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ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

6.1 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT, ATTRACTION, RETENTION, AND EXPANSION

6. Economic Prosperity

GOALS

- Promotion of Old Town San Diego as a major destination for historic and cultural heritage tourism.
- Economic well-being of locally-owned and operated businesses that provide services and goods to residents and visitors.
- Commercial buildings and uses that support and enhance Old Town San Diego's historic community character.

INTRODUCTION

As the birthplace of California, Old Town San Diego is rich with historical and cultural heritage and plays an important role in the City's tourism industry. Old Town has been a center for cultural heritage tourism and related businesses since the 1930s. Tourists continue to travel to Old Town to experience places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present, including irreplaceable historical, cultural, and natural resources. Heritage tourism also generates support for and enhancement of the community's historical character, preserves historical resources, and creates destinations for tourists and local residents. Visitors are attracted by the quality historical and cultural buildings and sites, period architecture and landscaping, museums, and parks.



Well-designed visitor-serving uses including hotels and restaurants support heritage tourism and generate sales and employment.



Old Town's historical resources and ambiance draw visitors and locals to the community's attractions and businesses.

The Community Plan supports the continuation, improvement, and expansion of the cultural heritage tourism industry and related businesses through land use policies, urban design guidance, and policies regarding mobility improvements, access to transit, and visitor parking. The plan also accommodates complementary uses, such as residential uses and office commercial uses, to support a balanced and vibrant community. The Land Use Element identifies historical and cultural parks and sites and guides land uses to support and complement these assets. The Urban Design Element addresses the design of new buildings and sites to ensure they are consistent with Old Town's historical character. The Mobility Element addresses the pedestrian environment, transit access, visitor parking, and wayfinding signs to help enhance the visitor experience. Acknowledging that the community incorporates residential uses in addition to commercial and visitor-oriented uses, the Noise Element addresses land use compatibility with commercial activity.

The Economic Prosperity Element provides additional policies regarding support for economically important uses in Old Town San Diego and support for programs and activities which aid and complement economic activity in the community.

6.1 Business Improvement, Attraction, Retention, and Expansion

The promotion of the Old Town as a visitor destination can result in economic benefits for the community and the City. Cultural heritage tourism as an economic development strategy supports local and small business growth, provides job opportunities, increases property values, and encourages private investment. Economically important business and activity types in Old Town San Diego include hotel and visitor uses, special events, retail goods and services, and office uses. Improving the environment for these uses, retaining and expanding existing businesses and activities, and attracting new businesses and opportunities is important to the economic health of the community.

Community organizations in Old Town San Diego are active in promoting tourism and community businesses, and in fostering the historical and welcoming atmosphere that draws visitors and businesses. The City supports the formation and operation of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), including the Old Town Business Improvement District, which are geographic-based areas where the business owners are assessed annually to fund activities and improvements to promote their individual business districts. BIDs are a tool for strengthening local small business communities, creating new jobs, attracting new businesses, and revitalizing commercial neighborhoods across the City.



Office uses in Old Town support diverse business activity and provide customers for retail and restaurants.



Retail, goods and services uses can foster engagement with the community while supporting businesses and artisans.

HOTEL AND VISITOR USES

Hotel and visitor uses have a strong presence in Old Town San Diego, with hotels and other businesses that cater to business people, leisure travelers, and family vacationers. The community's location near San Diego International Airport, transit, beaches, Sea World, and Downtown also contributes to visitors staying in Old Town. Organizations and businesses offering cultural experiences through museums, historical buildings and sites, and exhibits also play an important role in supporting Old Town's character and economy. Walking tours and other types of engagement activities may encourage and guide visitors to experience points of interest that are outside of the San Diego Avenue corridor.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events such as festivals, cultural events, and farmers and art markets, also play an important role in attracting visitors and supporting community businesses and organizations. These types of events can also highlight Old Town's history, culture, and attractions.

RETAIL GOODS AND SERVICES USES

San Diego Avenue has historically functioned as a "main street" for Old Town San Diego, with storefront businesses that foster a vibrant public realm and pedestrian activity. Retail uses, including sales of crafts and art, restaurants, and cafes cater primarily to visitors. Authentic streetscape and building design that enhance the public realm and

strengthen the visual and pedestrian connection with the State Historic Park will attract visitors and support the community's sense of place.

OFFICE USES

Office uses are also drawn to Old Town San Diego by the historical ambiance and stimulating environment. The Community has a variety of office users including professional businesses and government offices that assist in supporting local retail and restaurant businesses.

POLICIES

- EP-1.1 Promote Old Town San Diego as a historical and cultural heritage tourism destination.
- EP-1.2 Promote a community atmosphere that attracts craftsmen and artisans who could live, work, and sell their products in Old Town.
- EP-1.3 Encourage guided and self-guided walking tours in Old Town San Diego.
- EP-1.4 Support activation of Old Town's public spaces, including streets, sidewalks, and parks, with City-permitted special events and park uses to provide cultural enrichment, promote economic vitality, enhance community identity and pride, and provide fundraising opportunities for the community's nonprofit organizations.
- EP-1.5 Encourage the use of tourism-related local funding sources to promote Old Town San Diego nationally and internationally as a cultural heritage tourism destination.
- EP-1.6 Encourage the use of local, state, and federal programs to incentivize the retention of small local businesses within Old Town.
- EP-1.7 Support the character of buildings and landscaping and the quality of museums and exhibits within Old Town San Diego to support historical and cultural heritage tourism.



Old Town San Diego's history and character have long made it an attractive location for businesses including the Old Mission Olive Works Company, seen here in 1928.