail districts makes them desirable downtown residents.

Painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, or other media generally require more workspace than living space, making artists’ housing requirements different from those of the general population. Artists and their families have taken advantage of buildings and spaces—as well as very mixed neighborhoods—that the general public might find unsuitable. Numerous live/work spaces have been established downtown, particularly in eastern downtown and Little Italy.

While downtown San Diego has historically been a welcoming environment for live/work situations, units have been lost due to redevelopment and rising land values and rents. Part of the commitment to arts and culture includes providing live/work opportunities for artists.

### Goals: Artist Live/Work Space

10.3-G-1 Promote affordable live/work space for artists—including artists with families—in downtown.

### Policies: Artist Live/Work Space

10.3-P-1 Allow live/work space in all areas subject to limitations to protect public health and safety.

10.3-P-2 Allow use of downtown’s stock of historic warehouses and commercial buildings for live/work space where feasible.

10.3-P-3 Allow live/work units in mixed use and institutional projects such as arts-related schools, museums, and performance facilities.



Maintaining flourishing artistic and creative activities in the downtown environment will require flexible live/work spaces, such as the Rattner Art Center in East Village (top) and studios in re-used Little Italy buildings (above).



# 11



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Downtown has been an economic center for San Diego since its early days, becoming very active in shipping and warehousing by the early 20th century. In subsequent years, however, the area met with economic decline, although its commercial office hub was the regional business center until the 1980s. In the 1970s, San Diego embarked on a mission to better its troubled, under-performing downtown, and by 2005, more than \$4 billion of public and private money had been invested. Downtown's continued revitalization means important new opportunities for business growth and development in the eighth largest U.S. city.

An expanding and well-educated population, a positive business environment, and availability of sites for job-oriented land uses position downtown to capture significant new development with resultant economic benefits for the City and the region. Central location, transportation

infrastructure, government presence, and unique urban culture reinforce downtown as the economic center for the region.

The City of San Diego General Plan Economic Prosperity Element (amended by Resolution number R-315702) sets forth the City's long-term goals and policies for growth and development with regard to Economic Prosperity and Equitable Development.



### 11.1 PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Traditionally, downtown has served as the government center for the region. According to 2019 SANDAG estimates, of the 76,228 daily workers in downtown, 19% were employed by the government (federal, State, and local). Concentration of government uses in close proximity enhances downtown’s attractiveness to many office users, particularly law firms, title companies, and other professional service firms. Downtown is home to a range of other non-government service establishments as well, including those in finance, insurance, and real estate. More than 8,000 workers are employed by hotels, and more than 12,000 in food services.

Downtown San Diego has had exceptional success in attracting new residential development over the past two decades. While downtown is a strong regional employment center, the overall magnitude and concentration of employment falls behind other major North American downtowns. Opportunities and challenges for key employment-oriented land uses include offices, hotels and other visitor-serving uses, and retail as discussed below.

#### Offices

Downtown San Diego’s private office market currently consists of approximately ten million s.f. of space, representing the largest concentration of office space within the region. However, downtown does not dominate the regional market, and downtown’s share of the regional overall inventory has diminished from 23% in 1991 to about 15% in 2004. A number of outlying submarkets now have large office inventories, such as Mission Valley, Sorrento Mesa, Kearny Mesa, and University City. A key goal of the Community Plan is to retain downtown as the major employment and office center in the region.

The suburban users represent the region’s fastest growing industries (biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, communications, health, and other high-technology). Downtown faces a number of key challenges in its efforts to draw tenants away from established suburban submarkets, especially given that bio-technology and pharmaceutical companies tend to locate near major research institutions (such as UCSD), and high-tech firms’ space requirements and preference for campus-style settings, (that is, larger floor plates and higher ceilings, and free parking). These environments vary from downtown’s existing high-rise office buildings.

#### Hotels and Visitors

With its balmy weather, attractions, and beautiful setting, San Diego is already a leading visitor destination. With more than 12,000 hotel rooms, downtown is a strong and expanding lodging center. However,

more than 80 percent of the downtown hotel market is geared toward conventioners and other group travelers. Downtown has the potential to become more a leisure or “one-stop” travel destination, which will necessitate linkages between downtown’s tourist amenities, such as North Embarcadero, Balboa Park, the Gaslamp Quarter, Seaport Village, Little Italy, and the ballpark; and an expanded art and culture presence.

#### Retail, Restaurants, and Entertainment

Retail uses within downtown are concentrated primarily within three locations: Horton Plaza, Seaport Village, and the Gaslamp Quarter. Combined, these three retail nodes have a total of nearly 1.7 million s.f. of retail/restaurant/entertainment space. Little Italy also serves as a small, but vibrant, retail district with an emerging design and arts center. Downtown offers several regional and visitor-serving retail/entertainment destinations but a very limited amount of local-serving retail and services. The influx of new residents provides significant opportunities to introduce additional neighborhood-serving goods and services.

#### Other Sectors

Many other sectors contribute to downtown’s economic vibrancy, including public uses and maritime-related commercial and industrial uses. Downtown also offers a full range of schools, including preschool, charter, public, and private schools and numerous colleges, continuing education, and training programs. It is an established performing arts and a growing visual arts center.

### 11.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### Partnerships

Many agencies and entities have a stake in downtown economic development, including the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation (EDC), the Downtown San Diego Partnership, and the City’s Economic Development Department. Continuing collaborative efforts will be essential to help downtown realize its economic potential. Given the current residential surge, maintaining appropriate sites for employment uses—especially larger floor plates—is critical to this Community Plan.

#### Business Incentives and Financial Assistance

A variety of incentives and assistance are available to downtown’s businesses from the City:



The government (County Administration Center shown at top) employs 19% of workers downtown. Downtown includes the largest concentration of office space in the region (middle) and a rapidly-expanding inventory of hotels (above).



Gaslamp Quarter (above) is also the city’s principal nightlife destination.



**Promise Zones.** Through the Promise Zone initiative, federal government partners work with local agencies, community-based organizations, direct service providers, residents, and businesses to accelerate local efforts to increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, leverage private investment, reduce crime, enhance public health, and address other priorities identified by the community. The San Diego Promise Zone was designated in 2016 and includes portions of downtown.

#### Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention

**Business and Industry Incentive Program.** Serving as the City’s primary economic development platform, the Business Incentive Program offers assistance to businesses planning to expand within San Diego. The program provides financial assistance which can be utilized for various purposes, including:

- Assistance with City fees related to tenant improvements or new construction.
- Access to financing through existing City loan programs.
- Funding to support employee hiring or training through workforce development programs.
- Dedicated technical assistance provided by City staff.

Businesses may also be eligible for reimbursement on all or a portion of building and development-related fees subject to additional requirements. Eligibility criteria require businesses to be located within the City of San Diego and to meet specific job creation or capital investment benchmarks.

**Business Cooperation Program (BCP).** The BCP includes financial incentives designed to encourage businesses and nonprofit corporations to allocate sales and use taxes to the City, increasing revenues used to provide a variety of services that support the business community.

#### Business Finance

Financial assistance is available from several programs, including the San Diego Regional Revolving Loan Fund (SDRRLF); the Economic Development Funding Program, and grants from the California Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA). These programs provide loans, funding, and grants to support business growth, job creation, and entrepreneurship in San Diego. Additionally, a Storefront Improvement Program (SIP) provides small businesses with rebates to assist with eligible storefront renovation costs in downtown. These incentives aim to improve commercial districts and attract more customers.

### 11.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The economic development strategy outlined here provides a framework for ensuring downtown’s long-term regional competitiveness and to guide its emergence into a major West Coast business center. The strategy is based on the analysis of business trends and market trends and of available resources. While the strategy seeks to attract new businesses, build on existing strengths, and nurture start-ups in new market segments, it also outlines measures to retain and expand existing businesses, including smaller establishments vital to residential quality of life.

One of the economic development strategies incorporated in the Community Plan is the “employment required” overlay (See Figure 3-6). Given the momentum of residential development, some of these sites, particularly full-block sites, could be lost to non-employment uses. Primarily employment-oriented development is appropriate on these sites for three primary reasons:

1. These sites are centrally located in downtown, adjacent to existing businesses and civic uses, including federal and county courthouses, which are being expanded, and the Civic Center, which will be redeveloped in the coming years.
2. These areas have excellent regional and local transit access.
3. Given the Community Plan’s direction to allow bulkier buildings in the Core, some sites may not be as suitable for residential use given lower emphasis on sunlight penetration compared to some of the residential neighborhoods.

#### Goals: Economic Development Strategy

- 11.3-G-1 Maintain and enhance downtown’s unique and attractive climate for conducting business, including mixed-use environment, waterfront orientation, vibrant outdoor spaces, housing choices, and cultural amenities.
- 11.3-G-2 In partnership with business and community groups, proactively participate in downtown’s economic development.
- 11.3-G-3 Establish economic development priorities and undertake targeted investments to facilitate expansion, retention and attraction of businesses that meet downtown’s economic development objectives.

#### Policies: Economic Development Strategy

- 11.3-P-1 Preserve sites in Core/Columbia for business or primarily employment-oriented development to ensure that downtown’s employment potential is maintained.
- 11.3-P-2 Permit office and other employment-oriented development in a variety of locations across downtown, and allow mixed-use development in all neighborhoods.
- 11.3-P-3 Ensure a balanced inventory of land for appropriate use designations and development intensities in strategic locations.



- 11.3-P-4 Emphasize shared parking and merchant-serving parking approaches, including:
- Development of parking facilities that serve multiple uses, to enable efficient use of space over the course of the day;
  - Consider providing parking under all new parks, minimizing ramp impacts to urban design, where not limited by geologic or other constraints; and
  - Maximize short-term, on-street parking through restriping streets and minimal “red-curbs” where appropriate.
- 11.3-P-5 In collaboration with other public and private agencies, maintain a business attraction program to assist with site identification, incentive programs, permitting assistance, and other aspects of relocating or establishing a business.
- 11.3-P-5 Establish an inventory of targeted industry clusters and identify locational characteristics and determine the effects of City policy and regulation on the operation and continued success of these clusters; work closely with industry contacts to identify specific needs to be addressed.
- 11.3-P-7 Ensure that downtown zoning allows home occupation/ home-based businesses in appropriate locations.



*Downtown is well-positioned to support a thriving innovation economy. New employment uses such as high-tech, blue-tech, biotech, AI, medical campuses and research universities are encouraged through the Employment Use Incentive Program.*



*San Diego was an early adopter of the AI industry and is emerging as a vibrant AI hub. It is home to a growing number of AI startups and downtown is well-positioned to embrace this industry given its strong and growing supply of talent.*



# 12

## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The need for human services crosses all economic and social strata and the range and scope of service are as varied as the community. Downtown San Diego has a concentration of the region's human service facilities that provide shelter, meals, counseling, job training, youth programs, and other services to help seniors, the working poor, the sick and disabled, abuse victims, students, and single parents with children. Downtown's array of services respond to human needs where people live and work, and help to improve the quality of life. Human service facilities play an essential role in the downtown community.

There are two main reasons for the historic concentrations of needy populations and human service facilities downtown. Providers locate facilities in proximity to their targeted populations, but transportation, lower land values and rents, and reduced potential for community resistance have historically played important roles. Needy populations, in turn, have traditionally been attracted to downtown as the result of affordable housing and single-room occupancy hotels (SROs), accessibility, and presence of government aid offices and human service providers. While a number of downtown facilities assist those with extreme needs, others target more independent populations

in need of specialized services such as counseling, job training, child care, and refuge from domestic violence.

Some human service providers are associated with adverse neighborhood impacts. The facilities of greatest impact lack the complement of meals, shelter, restrooms, and counseling on-site. The lack of comprehensive care facilities can result in camping, loitering, public drunkenness, migrations from facility to facility, outdoor toileting, panhandling, and sometimes criminal behavior off-site. These impacts have been most intensely experienced in the eastern neighborhoods of downtown San Diego, where blighted conditions have endured the longest. There are many human service facilities in downtown that do not generate these types of impacts, and should be looked at as models for the future.

As redevelopment continues and downtown San Diego matures, human service providers must be considered partners because of their essential role in assisting downtown's neediest. Prevention of homelessness should be prioritized, including maintenance of affordable housing options and partnerships with human service providers to address needs.



IMAGE: DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP- CLEAN & SAFE



## 12.1 HUMAN SERVICES

Human Services are provided throughout our community by a variety of entities: State, County, City, and private agencies. The major private not-for-profit agencies within the Community Plan area have a long and distinguished historical connection to San Diego, they operate with a high degree of accountability and professional standards, and are mission driven. They are the communities' response to human need. These agencies' services include but are not limited to the following:

- Family/Individual Counseling
- Recovery Services
- Childcare and After School Programs
- Housing Continuum - Emergency through Permanent Affordable
- Prevention Activities
- Senior Services
- Emergency/Outreach Services
- Community Centers and Youth Activity Centers
- Employment Services
- Domestic Violence Services

The plan for downtown San Diego includes integrating human service facilities into neighborhoods, allowing service accessibility where people live and work. Smaller facilities that blend in with neighborhood development patterns and potentially generate fewer off-site impacts are preferable to larger facilities. Smaller facilities also enable tighter on-site management.

### Goals: Human Services

- 12.1-G-1 Promote future dispersion of human service facilities across downtown and throughout the City and region.
- 12.1-G-2 Ensure social service facilities are located with compatible uses.

### Policies: Human Services

- 12.1-P-1 Allow human service facilities in areas designated as Mixed Use, Core, and Mixed Commercial.
- 12.1-P-2 Promote child care, youth activities, and after-school/summer programs in Neighborhood Centers, downtown parks, and public facilities.
- 12.1-P-3 Accommodate larger health and human service facilities in designated large Floorplate Areas.



Child Care is encouraged through several incentive programs.



Human service facilities have tended to concentrate in downtown, to maintain accessibility to target populations, transportation, and government. The continued presence of these facilities is anticipated in the Community Plan, to meet people's needs.

## 12.2 FACILITIES

A variety of management and operational techniques for human service facilities have proven to be effective in balancing client needs with community concerns in urban areas. As development intensifies and the population grows downtown, managing off-site impacts will grow in importance.

### Goals: Facilities

- 12.2-G-1 Minimize impacts to surrounding land uses and downtown-at-large, while balancing provision of services to populations in need of assistance.
- 12.2-G-2 Provide mechanisms to transition existing single-service facilities into 24-hour providers of housing, meals, and services.

### Policies: Facilities

- 12.2-P-1 Require a plan to demonstrate operations, facilities, and protocols to avoid off-site impacts from clients such as litter, outdoor toileting, loitering, camping, and outdoor lines. Require that facilities employ a continuum-of-care approach, or a collaboration, whereby multiple services are provided on-site, such as meals, shelter, and counseling services.



The guiding principles of this plan depend on cleanliness and physical security of public spaces. This plan seeks to create clean and safe neighborhoods, including a network of well-maintained and actively managed public facilities and activated places that support the downtown population and visitors and ensure public hygiene and dignity.

## 12.3 HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGIES

At the level of downtown development planning, homelessness prevention involves both understanding and addressing underlying causes of homelessness, as well as protecting and enhancing affordable housing options. Affordable housing is addressed in *Chapter 3: Land Use and Housing* including goals and policies for maintaining and expanding housing options for low- and moderate-income households.

Maintaining a strong network of human service facilities is also critical because downtown is home to a variety of people with limited financial means. Seniors, low-wage earners, single parents, students, and the disabled have more opportunities to find affordable housing downtown, within proximity to transportation, services, school, and work. Due to limited incomes and resources, their living situations are sometimes precarious. The assistance offered by human service providers can help to stabilize individuals at risk of homelessness, and thereby keep people off the streets. Many of downtown's human service facilities are providing job training, health care, meal programs, alcohol and drug abuse treatment, and counseling in addition to services for the homeless.

The City of San Diego has also adopted a 10-year Community Action Plan on Homelessness, which emphasizes a systems-level approach



to addressing homelessness. This plan includes targeted goals, such as reducing unsheltered homelessness by 50% within three years and addressing veteran and youth homelessness through coordinated efforts. The strategy prioritizes collaboration, client-centered services, and the creation of long-term housing solutions while advancing high-impact initiatives and expanding access to resources. Downtown's human service facilities play a key role in achieving these objectives, supporting individuals at risk of homelessness through critical services that align with the city's strategic plan to create a more equitable and sustainable community.

### Goals: Homelessness Prevention Strategies

- 12.3-G-1 Create and maintain and expand housing options affordable to very-low income and special-needs groups.
- 12.3-G-2 Encourage location of human service facilities that provide assistance to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

### Policies: Homelessness Prevention Strategies

- 12.3-P-1 Work with human service agency providers, the City, and the County to expand the range of services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and require all new or relocated facilities to provide such services.
- 12.3-P-2 Allow human services in housing projects for very-low and low-income households, wherever possible.

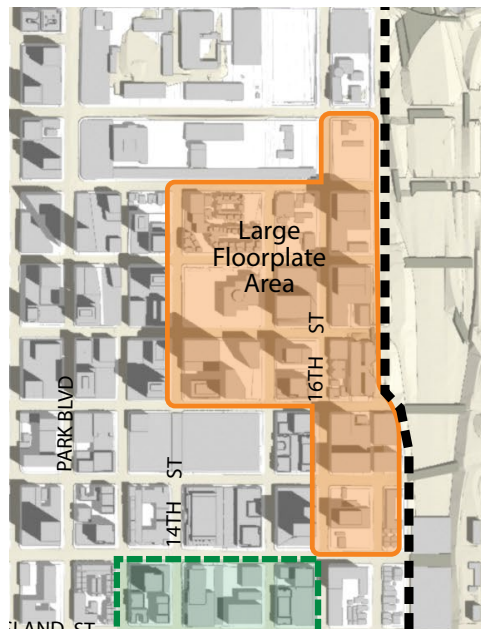
The location of nationally-recognized hospitals in Hillcrest greatly benefits downtown, and may focus facility needs on clinics and urgent care facilities. These most likely can be incorporated in mixed-use buildings, although buildings with large floorplates allowed in designated areas may be suitable for larger medical facilities. The Northeast sub-district of East Village would be an ideal location, although such a facility could be located elsewhere as well. Consideration should be given to medical services for students, elderly, and working poor with limited incomes and health insurance coverage.

### Goals: Health Care

- 12.4-G-1 Encourage the provision of sufficient and easily accessible health care facilities to meet needs of all sectors of the growing downtown population.
- 12.4-G-2 Allow for the integration of new clinics or larger facilities in the downtown fabric, following established community design goals.

### Policies: Health Care

- 12.4-P-1 Coordinate new medical care facility development carefully with providers, addressing both practical needs and downtown development and design objectives.
- 12.4-P-2 Pursue a diversity of facilities to meet the long- and short-term medical needs of downtown residents, the poor, visitors, and employees.
- 12.4-P-3 Encourage the location of a small hospital or similar facility downtown.



The areas designated for large floorplate buildings provide development opportunities for the multi-service medical facilities needed to serve downtown's diverse population.

## 12.4 HEALTH CARE

Another key factor for making downtown livable and addressing community needs is health care as the downtown population grows. Paralleling regional trends, and reflecting mid/high-rise housing downtown, a significant portion of downtown growth may come from the retired population. Children are expected to increase in numbers as well. These two groups are the most frequent users of medical care, and facilities downtown will increase to serve their needs, as well as those of the middle-aged adult population. Medical facilities in close proximity to downtown are not only essential for health purposes, but will also help cut down on driving trips to facilities located outside the area.

# 13

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

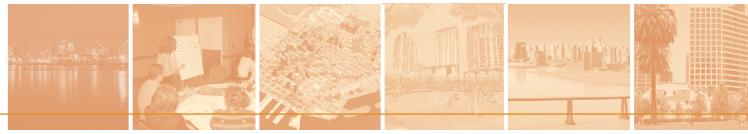
The Downtown Community Plan is subject to and must comply with all of the provisions of the City of San Diego General Plan and Strategic Framework Element and Action Plan as may currently exist or as may be amended in the future by the City of San Diego. The provisions thereof are specifically adopted herein by reference.

Health and safety issues stem from downtown's location in an earthquake-prone region, proximity to an international airport, noise from transportation systems, urban development patterns, and residual hazardous materials from historic development and industrial activities.

Reducing or avoiding risks associated with these conditions will create a safer, more livable environment. The need to proactively address health and safety concerns is underscored by the Plan's directives for significantly intensifying the downtown population. This potentially increases the number of people exposed to risks, and the possibility of creating new threats.

This chapter addresses health and safety issues associated with geologic and seismic hazards, hazardous materials, airport operations, and noise. Medical facilities are discussed in *Chapter 12: Health and Human Services*, and fire and police emergency services in *Chapter 8: Public Facilities and Amenities*.





### 13.1 GEOLOGIC AND SEISMIC HAZARDS

The more pervasive health and safety risks in downtown originate from regional and local seismic faults with potential for earthquakes. San Diego is located within a broad zone of seismic activity between the Pacific and North American lithospheric plates, extending from the San Clemente fault zone 60 miles west, to the San Andreas Fault 90 miles inland. Generally, the eastern edge of this zone is the most active. Faults in the west—closer to San Diego—experience some activity but usually with less impact.

The Rose Canyon Fault Zone, part of a system extending roughly from Oceanside to the U.S./Mexico International Border, crosses downtown in a complex pattern of active and potentially active fault traces. The two most significant active faults identified in the area are the Downtown Graben and the San Diego Fault, shown in Figure 13-1.

Ground shaking and potential liquefaction—the sudden loss of weight-bearing capacity in saturated sandy deposits—during an earthquake event could result in significant property damage, infrastructure disruption, and population injury and loss. Earthquake damage, however, is a function of controllable factors such as the form, structural design, materials, construction quality, and location of structures. There are many methods available to mitigate or avoid risks, and therefore seismic conditions should not be viewed as development constraints except in the immediate vicinity of faults. There is also potential for seismically-induced tsunami in the area, although such risk is low.

A number of older unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings in downtown are particularly prone to damage or collapse from earthquakes. A City inventory conducted in Spring 2002 indicates that a number of URM buildings are located downtown.

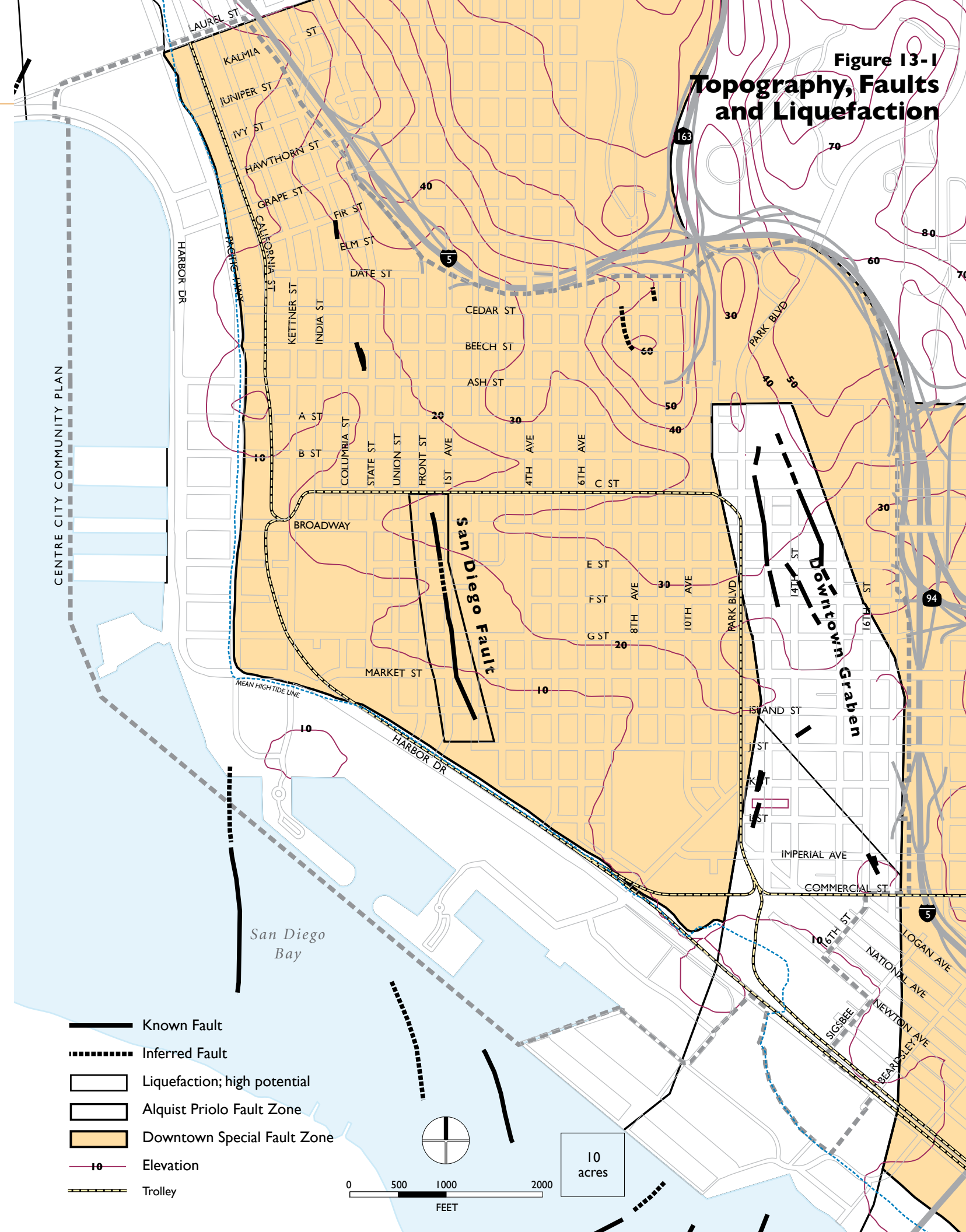
Various regulations enforced by the State of California and City of San Diego are intended to mitigate potential earthquake-related risks for new and existing development:

- **Alquist-Priolo Zone Act.** The State Alquist-Priolo Zone Act regulates development near active faults, preventing buildings intended for human occupancy from being constructed across identified active fault traces or within 50 feet on either side (unless geological investigation proves there are no traces present). A detailed geologic investigation must precede permitting of any proposed development in earthquake fault zones – extending between 200 and 500 feet on both sides of known potentially and recently active fault traces. The Downtown Graben and San Diego Fault are Alquist-Priolo zones (see Figure 13-1).
- **City of San Diego Fault and Liquefaction Zones.** The City requires fault investigations within the Downtown Special Fault Zone shown in Figure 13-1. These include site-specific geotechnical investigations of potential fault hazards, and setbacks from active faults, for proposed development proposals. The City also requires investigations for liquefaction hazard in zones adjacent to the Bay or major drainages, shown in Figure 13-1 as well. Appropriate mitigation is then required for hazards identified in these reports.



New open spaces are strategically located to capitalize on the presence of geologic faults.

Figure 13-1  
Topography, Faults  
and Liquefaction





- **Uniform Building Code (UBC).** The California UBC, which has been adopted by the City, incorporates minimum strength standards to which a building must be designed in order to resist seismic shaking.
- **City of San Diego Ordinance 18451.** This ordinance provides minimum standards for structural seismic resistance in URM buildings and sets timelines for building reinforcement.

These regulations will be implemented in all downtown development. Downtown’s seismic safety will likely increase as redevelopment occurs, and older building stock—constructed prior to implementation of the UBC with seismic safety provisions—is replaced with new buildings incorporating the latest in seismic-safety technology. Areas deemed undevelopable due to underlying faults have great potential for a network of interesting, unique open spaces. This Plan locates open space resources on known fault traces to the extent possible; these will be complemented by additional “finger parks” along newly discovered faults as development exploration continues.

**Goals: Geologic and Seismic Hazards**

- 13.1-G-1 Maintain a safe and livable environment by mitigating and avoiding risks posed by seismic conditions.
- 13.1-G-2 Create an open space network in areas where development is precluded by faults to the greatest extent possible.

**Policies: Geologic and Seismic Hazards**

- 13.1-P-1 Implement all seismic-safety development requirements, including the Alquist-Priolo Zone Act, City requirements for the Downtown Special Fault Zone and areas subject to potential liquefaction, and building codes.
- 13.1-P-2 Coordinate with the City in enforcement of Ordinance 18451 for URM building reinforcement, and require appropriate reinforcement of URM buildings integrated into new development.
- 13.1-P-3 Where active faults are found and building cannot take place, work closely with developers to provide publicly-accessible open space.



Downtown has extensive experience in building along fault lines and traces – shown above is a residential development in East Village.

### 13.2 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

While it does not pose an immediate physical threat as earthquakes do, exposure to hazardous materials can cause harm over time, and must also be mitigated to ensure a high standard of living. Considerable progress has been made since 1992 in the identification and mitigation of hazardous materials concerns.

Contaminated soil problems have been ameliorated as part of the redevelopment activities related to the ballpark, hotel construction, and expansion of Port of San Diego and convention center facilities.

Nevertheless, isolated soil and/or water contamination could be encountered on properties undergoing redevelopment, particularly in the eastern neighborhoods due to the history of industrial and storage uses. A portion of older buildings subject to demolition will likely contain asbestos and lead-based paint, posing health concerns. Implementing established remediation protocols in these situations can reduce public health risks to negligible levels.

**Goals: Hazardous Materials**

- 13.2-G-1 Encourage efforts to minimize hazardous material exposure.

**Policies: Hazardous Materials**

- 13.2-P-1 During review of all development projects, require documentation of hazardous materials investigation addressing site and building conditions.
- 13.2-P-2 Help to coordinate remediation of sites as necessary and feasible.
- 13.2-P-3 Do not support on-site remediation of contaminated soil if the process causes any nuisance impacts.

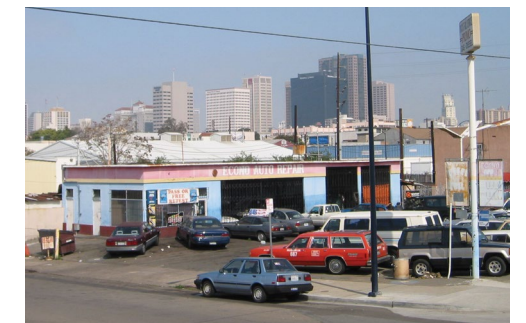
### 13.3 AIRPORT INFLUENCE

The San Diego International Airport (SDIA) is located directly northwest of downtown. While its proximity is an asset, airport activities also represent potential risks. A rare crash occurrence during approaches to the airport and take-offs could result in injury, life loss, and property damage. In addition, noise related to airport activities impacts surrounding areas, and needs to be considered as part of planning for the affected areas.

The Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans (ALUCPs) for San Diego County establish land use policies for the communities surrounding San Diego International Airport, including Centre City, and areas surrounding other airports in San Diego County. Airport land use policies are contained in the ALUCP overlay zone of the San Diego Municipal Code. The Downtown Community Plan, Centre City Planned District Ordinance, and the overlay zones have been amended to implement the policies contained in the ALUCPs. These policies address land use compatibilities concerning noise and safety aspects of airport operations and regulate land uses, heights of buildings, and densities (both residential



Urban environments often experience significant air pollution from various sources of exhaust and particulate matter. Strategies to improve air quality and mitigate sources of particulate matter include the installation of air filtration devices for commercial kitchens and restaurants to minimize grease and smoke emissions, support for additional pedestrian and cycling infrastructure to reduce vehicle emissions, and expansion of urban green spaces and tree planting initiatives to act as natural air filters.



Shared sites contemplated for reuse in the Community Plan may require cleanup prior to redevelopment (top and above).



and commercial). In the event the airport is ever relocated or closed, land uses in the vicinity would be re-evaluated.

### Goals: Airport Influence

- 13.3-G-1 Minimize the risk of injury, life loss, and property damage; and mitigate noise impacts that are associated with aircraft activity at Lindbergh Field.

### Policies: Airport Influence

- 13.3-P-1 Regulate development within the various areas affected by SDIA as follows:
  - Building Heights. Consistent with the SDIA ALUCP, Centre City Planned District Ordinance, and City of San Diego Municipal Code.
  - Use and Intensity Limitations. As established by the SDIA ALUCP (and incorporated by reference in the Centre City Planned District Ordinance).
  - Noise-Sensitive Uses. Use the SDIA ALUCP noise contour boundaries and use regulations as provided in the Centre City Planned District Ordinance.

## 13.4 NOISE

Noise has an important effect on human habitation, health, and safety. Disruptive or harmful levels should be avoided or mitigated in order to provide a livable environment downtown. Transportation systems such as the railroad and freeway traffic are the principle sources of noise in downtown. Noise impacts resulting from SDIA are discussed in Section 13.3: Airport Influence and addressed in the ALUCPs. The juxtaposition of residential with more active uses that generate noise may be problematic as well.

Reducing impacts from transportation noise involves identifying the geographic extent of noise in mapped contours and then 1) avoiding uses sensitive to noise—such as residences and schools—in affected areas, and/or 2) integrating noise attenuation components in buildings for noise-sensitive uses to reduce interior sound levels. The State of California establishes acceptable interior noise levels for habitable uses.

Train operations associated with the railroad that flanks downtown’s eastern and southern perimeters generate excessive noise. The rumblings, horns, and whistles from trains create loud, intermittent noise that is particularly distressing for residents. Options for reconstructing the railroad in a below-grade trench have been studied. This may reduce some noise impacts and other safety and urban design concerns but would not mitigate the effects of the railroad entirely. At the same time, the railroad is an integral part of downtown’s character and the Santa Fe Depot is a major historical monument. There are significant cost and feasibility issues as well. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has issued an Interim



Much of Little Italy is in close proximity to SDIA, and is affected by the provisions of the ALUCPs (above).

Final Rule for the Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Crossings, took effect in August 2006. This rule allows local jurisdictions to establish “quiet zones” with limits on crossing horns and whistles, and downtown railroad crossings may be eligible. In addition, evolving technology will continue to reduce the need for horns and whistles. However, in January 2024, the FRA temporarily suspended this quiet zone due to safety compliance issues at 12 intersections. The City of San Diego promptly addressed these deficiencies by installing over 120 railroad crossing signs and updating road markings. By January 29, 2024, the FRA confirmed that the quiet zone was reinstated, and trains ceased routine horn sounding within seven days.

Constant traffic noise arises from the heavily traveled freeways serving downtown as well. Development of noise-sensitive uses in areas affected by freeway noise will require noise attenuation—such as reinforced insulation and limited outdoor exposure—to ensure acceptable interior sound levels. The City of San Diego Municipal Code Chapter 5, Article 9.5 contains interior noise standards that must be met for residential uses when outdoor levels exceed certain thresholds.

In addition to the transportation-related noise, downtown’s mixed-use character and increasing intensities result in the juxtaposition of residents and more active, noisy uses. One example of this will be higher noise levels in active mixed-use Neighborhood Centers—due to foot traffic, restaurant and bar activity, and delivery trucks—that will infiltrate housing and offices. While limiting high-energy entertainment uses to certain areas and raising construction insulation standards will limit this problem to some extent, new residents will also need to accept higher noise levels in general as part of urban living.

### Goals: Noise

- 13.4-G-1 Maintain a pleasant, livable sound environment alongside rising levels of activity and increasing mixing of uses.
- 13.4-G-2 Work with responsible agencies to mitigate to the extent possible severe noise impacts from un-changeable sources—such as railroad and freeways.

### Policies: Noise

- 13.4-P-1 Continue working toward innovative solutions with railroad operators to balance public safety, urban design, and heritage goals.
- 13.4-P-2 Apply for a downtown quiet zone, to include the 13 railway crossings, and enforce ban on sounding of horns, bells, and whistles.
- 13.4-P-3 Require construction techniques that mitigate interior noise near freeways—in areas of 65 CNEL or greater—pursuant to the City of San Diego’s Municipal Code, such as greater insulation, reinforced windows, ventilation systems, and limited outdoor exposure.
- 13.4-P-4 Provide discretionary review process for night clubs, music halls, live-music performance venues, and other sources of noise to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses.



The principal sources of noise (in addition to those from flights) are from railroad operations (top) and freeway traffic (middle). Active nighttime uses will be accommodated alongside residential (above).



### 13.5 EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Emergency preparedness in an urban setting takes two primary forms: one, establishing appropriate levels of safety in the built environment, and two, the ability to respond to emergency situations.

The majority of recent downtown development is Type 1 construction, and meets the high-rise building code, providing the highest levels of occupant fire and life safety protection. Additionally, code compliance is closely coordinated with the Fire Department both through the development process and following through construction. Coordination with relevant code review and enforcement authorities is ongoing and shall continue to provide best practice safety for users of all building types.

The ability for an area to effectively address emergency situations—natural or man-made—is of critical importance for the health of a community. Ongoing responsibility for emergency response is borne by the City of San Diego through its Emergency Operations Plan, and its role in the Unified San Diego County Emergency Services Organization to assure regional cooperation and assistance with emergencies. The City also conducts drills and training simulations to assure improved operations in the event of a disaster.

As a result, modifications may be made to street operations or parking to accommodate evacuation needs. The City of San Diego will continue to work in partnership with agencies with responsibility for emergency operations throughout the implementation of the Community Plan.

#### Goals: Emergency Preparedness

13.5-G-1 Maintain high levels of emergency preparedness.

#### Policies: Emergency Preparedness

13.5-P-1 Participate proactively in the efforts of other agencies to plan for emergencies, and work to identify areas where the City could contribute to safety improvements downtown.

13.5-P-2 Work with relevant code review, enforcement and inspection authorities to ensure all building types are constructed and operated to highest accepted safety standards.

13.5-P-3 Work with rail owners and operators to reduce and eliminate the blocking of street intersections.



A resilient downtown prioritizes safety, risk reduction, and preparedness through thoughtful planning and coordination with regional partners.

# 14



## PLANNING PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Downtown Community Plan is subject to and must comply with all of the provisions of the City of San Diego General Plan and Strategic Framework Element and Action Plan as has been amended by the City of San Diego. The provisions thereof are specifically adopted herein by reference.

The Community Plan will be implemented through a variety of mechanisms. As a living document with long-range applicability, mechanisms also exist to permit changes in the Community Plan as the need arises, and to review the document periodically for successful performance. The following section addresses the smooth continuing operation of the Community Plan.



### Implementation of the Community Plan

A variety of tools will be used to implement the Community Plan:

**Zoning.** The zoning regulations in downtown's Planned District Ordinances (PDOs) will be consistent with the goals and policies of the Community Plan, and serve to implement them.

**TDR Programs.** Programs will be put in place to facilitate the transfer of development rights for parks and historic resources.

**Capital Improvements.** Specific streetscapes, parks, and other amenities will be required to be consistent with the Community Plan.

**Master Plans for Specific Components.** These could range from a transit plan to a streetscape master plan.

**Design Regulations and Guidelines.** The Design Regulations and Guidelines will provide specific, detailed guidance for the design of downtown and its individual specific districts such as Gaslamp Quarter.

### Amendments to the Community Plan

Changes to the Plan may be proposed in order to address circumstances and opportunities. If approved, they will take the form of amendments. Because the Community Plan is part of the City General Plan any amendments to this document constitute a General Plan amendment as well.

A series of agencies will be responsible for reviewing and evaluating recommendations, and/or approving any amendments, listed (in sequential order) below:

- City of San Diego
- Planning Commission; and
- City Council.

Any proposed amendment is also subject to environmental review.

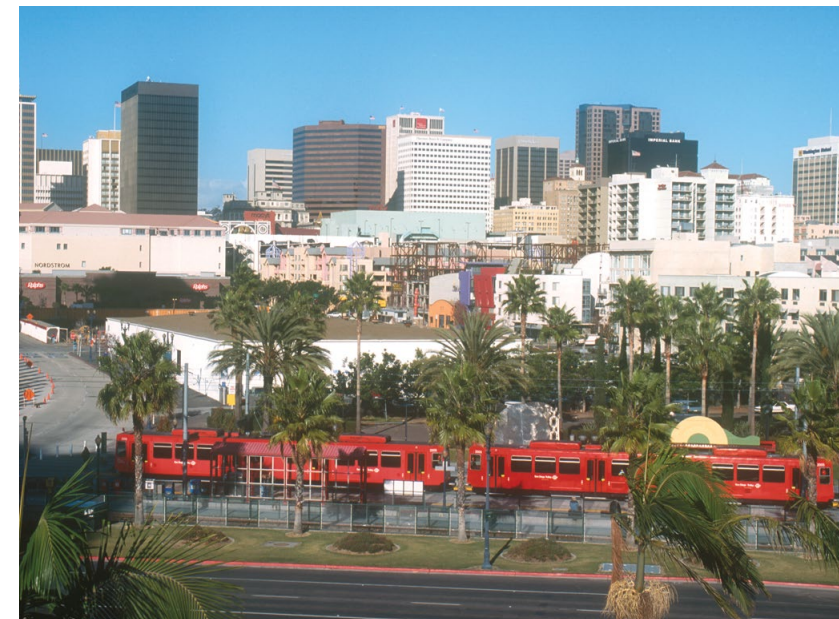
### Periodic Review

Conducting periodic reviews is important to ensure the Plan's proper functioning over time. Changing conditions may also affect the effectiveness of implementing actions. Reviews offer an opportunity to examine the directives of the Plan, check in on the planning process to see whether goals and objectives are being achieved, and make changes in the case that they are not.

State General Plan legislative requirements do not necessitate a mandatory review cycle for Community Plans. Nevertheless, given the pace of development and magnitude of transformations occurring downtown, a periodic review should be conducted to make sure the Plan is on track.

Items of particular importance to consider are:

- Ensure preservation of park land and park development, including proper functioning of the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program;
- Review neighborhood development for consistency with Plan goals;
- Determine whether PDO requirements and Design Guidelines are resulting in projects that reflect intended Plan goals; and
- Review Floor Area Ratio (FAR) incentives (identified in *Chapter 3: Land Use and Housing*) program to evaluate if it is providing the intended results.



*Maintaining progress in redevelopment and neighborhood building will require periodic review of the Community Plan's policy structure, to address ever-changing economic, cultural, development, and transportation trends.*

# Acknowledgements

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## Appendix A

### FEIR Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the Downtown Community Plan