
IV-E ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The Mid-City communities stand at economic, as well as geographic crossroads. Regional retailing, the engine of Mid-City's economic success in the post-war years, is today dominated by shopping malls located on large tracts of land in suburban communities along the City's freeway system. A new strategy for economic growth is needed; one that builds upon the community's contemporary attributes.

Community Organization

**Physical Design
and Development**

Development Regulations

**Economic Restructuring
and Reinvestment**

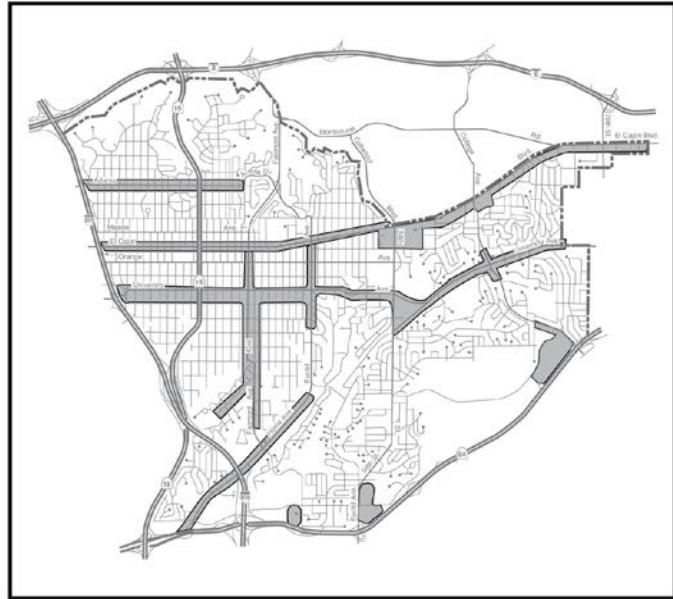
Promotion

Urban Nodes

BACKGROUND

Throughout their history, the communities of Mid-City have provided San Diegans with suburban housing and shopping opportunities with easy access to downtown employment centers. Local employment was not a key component of Mid-City's development.

Between 1910 and 1960, Mid-City's population of residents and commuters supported thriving neighborhood- and region-serving commercial enterprises, particularly along the major east/west corridors. Following the Second World War, freeway construction, shopping center development, and further suburbanization resulted in a redirection of economic activity away from San Diego's older communities, including Mid-City.



Today, Mid-City's aging infrastructure lacks focus in the form of anchor businesses or defined districts and there remain few employment opportunities in the manufacture of goods for sale.

The following economic development goals and recommendations have been organized to correspond with the four tenets of the "Main Street" community revitalization strategy established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and adopted by the business improvement associations active in the Mid-City.

Vision: A vital "City within a City," providing a wide range of housing, employment and shopping opportunities accessible to all residents of the Mid-City, will be realized.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Goal

- To improve communication and cooperation both within the business and residential communities.

Recommendations

- Establish and expand property- and tenant-based business improvement districts.
- Support business incubators with financial assistance and other incentives.
- Support efforts to establish benefit assessments for maintenance along commercial corridors.

PHYSICAL DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Goals

- To enhance the image of local commercial districts.
- To establish an atmosphere conducive to district shopping.

Recommendations

- Accentuate nodes and gateways with tree plantings and community identifying landmarks, and the placement of high-intensity development near the street.
- Establish recognizable gateways and districts within the Mid-City communities as described in the **Urban Design Element**.
- Design infrastructure and lighting in keeping with district themes where possible.
- Encourage pedestrian activity and the use of public transit through public and private investment in quality streetscape improvements including landscaping, crosswalk paving, lighting and other pedestrian-oriented enhancements. The City's storefront improvement program should be maintained and expanded.
- Maintain and expand storefront improvement and other programs, such as landscaping rebates, which provide matching funds to business owners who enhance their properties.
- Increase business district parking through the acquisition of property for parking reservoirs located behind existing businesses and the creative redesign of existing on-street parking.
- Enhance the character and security of alleys through public and private investment in lighting, landscaping, and litter control.
- Create incentives for builders and remodelers to incorporate architectural elements that reflect the ethnic diversity of the community.

DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Goal

- To preserve and enhance the character of the Mid-City by those regulatory measures least detrimental to the economic viability of the community.

Recommendations

- Expand the use of the transition zone to allow the expansion of commercial uses. The transition zone should extend from a maximum of one-half to one block off of El Cajon Boulevard to as little as fifty feet past the commercial zoning on Adams Avenue. Some restrictions may be appropriate in some areas, such as limiting the use to parking or requiring a discretionary permit.
- Actively monitor and enforce the provisions of conditional use permits, but do not apply sunset provisions that unduly diminish business viability.
- Develop varying levels of home occupation including live/work lofts, to encourage incubator business development out of the home.
- Develop simple regulations for street vendor activity.
- Develop regulations to permit local food production.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND REINVESTMENT

Goals

- To recast Mid-City's commercial corridors as neighborhood- and community-oriented shopping and employment centers.
- To improve accessibility of employment centers within and outside the community.
- To encourage development of manufacturing enterprises to expand employment opportunities for the residents of Mid-City.

Recommendations

- Partner with area schools to improve the quality and accessibility of educational opportunities.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive revitalization strategy based on the National Trust For Historic Preservation's Main Street model. Such a program would address community participation, economic restructuring, physical improvement of commercial areas and promotion of the community's attributes and businesses.
- Develop and maintain a database providing immediate access to commercial real estate market information.

- Provide the public infrastructure necessary to leverage private capital investment.
- Introduce light manufacturing, and other employment generating uses, along major transportation corridors. Ensure that employment generating land uses are compatible with neighborhood character through revisions in development regulations and permit review requirements.
- Increase the rate of owner occupancy of residential and commercial property.
- Provide incentives for business persons to own their business properties.
- Expand opportunities for home-based businesses, including the ability to have a limited number of employees and customers on the property. A range of activity levels, from home offices in single-family zones to more intense uses perhaps including apparel assembly in multifamily zones, should be defined and appropriately regulated.
- Establish opportunities for live/work lofts and other developments designed to accommodate a combination living and working environment.
- Support local food production by providing locations and support for persons who grow and market their own food crops.
- Address failures of the credit delivery system by cooperating in the establishment of new Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI).

PROMOTION

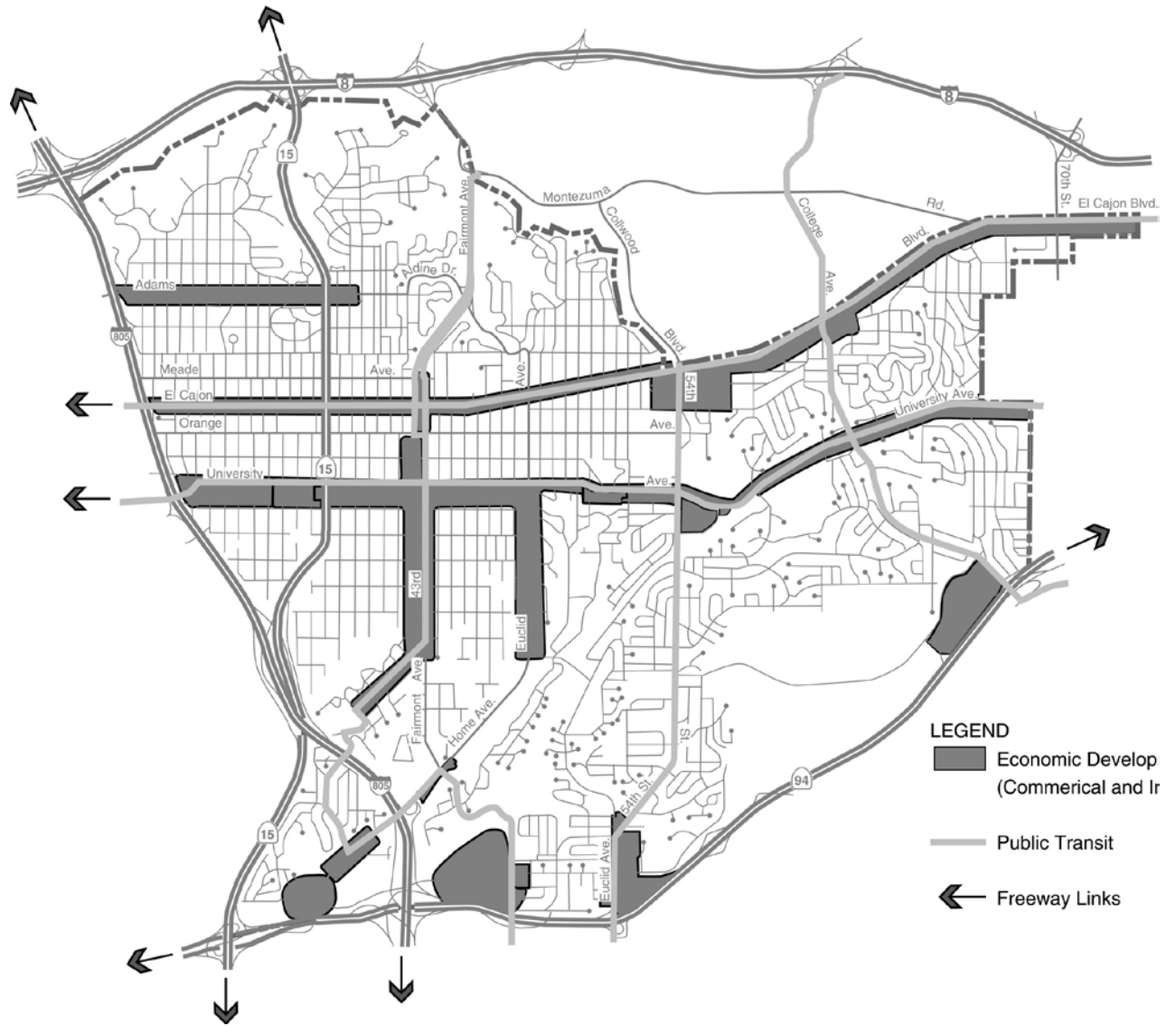
Goal

- To enhance the image of the Mid-City communities as desirable locations for living, working and shopping.

Recommendations

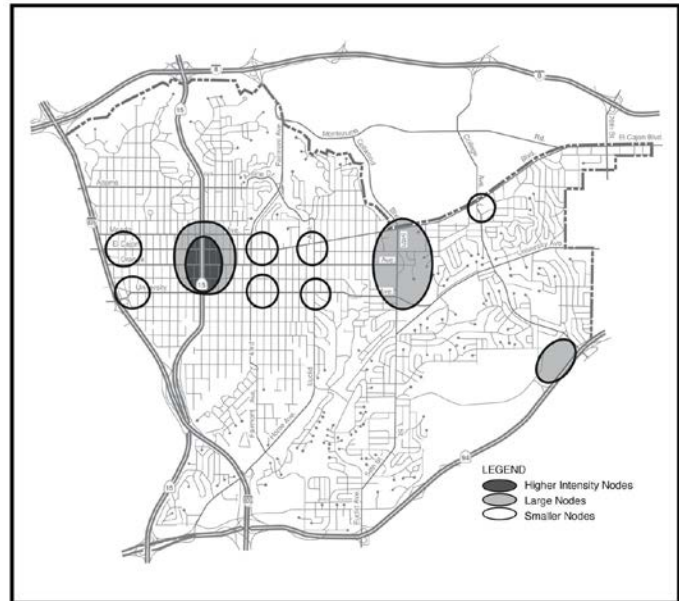
- Increase positive media exposure.
- Market Mid-City as a desirable alternative to distant suburbs.
- Widely publicize community fairs and festivals to showcase the assets of Mid-City.
- Take advantage of ethnic investment in the Mid-City area by promoting it as a theme. City Heights Village could be a focus for the celebration of ethnic festivities (e.g., Lunar New Year) and parades.

FIGURE 19. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT



URBAN NODES

Urban nodes area locations identified for higher-density mixed-use development. Urban nodes are designated at “Mid-City Center,” at the intersections of El Cajon Boulevard and State Route 15, and University Avenue and State Route 15, and the “Cultural Center” at the intersections of El Cajon Boulevard and 54th Street, and University Avenue and 54th Street.



Vision: Urban nodes that have vitality, high quality design, a combination of uses, and are the places where community members interact.

Mid-City Center

The completion of State Route 15 provides significant opportunities for new development, both from the perspective of land availability and improved regional accessibility. The nodes designated at the intersections of El Cajon Boulevard and State Route 15, and University Avenue and State Route 15, should be developed as transit-oriented town centers, accommodating the highest development densities in the Mid-City communities.

Goal

- To establish a major urban center at these regional “crossroads.”

Recommendations

- A major subregional transit station should be established.
- A large retail and office development, possibly hotels and theaters, should be promoted to take advantage of excellent regional vehicular access and transit.
- Selected light manufacturing activities should be accommodated.
- Major joint-use public facilities should be focused around these intersections.

- Building walls should be located at the property line. In those areas where the sidewalk is less than eight feet wide, pedestrian arcades along the street should be encouraged.
- Residential, office and hotel uses should be located on upper floors, taking advantage of views to the surrounding area.

The Cultural Center

An urban node south of the intersection of 54th Street and El Cajon Boulevard designed to foster a concentration of institutional or “cultural” uses, providing convenient access to amenities such as schools, parks, medical facilities, community buildings and other uses that have a strong cultural component, and will help to strengthen links between Mid-City neighborhoods and San Diego State University.

Goal

- To provide convenient access to an expanded variety of “cultural” and institutional services and amenities and extend the benefits of proximity to a major urban university.

Recommendations

- Maintain and enhance the existing educational facilities.
- Market the adjacent commercial corridors for retail and commercial recreation facilities, including theaters, hotels, and art galleries.
- Encourage light manufacturing, emphasizing arts and crafts.
- Foster the rehabilitation and growth of existing health facilities.
- Foster development of moderate-density senior housing near health centers.
- Accentuate the rolling terrain by accommodating taller buildings on hilltops, thereby creating recognizable landmarks that provide orientation and identify this unique area.
- Create a park-like atmosphere around the perimeter of the node by enhancing visual access to Colina Del Sol Park and various school playgrounds.