

Appendix G

Historic Context Statement

Kearny Mesa Community Planning Area Historic Context Statement

FINAL DRAFT

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Prepared for:

City of San Diego
Planning Department
9485 Aero Drive San Diego, CA 92123

Prepared by:

IS Architecture
5645 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

for

HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc.
7578 El Cajon Boulevard
La Mesa, CA 91942

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| List of Figures | ii |
| Part I: Introduction | 1 |
| Terms and Definitions | 1 |
| Planning Area | 2 |
| Existing Literature, Archives, and Outreach | 5 |
| Part II: How to Use this Document | 6 |
| What is a Historic Context Statement? | 6 |
| Overview of Applicable Designation Programs | 6 |
| Document Organization | 11 |
| Part III: Historic Context Statement | 13 |
| Pre-Settlement to 1917 | 13 |
| Early Development & the Influence of Surrounding Development (1918-1949) | 15 |
| Theme #1: Aviation | 22 |
| Mid-Century Development Boom (1950-1969) | 28 |
| Theme #2: Industry | 32 |
| Transition to Commercial, Retail, and Office Development (1965-1989) | 48 |
| Theme #3: Commercial, Retail, and Office | 50 |
| Continued Development (1980s to present) | 65 |
| Part IV: Preservation Goals and Priorities | 67 |
| Appendices | |
| A Study List | 68 |
| B Bibliography | 70 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|
| 1 | Regional location of planning area | 3 |
| 2 | Planning area boundaries | 4 |
| 3 | Regional map showing Pueblo and Ex-Mission San Diego lands in 1903 | 14 |
| 4 | Bvt. Major Gen. Stephen W. Kearney | 15 |
| 5 | The development of Camp Kearny brought a number of new improvements..... | 16 |
| 6 | New utilities..... | 16 |
| 7 | Early development in and around Camp Kearny..... | 17 |
| 8 | Regional map showing Pueblo and Ex-Mission San Diego lands in 1930 | 18 |
| 9 | Camp Elliott | 20 |
| 10 | 1941 aerial photograph of Linda Vista | 21 |
| 11 | Spider’s Flying Service aviation hangars | 23 |
| 12 | Gibbs Control Tower | 24 |
| 13 | National Air College aviation hangars | 25 |
| 14 | 1953 aerial photograph of Kearny Mesa | 29 |
| 15 | 1964 aerial photograph of Kearny Mesa | 30 |
| 16 | Convair’s Kearny Mesa complex in 1959 | 33 |
| 17 | Convair’s Kearny Mesa complex. Aerial looking southeast..... | 34 |
| 18 | Convair office buildings at the Kearny Mesa complex in 1958 | 34 |
| 19 | Ryan Aeronautical Company’s Kearny Mesa plant in 1957 | 35 |
| 20 | 7899 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard | 37 |
| 21 | The Wesco Building | 38 |
| 22 | City of San Diego Industrial Park sign in 1962 | 39 |
| 23 | Industrial park at 7701-7725 Convoy Street | 40 |
| 24 | Slump block building at 7035 Convoy Court | 42 |
| 25 | Pierced block screens on the Pepsi bottling plant | 43 |
| 26 | Board-formed concrete in an industrial park complex | 44 |
| 27 | Pierced metal at 9150 Balboa Avenue | 45 |
| 28 | Glass wall at 7531 Convoy Court | 46 |
| 29 | 1969 aerial photograph of Convoy Street north of Balboa Avenue | 48 |
| 30 | 1972 aerial photograph of Convoy Street north of Balboa Avenue | 49 |
| 31 | 1989 aerial photograph of Convoy Street north of Balboa Avenue | 49 |
| 32 | FedMart on Othello Avenue in 1960..... | 50 |
| 33 | Former Frazee Paint building | 51 |
| 34 | Conceptual image of the Convoy Village Shopping Center in 1971 | 53 |
| 35 | Convoy Village Shopping Center in 2018 | 54 |
| 36 | Former Dorman’s auto shop in 1967 | 56 |
| 37 | Kearny Mesa Wienerschnitzel restaurant | 57 |
| 38 | Office park at 9465 Farnham Street | 58 |
| 39 | Neo-Spanish Eclectic office park building | 60 |
| 40 | Strip mall building at 7730 Ronson Road | 61 |
| 41 | Pressed metal detail at 7320 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard | 62 |
| 42 | Angled glass at 8525 Gibbs Drive | 63 |

PART I: INTRODUCTION

In support of the comprehensive update to the Kearny Mesa Community Plan and its Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR), this historic context statement addresses the themes and property types significant to the development of the Kearny Mesa community. The context provides the foundation for the historical overview of Kearny Mesa in the PEIR, helps to indicate the likelihood of encountering historic resources within the community, and will guide the future identification of such resources.

This context statement addresses built environment themes only and excludes the evaluation of themes relevant to only archaeological and intangible cultural resources. Furthermore, this context statement is not intended to serve as the definitive history of the study area, but rather provides sufficient historical background to identify and discuss the thematic contexts. This context statement was developed without a field survey element and is not a definitive listing of all building types and periods of significance in Kearny Mesa; resources that do not fit into the significant building types and periods of significance identified in this study are not necessarily excluded from eligibility consideration for significance not related to the resource's property type.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

City vs. city: The governmental agency the City of San Diego is referred to as the “City.” The location of San Diego is referred to as the “city.”

High-rise, Mid-rise, and Low-rise: There are no universal definitions of what constitutes a high-rise, mid-rise, or low-rise building. The California Building Code (CBC) defines a high-rise building as one having an occupied floor located more than 75 feet above the lowest level of fire department vehicle access. This does not easily translate into a number of stories, since that depends on variable factors like ceiling heights. Using this guideline, buildings as short as five stories could qualify as high-rise buildings. However, architectural history recognizes the Home Insurance Building, a ten-story building in Chicago, as the first skyscraper and the first true high-rise building in the country. By modern standards, high-rise skyscrapers are much taller than ten stories. Taking all these traditions and the building stock of Kearny Mesa into account, this study has developed the following, Kearny Mesa-specific categorizations:

Low-rise buildings are those buildings with one to three stories above ground level.

Mid-rise buildings are those buildings with four to seven stories above ground level.

High-rise buildings are those buildings with eight or more stories above ground level.

For the purposes of this categorization, unoccupied maintenance levels (including below ground and rooftop levels) and parking levels are not included in the building's story count; however,

they may be recognized in the description of the building as an additional level (e.g., a four-story building with basement level and rooftop mechanical suite).

Kearny Mesa vs. the Kearny mesa: It is important to distinguish between the current community planning area boundaries for Kearny Mesa and the geographical feature called “the Kearny mesa.” For much of the area’s history, the term “Kearny Mesa” was used loosely to refer to the geographic region that stretches from Mission Valley to the Los Peñasquitos Canyon and now includes Kearny Mesa, Clairemont, Linda Vista, Mira Mesa, and parts of other communities. For the purposes of this study, the community planning area will be referred to as “Kearny Mesa” and the geographic feature as “the Kearny mesa.”

Additionally, the geographic feature called “the Kearny mesa” has been known by at least three different names throughout its history. From the mid-19th century to about 1917, the geographic feature was referred to only as the “Linda Vista mesa.” During the early 1920s, newspapers began referring to the land as the “Camp Kearny mesa.” Shortly thereafter, from about the late-1920s on, “the Kearny mesa” became the most common reference.

Pan-Asian: The Asian influences on Kearny Mesa are multinational and multicultural in nature. This study will use the adjective “Pan-Asian” when referring to the entirety of the numerous Asian cultures and nationalities present. When individual cultural groups or nationalities can be identified, these will be used as appropriate.

Postmodern vs. post-Modern: Postmodernism (also spelled Post-Modernism) is an academically-recognized movement within architecture that gained traction in the mid-1970s and continues to influence current day architecture. This should be distinguished from the adjective “post-Modern,” which refers to styles and elements that post-date the Modernist architectural movement.

PLANNING AREA

Kearny Mesa is located in the City of San Diego (“City”; Fig. 1). Surrounding development includes the residential communities of Clairemont and Linda Vista to the west, Serra Mesa to the south, and Tierrasanta to the east. The Miramar Naval Air Station, currently known as Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS Miramar), is located to the north of Kearny Mesa.

The boundaries for the purposes of this context statement follow the Kearny Mesa Community Plan boundaries (Fig. 2). Kearny Mesa is bounded by major highways to the north (SR-52), west (I-805 and SR-163), and east (I-15). The southern boundary of the planning area follows an uneven line, capturing parts of the block south of Aero Drive and a triangular area between Ruffin Road, Aero Drive, and I-15 that extends south to Friars Road.

The Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport is not governed by the Kearny Mesa Community Plan, but rather by its own planning documents prepared by the City’s Airports Division. However, the

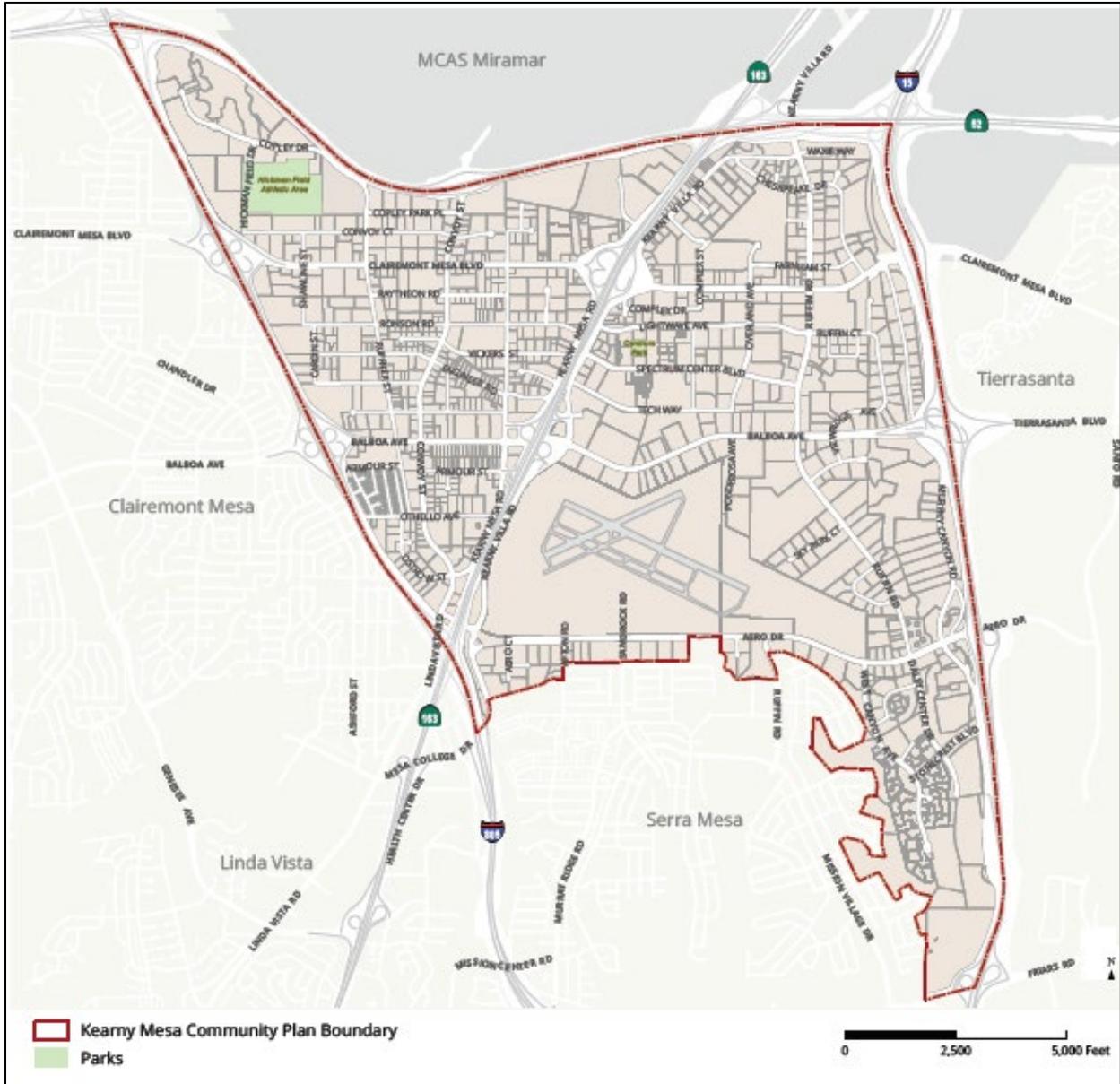


Fig. 2. Kearny Mesa Community Plan boundaries. *Kearny Mesa Community Plan, City of San Diego.*

EXISTING LITERATURE, ARCHIVES, AND OUTREACH

Very few secondary sources exist for the history and development of Kearny Mesa. Specialized studies of themes within the city or county, such as the history of aviation or the histories of individual companies, provide some insight into the influence of these specific pieces of history on Kearny Mesa. Most of the information about Kearny Mesa, however, is primary source in nature and relies heavily on newspaper archives and historic aerial and terrestrial photography.

The City has completed extensive public outreach in conjunction with the Kearny Mesa Community Plan Update. A summary report from the summer of 2017 outlines the workshops, online activity, and resident survey aspects of the City's public outreach. No additional public outreach was undertaken in conjunction with the initial preparation of this historic context statement; however, the document was presented at a meeting of the Kearny Mesa Community Planning Group for input.

PART II: HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

WHAT IS A HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT?

Historic context statements identify important themes in history and then relate those themes to extant built resources. They are not intended to be all-encompassing narrative histories. Instead, historic contexts establish the significance of themes and related topics and then provide guidance regarding the characteristics a particular property must have to represent an important theme and be a good example of a property type. The overriding goal of this context statement is to distill much of what is known about the evolution and development of the Kearny Mesa community, and to help establish why a particular place may be considered historically significant within one or more themes. It is intended to be used as a starting point for determining whether or not a specific property is eligible for designation as a historical resource under a national, state, or local designation program.

This historic context statement is not a comprehensive history of the Kearny Mesa community, and it does not provide a list of eligible properties. This context statement was developed without a field survey element and is not a definitive listing of all building types and periods of significance in Kearny Mesa. Resources that do not fit into the significant building types and periods of significance identified in this study are not necessarily excluded from eligibility consideration for significance not related to the resource's property type. In fact, this document does not make eligibility determinations for any potentially important properties. Instead, it presents the information necessary to assist in the evaluation of properties for significance and integrity on a case-by-case basis, and may be used to guide certain aspects of city planning. Additionally, it will hopefully inspire members of the community to nominate places which they think are important for formal designation.

It is important to note that this historic context statement is intended to be a living document that will change and evolve over time. As explained above, this document is not intended to be a definitive history, but rather a solid foundation. For more information on what a historic context statement is and is not in general, see "Writing Historic Contexts," by Marie Nelson of the State Office of Historic Preservation:

<http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1054/files/writing%20historic%20contexts%20from%20ohp.pdf>.

OVERVIEW OF APPLICABLE DESIGNATION PROGRAMS

No formal survey was undertaken as a part of this study. However, the following designation programs guide the discussion of eligibility criteria and integrity thresholds in Part III of this historic context statement.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is an “authoritative guide to be used by federal, state, and local governments, private groups and citizens to identify the nation’s cultural resources and to indicate what properties should be considered for protection from destruction or impairment.”¹

Designation Criteria

To be eligible for listing in the NRHP, a property must be at least 50 years of age and possess significance in American history and culture, architecture, or archaeology. A property of potential significance must meet one or more of four established criteria:²

- A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. Yield, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Historic resources eligible for listing in the NRHP may include buildings, sites, structures, objects, and historic districts.

Integrity

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. To be listed in the NRHP, a property must not only be shown to be significant under the criteria, but it also must have integrity. The evaluation of integrity is grounded in an understanding of a property’s physical features and how they relate to its significance.

Historic properties either retain integrity (that is, are able to convey their significance) or they do not. Within the concept of integrity, the NRHP criteria recognize seven aspects of integrity. These seven aspects include location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant. The seven aspects of integrity are defined as follows:

¹ Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 60.2.

² Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 60.4.

- Location: The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
- Setting: The physical environment of a historic property.
- Design: The combination of elements that create form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
- Materials: The physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
- Workmanship: The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
- Feeling: A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- Association: The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

Criteria Consideration G

Certain kinds of properties, like those less than 50 years of age, are not usually considered eligible for listing in the NRHP. Fifty years is the general estimate of the time needed to develop historical perspective and to evaluate significance. Younger properties can be eligible for listing, however, if they achieve exceptional significance.³ Demonstrating exceptional significance requires the development of a historic context statement for the resources being evaluated, a comparative analysis with similar resources, and scholarly sources on the property type and historic context.

There are six other Criteria Considerations identified in *National Register Bulletin #15*. No others are immediately relevant to the resources and themes identified in this historic context statement; however, should further research and survey identify properties covered by other Criteria Considerations, those would apply as well.

More Information

The National Park Service's website features PDF documents of National Register Brochures and Bulletins, technical guidance, and guidance by property type. These resources can be found at: <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/>

California Register of Historical Resources

In 1992, Governor Wilson signed Assembly Bill 2881 into law, establishing the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR). The CRHR is an authoritative guide used by state and local agencies, private groups, and citizens to identify historic resources and to indicate what properties are to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change.

³ *National Register Bulletin #15*, p. 2.

The CRHR consists of properties that are automatically listed as well as those that must be nominated through an application and public hearing process.⁴ The CRHR automatically includes the following:

- California properties listed in the NRHP and those formally Determined Eligible for the NRHP;
- California Registered Historical Landmarks from No. 0770 onward; and
- Those California Points of Historical Interest that have been evaluated by the OHP and have been recommended to the State Historical Resources Commission for inclusion on the CRHR.

Designation Criteria

The criteria for eligibility of listing the CRHR are based upon NRHP criteria, but are identified as 1-4 instead of A-D. To be eligible for listing in the CRHR, a property must be at least 50 years of age and possess significance at the local, state, or national level under one or more of the following criteria:

1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United State; and/or
2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history; and/or
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values; and/or
4. It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important in the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

Historic resources eligible for listing in the CRHR may include buildings, sites, structures, objects, and historic districts.

Integrity

The CRHR uses the same seven aspects of integrity as the NRHP. While the enabling legislation for the CRHR is less rigorous with regard to the issue of integrity, there is the expectation that properties reflect their appearance during their period of significance.⁵

Properties Less Than 50 Years Old

While the CRHR does not utilize formal Criteria Considerations, it does make allowances for resources less than fifty years old to be designated if it can be demonstrated that sufficient time has passed to understand the subject resource's historical importance.

⁴ Public Resources Code Section 5024.1.

⁵ Public Resources Code Section 4852.

More Information

Further information about the CRHR and other state-level preservation programs and initiatives can be found on OHP’s website: http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1056

City of San Diego Register of Historical Resources

Designation Criteria

The Historical Resources Guidelines of the City’s Land Development Manual identifies the criteria under which a resource may be historically designated. It states that any improvement, building, structure, sign, interior element and fixture, site, place, district, area, or object may be designated a historic resource on the San Diego Register of Historical Resources (San Diego Register) by the City’s Historical Resources Board (HRB) if it meets one or more of the following HRB designation criteria:

- A. Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City’s, a community’s, or a neighborhood’s historical, archeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping, or architectural development; and/or
- B. Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state, or national history; and/or
- C. Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship; and/or
- D. Is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist, or craftsman; and/or
- E. Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historic Preservation Office for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources; and/or
- F. Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.

Integrity

The San Diego Register uses the same seven aspects of integrity as the NRHP.

45-Year Threshold

The City does not utilize Criteria Considerations. Although the City’s municipal code does use a 45-year threshold to review properties which may be adversely impacted by development, a property need not be 45 years of age to be eligible for listing on the San Diego Register. The historic context developed to evaluate a resource must always demonstrate that sufficient time has passed to understand the subject resource’s historical importance.

More Information

Further information on the City’s designation criteria can be found at:

<https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/201102criteriaguidelines.pdf>

DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This historic context statement is organized into the following primary sections:

- **“Introduction”** provides information on the purpose of this document, its intended use, scope of study, and source material.
- **“How to Use this Document”** provides information on historic context statements, the regulatory framework of applicable designation programs, and document organization.
- **“Historic Context Statement”** discusses the distinct time periods of development that have been identified in Kearny Mesa; the themes within those periods identified as important to the community’s history; and the property types that are associated with those themes in a significant way.
- **“Preservation Goals and Priorities”** identifies the next steps in protecting the potential historic resources in Kearny Mesa.
- **“Appendix A: Study List”** includes the master study list of properties of interest identified during the course of this study.
- **“Appendix B: Bibliography”** lists the major sources of information for this context statement. Additional sources used for specific quotes or subjects are cited directly within the text.

Within the “Historic Context Statement” section, three distinct periods of development have been identified - Early Development & the Influence of Surrounding Development (1918-1949); Mid-Century Development Boom (1950-1969); and Transition to Commercial, Retail, and Office Development (1965-1989). The discussion of each period includes a historical overview of events that shaped the development of Kearny Mesa during that time. Within these periods, three themes important to the development of Kearny Mesa have also been identified. The discussion of each theme is presented in three parts.

First, a narrative overview of the theme is presented; second, associated property types, materials, and construction methods significant to the theme are identified and eligibility and integrity thresholds discussed; and third, a study list of potentially significant properties is included. The narrative overview discusses known persons, groups, events, trends, and locations associated with the theme. The eligibility standards outline requirements for what would make a property eligible within the subject theme. They provide information on what property types would be associated with the theme, the period of significance for the theme, applicable significance criteria, and integrity considerations. They are general and broad to account for the numerous variations among associated property types. The study list consists of properties which came up during research for the subject theme. It is provided for information purposes only to help focus future research and is *not* a comprehensive list of all eligible resources within Kearny

Mesa. Additional properties may be identified as associated with the significant themes upon site-specific evaluation. Conversely, a resource's presence on this study list does not automatically make that resource eligible for designation at any level.

The themes are designed to cover a variety of related topics and associated property types. Themes were only developed if extant properties directly associated with the theme and located within Kearny Mesa limits were identified. The specific topics covered by each theme are outlined below:

Early Development & the Influence of Surrounding Development (1918-1949)

The Kearny mesa remained relatively open land until the turn of the 20th century, when military developments following the outbreak of World War I required the first improvements to the area. The use of the land for military training operations dictated the early development of the area and resulted primarily in the growth of aviation and other defense related activities.

- **Theme #1: Aviation**

The development of aviation capabilities, in the form of what is now Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport, was the first non-infrastructure development. The airport continues to make its influence known on both the economy and city planning of Kearny Mesa.

Mid-Century Development Boom (1950-1969)

Beginning in the 1950s, the City's need for both residential and industrial land led to the first developments on the Kearny mesa. The areas closer to the coast, like Linda Vista and Clairemont, were zoned for residential development. The area that is now Kearny Mesa was zoned for industrial development and soon became the new industrial powerhouse of the City.

- **Theme #2: Industry**

Industry was the primary driver of development in Kearny Mesa. Archival sources depict a tug-of-war between the need for continued residential development to serve the Post-War increase in San Diego's population and the need to industrialize San Diego's economy to support that population increase.

Transition to Commercial, Retail, and Office Development (1965-1989)

Most of the available industrial land in Kearny Mesa was occupied by 1969, with less than 100 acres left available for new industrial development. A second wave of development began in earnest. While the large tracts of land necessary for new industrial development were no longer available, smaller parcels were becoming available for commercial, retail, and office use.

- **Theme #3: Commercial, Retail, and Office Development**

Small amounts of commercial, retail, and office development have existed in Kearny Mesa since the area's first development boom in the 1950s. There is a clear shift, however, to prioritizing these types of development over industrial development beginning in the mid-1960s.

PART III: HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

PRE-SETTLEMENT TO 1917

Prior to settlement, the Kearny mesa was part of the expansive Kumeyaay homelands. Bands of the native tribe inhabited the general area and used much of this land for hunting and gathering.⁶ Following the arrival of the Spanish explorers and missionaries in 1769, a vast amount of Kumeyaay land, including the area now known as Kearny Mesa, was claimed by Spain for the Mission San Diego de Alcalá. After declaring its independence from Spain in 1822, Mexico took control of what had become known as the Alta California territory and began to secularize the Missions that had been established.⁷ Large tracts of what had previously been mission lands were then parceled out and granted to private owners and families. Rancho Ex-Mission San Diego was one such land grant. Although it was awarded to Santiago Arguello by Alta California Governor Pío Pico in 1846, it was not until 1876, twenty-six years after Mexico had ceded its interest in California to the United States, that the land claim would be confirmed at 58,875 acres.⁸ Bounded on the west by the Pueblo Lands, which included the coastal areas that would develop into downtown San Diego and La Jolla, Rancho Ex-Mission San Diego consisted mostly of what is now east of Interstate 805, including the communities of Kearny Mesa, Serra Mesa, and Tierrasanta, as well as the cities of La Mesa and Lemon Grove.

The development of Alonzo Horton's "New Town" in 1867 began a period of steady urbanization within downtown San Diego. With this growth came an increasing interest in creating the city's first major rail station. The arrival of the California Southern Railroad, which was completed in 1885, catalyzed San Diego's first boom period and inspired local speculators to invest in more rail lines around the area.⁹ What resulted were the creation of several independent rail lines that linked downtown San Diego east to the Ex-Mission lands.¹⁰ The easier access inland paired with the rising population and land costs of downtown San Diego had increased interest in the Ex-Mission lands where land was cheaper and more plentiful.

⁶ Lynn H. Gamble and Michael Wilken-Robertson, "Kumeyaay Cultural Landscapes of Baja California's Tijuana River Watershed," *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 28, no. 2 (2008): 127-51.

⁷ W.B. Campbell and J.R. Moriarty, "The Struggle Over Secularization of the Missions on the Alta California Frontier," *The Journal of San Diego History* 15, no.4 (1969).

⁸ Clare B. Crane, "The Pueblo Lands," *The Journal of San Diego History* 37, no.2 (1991).

⁹ James N. Price, "The Railroad Stations of San Diego County," *The Journal of San Diego History* 34, no.2 (1988).

¹⁰ Ibid.; "San Diego County," *San Diego Union*, 1-1-1894.

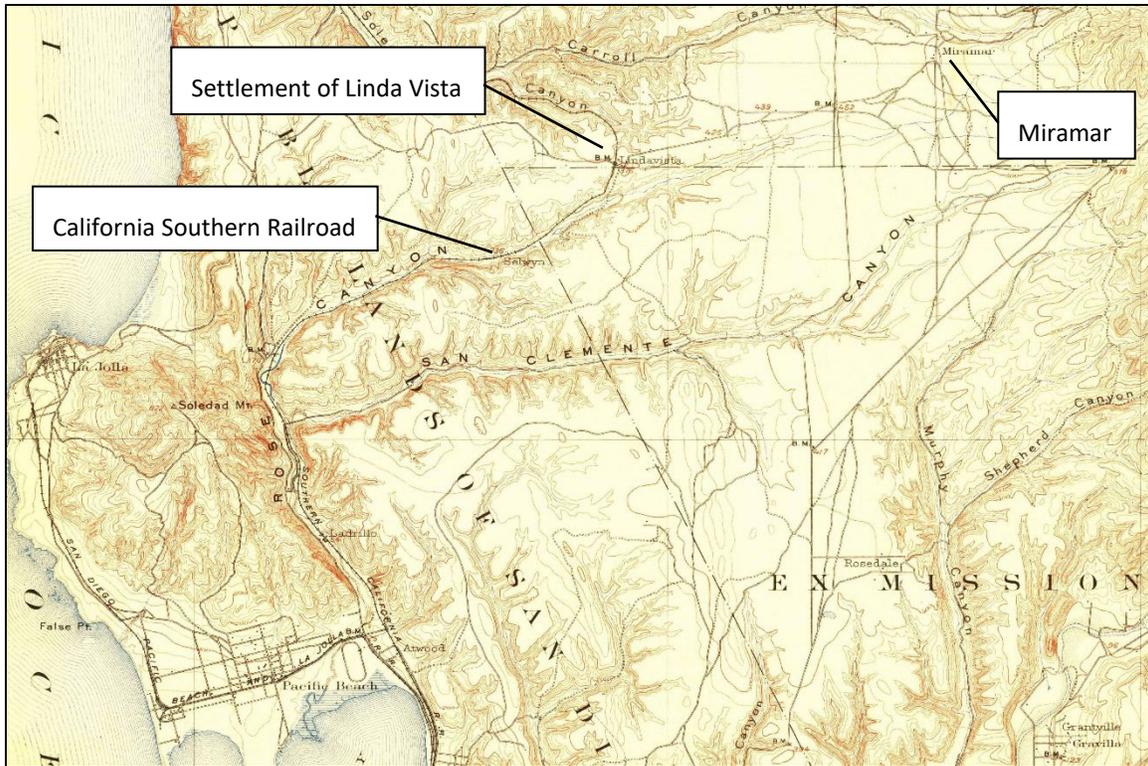


Fig. 3. Regional map showing the Pueblo and Ex-Mission San Diego lands. The California Southern Railroad and the late-19th century settlement called Linda Vista can be seen near the northwest corner of the Ex-Mission lands, south of Soledad and Carroll Canyons. The modern-day community of Kearny Mesa is located just south of San Clemente Canyon and between the western boundary of the Ex-Mission lands and the Murphy Canyon. Scale 1:24,000. USGS, 1903.

Up until the 1880s, the Kearny mesa, which was then referred to as the Linda Vista mesa,¹¹ was essentially an untouched chaparral landscape. Settlement of the area began to occur during the 1880s and reached its height in the latter part of that decade.¹² Although some of these settlers had built isolated homesteads and used the land for agriculture and ranching, such as E.W. Scripps's Miramar Ranch, a few farming communities had also begun to grow along the California Southern Railroad. One such settlement was Linda Vista, which was developed near Rose Canyon in 1886 by Col. W.C. Dickinson.¹³ Despite its name, the settlement was not in the location of the present-day planning area of Linda Vista; but rather in the general vicinity of present-day Miramar Road. An article in the *San Diego Union* from 1888 described the community as "a large settlement, or town...which extends from the railroad eastward about six-miles, with over fifty

¹¹ "Linda Vista. The Latest Candidate for the New Settler's Attention," *San Diego Union*, January 1, 1921.

¹² "The Linda Vista District," *San Diego Union*, January 1, 1894.

¹³ Winifred Davidson, "Mesa Named for General," *San Diego Union*, April 2, 1956.

families...a store, post office, two blacksmith shops, and [a] school.”¹⁴ The article continued to note that the area was predominated by orchards and tobacco farms. The development of Linda Vista was inhibited, however, due to its relative isolation, the occurrence of severe droughts, and the lack of local water supplies.¹⁵ Development stagnated, and the community eventually failed following the devastating floods of 1916.¹⁶ By that time, however, what had remained of the community and its surrounding lands had already been targeted as the location of a major Army camp. The decision to select Linda Vista was based partly on its proximity to the city, the availability of land, and the guarantee of San Diego Consolidated Gas and Electric to provide electricity.¹⁷

EARLY DEVELOPMENT & THE INFLUENCE OF SURROUNDING DEVELOPMENT: 1918-1949

After the United States entered the war with Germany in 1917, the federal government sought to establish new military training camps to both prepare and mobilize troops. Realizing the potential economic benefits, San Diego jumped at the chance to secure a permanent military presence.¹⁸ In its petition to the federal government, San Diego offered to lease the land on what was then called the Linda Vista mesa along with the promise to develop the necessary infrastructure to support the camp, such as gas, electricity, water,¹⁹ and sewage, as well as telephone lines and the construction of new roads and rail lines.²⁰

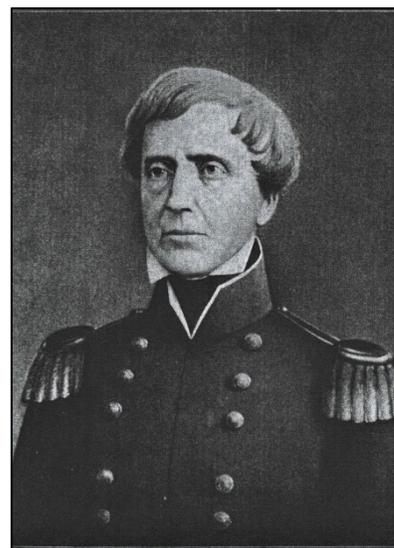


Fig. 4. Bvt. Major Gen. Stephen W. Kearney, San Diego History Center. 21:9644.

Construction began almost immediately upon the federal government’s acceptance of the proposal. Work then progressed rapidly and the camp was completed by the fall of 1917. The new installation was named Camp Kearny, after Brevet Major General Stephen W. Kearny, who served as commander of the US Army of the West in 1846. On December 6, 1846, General Kearny led the American forces against Mexico in the Battle of San Pasqual,

¹⁴ “Linda Vista: Good Crops-Fine Orchards-Tobacco Culture-Good Water,” *The Daily San Diegan*, January 18, 1888.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Martina Schimitschek, “Linda Vista: Military housing push created community with ‘pretty view’,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, June 22, 2018.

<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/almanac/san-diego-central/linda-vista/sd-me-almanac-lindavista-20170423-story.html>

¹⁷ John Martin, “Patriotism and Profit: San Diego’s Camp Kearny,” *The Journal of San Diego History* 58, 4 (2012).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ “Water System Working Full Blast; Roofing of Reservoir is Done,” *San Diego Union*, September 16, 1917.

²⁰ “Trenching for Camp Sewer System Nearing Completion,” *San Diego Union*, September 20, 1917.



Fig. 5. The development of Camp Kearny brought a number of new improvements, such as roads, to the area. *Camp Kearny, 1917. San Diego History Center, 81-9641.*

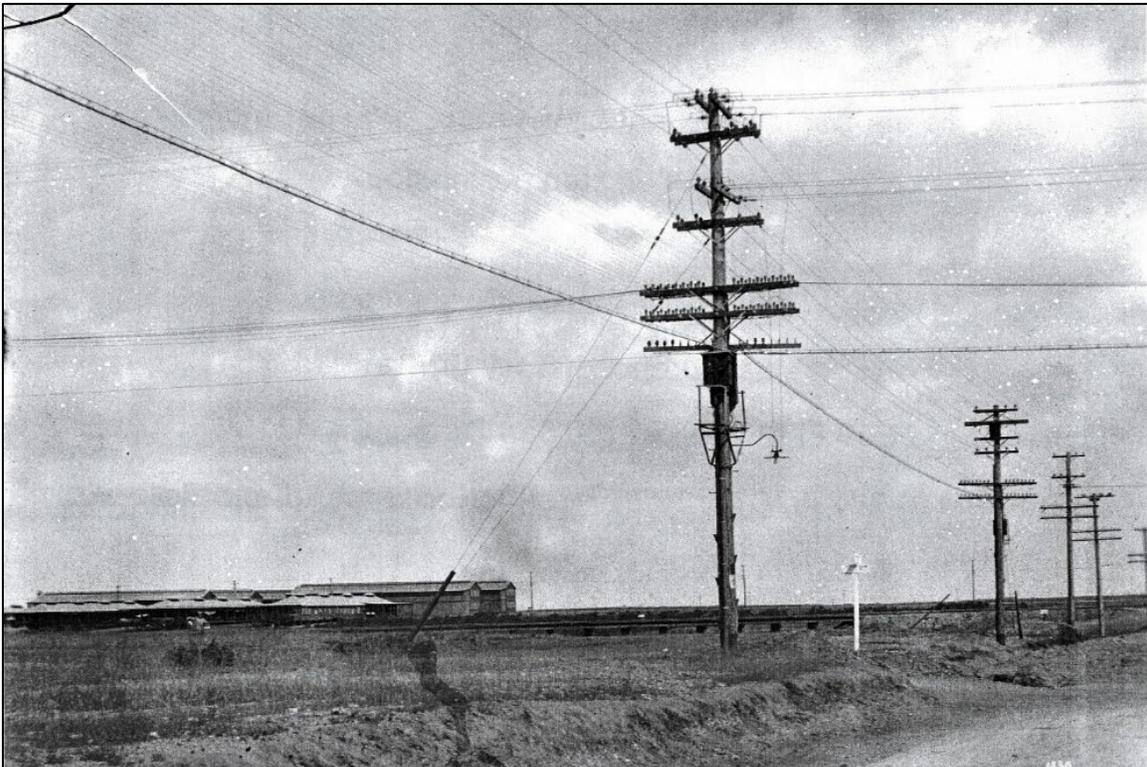


Fig. 6. New utilities, like electricity, were also introduced. *Camp Kearny, 1917. San Diego History Center, 4606.*



Fig. 7. Early development in and around Camp Kearny. *Camp Kearny - 1918. San Diego History Center, 4289-11.*

which occurred near present day Escondido. Although no information was found as to why the Army adopted General Kearny's name for the camp, it is likely that the reason was largely due to the proximity of the new camp to the site of the Battle of San Pasqual.

Referred to as "San Diego's Great War City,"²¹ Camp Kearny was a robust and completely self-sustaining development that brought significant improvements to the Ex-Mission lands for the first time. One of the most notable of these improvements was the creation of the inland highway, which is known today as Linda Vista and Kearny Villa Roads. Previously, travel to the Linda Vista mesa from the city was extremely limited and, with the lack of available water in the area, inhibited potential development opportunities. The creation of this road, however, provided greater accessibility to the Ex-Mission lands and brought an unprecedented amount of traffic through the heart of the area that would later develop into the community of Kearny Mesa.

The city saw considerable growth in the years following the war. In response to the soaring population and an escalating housing shortage, opportunistic residential developers began to look toward the open land north of Mission Valley, which, by the 1920s, was beginning to be referred to in newspapers as the Camp Kearny mesa, or simply the Kearny mesa. The mesa's first

²¹ "Construction Scheme Laid on Lines Indicating Change", *San Diego Union*, September 19, 1917.

subdivision, which was named “Chesterton” was developed by O.W. Cotton in 1927.²² The Chesterton subdivision was located near what is now the neighborhood of Birdland, just south of what would become the community of Kearny Mesa. This first subdivision was celebrated in the local newspapers, which claimed that it opened “up the second great chapter in the development of San Diego.”²³ The Chesterton subdivision was made possible due to the advancements in the city’s water development and the creation of the Sixth Street Extension, which provided a through boulevard from the Kearny mesa through Mission Valley to downtown San Diego.”²⁴

Although Camp Kearny had declined in the years following the war, the presence of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps grew stronger due to the recognition of San Diego as an important strategic location. Land on the Kearny mesa was of particular interest to the U.S. military, but a failed attempt by the Navy to establish a dirigible base there in the 1920s had stalled all attempts at development for another decade. Activity picked up again in the mid-1930s when the Marine Corps began using the Camp Kearny lands for combat training. As the Marines’ occupation of the site grew more permanent, a new training base, Camp Holcomb, was built on the old Camp Kearny grounds.

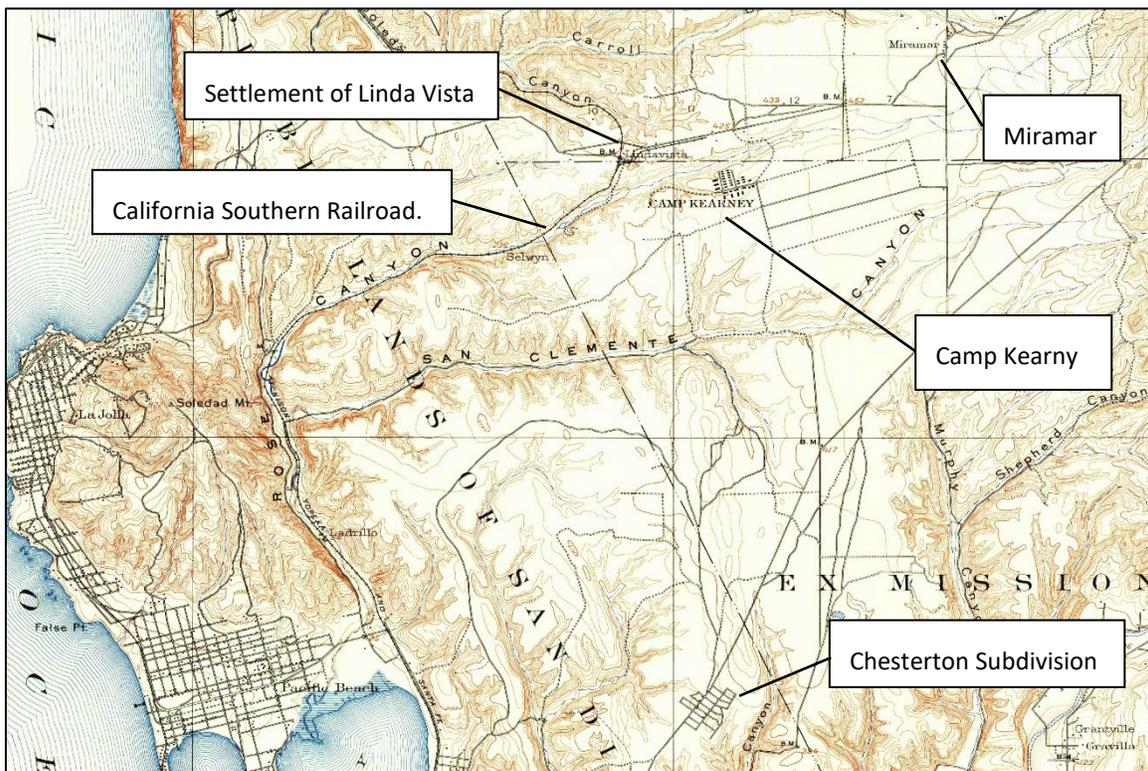


Fig. 8. Regional map showing the Pueblo and Ex Mission lands in 1930.. Scale 1:24,000. USGS, 1930.

²² “Linda Vista Mesa Logical Site For Residential Tract,” *Evening Tribune*, July 30, 1927.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ “Opening Today: Chesterton Extension,” *San Diego Union*, October 23, 1927.

During the 1920s and 1930s the mesa land south of the Camp Kearny site was often used as informal landing fields for military and civilian aircraft.²⁵ As the area continued to grow in popularity amongst aviators, civilian pilot Bill Gibbs moved his company, the Gibbs Flying Service, to the area and created his own airfield in 1937. After clearing the land for a single runway, Gibbs Field became the first private development in what would become the community of Kearny Mesa.

While Gibbs Field was under development, so too was a new military installation to the east named Camp Elliott. Camp Elliott grew out of Camp Holcomb in anticipation of another war in Europe. The construction of Camp Elliott began in 1940 and quickly introduced all new utilities, such as gas and water, to the Kearny mesa.²⁶ Camp Elliott became an expansive installation that also featured several satellite camps. Apart from these bases, Camp Elliott also contained thousands of acres of undeveloped land on the Kearny mesa which were specifically used as

training grounds. A *San Diego Union* article from 1942 noted a training operation in which “[m]achine guns rattled and torpedo bombers screamed low as 200 Camp Elliott marine corps parachuters fought furiously for Gibbs airport, near Camp Elliott, in a simulated battle yesterday.”²⁷

As the military presence intensified, San Diego became one of the country’s major defense centers.²⁸ Apart from the surging number of troops now occupying the city, the booming defense industry that supported the military also attracted thousands of civilians in search of work. The city’s capacity to support the massive growth of industry and population was quickly met and surpassed. The urgent need for defense housing during the build-up to World War II resulted in government intervention and the passage of the Lanham Defense Housing Act. Shortly thereafter, the first project was planned. When completed in 1941, the Linda Vista housing project, which consisted of 3,000 dwellings on twelve hundred acres of land on the Kearny mesa just south of the area that would become the community of Kearny Mesa, was the largest defense housing project America had ever undertaken.²⁹ The development of Linda Vista introduced new infrastructure improvements, such as water and sewer systems, to the area. What had previously been dirt roads were now paved and expanded. Schools, hospitals, and stores were built to support the new community.³⁰

²⁵ Martin, “Patriotism and Profit”.

²⁶ “8000 Slated For Marine Base, Camp,” *San Diego Union*, July 11, 1940.

²⁷ “House Navy Group Members See Amphibious Force Act,” *San Diego Union*, May 26, 1942.

²⁸ Mary Taschner, “Boomerang Boom: San Diego 1941-1942,” *The Journal of San Diego History* 28, no.1 (1982).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

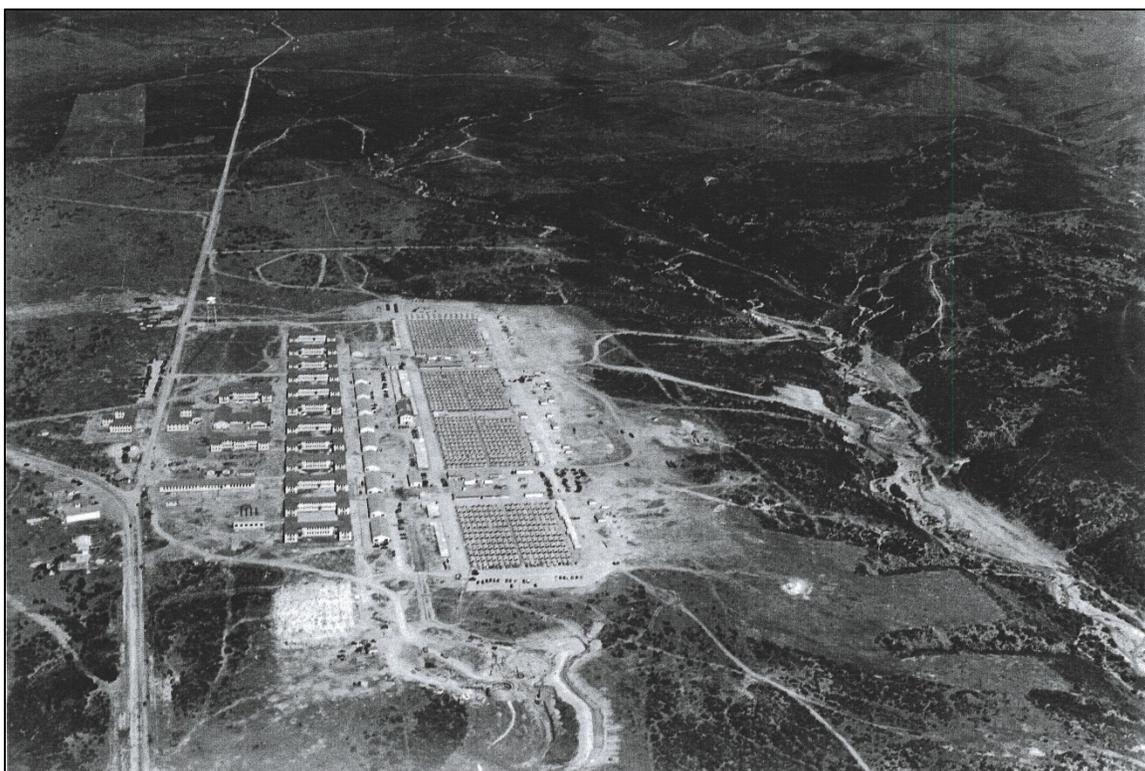


Fig. 9. Camp Elliott was an expansive military base that was located east of the present-day community of Kearny Mesa. *San Diego History Center, 79:744-646 Camp Elliot, March 23, 1944.*

Despite the development of the military installations to the north and east, and the Linda Vista housing project to the south, the area that would become the community of Kearny Mesa remained relatively undeveloped for the better part of the 1940s, with the exception of the military training and aviation uses. This was largely due to the dominating government and military presence paired with the lack of sufficient accessibility. It wasn't until the latter half of the decade that plans to develop the area now known as Kearny Mesa began to take shape. The City believed that Kearny Mesa was the next logical area in which to expect development and took action to boost interest in the land. The first move came in 1947 when the City acquired the Gibbs Airport with the hopes of developing it into a municipal airport. The City also acquired approximately 700 acres of land adjacent to the airport and planned to subdivide the large tract to encourage the construction of low-cost housing.³¹ The City continued to facilitate development of the area by offering to extend water and sewer mains up to Kearny Mesa from Linda Vista to help subdividers develop low-cost lots.³² Work moved quickly and by 1949, major water mains were being constructed through Kearny Mesa.

³¹ "City to Sell Housing Lands On Kearny Mesa," *San Diego Union*, April 20, 1948.

³² "City to Install Sewer Line to Kearny Mesa," *San Diego Union*, June 24, 1948.



Fig. 10. Aerial c. 1941 showing proposed boundary of the Linda Vista housing project just north of Mission Valley. The Chesterton subdivision is seen to the north. *San Diego History Center, 79:741-623. Aerial of Kearny Mesa, Jan 1941.*

THEME #1: AVIATION

Aviation was first introduced to the Kearny mesa lands through the establishment of the military camps north of the planning area. Naval aircraft based at what is now known as Mitscher Field at MCAS Miramar would routinely fly over the Kearny mesa on training missions. Dirigibles were also a common sight in the area during the 1920s. In the 1930s, several auxiliary landing fields had existed around the subject area and served both military and civilian pilots alike. Realizing the potential of an airport so close to the military bases, Bill Gibbs moved to the area and established Gibbs Field in 1937. This was the first non-infrastructure development in the area which would become the community of Kearny Mesa. Gibbs' company, Gibbs Flying Service, provided a number of aviation services including lessons in flying and parachuting.

The defense industry, and aerospace companies in particular, quickly gained an interest in the area. In 1940 the Ryan School of Aeronautics leased Gibbs Field in order to train Army Air Corps cadets to fly.³³ Following the war, the City recognized the potential benefit of a second airport in what would become Kearny Mesa and planned to make this a reality. San Diego soon purchased Gibbs Airport and leased part of the MCAS Miramar airstrip. Although the massive, 1500-acre airport the City had planned for was never realized, Gibbs Airport, which was then renamed to Montgomery Field, was designated as a municipal airport and used specifically for private aircrafts.

During the 1950s, many of San Diego's major aerospace companies relocated to Kearny Mesa with the hopes of maintaining the city's "place in the forefront of aviation development."³⁴ Although the spirit of the aviation and aerospace industry lived on, many of these companies were forced to diversify as the defense industry began to wane following the war. More on the aerospace companies can be found under Theme #2: Industry. Renamed in 2016, the Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport remains the strongest link to the Kearny Mesa's strong historical association with aviation.

Associated Property Types

Aviation Hangar

The aviation hangar type is a one- to two-story, steel frame utilitarian structure and is typically clad in a metal siding. Although the type commonly features a shallow pitched gable roof, barrel-vaulted and flat roofs can appear as well. The type features a large hangar door, which can be of the sliding, vertical lift, or bi-folding varieties. The aviation hangar is purpose-built for the sheltering and maintenance of aircraft. It features a large hangar area but can also include office and warehouse areas. The size and design qualities of aviation hangars can vary slightly based on type of aircraft utilizing the space. A variation of the aviation hangar includes the Quonset hut or

³³ "Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport," *The City of San Diego*.

<https://www.sandiego.gov/airports/montgomery/>.

³⁴ "City to Stay In Aviation Forefront," *San Diego Union*, January 18, 1950.

half-round form. Aviation hangars in Kearny Mesa are concentrated around the Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport.

Control Tower

The control tower type typically features a tall tower shaft capped with a cab with large windows on each side. An entrance is usually found at the base. It is a purpose-built structure used to control and manage the air and ground operations of an airport. The only known control tower in Kearny Mesa is located on the airfield of the Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport.

Character-Defining Features of the Aviation Hangar Building Type

- One to two stories
- Steel frame
- Metal siding
- Shallow pitched gable or barrel-vaulted roof
- Large hangar doors (sliding, vertical lift, or bi-folding)
- Commonly with office and/or warehouse space
- Typically cuboid in form but Quonset hut or half-rounds exist



Fig. 11. These three hangars are likely the first aviation related structures in Kearny Mesa. Each display the character-defining features noted above. *Google Maps, 2018.*

Character-Defining Features of the Control Tower Building Type

- Tall, freestanding tower shaft with battered walls.
- Capped with a control cab with large angled windows on each side.
- Entrance at base



Fig. 12. The Control Tower at Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Stylistic Influences

Aviation hangars at the Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport are nearly all pre-engineered or pre-fabricated structures of a standardized utilitarian design. Character defining features include large hangar doors, metal siding, and shallow-pitched or vaulted roofs.

The control tower at the Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport features a utilitarian design representative of its function. The functional aesthetic created through the use of concrete masonry units for the tower shaft and the large glass windows of the cab conveys a modest nod toward modernist design.



Fig. 13. Pre-engineered aviation hangars belonging to the National Air College and located at Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport. Notice the metal siding, flat and gabled roofs, as well as the large sliding and bi-folding hangar doors. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Materials and Construction Methods

Metals

Metals are used structurally and for the cladding and roofing of aviation related properties in Kearny Mesa. Whereas steel is predominantly used for the framing of these structures, corrugated steel and aluminum panels are most commonly used for exterior cladding and roofing.

Concrete Masonry Units (CMUs)

A Concrete Masonry Unit (CMU), commonly referred to as concrete block, is a pre-cast concrete block with open interior cells to allow for the insertion of reinforcement bar (rebar). CMU is a cost-effective, fire-resistant construction material that comes in a variety of colors and surface finishes. While CMUs were invented in the 19th century and widely available by the early 20th century, the mass production of CMUs didn't occur until shortly after World War II. This increase in production was driven by the need for quick and cost-effective construction methods in the post-war boom period. By 1950, concrete block was widely and cheaply available to Modernist architects and builders. Combined with its fire resistance, ease of use, and ease of maintenance, this made CMU a common material in Kearny Mesa.

While the standard CMU is grey in color and features a slightly textured finish, concrete block could be easily altered to serve more decorative purposes.

CMU is used for the squared façade of a half-round aviation hangar and, more commonly, as the foundation material for hangars such as those for the National Air College. Decorative CMU is not common for aviation architecture in Kearny Mesa.

Eligibility Criteria

Significance Criteria

Although many appear to have been constructed after 1980, some aviation related properties dating to the 1918-1949 may remain. Aviation related properties may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1 if they are associated with events that contributed to the broad patterns of local history, particularly in regard to aviation history; or under HRB Criterion A if they reflect special elements of the City or Kearny Mesa's historical, economic, or engineering development as it relates to aviation. As aviation in particular played a major role in the development of Kearny Mesa, further contextual research, particularly into the properties' association with the original Gibbs Field, will be necessary to evaluate its significance to the City and/or the Kearny Mesa community.

Aviation related properties may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3 if the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master; or under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of aviation related construction.

Significance under other criteria may be identified following future site-specific survey and evaluation.

Essential Factors of Integrity

Under NRHR Criterion A, CRHR Criterion 1 and HRB Criterion A, location, setting, association, and feeling are the essential factors of integrity.

Under NRHR Criterion C, CRHR Criterion 3 and HRB Criterion C, the design, materials, and workmanship aspects of integrity must be strongly present for a resource to be eligible. Resources evaluated under this criterion should retain most of the character-defining features of their construction types, as well as retain the primary character-defining features of any recognized style identified with the property.

Despite some alterations, a number of aviation related properties appear to maintain a sufficient level of integrity to be considered eligible as either individual resources. The resources with lower levels of integrity may be acceptable to designate as contributors to a district, should one be identified in the future. Contributors must still retain most of the character-defining features of

their type and style, as well as the specific elements that identify them as aviation related structures.

Aviation Properties Study List

| <i>Street Number</i> | <i>Street Name</i> | <i>Property Type</i> | <i>Notes</i> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 3750 | John J. Montgomery Drive | Control Tower | At Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport |
| 3873 | Kearny Villa Road | Aviation Hangars | Spider's Aircraft Service |

MID-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT BOOM: 1950-1969

By the end of the 1940s, development had spread northward and eastward onto the Kearny mesa. Residential development in surrounding areas to the west and south were reaching capacity, and both the Navy and the growing aircraft industry were pushing for further development to accommodate the future residential demand, estimated at 50,000 units in 1951.³⁵ The need for residential development was rivaled, however, by the city's concurrent need for industrial land. In April of 1951, then-president of the Chamber of Commerce, Harry L. Foster, told the Realty Board that "Kearny Mesa offers San Diego its only remaining area for industrial development."³⁶ This conclusion was supported by a study completed for the City in 1953 by Industrial Survey Associates.³⁷

This tension between the city's residential and industrial zoning needs characterized the first few years of the 1950s. Large sections of the Kearny mesa were brought before the City Council for zoning as they were annexed – sometimes in excess of 1,000 acres at a time.³⁸ Most available land was zoned either residential or industrial. Proposals for residential development frequently appear in the newspaper in the early 1950s for the area that would become Kearny Mesa. These proposals never came to fruition; the land between the Miramar Naval Air Station and Montgomery Field (much of which is now in Kearny Mesa) was prioritized as industrial land due to the limitations imposed by airfield safety zones and the area's comparative distance from previously-established residential enclaves on the mesa.³⁹ The area that is now Clairemont was prioritized for residential use.

Development initiated slowly but, once begun, exploded exponentially. Aerial photography shows that by 1953, when most zoning had been settled within Kearny Mesa, very little development had occurred (Fig. 14). A decade later, however, the entire area was substantially developed (Fig. 15).

³⁵ "Council May Act on Expansion Today," *San Diego Union*, February 1, 1951.

³⁶ "Kearny Mesa Touted for New Development," *San Diego Union*, April 19, 1951.

³⁷ "Talk on Zoning Will Continue," *San Diego Union*, September 13, 1953.

³⁸ "Kearny Mesa Acreage Annexed to San Diego," *San Diego Union*, September 21, 1951.

³⁹ "Kearny Mesa Zoning for Light Industry Adopted by Council," *San Diego Union*, September 23, 1953; "City Will Buy Mesa Land for New Industries," *San Diego Union*, October 10, 1953.



Fig. 14. 1953 aerial photograph of Kearny Mesa. *USDA, 1953.*



Fig. 15. 1964 aerial photograph of Kearny Mesa. *USDA, 1953.*

The development of road systems was the key that allowed for Kearny Mesa’s development explosion in the late 1950s and early 1960s. U.S. 395, a local expressway, connected the area to the residential developments to the south and to the larger Southern California region to the north. This alignment was upgraded and expanded during its conversion to I-15 in the 1960s.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Federal Highway Administration, *The Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways: Part I – History*, accessed May 4, 2018, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/highwayhistory/data/page01.cfm>.

The conversion of Legislative Route 279 into the wider, more modern SR-52 began in 1964.⁴¹ This route connected Kearny Mesa to the coast and to residential developments to the west. SR-163, completed in the late 1960s, connected Kearny Mesa to downtown along the former route of an earlier alignment of US-395 and US-80.⁴²

The development of major surface streets – such as Balboa Avenue, Aero Drive, and Kearny Villa Road – was also critical to the mid-century development of Kearny Mesa. While the freeway system connected Kearny Mesa to the San Diego area and beyond, these surface streets served as the primary arteries *through* the area. Running generally east-to-west, both Balboa Avenue and Aero Drive were developed to their current lengths by 1964 (see Fig. 15). Kearny Villa Road continued to be an important north-to-south artery. Public transportation served these major thoroughfares. Major industrial employers like Convair, Cubic Corporation, the Ryan Aeronautical Company, and KinTel Corporation could be accessed by bus Route G, originating downtown, or Route D, originating in La Jolla.⁴³

Reliable water infrastructure was also critical to the area's development during this period. In 1958, an eleven-million-dollar water revenue bond was passed. Much of the bond was earmarked for water development on the Kearny mesa, which a May 1958 article estimated would one day use one fifth of the city's water supply.⁴⁴ By this time, San Diego had outpaced its native water supply and relied heavily on imported water from the Colorado River. This bond funded a second aqueduct from the Colorado River, which passed through Riverside to a new dam and filtration plant to the northeast of Miramar Naval Air Station. Treated water was distributed by three pipelines: the Miramar pipeline, Miramar pipeline extension, and Elliott pipeline.⁴⁵

The City and County governments of San Diego expanded significantly in the 1950s and 1960s to accommodate the exploding local population, made possible in part by the residential and economic development of the Kearny mesa. In 1963, the County was required to demolish its operations center on Rosecrans Street, which was in the alignment of a highway project. Drawn by the plentiful and comparatively inexpensive land in Kearny Mesa, the County selected an approximately thirty-eight acre site about a quarter mile east of the intersection of Clairemont Mesa Boulevard and US-395 (now SR-163).⁴⁶ The complex was complete and occupied by the

⁴¹ The section of LR-279 was not fully converted to SR-52 until 1988. "Motorists Christen Stretch of Route 52," *San Diego Evening Tribune*, July 1, 1988.

⁴² Jeff Jensen, *Drive the Broadway of America!* (Tuscon, AZ: Bygone Byways, 2013), 216-217.

⁴³ "Bus Line Extensions Due on Kearny Mesa," *San Diego Union*, August 6, 1960; "Bus Route Change Sought to Plants," *San Diego Union*, September 28, 1960.

⁴⁴ "Kearny Mesa Needs Water to Expand," *San Diego Union*, May 30, 1958.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ "Supervisors Select Location for New Operations Center," *San Diego Union*, February 21, 1961.

summer of 1963.⁴⁷ A new County Operations Center was constructed on the same site in 2013, replacing the 1960s complex. The City's Fire Station 28, located on Kearny Villa Road north of Aero Drive, was constructed in 1958 and has been in continuous use.⁴⁸

Theme #2: Industry (1950-1969)

During World War II, San Diego served as the headquarters of the Pacific Fleet and as a major training and wartime production center. In the Post-War years of the early 1950s, however, the City strove to push beyond its reputation as a Navy town, diversify its existing industries, and attract new industries that would both employ and provide goods for the city's burgeoning population. The City actively recruited companies to relocate to the Kearny mesa. The Chamber of Commerce mailed five thousand brochures to executives in the research, educational, tool production, electronics, food processing, defense, garment, and aviation industries. These brochures outlined the advantages that companies could expect from relocating to the City's newly available industrial land on the Kearny mesa, including the area's proximity to Montgomery Field, favorable climate, advanced highway system, large skilled labor pool, and eager consumer markets.⁴⁹ According to Stanley Grove, then the general manager of the Chamber of Commerce, the outreach program was successful in securing commitments from nine unnamed companies by 1951.⁵⁰

Kearny Mesa was also attractive to the defense, aeronautics, and electronics companies that had previously established themselves in the Lindbergh Field area during World War II. Available parcels in the tidelands near the bay, previously preferred due to their proximity to Lindbergh Field and the port, were becoming rarer and more expensive. When the Kearny mesa's industrial land became available, these companies capitalized on the opportunity to expand in a new, more cost-effective location. Convair Astronautics was the first industrial occupant of Kearny Mesa; their Kearny Mesa plant was constructed to the east of US-395 in 1958.⁵¹

In the mid-1950s, the Ryan Aeronautical Company was forced to seek a new location for its expanding electronics division despite a recent renovation and expansion of their Lindbergh Field plant. They leased a previously-constructed electronics plant in Kearny Mesa in 1957.⁵² Stinson

⁴⁷ "County Offices on Move to Kearny Mesa," *San Diego Union*, July 28, 1963.

⁴⁸ City of San Diego, "Fire Station 28," *Fire-Rescue Department*, accessed May 1, 2018, <https://www.sandiego.gov/fire/about/firestations/sta28>.

⁴⁹ "Grove Says 9 New Industries Interested in Locating Here," *San Diego Union*, March 4, 1951.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ "Astronautics Plant Moving Day," *San Diego Union*, May 25, 1958. This complex was redeveloped in the 1990s. All existing buildings on the site were constructed after 1990 and are not part of the historic complex, including Building 24 at 8695 Spectrum Center Boulevard, which looks very similar to the Convair buildings in Figure 18 (page 34). For more information about this complex, reference the Cultural Resources section of the New Century Center Program EIR.

⁵² "Ryan Aeronautical Co.," *San Diego Union*, October 20, 1957.

Aircraft Tool & Engineering Corporation, which produced special machinery and tools for the aircraft industry, moved from Chula Vista into a new plant and office structure in Kearny Mesa in 1958.⁵³



Fig. 16. Convair's Kearny Mesa complex (non-extant). Looking north towards Highway 395. February 3, 1959. *San Diego History Center 92:18835-521.*

⁵³ "Stinson Aircraft Plans Expansion," *San Diego Union*, November 10, 1957.



Fig. 17. Convair's Kearny Mesa complex (non-extant). Aerial looking southeast. *San Diego History Center 1998_63-19.*



Fig. 18. Convair office buildings at the Kearny Mesa complex (non-extant). Looking southeast. July 2, 1958. Reference footnote 51 (page 32) for more on these buildings. *San Diego History Center UT 85:6625.*

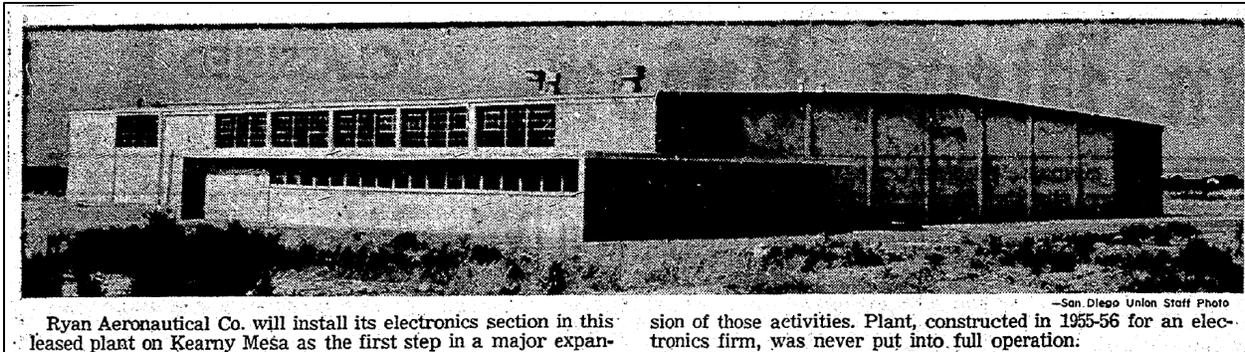


Fig. 19. Ryan Aeronautical Company's Kearny Mesa plant (non-extant). Photograph and caption from *San Diego Union*, October 20, 1957.

These aviation and aeronautics companies were a source of local pride and national recognition for San Diego. A 1950 article in the *San Diego Union* named San Diego a “cradle of aviation,” noting the City’s revolutionary aviation research, design, and manufacturing companies like Convair and Ryan Aeronautical Company. These companies had put San Diego in the national spotlight in World War II and, following their respective relocations to Kearny Mesa, continued to innovate and to be leaders in both the commercial and military aviation industries on a nationwide scale.⁵⁴

The aviation industry, already well established since World War II, was joined by new, related industries in Kearny Mesa. Among the most prominent of the new industries in the area was the electronics industry. Kay Labs, an electronics manufacturer, moved into a 30,000 square foot facility in Kearny Mesa in 1955.⁵⁵ Narmco Inc., a producer of electronic components and structural plastics for aircraft, opened a 15,000 square foot facility on Aero Drive in 1958.⁵⁶ KinTel, a division of Cohu Electronics Inc., broke ground for their 16,000 square foot facility in Kearny Mesa in 1958.⁵⁷ Also in 1958, Electro Instruments Inc. built their headquarters on Aero Drive. In 1959, they built a 60,000 square foot manufacturing plant to the south of their headquarters building.⁵⁸ These companies produced both consumer electronics – feeding the Mid-Century populace’s need for radios, televisions, telephones, and other consumer goods – and electronic components for the manufacturing and other industries.

While the aerospace, defense, and electronics industries were dominant throughout much of this Mid-Century period, other types of manufacturers also settled in Kearny Mesa. For example, Union Carbide Corporation produced chemicals (in addition to electronics), Reflin Company produced plastics, Balboa Pipe & Supply Company produced plumbing and mechanical pipe,

⁵⁴ “City to Stay In Aviation Forefront,” *San Diego Union*, January 18, 1950.

⁵⁵ “Kay Lab, Electronics Manufacturer, is Now ‘At Home’,” *San Diego Union*, June 19, 1955.

⁵⁶ “Narmco Inc. Set to Dedicate Half-Million-Dollar Facility,” *San Diego Union*, January 19, 1958.

⁵⁷ “Kin Tel Announces \$250,000 Build-Up,” *San Diego Union*, May 6, 1958.

⁵⁸ “Electronics Firm Plans New San Diego Facility,” *San Diego Union*, September 20, 1959.

Pepsi Bottling Company produced bottled soft drinks, and Solar Turbines produced equipment for the production of solar, wind, and gas energy, among numerous others.⁵⁹

By 1969, Kearny Mesa's explosive growth had nearly reached capacity. Only 75 acres remained of the nearly 4,000 acres of industrially-zoned land in Kearny Mesa. As a result, National City, El Cajon, and North County areas like Escondido became the new desirable location for industrial development.⁶⁰ The character of development at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s changed towards commercial and retail, as the large parcels of land needed for new industrial development had been developed by this point.

Associated Property Types

Office-Production Buildings

The Office-Production type features a publicly-accessible front office or showroom attached to a rear warehouse or production facility. These types of buildings tended to be purpose-built for a particular type of industry, most often by the company that intended to inhabit it. Initial archival research yielded only one example of an Office-Production type building in Kearny Mesa being built on speculation (that is, built by a property owner or developer without a specific tenant in mind or under lease agreement): the 1968 building at 7899 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard. The requirements of each individual industry were so specific that creating plants of these types on speculation was not typically a sound investment. However, the archival record does suggest that companies within the same industry would move into pre-existing Office-Production buildings constructed for their particular industry. For example, the Ryan Aeronautical Company moved its electronics division into a building previously constructed by Magnatron Corporation, another electronics company, in 1957.⁶¹

⁵⁹ "New Plants Enhance Outlook," *San Diego Union*, May 30, 1967; "Electronics-Plastics," *San Diego Union*, June 19, 1955; "Balboa Pipe Office Move is Announced," *San Diego Union*, January 10, 1960.

⁶⁰ "EDC Attracts Firms to San Diego Area," *San Diego Union*, January 1, 1969.

⁶¹ "Ryan Arranges for Expansion in Electronics," *San Diego Union*, October 20, 1957.



Fig. 20. The building at 7899 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard (extant) is the only known example of an Office-Production type built on speculation for multiple tenants in Kearny Mesa. *San Diego Union*, June 2, 1968.

Character-Defining Features of the Office-Production Industrial Building Type

- Single story
- Publicly-accessible front office or showroom space
- Front office styled in a Modernist sub-style
- Production/warehouse space physically connected to front office
- Loading areas with roll-up, warehouse-style doors
- Parking lots
- Designed landscapes in public areas and/or along road frontages
- Prominent signage, either freestanding or mounted on a street-facing elevation



Fig. 21. The WESCO building at 7790 Convoy Court features all the character-defining features of the Office-Production type including single story massing, a styled front office attached to the warehouse space, a paved parking lot, and loading area with warehouse doors. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Industrial Park Complex

The Industrial Park Complex type was developed on speculation and provided a variety of sizes and configurations of industrial spaces for lease. These complexes were developed as campuses with unifying stylistic elements and deliberate spatial organization. Interior spaces were flexible, allowing for multiple, smaller tenants or a single, larger tenant in each building of the complex. There are no known examples in Kearny Mesa of a single tenant occupying all buildings in an industrial park complex during the historic period. Shared parking lots and exterior courtyard spaces are common for this building type, with networks of exterior walkways providing access to and between the complex's buildings.



Fig. 22. City of San Diego Industrial Park in 1962. City-owned land was leased to industrial companies and became a dense area of Kearny Mesa industrial development in the 1960s. The park's location is likely along Balboa Avenue and Ruffin Road. Some resources may be extant in this area. *San Diego History Center*.

Character-Defining Features of the Industrial Park Complex Building Type

- One or two stories typical; taller examples possible
- Multiple buildings (at least two) with unifying design details
- Exterior courtyards between buildings common
- Designed landscapes (including pedestrian circulation) in common areas and/or along street frontages
- Loading areas with warehouse-style doors at rear
- Parking lot, often shared between buildings
- Modernist design elements
- Developed as a complex or campus for multiple tenants



Fig. 23. Industrial park at 7701-7725 Convoy Street. This one story Industrial Park Complex features a shared parking lot, designed landscape spaces, multiple buildings with unifying details, and modern styling. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Stylistic Influences

Industrial buildings in Kearny Mesa nearly ubiquitously feature elements of the Contemporary, Brutalist, International, and/or New Formalist substyles of Modernism. In rarer cases, these Modern features are combined with Spanish elements such as tiled roofs. Buildings can feature enough elements of a single Modernist substyle to be categorized in accordance with the City's *Modernism Context*, but more often they combine elements of the predominant styles of the Mid-Century period and apply them loosely to industrial forms.⁶²

While the City's *Modernism Context* applies mainly to residential and commercial building types constructed between 1935 and 1970, the character-defining features listed for the Modernist sub-styles within that context statement can be adapted to the industrial forms present within Kearny Mesa between 1950 and 1970. Other architectural style guides may be required for styles not included in the *Modernism Context*, such as New Formalist.

Materials and Construction Methods

Modernist architecture relies heavily on material and construction method to convey style. The movement was defined by an experimentation with new materials, such as glass and concrete, and the reimagining of traditional materials, like wood and masonry. For some modern styles, such as Brutalism or Post-and-Beam, expression of the construction method was as or more important than any applied stylistic markers. The application of these materials and construction methods cross the boundaries of building type and style, applied to all types and styles of industrial buildings in Kearny Mesa. As such, the below discussion includes descriptions of these materials and methods for purposes of their identification in the field, with examples for reference.

Concrete Masonry Units (CMUs) and Decorative Block

A Concrete Masonry Unit (CMU), commonly referred to as concrete block, is a pre-cast concrete block with open interior cells to allow for the insertion of reinforcement bar (rebar). CMU is a cost-effective, fire-resistant construction material that comes in a variety of colors and surface finishes. While CMUs were invented in the 19th century and widely available by the early 20th century, the mass production of CMUs didn't occur until shortly after World War II. This increase in production was driven by the need for quick and cost-effective construction methods in the post-war boom period. By 1950, concrete block was widely and cheaply available to Modernist architects and builders. Combined with its fire resistance, ease of use, and ease of maintenance, this made CMU a common material for industrial buildings in Kearny Mesa throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

While the standard CMU is grey in color and features a slightly textured finish, concrete block could be easily altered to serve more decorative purposes. This was done in a number of ways

⁶² Note also that the City's *Modernism Context* applies mainly to residential and commercial building types constructed between 1935-1970. Character-defining features are not explicitly listed for industrial examples of the various Modernist substyles present in San Diego during this period.

including coloring, texturing, and piercing the block as well as producing CMUs in non-standard shapes and sizes.

Due to the versatility of concrete as a material, CMUs were often used to approximate the appearance of other materials. Textured, colored block can approximate various types of stone, brick, or other materials. One common variation on the standard CMU form is slump block. This block is shorter and wider than a standard CMU and is removed from its mold before it is completely set. This causes the block to retain a slightly slumped appearance rather than the crisp, flat face of a typical CMU. Slump block is used in Southern California to approximate the appearance of adobe block. CMUs imitating both stone and adobe block are found on Kearny Mesa industrial buildings.



Fig. 24. A Kaiser Permanente site at 7035 Convoy Court. This building's slump block approximates the appearance of an adobe block. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Decorative, pierced block is one of the most recognizable Modernist design features. These blocks could be used structurally but – due to their comparatively high cost and the Modernist design ethos – were most commonly used as screen walls, fences, or as decorative highlights. Pierced block came in a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and patterns and could be colored and textured in the same way that more typical CMU could be.



Fig. 25. Decorative pierced block screens on the Pepsi Cola bottling plant at 7995 Armour Street. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Non-standard block shapes and sizes could also be used for more subtle decoration. For example, builders could achieve a square block look by exposing the short face of a standard concrete block, rather than the rectangular face. Eventually, specific square block was produced to achieve this look with more flexibility.

Cast Concrete and Tilt-Up Construction

Cast concrete, both cast-in-place and tilt-up, is also a common construction method for industrial buildings in Kearny Mesa. Fully cast concrete buildings are relatively rare but cast concrete portions of buildings often coexisted with CMU and/or tilt-up portions of buildings.

Tilt-up construction is a method of pre-casting reinforced concrete panels on the ground or other flat surface on site and then lifting the panels into place. Tilt-up differs from prefabrication in that the panels are poured, cured, and assembled at the construction site rather than in a factory. The size, weight, and configuration of panels was therefore not impacted by shipping constraints. This leads to a highly custom and cost-effective construction type. The method was experimented

with as early as 1905 but, like CMU construction, did not gain widespread popularity until the post-WWII construction boom.⁶³

A variety of decorative finishes could be achieved with both cast-in-place and tilt-up concrete walls. While smooth or lightly-textured concrete is most common, there are many examples of exposed aggregate or board-formed finishes throughout Kearny Mesa. Exposed aggregate is achieved by mechanically or chemically removing the top layer of concrete to expose the aggregate beneath, which is usually larger or more decorative in nature than typically used for concrete. Faux exposed aggregate concrete can be created by pressing stones into the concrete as it cures. Board-formed concrete is a decorative method that leaves the imprint of a wood board, including its grain, in the finished product. Boards can be arranged in any manner to create the final pattern.



Fig. 26. Board-formed concrete is the main decorative finish on this Industrial Park Complex building at 7197 Convoy Court. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Metals

Steel and aluminum are used sparingly on industrial buildings in Kearny Mesa. The use of exposed metal for structure or ornament is most commonly found on the Industrial Park Complex building

⁶³ Langton, Schenck, and Sun, *A Study of the Concrete Block Industry: A National and Regional Approach* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1972), 169.

type where, for example, metal posts may support exterior overhangs. Metal doors and window frames are the most common usage of metal on industrial buildings in Kearny Mesa.



Fig. 27. Decorative pierced metal wraps around the corner of this CMU industrial building at 9150 Balboa Avenue. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Glass

The expansive use of glass is a defining element of much Modernist design. Glass windows, wall systems, and doors are found both in the Industrial Park Complex building type and in the front office or showroom space of the Office-Production building type. The windows are metal-framed, most often with aluminum, and are clear or tinted dark.



Fig. 28. Large expanses of glass at the corner entrance to this Industrial Park Complex at 7531 Convoy Court. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Eligibility Criteria

Significance Criteria

The industrial properties may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1 if they are associated with events that contributed to the broad patterns of local history, particularly in regard to industrial history and development; or under HRB Criterion A if they reflect special elements of the City's or Kearny Mesa's economic, engineering, and/or historical development. Resources should be considered in the context of significant companies or industries within the city. For example, surviving resources associated with Convair/General Dynamics, Ryan Aeronautics/Electronics, or other giants of local and regional industry would be evaluated under NRHR Criterion A, CRHR Criterion 1 and HRB Criterion A.

Industrial properties may also be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3 if the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master; and/or under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction. Because the large form and function of industrial buildings are critical to the success of their use, buildings may exhibit only a few character-defining features of a Modernist substyle or a combination of character-defining features from multiple Modernist substyles, which should not

in and of itself preclude designation of the resource under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C if they embody the distinctive characteristics of a modernist substyle as applied to an industrial type building.

Significance under other criteria may be identified following future site-specific survey and evaluation.

Essential Factors of Integrity

Under NRHP Criterion A, CRHR Criterion 1 and HRB Criterion A, location, setting, association, and feeling are the essential factors of integrity.

Under NRHP Criterion C, CRHR Criterion 3 and HRB Criterion C, the design, materials, and workmanship aspects of integrity are especially important and must be intact for a resource to be eligible. Resources evaluated under this criterion should retain most of the character-defining features of their construction types, as well as retain the primary character-defining features of any recognized style identified with the property.

Industrial Properties Study List

| Street Number | Street Name | Property Type | Notes |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 7899 | Clairemont Mesa Blvd | Office-Production | Late example of the type and only known example of this type built on speculation for multiple tenants. |
| 7028 | Convoy Court | Industrial Park Complex | Kearny Mesa Industrial Park |
| 7197 | Convoy Court | Industrial Park Complex | |
| 7585 | Convoy Court | Industrial Park Complex | |
| 7601 | Convoy Court | Industrial Park Complex | Mentioned in 1969 newspaper article. Address given as 7601 Convoy Street, which does not exist. |
| 7620 | Convoy Court | Office-Production | |
| 7790 | Convoy Court | Office-Production | WESCO building |

TRANSITION TO COMMERCIAL, RETAIL, AND OFFICE DEVELOPMENT: 1965 TO 1989

Most of the available industrial land in Kearny Mesa was occupied by 1969, with less than 100 acres left available for new industrial development.⁶⁴ While the area's industrial nature did not disappear, the boom period of new industrial development in Kearny Mesa had passed. A second wave of development began in earnest. While the large tracts of land necessary for new industrial development were no longer available, smaller parcels were becoming available for commercial, retail, and office use.

While there were individual instances of commercial and retail buildings before this period, commercial development did not explode until after industrial development had slowed in the late 1960s. For example, aerial photography shows that the strip malls and shopping centers along Convoy Street north of Balboa Avenue had barely begun to develop in 1969 (Fig. 29) By 1972, shopping centers and stand-alone retail stores line both sides of the street (Fig. 30). By 1989, the area is completely built out with commercial development (Fig. 31).



Fig. 29. 1969 aerial photography of Convoy Street between Balboa Avenue and Clairemont Mesa Boulevard. USGS, 1969.

⁶⁴ "EDC Attracts Firms to San Diego Area," *San Diego Union*, January 1, 1969.



Fig. 30. 1972 aerial photography of Convoy Street between Balboa Avenue and Clairemont Mesa Boulevard. *USGS, 1972.*



Fig. 31. 1989 aerial photography of Convoy Street between Balboa Avenue and Clairemont Mesa Boulevard. *USDA, 1989.*

Theme #3: Commercial, Retail, and Office Development (1965-1989)

Commercial and retail businesses began to appear widely throughout Kearny Mesa in the latter half of the 1960s. These businesses were mostly concentrated in the western portions of Kearny Mesa that border the residential areas of Clairemont and Linda Vista, which both supplied consumers for Kearny Mesa businesses. A J-Mart was constructed in 1965 near the intersection of Balboa Avenue and Kearny Villa Road.⁶⁵ A Ford dealership off of Kearny Villa Road to the south of the FedMart was advertising in the *San Diego Union* by 1966.⁶⁶ A very early example, FedMart, was constructed on Othello Avenue in 1958.⁶⁷ The commercial aspects of the area's industrial businesses, such as those run out of the front offices of the Office-Production type buildings, also predate the late 1960s commercial/retail boom. These early commercial and retail buildings followed the same model of development as the industrial development before it: large, warehouse-type buildings with expansive parking lots on multi-acre sites. The development of these big-box type stores became more difficult in the latter half of the 1960s as large tracts of available land became rarer.



Fig. 32. FedMart on Othello Avenue in 1960. *San Diego History Center, S-6630-4 FedMart – Kearny Mesa – 1960.*

⁶⁵ "Big Mart Planned for Kearny Mesa," *San Diego Union*, December 13, 1964.

⁶⁶ "Autos & Trucks Wanted," *San Diego Union*, July 16, 1966.

⁶⁷ "Congratulations to the New FedMart Kearny Mesa Store," *San Diego Union*, November 9, 1958.

The industrial-scale commercial/retail model was succeeded by strip malls and stand-alone buildings. A 1974 article in the *San Diego Union* calls Kearny Mesa “one of the hottest small business growth centers in the U.S.” and states that there are four community shopping centers and 125 retail stores in Kearny Mesa. That development happened quickly, with retail sales rising by 31 percent between 1970 and 1972 alone.⁶⁸ While this commercial development happened throughout Kearny Mesa, it tended to center around the main vehicular arteries in the western half of Kearny Mesa: Balboa Avenue, Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, Kearny Villa Road, and Convoy Street.



Fig. 33. Former Frazee Paint building at 4802 Convoy Street (extant). *San Diego History Center, Hope Collection. Date unknown.*

Beginning in the mid-1970s, a third wave of construction further diversified Kearny Mesa’s building stock: office building development. As with the commercial development wave beginning in the late 1960s, the office development wave was not the first appearance of office uses in Kearny Mesa. Rather, this period represented a focused shift towards office development that outpaced other types of development in the area during this period. A 1980 *San Diego Union* article, entitled “Industries Give Way to Offices in Kearny Mesa,” indicates that there were 36 office buildings with roughly 980,000 square feet of rentable space in Kearny Mesa by the beginning of 1980. An additional 14 buildings, totaling 650,000 square feet of office space, were

⁶⁸ “Kearny Mesa Business Growth Challenges Swiftest Anywhere,” *San Diego Union*, January 8, 1974.

scheduled to be completed in the area by the end of 1982, representing a 68 percent increase in rentable office space in less than two years.⁶⁹ This boom in development was likely in response to dropping office vacancy rates throughout the city. The results of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce’s Economic Research Bureau annual survey for 1980 shows a 7.1 percent vacancy rate for office space throughout the city, which was considered very low compared to the 19 percent vacancy rate of three years prior.⁷⁰

Kearny Mesa did not attract any specific varieties of commercial or retail businesses. The area was well-connected by road to the residential neighborhoods to the west and south, whose populations supported all varieties of businesses. The area was also far enough away from those residential areas – and industrial enough in character – to support noisier or dirtier businesses like automotive repair shops and dealerships. Kearny Mesa was home to shops of all varieties, restaurants, clubs, automotive repair shops and dealerships, specialty construction and hardware supply stores, banks, hotels, and dozens of other commercial and retail businesses. This economic diversity persists to the present day.

Associated Property Types

Strip Mall

The strip mall developed out of a long tradition of street-facing commercial development that began with the pedestrian-oriented downtown commercial districts of the pre-automobile era. The shift in American culture towards an automobile-centric society began in the mid-1940s and rippled outwards into all aspects of American life. By the 1950s, most middle- and upper-class homes had at least one car, adding up to millions of cars on the roads. Parking in the traditional commercial centers became more difficult, and these centers’ locations within the densest parts of a city or community made them difficult to retrofit for parking.

California was home to some of the earliest experimental models that attempted to solve the issue of providing a walkable commercial experience for shoppers while also providing for parking for those shoppers’ cars. Some early shopping centers, like Los Angeles’ Broadway-Crenshaw Center (1947), attempted to draw both the traditional pedestrian traffic and the automobile traffic by presenting an equally inviting storefront to the street and to the large, rear parking lot. This design represents an attempt to transition between the pedestrian and automobile eras. In reality, however, the Broadway-Crenshaw Center and other early examples like it experienced very little pedestrian traffic.⁷¹

⁶⁹ “Industries Give Way to Offices in Kearny Mesa,” *San Diego Union*, November 9, 1980.

⁷⁰ “Office Glut Continues 3-Year Decline,” *San Diego Union*, July 26, 1980.

⁷¹ Matthew Manning, “The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls: Evaluating and Preserving a Unique Cultural Resource” (MHP thesis, University of Georgia, 2009), 21.

In light of the lessons learned from these early examples, the next generation of shopping center fully embraced the automobile and the parking lot. These were the first shopping centers to be called 'strip malls' due to their long, rectangular shape.⁷²

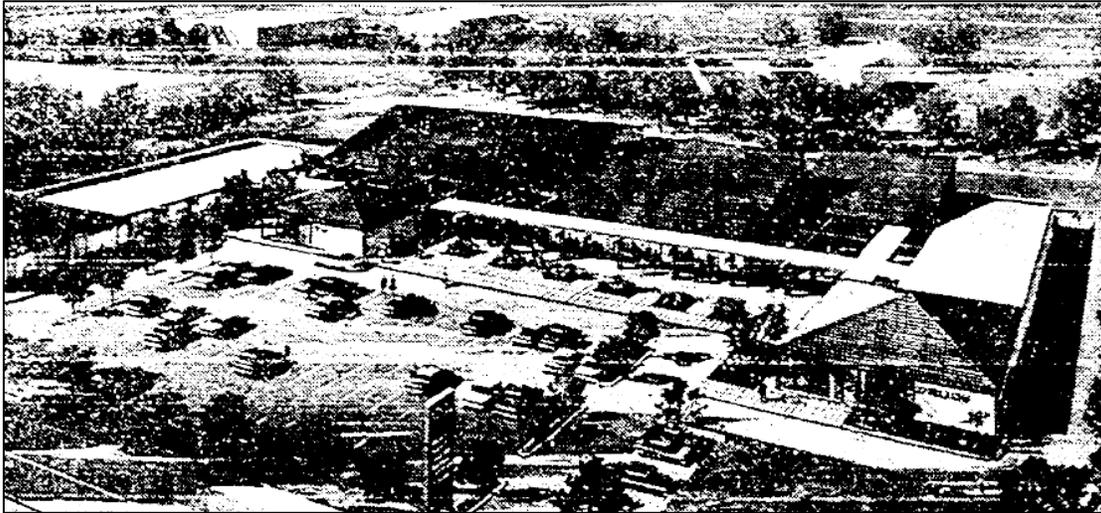


Fig. 34. Conceptual image of the Convoy Village shopping center (3737 to 4344 Convoy Street) from 1971. Extant but highly altered. *San Diego Union*, July 25, 1971.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 28.

Character-Defining Features of Strip Malls

- Designed and built as a planned unit
- Linear arrangement of building(s) (I, U, or L-shaped plans most common)
- Building(s) set back from the public road or right-of-way
- Primary parking area between building(s) and road
- Primary elevation faces parking lot
- Rear service entrances and/or loading docks
- Covered sidewalk along storefronts common
- Individualized, prominently-placed signage for each tenant
- Single story most common, two stories possible



Fig. 35. Convoy Village shopping center at 3737 to 4344 Convoy Street is a U-shaped, single story shopping center on Convoy Street. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Purpose-Built and Franchise Architecture

Purpose-built commercial architecture includes all those standalone commercial buildings that feature architectural elements that allow for a specific category of business to operate in that building. Purpose-built commercial architecture can include buildings such as banks, gas stations, hotels, automotive dealerships and repair shops, etc., where specialized architectural features like gas pump overhangs, drive-throughs, or garage bays were specifically designed to allow the business to operate. Buildings that were created on speculation, with open interiors that are fully customizable by the tenant and with no specialized architectural elements, are not considered purpose-built commercial architecture. Like with the Office-Production type of industrial buildings, purpose-built commercial architecture was typically built by the first company to occupy the building and subsequent occupants were companies within the same commercial category (e.g., bank to bank). Each of these types of purpose-built architecture has its own set of character-defining features that distinguish it from those commercial buildings built on speculation for flexible uses.

Franchise architecture is a subset of purpose-built commercial architecture. Franchise architecture consists of architectural forms developed by a company for maximum brand recognition. These buildings are constructed the same way throughout that company's region of operation and do not take site conditions, local architectural themes, or any other localized elements into consideration. The effect is to have a building that serves not only its stated function, but also serves as advertising from the street. Franchise architecture also provides for a unified shopper experience between chain store locations. While franchise retailers can also occupy storefronts within strip malls, franchise *architecture* refers only to standalone architecture of a pre-designed, company-specific style.

Some of the most recognizable franchise architecture is restaurant architecture. For example, the brightly-colored A-frame of Wienerschnitzel restaurants is a distinctive Southern California landmark. The Kearny Mesa location, at the corner of Convoy and Armour Streets, was constructed between 1966 and 1972. Some restaurant architecture, however, better qualifies as purpose-built architecture. For example, the former Jack-in-the-Box at the corner of Balboa Avenue and Convoy Street consists of a box-like main mass with one drive-through lane. Buildings like these could be easily and cheaply adapted to house any fast food company by changing overhangs, decorative details, fenestration, and other building elements.

Office Parks

The Office Park type was typically developed on speculation and provided a variety of sizes and configurations of office spaces for lease. These complexes were developed as campuses with unifying stylistic elements and deliberate spatial organization. Interior spaces were flexible, allowing for multiple, smaller tenants or a single, larger tenant in each building of the complex. There are no known examples in Kearny Mesa of a single tenant occupying all buildings in an office park during the historic period. Shared parking lots and exterior courtyard spaces are common for this building type, with networks of exterior walkways providing access to and between the complex's buildings. Buildings within the same park could be different heights, but

most often the buildings were uniform in height and design details. Standalone office buildings are excluded from this building type.

Office parks are distinguished from industrial parks by a number of features. Office parks may be a single story but are more often two or more stories. In addition, office parks typically lack the warehouse-style doors at the rear of the complex's buildings. Office parks also tend to eschew landscaped courtyards and exterior spaces in favor of additional paved parking. Landscaping is still common close to the buildings and in parking lot medians. Finally, the stylistic language of office parks tends to reflect the later elements of Modernism, since office park development in Kearny Mesa was most prevalent beginning in the 1970s. More about office park architectural styles is discussed in *Stylistic Influences*, below.

Character-Defining Features of the Purpose-Built Commercial Architecture Building Type

- Standalone building
- Designed with features specific to a commercial category
- Occupied and re-occupied by the same commercial category
- Individual character-defining features will vary (e.g., for a bank vs. an auto shop)

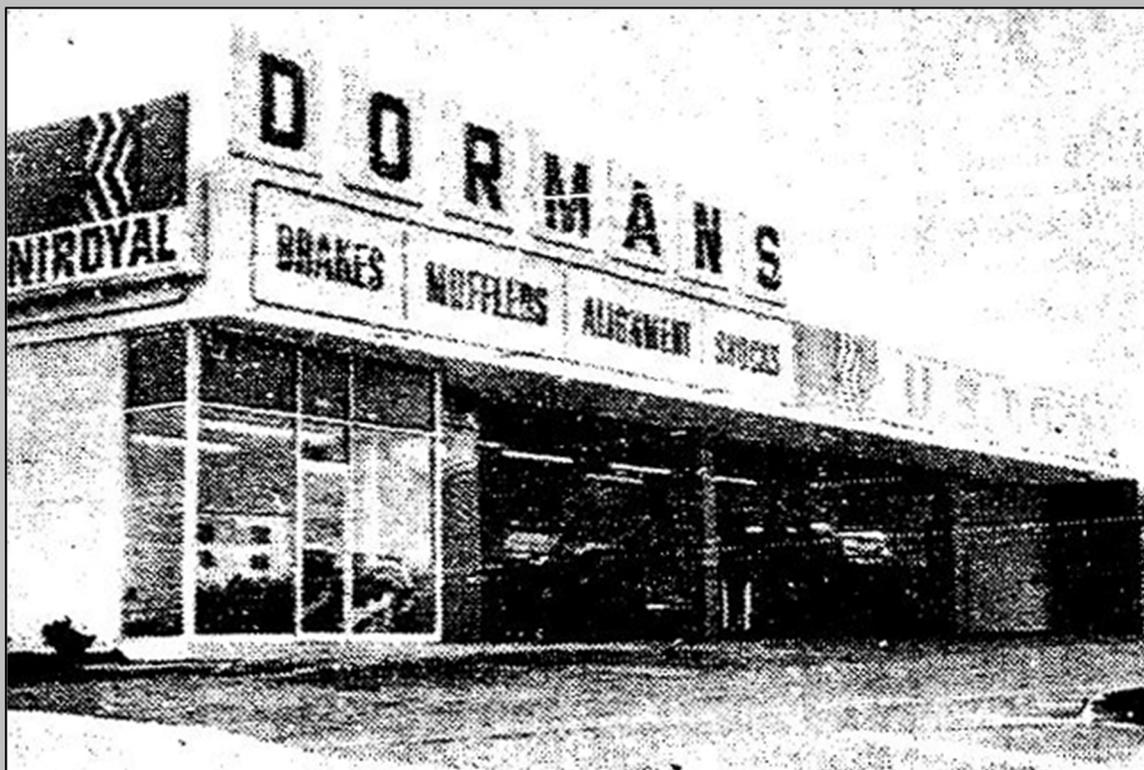


Fig. 36. The former Dorman's auto shop at 3950 Convoy Street (extant) is an example of a purpose-built commercial building. The garage bays are specific features that make this building particularly suited to an auto mechanic's work. *San Diego Union*, February 3, 1967.

Character-Defining Features of the Franchise Architecture Building Type

- Standalone building
- Designed by a brand or company for combined function and advertising
- Constructed the same throughout the brand or company's region of operation
- Developed without regard for local architectural themes or site conditions
- Provide for a unified customer experience between locations



Fig. 37. The Kearny Mesa Wiener Schnitzel is a strong example of franchise architecture. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Character-Defining Features of the Office Park Building Type

- Low-rise and mid-rise examples most common, but high-rise examples possible
- Buildings in the complex need not be the same number of stories
- Multiple buildings (at least two) with unifying design details
- Exterior courtyards between buildings common
- Designed landscapes (including pedestrian circulation) tight to buildings, in parking lot medians, and/or along street frontages
- Paved parking lot(s), often shared between buildings
- Modernist and post-Modernist design elements
- Developed as a complex or campus, typically for multiple tenants



Fig. 38. This office park building at 9465 Farnham Street is one of a complex of three low-rise office buildings with designed landscaping beds around each building and along the street frontages. A continuous, paved parking lot connects the buildings to each other, and the board formed concrete detailing is a distinctive Modern design element that unites the buildings. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Stylistic Influences

Commercial and retail buildings in Kearny Mesa are not as styled as their industrial or office counterparts. As Manning stated in his study of Modernist commercial architecture, these buildings are “less a product of architecture than a result of graphic design,” with signage often taking predominance over the architecture itself.⁷³ While most commercial buildings in Kearny Mesa feature aspects of Modernist design, rarely do they contain enough features of a single Modernist substyle to be categorized in accordance with the City’s *Modernism Context*. In fact, the 1948 edition of *The Community Builder’s Handbook* stated that strip malls in particular should appear generally Modernist but should not make strong stylistic statements because a strong association with any one style risked the design becoming dated more quickly.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, commercial and retail buildings within Kearny Mesa features stylistic influences from the Contemporary, Googie, Brutalist, Organic Geometric, and New Formalist sub-styles of Modernism. Also in abundance is a style that could be called Neo-Spanish Eclectic. This style mixes traditional Spanish Eclectic elements like stucco walls, arched colonnades, and red tiled roofs with Modernist design elements to create something that is, perhaps, particular to the Southwestern United States.

Office buildings in Kearny Mesa may include highly-designed examples that incorporate elements from the styles of the preceding decades (such as Contemporary, Brutalist, New Formalist, and Neo-Spanish Eclectic) and combine them with new stylistic elements and design sensibilities particular to the mid-1970s and later, such as Postmodernism. Due to the relative youth of these buildings, however, these new styles have not been well-documented or codified in any consistent manner. Like those of the Modernist era, however, these post-Modern buildings rely more heavily on the experimental use of material and on construction methods than on the character-defining features of any established style. Those materials and construction methods particular to office buildings are discussed below.

⁷³ Ibid., 39.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 32.



Fig. 39. The Neo-Spanish Eclectic elements of this low-rise office park building at 7710 Balboa Avenue include a red tile roof, arched colonnade, stucco façade, and red, faux tile roof. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Materials and Construction Methods

Concrete Masonry Units (CMUs) and Decorative Block

A Concrete Masonry Unit (CMU), commonly referred to as concrete block, is a pre-cast concrete block with open interior cells to allow for the insertion of reinforcement bar (rebar). CMU is a cost-effective, fire-resistant construction material that comes in a variety of colors and surface finishes. While CMUs were invented in the 19th century and widely available by the early 20th century, the mass production of CMUs didn't occur until shortly after World War II. This increase in production was driven by the need for quick and cost-effective construction methods in the post-war boom period. By 1950, concrete block was widely and cheaply available to Modernist architects and builders. Combined with its fire resistance, ease of use, and ease of maintenance, this made CMU a common material for in Kearny Mesa.

While the standard CMU is grey in color and features a slightly textured finish, concrete block could be easily altered to serve more decorative purposes. This was done in a number of ways including coloring, texturing, and piercing the block as well as producing CMUs in non-standard shapes and sizes.

Due to the versatility of concrete as a material, CMUs were often used to approximate the appearance of other materials. Textured, colored block can approximate various types of stone, brick, or other materials. One common variation on the standard CMU form is slump block. This block is shorter and wider than a standard CMU, and is removed from its mold before it is completely set. This causes the block to retain a slightly slumped appearance rather than the crisp, flat face of a typical CMU. Slump block is used in Southern California to approximate the appearance of adobe block. Other types of decorative CMU, such as pierced block and shaped block are not common for commercial or office architecture in Kearny Mesa.



Fig. 40. This strip mall building at 7730 Ronson Road uses the short ends of the CMUs to create the appearance of square blocks. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Cast Concrete and Tilt-Up Construction

Cast concrete, both cast-in-place and tilt-up, is also a common construction method for commercial and retail buildings in Kearny Mesa. Fully cast concrete buildings are relatively rare, but cast concrete portions of buildings often coexisted with CMU and/or tilt-up portions of buildings.

Tilt-up construction is a method of pre-casting reinforced concrete panels on the ground or other flat surface on site and then lifting the panels into place. Tilt-up differs from prefabrication in that the panels are poured, cured, and assembled at the construction site rather than in a factory. The size, weight, and configuration of panels was therefore not impacted by shipping constraints. This leads to a highly custom and cost-effective construction type. The method was experimented with as early as 1905 but, like CMU construction, did not gain widespread popularity until the post-WWII construction boom.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Langton, et al., *A Study of the Concrete Block Industry*, 169.

A variety of decorative finishes could be achieved with both cast-in-place and tilt-up concrete walls. While smooth or lightly-textured concrete is most common, there are many examples of exposed aggregate or board-formed finishes throughout Kearny Mesa. Exposed aggregate is achieved by mechanically or chemically removing the top layer of concrete to expose the aggregate beneath, which is usually larger or more decorative in nature than typically used for concrete. Faux exposed aggregate concrete can be created by pressing stones into the concrete as it cures. Board-formed concrete is a decorative method that leave the imprint of a wood board, including its grain, in the finished product. Boards can be arranged in any manner to create the final pattern.

Metal

Architectural metal is used sparingly on commercial, retail, and office buildings in Kearny Mesa and is primarily seen in the context of window frames. In rarer cases, decorative metal elements like pressed tin or steel are used as decorative accents.

Glass

Glass is used widely and experimentally in Kearny Mesa's office buildings. Glass of different opacities and textures is given equal or higher emphasis than the solid wall surface (which is often a visually heavy material like concrete) to give these large, boxy buildings movement and visual interest. The use of glass on commercial and retail buildings is more limited and less experimental. It is primarily used for storefront windows.



Fig. 41. The pressed metal detail on this bank at 7320 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard is one of the rare instances of decorative metal on commercial, retail, and office buildings. *IS Architecture, 2018.*



Fig. 42. The dramatic pattern of dark, angled glass on this building at 8525 Gibbs Drive is the main decorative feature. *IS Architecture, 2018.*

Eligibility Criteria

Significance Criteria

The commercial, retail, and office properties may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1 if they are associated with events that contributed to the broad patterns of local history, particularly in regard to the commercial history and development; or under HRB Criterion A if they reflect special elements of the City's or Kearny Mesa's economic, cultural, and/or historical development. Resources should be considered in the context of significant companies or categories of commerce within the City.

Commercial, retail, and office properties may also be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3 if the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master; and/or under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction. Candidates for individual listing should be a highly representative example of a significant type or style and/or contain high artistic value. However, because commercial and retail buildings – and in particular strip malls – generally did not make strong stylistic statements to avoid the design becoming dated more quickly, buildings may exhibit only a few character-defining features of a style or a combination of character-defining features from

multiple styles. This should not in and of itself preclude designation of the resource under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C if they embody the distinctive characteristics of a substyle as applied to that building type.

While most of the office development within Kearny Mesa is less than 45 years old, there may be early and/or exceptional examples that still merit designation. It should also be noted that not all buildings that currently contain office uses were constructed as office buildings or office parks. Office uses can be observed in former industrial or commercial parks today. The categorization of a property type should be based not on current use but on the original, intended use of the building. If combined uses were intended (e.g., an office park with one or more restaurants), the predominant use and/or the building’s relationship to the thematic context statement should be the basis for categorization.

Significance under other criteria may be identified following future site-specific survey and evaluation.

Essential Factors of Integrity

Under NRHP Criterion A, CRHR Criterion 1 and HRB Criterion A, location, setting, association, and feeling are the essential factors of integrity

Under NRHP Criterion C, CRHR Criterion 3 and HRB Criterion C, the design, materials, and workmanship aspects of integrity are especially important and must be intact for a resource to be eligible. Resources evaluated under Criterion C should also retain most of the character-defining features of their construction types, as well as retain the primary character-defining features of any recognized style identified with the property.

Commercial, Retail, and Office Properties Study List

| <i>Street Number</i> | <i>Street Name</i> | <i>Property Type</i> | <i>Notes</i> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 9335 | Chesapeake Drive | Office Park | |
| 7770 | Clairemont Mesa Blvd | Purpose-Built | Former Southern CA First National Bank, now Union Bank |
| 3950 | Convoy Street | Purpose-Built | Former Dorman’s Tire |
| 4393 | Convoy Street | Purpose-Built, Franchise | Wienerschnitzel |
| 4802 | Convoy Street | Standalone Commercial | Former Frazee Paint (now Sherwin-Williams) |
| 9465 | Farnham Street | Office Park | |
| 9373 | Hazard Way | Office Park | |
| 4004 | Kearny Mesa Road | Purpose-Built | Format Southern CA First National Bank, now Union Bank |

| | | | |
|------|------------------|------------|----------------------------------|
| 9305 | Lightwave Avenue | N/A | |
| 8001 | Othello Avenue | Strip Mall | Former FedMart, currently Target |

CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT: 1980S TO PRESENT

By the 1980s and 1990s, Kearny Mesa had experienced development of all types. The industrial boom of the 1950s and 1960s transitioned to the commercial and retail boom in the 1970s and the office boom in the 1980s. The 1990s did not bring new types of development to Kearny Mesa, but rather represented the continued development and redevelopment of existing uses. One change seen during this time in the Convoy Street area of Kearny Mesa was the establishment of Pan-Asian businesses and the rise of a Pan-Asian cultural influence in the Planning Area.

Convoy Street is popularly known as the Convoy District, a term coined and promoted by the area’s Convoy District association. This area features Asian businesses including restaurants, grocery stores, and shops owned and operated by Asian families who reside in the city. These business owners began to migrate to the area in the 1980s, supported “in part by the Vietnamese-American population who settled in nearby Linda Vista after the Vietnam War.”⁷⁶ At that time, the area was not exclusively Vietnamese-American, but rather became a center of Pan-Asian commercial activity in the city. There was very little internal coordination between cultural groups due to cultural and linguistic differences. The uniting feature of this Pan-Asian district was instead, according to Convoy District association co-founder Ping Wang, the authenticity of each business to its culture of origin.⁷⁷

Asian entrepreneurs gravitated to this area primarily due to the comparatively low rents of the strip mall commercial buildings along Convoy Street. Business owners located their businesses in pre-existing buildings based on availability, size requirements, occupancy types, and rental prices. The first wave of businesses included restaurants, small grocers, doctors, dentists, and other businesses that primarily served the local Pan-Asian community. As the original businesses were taken over by the younger generation, new spins on the same business types appeared and the physical boundaries of the Pan-Asian area expanded to include Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, Mercury Street, and Balboa Avenue. Except in rare cases, like the Zion Market, the businesses maintained their “Mom and Pop” scale and character which, in turn, helped to maintain the feeling of community in the district.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Jeanette Steele, “2nd generation of Asian entrepreneurs poised to take Convoy District into future,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, January 19, 2018.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Interview with Tim Nguyen (Convoy District Partnership), October 10, 2018.

The Pan-Asian presence in this corridor has not yet reached an age where its full impact on the built environment can be evaluated in context. However, future survey efforts in Kearny Mesa should re-evaluate this corridor for significant persons and cultural history.

PART IV: PRESERVATION GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Kearny Mesa is a fast-growing and continually-developing area of San Diego. To date, most potential historic resources within its boundaries have not been reviewed for eligibility, due to both the lack of a historic context statement to guide evaluation and to the relative newness of the area's resources. The nature of an industrial and commercial area results in adaptation or redevelopment of the building stock in order to accommodate new tenants. This turnover of tenants, owners, and built environment resources in Kearny Mesa poses an increased risk of adverse impacts to the integrity of the buildings. The priority, therefore, should be identifying potentially eligible resources and evaluating them for significance prior to any loss of integrity.

The following recommendations are outlined in the order of priority:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Complete site-specific evaluations of the study list properties. These properties were identified during the course of research as prominent in the archival or physical record and should be evaluated to determine if they are eligible for historic designation.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Complete a Reconnaissance Survey of the Community Plan Area based upon this Historic Context Statement, in order to identify potential historic resources, including districts and individually eligible resources. A reconnaissance level survey will assist in the future evaluation of properties reviewed in accordance with SDMC Section 143.0212.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Due to insufficient passage of time, this historic context statement was unable to determine that the Pan-Asian presence and influence in Kearny Mesa is a historically important theme to the development of the community. However, this should be re-evaluated, and it is recommended that a focused Historic Context Statement and Reconnaissance Survey regarding the Pan-Asian presence in Kearny Mesa be prepared in the future in order to determine whether or not this is a significant theme in the development of Kearny Mesa or the city as a whole, and whether any potential resources may be eligible for designation as individual sites, a Multiple Property Listing, or a Historic District.

APPENDIX A: STUDY LIST

The following study list represents properties of architectural or thematic interest within Kearny Mesa. This list is not an exhaustive list of all eligible properties but a representation of potentially eligible resources identified during the archival research and limited fieldwork conducted in the development of this historic context statement. Conversely, a resource’s presence on this study list does not automatically constitute eligibility.

| Number | Street Name | Theme | Property Type | Notes |
|---------------|----------------------|--|--------------------------|---|
| 9335 | Chesapeake Drive | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | Office Park | |
| 7770 | Clairemont Mesa Blvd | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | Purpose-Built | Former Southern CA First National Bank, now Union Bank |
| 7899 | Clairemont Mesa Blvd | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | Strip Mall | Contemporary-style 1968 commercial/office building |
| 7028 | Convoy Court | Industry | Industrial Park Complex | Kearny Mesa Industrial Park |
| 7197 | Convoy Court | Industry | Industrial Park Complex | |
| 7585 | Convoy Court | Industry | Industrial Park Complex | |
| 7601 | Convoy Court | Industry | Industrial Park Complex | Mentioned in 1969 newspaper article. Address given as 7601 Convoy Street, which does not exist. |
| 7620 | Convoy Court | Industry | Office-Production | |
| 7790 | Convoy Court | Industry | Office-Production | WESCO building |
| 3950 | Convoy Street | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | Purpose-Built | Formerly Dorman’s, a tire dealership |
| 4393 | Convoy Street | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | Purpose-Built, Franchise | Wienerschnitzel |
| 4802 | Convoy Street | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | Standalone Commercial | Frazer Paint (now Sherwin-Williams) |

Kearny Mesa Community Planning Area Historic Context Statement
FINAL DRAFT – March 2019

| | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|--|---------------|--|
| 9465 | Farnham Street | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | Office Park | |
| 9373 | Hazard Way | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | Office Park | |
| 3750 | John J. Montgomery Dr | Aviation | Control Tower | |
| 4004 | Kearny Mesa Road | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | Purpose-Built | Format Southern CA First National Bank, now Union Bank |
| 3873 | Kearny Villa Road | Aviation | Hangar | Spider's Aircraft Service |
| 9305 | Lightwave Avenue | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | Office Tower | |
| 8001 | Othello Avenue | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | Strip Mall | Formerly Fed-Mart |
| 9150 | Topaz Way | Commercial, Retail, and Office Development | N/A | Potentially significant for its Contemporary architectural style, not its property type. |

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