



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: April 18, 2017

TO: Historical Resources Board

FROM: Kelley Stanco, Senior Planner, Historic Preservation Planning

SUBJECT: Information Item A: Briefing on the Historic District Process

With the adoption of the Community Plan Updates (CPUs) for North Park and Golden Hill last fall, the Planning Department committed to an aggressive six-year work program to bring forward all thirteen potential historic districts identified in the reconnaissance surveys that were prepared in support of the CPU efforts. The first three of these districts will be processed this calendar year. In anticipation of this work effort, staff is presenting an informational item to brief the Historical Resources Board on the historic district designation process and to answer any questions the Board may have about the process or their role in it. To that end, this information item will address what a historic district is; the historic districts that are currently designated; the process for establishing a new historic district and the Board's role in the designation process; and the processing schedule for this year and beyond.

What is a Historic District?

A historic district is defined by the City's Municipal code as "a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects that are united historically, geographically, or aesthetically by plan or physical development and that have a special character, historical interest, cultural or aesthetic value, or that represents one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City."

In other words, a historic district is a geographically defined concentration of resources – typically buildings – that come together to collectively convey a shared significance under one or more of the City's designation criteria. Individual buildings within the boundary of the historic district may or may not be significant in their own right, but much like pieces of a puzzle these properties come together to paint a picture and tell an important story about our City's past. The historic resource, then, is the historic district as a whole.

A historic district is also a sum of its parts, and is comprised of contributing and non-contributing resources – those that convey and contribute to the significance of the district and those that do not. Contributing resources are those resources that were built within the period of significance for the district (the period of time that reflects and captures the district's historic significance) and retain integrity to convey that significance. Non-contributing resources were either built outside of the period of significance, or have been so modified that they no longer retain integrity to convey the significance of the district.

All improvements to resources within the district must be reviewed and approved for consistency with the US Secretary of the Interior’s Standards. However, because contributing resources contribute to the significance of the district and non-contributing resource do not, the implementation of the Standards, and the benefits available to the property owners do differ. Non-contributing resources are afforded much more flexibility in terms of what they can do with the property, including demolition, provided that the modifications, additions or new construction do not adversely impact the district as a whole. Contributing resources must comply with the Standards in a manner very similar to individually significant resources, in order to preserve the building’s integrity and contributing status. In return, all contributing resources are eligible for a Mills Act agreement to provide property tax relief in exchange for maintenance and restoration of the property, while non-contributing resources are not eligible. All properties benefit from increased property values typically seen within designated historic districts.

There is no set or defined ratio of contributing to non-contributing resources that is required for a district to be eligible for historic designation, and there are a range of percentages for the City’s designated historic districts. However, staff has observed that once the ratio falls below roughly 65 percent contributing resources, you begin to lose the sense of place that defines a historic district and allows it to convey significance as an intact historic resource.

What Historic Districts Are Currently Designated?

The City of San Diego currently has 19 designated historic districts listed on the City’s register, just over half of which have been processed since 2000. These districts are located in various parts of the City and reflect a wide range of resource types, styles and historic significance. An overview of the districts, their size, significance, and year designated is provided in the table below, and a City-wide map is provided in Attachment 1. Additional information regarding these districts and the contributing resources may be found in the City’s [California Historic Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\)](#)¹ for those interested in learning more.

District Name	HRB #	Size	Significance	Period of Significance	Year Designated
Auxiliary Naval Air Station Brown Field	405-411	7 Resources	National Register	1940-1946	2000
Balboa Park	1	All elements constructed for the Expos	Architecture, Art, Education, Landscape Architecture, Sculpture	1915-1916; 1935-1936	1977
Bishop’s School	357	8 Resources	Work of Masters; Contribution to the Community	1935	1994
Burlingame	526	188 Parcels (168 C, 20 NC)	Early 20 th Century Suburban Development; Association with Leading Citizens; Architecture; Work of Masters.	1912-1952	2002-2007
Chinese/Asian Thematic	207	23 Resources	Association with 19 th and 20 th Century Chinese-Asian Community	1872-1932	1987
El Pueblo Ribera	117	11 Resources	Architecture, Work of a Master	1923	1977

¹ <http://sandiego.cfwebtools.com/search.cfm?display=search>

District Name	HRB #	Size	Significance	Period of Significance	Year Designated
Fort Stockton Line	822	109 Parcels (80 C, 29 NC)	Streetcar Suburb Development; Architecture; Work of Masters	1910-1939	2007
Gaslamp Quarter	127	135 Parcels (90 C, 45 NC)	Architecture; Exploration and Settlement, Commerce, Politics	1873-1930	1980
Grant Hill Park	217	136 Parcels (48 C, 88 NC)	Architecture	1906-1936	1988
Golden Hill	130	115 Parcels (60 C, 55 NC)	Architecture	1890-1940	1978
Islenair	807	113 Parcels (82 C, 31 NC)	Small House Movement, Architectural Trends, Working Class Housing, Early Auto-Oriented Subdivisions, and Adaptation to Natural Topography; Architecture	1926-1952	2007
Naval Training Center (NTC)	425	86 Resources (53 C, 33 NC)	National Register	1922-1946	2000
Mission Hills	821	174 Parcels (129 C, 45 NC)	Progressive Era Civic Politics, Influence of the Nolen Plan, High Concentration of Quality Design; Architecture; Work of Masters	1908-1942	2007 & 2014
North Park Dryden	1008	136 Parcels (108 C, 28 NC)	Streetcar Suburb Development, Architecture, Work of Masters	1912-1941	2011
Ocean Beach Cottage Emerging	442	72 Resources	Early 20 th Century Beach Cottage Architectural Development & Style	1887-1931	2000- Present
Old Town	14	9 Resources	Earliest San Diego Development	1821-1846, 1846-1869	1970
Sherman Heights	208	544 Parcels (395 C, 149 NC)	Architecture	1868-1937	1987
Shirley Ann Place	424	25 Parcels (25 C, 0 NC)	Post-WWI Speculative Middle-Class Builder/Contractor Designed Tract; Architecture	1925-1927	2000
Talmadge Gates	422	16 Gates 40 Lights	Andalusian Revival Forged Iron Design.	1927	2000

What is the Process for Establishing and Designating a New Historic District, and what is the Board's Role in that Process?

Typically, historic districts are initially identified through a windshield or reconnaissance survey, which looks for concentrations of resources that may be eligible for designation as a historic district pending further research into the history of the area and the individual properties within it. Because windshield and reconnaissance surveys are intended only to identify historic resources (including districts) that may be eligible for historic designation, additional, intensive level survey work is required to confirm whether or not a district is present and designate that district as a historic resource. That intensive level survey work involves researching and developing a historic context statement, statement of significance, and period of significance; refining and justifying a district boundary; surveying each property within that boundary, recording the building's date of construction, features and alterations; and classifying those properties as either contributing or non-contributing

resources. Once this intensive level survey work is complete, a nomination is ready to proceed through the designation process consistent with the Board's [Procedure on Establishing Historic Districts](#) and the Historical Resources Board Procedures.

Historic Context Statement

The first step in preparing an intensive level survey is developing a historic context statement that places the historical and architectural development of the district within a broader neighborhood, City-wide, and sometimes state or national context. Typically, the district contexts will reference and build upon existing contexts, such as the City-wide historical overview developed for the General Plan, or community-specific contexts developed for reconnaissance surveys conducted in support of Community Plan Update efforts. The historic context statement will address the broader City-wide and community/neighborhood development up to the point in time where the district was first developed, as well as any relevant broader state or national trends (i.e. streetcar suburb development, small house movement, etc.). The historic context will then address the historical development of the district itself, and how that relates to the broader context.

Statement of Significance

Once the historical and/or architectural development of the district is placed into its proper context, the historic district is then evaluated under the City's designation criteria and a statement of significance is developed. The district as a whole is evaluated under HRB Criteria A, B, C, D and/or E consistent with the City's Designation Criteria guidelines. A historic district need only meet one of the designation criteria to be found significant and designated. Contributing resources within the district would then be designated under HRB Criterion F.

Period of Significance

In addition to a statement of significance, a period of time that reflects the statement of significance must also be defined and justified. This is known as the period of significance. Depending upon the historic context and statement of significance, this may reflect a development trend (such as streetcar development), architectural style or movement (Craftsman, small house, etc.), or initial build-out of the district.

Boundary Description and Justification

As stated previously, a historic district is a geographically defined concentration of resources. Therefore, the defined geographic boundary must be based upon a shared relationship among the properties constituting the district, as established by the historic context and statement of significance. In some instances, the boundary may be coterminous with the boundary of an underlying subdivision, or capture a portion of a subdivision, or even multiple subdivisions, depending upon the historic context and statement of significance. Boundaries may also be refined following the completion of survey work. If the intensive level survey work reveals lower concentrations of contributing resources at the edge of a district, it may be advisable to pull in the boundary to obtain a higher concentration of contributing resources with a better defined entry distinct from its surroundings. However, it should be noted that district boundaries should almost always be contiguous. For example, if an entire block in the center of a district were non-contributing or largely non-contributing, that block would not be omitted from the district.

Survey

During the intensive-level field survey of a historic district each property within the district is recorded on a Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) form. Information collected includes locational information, an architectural description, date of construction, alterations, photographs, current owner, architect and builder (if known) and a brief statement regarding how the property does or does not convey and contribute to the significance of the district. In addition to visiting each property in the field and visually identifying and documenting modifications, staff reviews water and sewer permit records, aerial photographs, Sanborn Maps and available historic photographs to verify date of construction and further document any alterations. In instances where the date of construction or existing alterations may be unclear based upon this documentation, staff pulls and reviews the Assessor's Building Record from the County Assessor's office.

Classification of Contributing and Non-Contributing Resources

Once the context statement, statement of significance, period of significance and boundary have been defined and the survey work is complete, staff divides the properties into recommended contributing and non-contributing resources. As noted previously, contributing resources are those resources that were built within the period of significance for the district and retain integrity to convey that significance. Non-contributing resources were either built outside of the period of significance, or have been so modified that they no longer retain integrity to convey the significance of the district.

Any property built outside the period of significance is therefore classified by staff as non-contributing. Properties built within the period of significance are evaluated to determine whether or not they maintain the essential character defining features required to retain integrity and convey the significance of the district. Because contributing resources within a district are part of a larger whole and do not need to stand alone as individually significant buildings, modifications (either singular or cumulative) that may not be acceptable on an individually significant resource may be acceptable on a contributing resource.

For example, typically enclosing a porch; or application of historically inappropriate stucco; or replacing windows within the original openings with windows of historically inappropriate materials, appearance or operation would have a significant impact on the integrity of an individually significant resource, particularly in regard to architectural significance or association with a Master. However, with contributing resources enclosing a porch with windows and leaving the original framing of the porch intact and evident; or applying Spanish Lace stucco to a building which was stuccoed originally; or replacing one or more windows in the original opening with non-historic aluminum or vinyl windows will typically not result in the inability of the resource to contribute to the overall significance of the district. On the other hand, resources that have undergone significant singular or cumulative minor to moderate modifications, such as a partial porch enclosure coupled with window replacements and a minor addition; or a complete porch enclosure that does not leave the original framing intact; or application of stucco cladding to a building that was wood-clad historically; or replacing windows in altered openings, may no longer be eligible as a contributor to the district because the quality and character of the building is impaired to such an extent that the resource no longer conveys the significance of the district.

In evaluating integrity and classifying contributing and non-contributing resources, staff strives for the greatest consistency possible, understanding that the same modification(s) may have a different impact on a building with fewer character defining features than one with more character defining features. To assist both staff and the Board in evaluating integrity as consistently as possible, staff prepares a spreadsheet of all properties within the district that identifies the types of modifications that each property displays.

District Processing

Once staff has compiled the historic district nomination, it is ready to begin processing. The requirements for processing are defined in the Board's *Procedure on Establishing Historic Districts* and the Historical Resources Board Procedures. First, the historic context, statement of significance, period of significance and boundary description and justification are reviewed by the Policy Subcommittee to determine if the materials are ready for consideration by the full Board. This may occur over one or more meetings of the Policy Subcommittee. If the Subcommittee finds that the materials are largely complete, the district nomination may be forwarded to the Board with direction to staff regarding any required revisions prior to review by the full Board.

At least one staff-led workshop with the property owners within the historic district boundary is required. These workshops are informational and Boardmembers do not participate. Topics covered at the workshop include the history and significance of the district; contributing vs. non-contributing properties; and how being within a historic district will affect their property, including the responsibilities and benefits. Often, staff will schedule this workshop after the Policy Subcommittee meeting, so that any direction regarding the nomination can be understood and addressed prior to the workshop.

While the Municipal Code does not require property owner consent for designation of a historic resource – including a historic district and the resources within it – the Board's *Procedure on Establishing Historic Districts* states that “For all nominations, staff will solicit the level of support and opposition from property owners within the proposed district boundary... and shall provide that information to the Board.” To fulfill this requirement, staff mails self-addressed, stamped polling cards to the property owner of record. The polling card includes the property address, the property owner's name, and two check-boxes – one indicating that they support the designation of the historic district, and one indicating that they do not support the designation of the historic district. Property owners are provided a deadline for returning the polling card, and the results are presented to the Board at the first and second hearings.

Lastly, two meetings of the Board are required to establish and designate a historic district. Both hearings are noticed to the property owner of record consistent with the requirements of the municipal code. At the first hearing, the Board evaluates the completeness and adequacy of the information submitted establishing the significance of the proposed historic district. This involves reviewing the historic context, statement of significance, period of significance and boundary description and justification, and either accepting those portions of the nomination with or without further direction, or returning those portions of the

nomination to staff for more substantial revisions. The Board also reviews the classification of contributing and non-contributing resources and provides direction to staff regarding any further evaluation or reclassification of resources. This review and direction provides property owners a better idea of how the district is likely to impact their property (as either contributing or non-contributing) heading into the second hearing. At the second hearing, the Board takes action to designate the historic district under one or more of the City’s designation criteria, designate the contributing resources, and classify the remaining properties as non-contributing resources.

As with any Board action to designate a historic resource, the designation of the historic district, as well as any of the contributing resources within the district, may be appealed to the City Council by a property owner or interested member of the public within 10 business days of the Board’s action. On appeal, the City Council may affirm, reverse or modify the decision of the Board, based upon the appeal findings in the municipal code. If the district is not appealed, the designation becomes final on the 11th business day. Since the adoption of the current Land Development Code (LDC) in 2000 only two historic district designations have been appealed to the City Council. One appeal was withdrawn by the appellant and was never heard by the Council, and the second appeal was denied and the designation upheld in its entirety.

What is the Schedule for Processing the 13 Potential Historic Districts in North Park and Golden Hill?

During the CPU adoption hearings for North Park and Golden Hill, the City Planning Department committed to a six year work program to process all potential historic districts that were identified in the Reconnaissance Surveys and by the community (with review and concurrence from City staff). The prioritization of the districts was developed in concert with the community and the Community Planning Groups, as follows:

Processing Year	District	Survey or Community Identified	Number of Properties	Community
2017 (Year 1)	South Park	Community/Survey	385	Golden Hill
	Spalding Place	Survey	14	North Park
	Valle Vista Terrace	Community	89	North Park
2018 (Year 2)	Park Boulevard Apartment*	Survey	33	North Park
	Shirley Ann Place Expansion	Survey	26	North Park
2019 (Year 3)	Culverwell & Taggart’s	Community/Survey	245	Golden Hill
	Park Villas	Community	48	North Park
2020 (Year 4)	Altadena	Community	400	North Park
	Kalmia Place	Survey	20	North Park
2021 (Year 5)	28 th Street	Survey	45	North Park
	St. Louis Heights	Community	135	North Park
2022 (Year 6)	30 th Street Commercial	Survey	128	North Park
	Wabash Mesa	Community	82	North Park

*Includes the western side of Park Boulevard, in Uptown

Staff is processing three historic districts this calendar year: Spalding Place, Valle Vista Terrace, and South Park. Work on these districts is well underway, and staff has scheduled the districts as follows:

District	Policy Subcommittee Review	Property Owner Workshop	HRB First Hearing	HRB Second Hearing
Spalding Place	May	May	June	July
Valle Vista Terrace	July	July	August	September
South Park	June	August	September	October

The processing schedule this calendar year is rather compressed, due in large part to the fact that staff was not able to begin work on this year's effort until the start of the calendar year in January. In addition, 2017 is the only year in the work program where three historic districts will be processed in a single year. In future years of the work program, staff will be able to begin work on the districts in the prior calendar year, which will allow for a far less compressed review schedule for the Board.

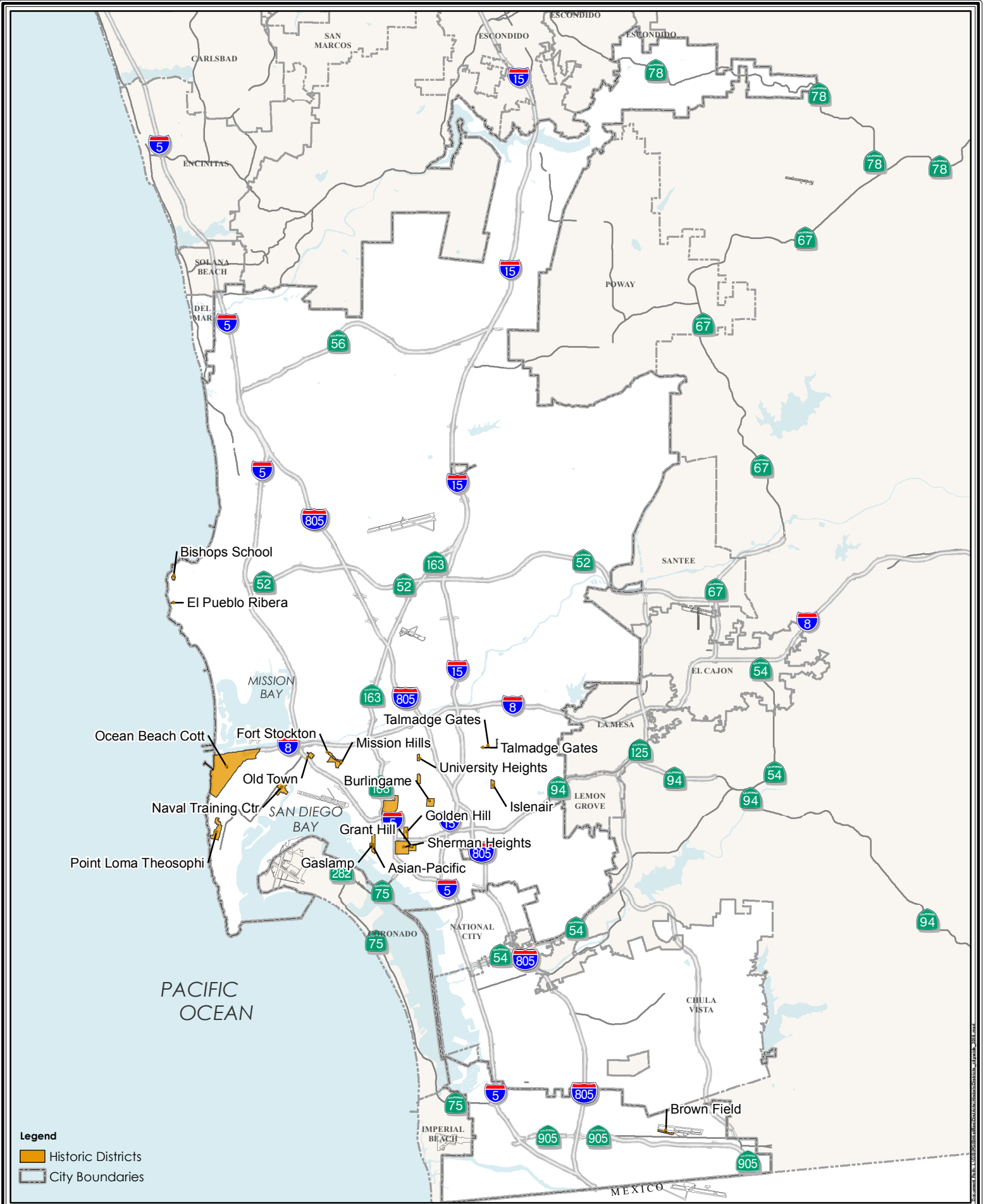
The Planning Department greatly appreciates the Board's participation in this ambitious and important work effort, which will nearly double the number of designated historic districts within the City of San Diego; and in the process, support the fundamental goals and policies of the General Plan and North Park and Golden Hill community plans to identify and preserve significant historic districts.



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Attachments: 1. Map of Designated Historic Districts in the City of San Diego



- Legend**
- Historic Districts
 - City Boundaries



Existing Designated Historic Districts

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