

## 3.16 VISUAL EFFECTS AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

### 3.16.1 Existing Conditions

#### Regional Setting

San Diego is a city in a region with unique and varied landscapes – ocean, bays, and beaches, estuaries and river valleys, canyons and mesas, hills and mountains, and desert. Much of the City is situated in the coastal plain portion of southwestern San Diego County. This coastal plain slopes gently upwards to the eastern foothills and has been eroded into separate mesas. Numerous side canyons have incised the coastal plain and created major drainages which generally flow westward towards the coast. These major drainages are the San Dieguito River, Los Peñasquitos Canyon, Carroll Canyon, Rose Canyon, San Diego River, Los Chollas Creek, Sweetwater River, Otay River, and the westernmost mouth of the Tijuana River (City of San Diego Strategic Framework Element Final EIR, 2002).

Alongside these canyons and foothills are the many large mesas that serve as the foundation of various San Diego neighborhoods. These large mesas have developed into unique communities that are physically bounded by distinct natural barriers, namely the major east-west canyons. The City canyon system and steep hillsides are illustrated on **Figure 3.16-1**. While development has occurred in Mission Valley and portions of other drainages, efforts to provide open space and reduce land use intensity in San Dieguito River Valley, Los Peñasquitos Canyon, San Clemente Canyon, and the Otay River Valley allows the City of San Diego an opportunity to retain and/or develop unique communities with distinct physical separation (City of San Diego Strategic Framework Element Final EIR, 2002).

San Diego's location bordering the Pacific Ocean also contributes to the natural setting of the area. In fact, many of San Diego's most appreciated natural resources are located within the coastal zone. These include the City's beaches, bays, shoreline, coastal canyons and the many rivers, streams and other watercourses that drain inland areas, eventually reaching the coastal environment and waters. In the City of San Diego, the Coastal Zone encompasses approximately 40,000 acres of public and private land and waters. **Figure 3.8-3** (See Land Use section) illustrates the Coastal Zone boundary that was established by the Coastal Commission by way of the California Coastal Act.

Neighborhood and community borders are often defined by San Diego's interstate and highway system. Communities are connected through a system of transportation networks including major arterial freeways, highways, surface streets and public transportation routes. Available modes of public transportation include buses and regional light rail trains that link San Diego with other municipalities in the county. The City is also connected to the larger statewide and national transportation networks through established train lines and interstate freeways. Close proximity to Mexico and the presence of the federal ports of entry connect the City to the international arena as well. The area also enjoys a number of state designated scenic highways, which include portions of State Route 75 (SR-75), SR-78, SR-163, and SR-125.

Nearly 28 percent of all existing land use in San Diego consists of parks, open space and recreation areas. These areas are reserved for environmental protection and/or public recreation. Preserving parks and open space areas protects San Diego's unique natural landscape and scenic beauty. Natural scenic vistas can be seen from the 36,000 acres of recreational and open space parks in the City, such as Mission Trails Regional Park, Marian Bear Memorial Park, Rose Canyon Open Space Park and Tecolote Canyon Natural Park & Nature Center, San Diego River Park, Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Black Mountain Open Space Park, and San Pasqual/Clevenger Canyon Open Space Park.

In addition to scenic vistas and highways, public views are also identified in community plans. Although most community plans make some reference to public views, the detail varies from plan to plan with many plans making little or no reference to public views. See **Table 3.16-1**. In the community plans that do identify public views, the views are typically those which overlook or face a body of water, most often the Pacific Ocean, however, community plans also identify views overlooking canyons, the Centre City skyline, and open space. In 1972, voters approved Proposition D which restricts the building height in areas generally west of Interstate 5 (I-5) to 30 feet. Prior to the adoption of Proposition D, multiple dwelling unit developments in San Diego were built to accommodate a range of densities at varying heights. Since the adoption of Proposition D, the bulk and scale of buildings has become more uniform as property owners seek to maximize development potential within the 30-foot height limit.

The City of San Diego's Utilities Undergrounding Program is also improving views in neighborhoods. The City has been undergrounding lines since 1970, and the program is currently relocating approximately 30-35 miles of overhead utility lines underground throughout the City each year. It is estimated that nearly all major and collector streets will be completed within the next 20 years and streets in residential areas within approximately 50 years. The Utilities Undergrounding Program will help beautify neighborhoods and clear up views by hiding utility lines.

San Diego's communities, and the landscapes and transportation networks that frame and link them, are the City's basic building blocks. In the past, the pattern of development in San Diego has occurred on large vacant tracks of land. Currently, vacant land considered to be developable accounts for 3.6 percent or 6,756 acres of the City's total acreage. Vacant land is limited, and redevelopment and infill development is occurring in many parts of the City. The City is and will continue to experience infill development and redevelopment in urbanized communities, and a number of areas have qualified as redevelopment project areas in order to stimulate improvements within communities.

The California Community Redevelopment Law authorizes the City of San Diego to use special legal and financial mechanisms to eliminate blight and improve economic and physical conditions in designated areas of the City. San Diego's Redevelopment Agency was created in 1958 and currently manages redevelopment areas within the City's jurisdiction. Redevelopment activities in the Redevelopment Agency's 17 project areas are carried out by the City's Redevelopment Division and two public, nonprofit City corporations: Centre City Development Corporation and Southeastern Economic Development Corporation. These project areas, located

in various parts of the City, encompass more than 11,700 acres. **Figure 3.16-2** identifies the 17 project areas and provides the associated acreage for each project area.

Redevelopment is a tool used to improve deteriorated areas plagued by social, physical, environmental or economic conditions that act as a barrier to new investment by private enterprise. Infill development and redevelopment can stimulate visual improvements that contribute to revitalizing neighborhoods and restoring unique neighborhood qualities. The following is a summary of various redevelopment area objectives and should not be considered an exclusive and/or exhaustive list:

- Eliminate and prevent blight and deterioration.
- Create an attractive and pleasant environment.
- Preserve the historic character of commercial and residential districts.
- Improve the appearance and character of industrial and commercial uses.
- Explore opportunities for mixed uses.
- Revitalize deteriorated commercial corridors.
- Retain and expand neighborhood supporting businesses.
- Enhance economic growth.
- Expand and diversify employment opportunities and create living wage jobs.
- Develop affordable multifamily and senior housing.
- Provide affordable and market-rate housing opportunities and rehabilitation.
- Preserve existing housing stock.
- Improve the flow of traffic, enhance transportation and parking facilities.
- Improve public infrastructure and improve and/or develop public facility assets.
- Enhance and expand entertainment, cultural, and recreational opportunities.
- Resolve environmental issues.
- Address urban runoff and industrial pollution.
- Support habitat conservation and restoration.

The intent of redevelopment is primarily to eliminate blight from designated areas, as well as to achieve the goals of development, reconstruction and rehabilitation of residential, commercial, industrial, and retail districts. Each redevelopment area has individual objectives tailored to meet the needs of the community as described below.

*Barrio Logan* - The 133-acre Barrio Logan Redevelopment Project Area is located in a mixed-use community near Downtown San Diego at the foot of the San Diego/Coronado Bay Bridge. The project area is located along the San Diego harbor, close to the San Diego Convention Center, Centre City East Village and the ballpark redevelopment project. It is adjacent to Downtown, and is located near all forms of transportation and the San Diego Bay.

*City Heights* - The City of San Diego's 1,984-acre City Heights Redevelopment Project Area, comprised of various community planning areas, focuses on education and beautification of the community. The project area is bounded by Home and Euclid Avenues and 54th Street to the east, Meade and Monroe Avenues to the north, Home Avenue to the south, and Interstate 805 to the west. The centerpiece of the project area is the City Heights Urban Village, a public/private

partnership effort that encompasses nine City blocks. Other focus areas include the Interstate 15 corridor and the University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard commercial corridors.

*College Community* - The City of San Diego's 131-acre College Community Redevelopment Project Area focuses on student housing needs, transportation planning, parking and public improvements. The project area is located immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of San Diego State University. It is primarily bounded by College Avenue to the east, the SDSU campus on the north, Montezuma Road to the south, and 55th Street to the west. The project area also includes the Montezuma Elementary School and a portion of the Alvarado Medical Plaza. The City is working with private developers to provide adequate student housing. Development has begun on several student housing projects, and a large mixed-use project is in the planning stage.

*College Grove* - The City of San Diego's 167-acre College Grove Redevelopment Project Area was adopted in 1986 to revitalize the aging College Grove Shopping Center by using tax increment revenue to finance street-related improvements around the shopping center for better traffic circulation. The project area, administered by the City's Redevelopment Division, comprises the 56-acre shopping center on College Avenue and State Route 94, and 111 acres of City land, including Chollas Lake Park and Chollas Landfill.

*Crossroads* - The City of San Diego's 1,031-acre Crossroads Redevelopment Project Area and Redevelopment Plan was established by the City Council on May 6, 2003. The focus of the Redevelopment Plan is twofold: to revitalize the properties along El Cajon Boulevard, University Avenue, Streamview Drive and College Avenue and the residential neighborhoods of Chollas Creek and Fox Canyon; and to develop the Resource-Based Parkland at Chollas Park.

*Grantville* - The City of San Diego's 990-acre Grantville Redevelopment Project Area was adopted in 2005. The Project Area is located in eastern San Diego and encompasses part of the Navajo Community, the Tierrasanta Community, and the College Area Community. The Project Area includes portions of the San Diego River, and it is located in close proximity to Mission Valley, Mission Trails Park and San Diego State University. The goals of the Grantville Redevelopment Project Area and Redevelopment Plan are to remove physical and economic blighting conditions and to ensure the continued economic viability of the commercial, industrial and retail uses within the Project Area.

*Linda Vista* - The City of San Diego's 12-acre Linda Vista Redevelopment Project Area was adopted in 1972 to facilitate the redevelopment of the Linda Vista Shopping Center, San Diego's oldest shopping complex. The Linda Vista Shopping Center includes the City Redevelopment Agency-owned Skateworld roller skating rink and the Linda Vista Library. The project area also contains Morley Strip, a small linear public park that runs parallel to Linda Vista Road. The project area is located in the heart of the Linda Vista community at the intersection of Linda Vista Road and Ulric Street. This redevelopment project area expires in 2012.

*Naval Training Center* - The City adopted a final Reuse Plan in October 1998, charting a new course for Naval Training Center (NTC). The former NTC is proposed to be a new urban village called Liberty Station. New homes, parks, businesses, as well as cultural and educational

facilities will transform the former Navy base into a vital waterfront community. The City NTC Reuse Plan calls for a pristine area surrounded by green landscaping and bordered by water, with a focus on NTC's history. This new community will anchor revitalization of the northern portion of San Diego Bay. It will also support education, training and research and development programs attracting new industries to San Diego.

*North Bay* - The City of San Diego's 1,360-acre North Bay Redevelopment Project Area is composed of a variety of land uses that are designated for residential, mixed-use, high technology office/flex/Research and Development (R&D), light industrial and retail development opportunities along I-5, Pacific Highway, Morena Boulevard, India Street, Loma Portal, Voltaire Street and in the City's Midway District. The project area is centrally located two miles from Downtown, is adjacent to the San Diego International Airport, is accessible by two major freeways, and has both light-rail and heavy-rail transportation for employees and freight.

*North Park* - The City of San Diego's 555-acre North Park Redevelopment Project Area is centrally located within 5 miles of Downtown San Diego and adjacent to Balboa Park. It is bounded by Interstate 805 to the east and Park Boulevard to the west and stretches as far north as Adams Avenue and as far south as Upas Street. Redevelopment in the project area focuses on the revitalization of North Park's commercial corridors, with special attention paid to the revitalization of the El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue corridors. Historic preservation and public art are incorporated features within the redevelopment focus.

*San Ysidro* - The City of San Diego's 766-acre San Ysidro Redevelopment Project Area was established to create a world-class gateway between the cities of San Diego and Tijuana. The project area is located on the United States-Mexico border where Interstates 5 and 805 merge. It also includes a corridor along the San Diego Trolley route with retail and residential land. The project area focuses on redeveloping a vital business district, attracting new businesses to the area, and encouraging continued tourism from American and Mexican visitors.

*Downtown* - The Centre City Development Corp (CCDC) was established in 1975 to carry out redevelopment activities in Downtown San Diego. Its project areas comprise approximately 1,490 acres and include two redevelopment project areas: Horton Plaza and Centre City (Core/Columbia, Cortez, East Village, Gaslamp Quarter, Little Italy, Marina). The Horton Plaza Redevelopment Project was adopted in 1972 and Centre City Redevelopment Project was adopted in 1992. The two redevelopment areas provide a comprehensive communitywide approach to reverse blight and deterioration and encourage and establish a Downtown core for government, financial, commercial, and cultural activities integrated with distinct residential neighborhoods (Centre City Development Corporation 2004).

*Southeastern area* – The Southeastern Economic Development Corp (SEDC) was established in 1981 to carry out redevelopment in southeastern San Diego. SEDC project areas comprise of approximately 1,055 acres. The SEDC administers four redevelopment project areas and one study area.

- *Central Imperial* - The 580-acre Central Imperial Redevelopment Project Area was established in 1992. It is located east of Messina Drive across Interstate 805 and 69<sup>th</sup> Street

and includes portions of Chollas View, Emerald Hills, Lincoln Park, Mountain View, Valencia Park, Encanto and South Encanto neighborhoods.

- Gateway Center West - The 59-acre Gateway Center West Redevelopment Project Area was established in 1976. It is bound on the west by 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, by Highway 15 to the east, south by Market Street and north by Highway 94.
- Mount Hope - The 210-acre Mount Hope Redevelopment Project Area was established in 1982. It is located north and south of Market Street between Interstate 805 and Highway 15.
- Southcrest - The 301-acre Southcrest Redevelopment Project Area was established in 1986. It is bounded on the west by Highway 15 and I-5, to the east by 44<sup>th</sup> Street, south by Gamma and Vesta Streets and north of Logan Avenue.
- Dells Imperial Study Area - The Dells Imperial Study Area is approximately 980-acres immediately adjacent to Downtown San Diego and located within two historic districts: Sherman Heights and Grant Hills.

It is likely new redevelopment areas will occur over time. As newer neighborhoods age, there will be more redevelopment opportunities. Meeting the City's growth needs through infill and redevelopment compliments the City's strategy for protecting canyons and open spaces.

San Diego's built environment spans over 200 years of architectural history. The real urbanization of the City as it is today began in 1869 when Alonzo Horton moved the center of commerce and government from Old Town (Old San Diego) to New Town (Downtown). Development spread from Downtown based on a variety of factors, including the availability of potable water and transportation corridors. Factors such as views and access to public facilities affected land values, which in turn affected the character of neighborhoods that developed.

Many of San Diego's neighborhoods are the product of small incremental parcelizations and development over a long period of time. Neighborhood character is defined in part by certain physical qualities that repeat throughout neighborhoods, such as landscape and massing of buildings, colors, and materials. The character of a neighborhood or community is also defined by factors including topography and natural features, street layout and streetscape, and landmarks and civic land uses.

Urban design describes the physical features that define the character or image of a street, neighborhood, community, or the City as a whole. Urban design is the visual and sensory relationship between people and the built and natural environment. The built environment includes buildings and streets, and the natural environment includes features such as shorelines, canyons, mesas, and parks as they shape and are incorporated into the urban framework. Citywide urban design recommendations are intended to ensure that the built environment continues to contribute to the qualities that distinguish the City of San Diego as a unique living environment.

Among the recognized architectural styles in San Diego are Spanish Colonial, Pre-Railroad New England, National Vernacular, Victorian Italianate, Stick, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival,

Neoclassical, Shingle, Folk Victorian, Mission, Craftsman, Monterey Revival, Italian Renaissance, Spanish Eclectic, Egyptian Revival, Tudor Revival, Modernistic and International. Examples of every major period and style remain, although few areas retain neighborhood-level architectural integrity due to several major building booms when older structures were demolished prior to preservation movements and stricter regulations regarding historic structures. (McAlester and McAlester 1990)

### 3.16.2 Thresholds of Significance

A significant impact could occur if implementation of the General Plan:

- Results in a substantial change in the topography or ground surface relief features of any areas of the City;
- Allows development that is incompatible in shape, form, or intensity such that public views from designated open space areas, scenic highways or to any significant visual landmarks or scenic vistas (e.g., mountains, bays, rivers, ocean) would be substantially blocked; or
- Results in projects that would negatively and substantially alter the existing character of the City's distinct neighborhoods.

### 3.16.3 Impact Analysis

***Could implementation of the proposed General Plan result in a substantial change in the topography or ground surface relief features of any areas of the City?***

The Draft General Plan calls for future growth to be focused into mixed-use activity centers. Implementation of the Plan would result in infill and redevelopment occurring in selected built areas, which would be identified through the community plan update/amendment process. The Draft General Plan would also guide the development of remaining developable vacant land. As new development occurs, changes to the landform may occur through site-specific grading. For example, new development may require significant on-site grading for development with larger footprints.

The City has policies and regulations which aim to preserve hillside areas throughout the City. Steep hillsides are shown on **Figure 3.16.1**. In general, steep hillsides are protected from excessive development by the City's Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) regulations. Steep hillsides is defined in the Municipal Code Chap 11 Art 3 Div 1 §113.0103 as "all lands that have a slope with a natural gradient of 25 percent (four feet of horizontal distance for every one foot of vertical distance) or greater and a minimum elevation differential of 50 feet, or a natural gradient of 200 percent (one foot of horizontal distance for every two feet of vertical distance) or greater and a minimum elevation differential of ten feet." The ESL regulations are applied to both publicly- and privately-owned property.

The Draft General Plan provides policies which help reduce the potential for significant impacts to topography and ground surface relief features. For example, the Urban Design Element addresses the natural environment, preserving open space systems and targeting new growth into compact villages through urban form and design policies.

There are several policies in the Draft General Plan which discuss environmentally sensitive development. The policies are intended to contribute to the qualities that distinguish San Diego as a unique living environment and highlight the value of open space resources as part of the overall built environment. Examples of Draft General Plan policies related to topography and ground surface relief features are as follows:

1. Avoid or minimize disturbances to natural landforms.
2. Contour manufactured slopes to blend with the natural topography.
3. Apply the appropriate zoning and regulations to limit development of floodplains, wetlands, steep hillsides, canyons, and coastal lands.
4. Preserve and protect natural landforms and features.
5. Protect the integrity of community plan designated open spaces.
6. Continue to implement the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) to conserve San Diego's natural environment and create a linked open space system. Preserve and enhance remaining naturally occurring features such as wetlands, riparian zones, canyons, and ridge lines.

Aside from policies in the Draft General Plan which address topography and sensitive development, the City relies on Environmentally Sensitive Lands regulations to identify environmental resources at a site specific level. The City's Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) regulations help protect, preserve, and restore lands containing steep hillsides, sensitive biological resources, coastal beaches, sensitive coastal bluffs, or Special Flood Hazard Areas. The intent of the ESL regulations is to assure that development occurs in a manner that protects the overall quality of the resources, encourages a sensitive form of development, retains biodiversity and interconnected habitats, maximizes physical and visual public access to and along the shoreline, and reduces hazards due to flooding in specific areas while minimizing the need for construction of flood control facilities. The regulations provide supplemental development regulations to the underlying zone to assure that development occurs in a manner that protects the natural and topographical character of these areas.

While the Draft General Plan policies are designed to minimize impacts to topography and ground surface relief features, there is no guarantee that all future implementation actions and development projects will adequately implement Draft General Plan policies. Assuming a site is underutilized based on planned land use and zoning, new development could potentially change the landscape of the built environment and result in grading and a change in ground surface relief features in order to maximize the development potential of a particular site.

Since no specific development project is proposed at this time, no project-level mitigation can be developed at this time to address potential environmental impacts. Environmental analysis would be required for any such future action or project; identification of project-level mitigation



measures would be determined at that time. Implementation of the above mentioned Draft General Plan policies and compliance with established development standards would serve to reduce impacts to a degree, but cannot guarantee that all future project level impacts will be avoided or mitigated to a level less than significant. Because the degree of impact and applicability, feasibility, and success of these measures can not be accurately predicted for each specific project at this time, the program level impacts related to changes in topography and ground surface relief features are considered significant and unavoidable.

***Could implementation of the proposed General Plan allow development that is incompatible in shape, form, or intensity such that public views from designated open space areas, scenic highways or to any significant visual landmarks or scenic vistas (e.g., mountains, bays, rivers, ocean) would be substantially blocked?***

With limited developable vacant land, the Draft General Plan anticipates future growth will likely occur along transportation corridors and within established urbanized areas. As new development occurs, a transition in building mass, form, and intensity is likely to occur in many areas of the City. For example, an existing commercial corridor which is currently characterized as having one- and two-story structures with surface parking may transition into a corridor with multistory structures and underground parking. The same commercial corridor which, in the past, may have been primarily commercial could redevelop with mixed uses, introducing new building types and forms. This new development and redevelopment may have the potential to block public views of scenic resources such as mountains, bays, rivers and the ocean. With growth expected to occur along transportation corridors, blocked views are most likely to occur as people travel on the public rights of way. However, views of important resources from designated open space areas, such as the City's parks and recreation areas could also be substantially changed. **Table 3.16-1** provides a list of identified public vantage points identified in community plans. Community plans that identify public views are typically those which overlook a body of water, canyons and open space, and/or the Centre City skyline.

The Draft General Plan provides policies which help reduce the potential for impacts to public views. The Draft General Plan addresses the natural environment, preserving open space systems and targeting new growth into compact villages through urban form and design policies. More specifically, the Urban Design Element contains policies which address development adjacent to natural features and reduce visual impacts to scenic areas or viewsheds. Relevant policies include:

1. Identify state highways where the City desires to preserve scenic qualities and work with California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) to pursue official scenic highway designation.
2. Designate scenic routes along City streets to showcase scenic vistas and to link points of visitor interest.
3. Adopt measures to protect aesthetic qualities within scenic highways and routes.
4. Design development adjacent to natural features in a sensitive manner to highlight and complement the natural environment in areas designated for development.
5. Utilize a clustered development pattern, single-story structures or single-story roof elements, or roofs sloped toward the open space system or natural features, to ensure that

the visibility of new developments from natural features and open space areas are minimized.

6. Provide increased setbacks from canyon rims or open space areas to ensure that the visibility of new development is minimized.
7. Screen development adjacent to natural features as appropriate so that development does not appear visually intrusive, or interfere with the experience within the open space system. The provision of enhanced landscaping adjacent to natural features could be used to soften the appearance of or buffer development from the natural features.
8. Ensure that the visibility of new development from natural features and open space areas is minimized to preserve the landforms and ridgelines that provide a natural backdrop to the open space systems. For example, development should not be visible from canyon trails at the point the trail is located nearest to proposed development. Lines-of-sight from trails or open space system could be used to determine compliance with this policy.
9. Protect views from public roadways and parklands to natural canyons, resource areas, and scenic vistas.
10. Protect and conserve the landforms and open spaces that: define the City's urban form; provide public views/vistas; serve as core biological areas and wildlife linkages; are wetlands habitats; provide buffers within and between communities, or provide outdoor recreational opportunities.
11. Convert overhead utility wires and poles, and associated overhead structures for supplying electric, communication, community antenna television, or similar service to underground.

The Draft General Plan addresses preservation of the natural environment and scenic vantage points, as well as provides design objectives to minimize visual impacts and screen new development from open space areas. While the Draft General Plan policies are designed to minimize impacts to public views, there is no guarantee that all future implementation actions and development projects will adequately implement Draft General Plan policies. As a result, in areas where public views of scenic resources exist, direct impacts could occur. As future growth occurs in the City, any development that is incompatible in shape, form, or intensity such that public views are impacted, will be analyzed and addressed in project-specific environmental reviews pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Identification of appropriate project level mitigation measures would be determined at that time.

Implementation of the above mentioned Draft General Plan policies and future compliance with established development standards would serve to reduce impacts to a degree, but cannot guarantee that all future project level impacts will be avoided or mitigated to a level less than significant. Because the degree of impact and applicability, feasibility, and success of these measures can not be accurately predicted for each specific project at this time, the program level impacts related to blocked public views are considered significant and unavoidable.

***Could implementation of the proposed General Plan result in projects that would negatively and substantially alter the existing character of the City's distinct neighborhoods?***

The Draft General Plan incorporates the City of Villages strategy to focus future growth into mixed-use activity centers that are linked to the regional transit system. Since there is little

remaining developable vacant land, implementation of the Plan would largely occur through infill and redevelopment occurring in selected built areas, which would be identified through the community plan update/amendment process.

Over the last two centuries, San Diego has grown by expanding outward onto land still in its natural state. This is the first general plan in the City's continuing history that must address most future growth with limited expansion onto the City's remaining open spaces and vacant land. Because less than four percent of the City's land remains vacant and available for new development, the plan's policies represent a shift in focus from how to develop vacant land to how to reinvest in existing communities. Therefore, new policies have been created to support changes in development patterns to emphasize combining housing, shopping, employment uses, schools, and civic uses, at different scales, in village centers. By directing growth primarily toward village centers and transit corridors, the strategy is intended to preserve established residential neighborhoods and manage the City's continued growth over the long term.

A balance between preserving, improving and enhancing neighborhoods and the surrounding natural environment is an important core value that is reflected in policies throughout the Draft General Plan. Relevant policies include:

1. Identify sites suitable for mixed-use village development that will complement the existing community fabric or help achieve desired community character, with input from recognized community planning groups and the general public..
2. Recognize that various villages may serve specific functions in the community and City; some villages may have an employment orientation, while others may be major shopping destinations, or primarily residential in nature.
3. Prepare community plans to address aspects of development that are specific to the community, including: distribution and arrangement of land uses (both public and private); the local street and transit network; location, prioritization, and the provision of public facilities; community and site-specific urban design guidelines; urban design guidelines addressing the public realm; community and site-specific recommendations to preserve and enhance natural and cultural resources; and coastal resource policies (when within the Coastal Zone).
4. Design roadways and road improvements to maintain and enhance neighborhood character.
5. Design buildings that contribute to a positive neighborhood character and relate to neighborhood and community context.
6. Encourage designs that are sensitive to the scale, form, rhythm, proportions, and materials proximate to commercial areas and residential neighborhoods that have a well established, distinctive character.
7. Provide architectural features that establish and define a building's appeal and enhance the neighborhood character.
8. Encourage innovative designs that distinguish civic and public buildings and landmarks from the surrounding neighborhood as a means of identifying their role as focal points for the community.

9. Review the redevelopment of property within conservation areas to maintain important bulk, scale, style, orientation, and other aspects of the surviving community character that have been identified as characteristics of a neighborhood that could be preserved.
10. Conservation areas that are identified at the community plan level, based on historical resources surveys, may be used as an urban design tool to complement community character.

As changes occur in established neighborhoods, the applicable policies in the Draft General Plan related to neighborhood character provide design guidelines to improve the transition between new and old structures. In addition, the Draft General Plan influences the implementation of community plans as it establishes goals and policies for the pattern and scale of development and the character of the built environment. Individual community plans are intended to provide additional recommendations for how new development will occur. It is intended that the urban design policies of the Draft General Plan be further supplemented with site-specific community plan recommendations. As community plans are updated, community and neighborhood character will be addressed more specifically.

While the policies, guidelines, and community plan updated process described above are designed to minimize future impacts to community character, future discretionary actions, private development projects, and public facilities (i.e. roads, transit lines, utilities) that occur subsequent to General Plan adoption may result in significant impacts associated with substantially altering the existing character of the City's neighborhoods. While the Draft General Plan policies are designed to minimize such impacts, there is no guarantee that all future implementation actions and development projects will adequately implement Draft General Plan policies.

Since no specific development projects accompany the Draft General Plan, no project-level mitigation can be developed at this time to address potential environmental impacts. Future environmental analysis pursuant to CEQA would be required for any such future discretionary action or project. The identification of appropriate project-level mitigation measures would be determined at that time. Because the degree of impact and applicability, feasibility, and success of these measures can not be accurately predicted for each specific project at this time, the program level impacts related to community character are considered significant and unavoidable.

#### **3.16.4 Mitigation Framework**

Goals, policies, and recommendations enacted by the City combined with existing regulations described above provide a framework for developing project-level protection measures for future discretionary projects which may impact topography, public views and/or neighborhood character. The City's process for evaluation of discretionary projects includes environmental review and documentation pursuant to CEQA as well as an analysis of those projects for consistency with the goals, policies and recommendations of the General Plan and the applicable Community Plan. In general, implementation of the above policies and compliance with established regulations would avoid or minimize significant environmental impacts. Compliance with regulations is required of all projects and is not considered to be mitigation. However, it is

possible that for certain projects, adherence to the regulations may not adequately protect topography, public views and neighborhood character, and such projects would require additional measures to avoid or reduce significant impacts. These additional measures would be considered mitigation.

For each future discretionary project requiring, mitigation (i.e. measures that go beyond what is required by existing regulations), site-specific measures will be identified that reduce significant project-level impacts to less than significant or the project-level impact may remain significant and unavoidable where no feasible mitigation exists.

No feasible specific mitigation has been identified at this program level to reduce visual impacts. Future discretionary actions and proposals will be analyzed pursuant to CEQA; project-level mitigation identified through this process would be applied at that time.

### **3.16.5 Significance of Impact after Mitigation Framework**

The policies resulting from the adoption of the Draft General Plan could avoid or reduce the potential significant impacts to topography, public views and the existing character of established communities, but possibly not to below a level of significance. In addition, future community plan updates and the existing development review process could reduce potential impacts to visual and neighborhood quality. Because the degree of impact and applicability, feasibility, and success of future mitigation measures can not be adequately known for each specific future project at this program level of analysis, the program-level impacts related to topography, public views and character remains significant and unavoidable.

**Table 3.16-1**  
**Community Plan Identified Public Vantage Points**

COMMUNITY	IDENTIFIED PUBLIC VANTAGE POINT	DESCRIPTION
Barrio Logan / Harbor 101	Harbor Drive Bridge over Switzer Creek	Views to the San Diego Bay
	Chollas Creek	Views to the San Diego Bay
	28th St and Harbor Dr	Views toward I-5, SR-15 freeway interchanges (major sculptural feature)
	Logan Ave	Centre City skyline and major industrial waterfront features
	National Ave	Centre City skyline and major industrial waterfront features
	Northern portion of community	Centre City skyline and major industrial waterfront features
Black Mountain Ranch	Northern portion of community	Views overlooking the canyon and open space
Carmel Mountain Ranch	I-15	Views into the southern portion of the community
	Communitywide	Views facing outside the community from open space areas in the south central portion of the community
Carmel Valley	Views not in current community plan	
Clairemont Mesa	Designated open spaces west of Clairemont Drive	Views facing west to Mission Bay and Pacific Ocean
	Communitywide	Many neighborhoods along the mesa overlook Mission Bay and the Pacific Ocean to the west, Fortuna Mountain and Cowles Mountain to the east and the open space canyon system
College Area	Views not in current community plan	
Del Mar Mesa	Views not in current community plan	
Elliott	Views not in current community plan	
Fairbanks Ranch Country Club	Views not in current community plan	
Golden Hill	Citywide	Structures should be designed to protect views of Golden Hill's natural scenic amenities, especially San Diego Bay, the Coronado Bay Bridge, Balboa Park, Switzer Canyon and the 32nd Street and 34th Street canyons
Greater North Park	Views not in current community plan	
Kearny Mesa	I-805, SR 52 & I-15	Create attractive views toward the community
La Jolla	Torrey Pines City Park	Viewshed overlooking coast
	La Jolla Farms Road	Scenic Overlook and Intermittent or Partial Vista looking west towards the coast
La Jolla	Scripps Natural Reserve	Viewshed overlooking coast

**Table 3.16-1  
Community Plan Identified Public Vantage Points**

COMMUNITY	IDENTIFIED PUBLIC VANTAGE POINT	DESCRIPTION
	Bluff - top easement at La Jolla Shores Lane	View Cone overlooking coast
	Ellentown Road	Scenic Overlook looking west towards the coast
	La Jolla Shores Drive from Torrey Pines Road	Intermittent or Partial Vista looking west towards the coast
	La Jolla Shores Drive looking south from the vicinity of Scripps Institute of Oceanography	Viewshed overlooking coast, Scenic Overlook, Intermittent or Partial Vista, and a road from which coastal body of water can be seen
	Allen Field	Viewshed looking west towards the coast
	Bordeaux Ave (western half)	Scenic Overlook looking west towards the coast
	El Paseo Grande (after it turns east)	View corridor and a road from which coastal body of water can be seen.
	Camino del Oro (after it turns east)	Road from which coastal body of water can be seen
	Whale Watch Way	Intermittent or Partial Vista looking west towards the coast
	Cliffridge Park	Viewshed looking west towards the coast
	Kellogg Park	Viewshed overlooking coast and beach
	Calle Frescota	View corridor looking west towards the coast
	Prestwick Drive	Intermittent or Partial Vista looking west towards the coast
	Vallecitos	View corridor looking west towards the coast
	Avenida de la Playa	View corridor looking west towards the coast
	Calle del Cielo	Views looking west towards coast
	Pottery Canyon Park	Scenic Overlook looking west towards the coast
	Costabelle Drive	Scenic Overlook looking west towards the coast
	Spindrift Drive (south of the Marine Room Restaurant)	Viewshed looking west towards coast
	Charlotte Park (at the foot of Charlotte Street)	View Cone and View Corridor overlooking coast
	Coast Blvd, Children's Pool, Shell Beach, Ellen B. Scripps Park and La Jolla Cove	Viewshed along coast looking north, east and west
	Prospect St and Cave St	View Cone and View Corridor overlooking coast
	Coast Walk	View Cone overlooking coast
	Park Row (north end)	View Corridor looking north towards the coast
	Torrey Pines Road	Road from which coastal body of water can be seen looking north towards

**Table 3.16-1**  
**Community Plan Identified Public Vantage Points**

COMMUNITY	IDENTIFIED PUBLIC VANTAGE POINT	DESCRIPTION
		the coast
	Public open space on Torrey Pines Rd between St. Louis Terrace and Calle de la Plata	Intermittent or Partial Vista looking north towards the coast
La Jolla	Azure Coast Drive	Views looking west towards coast
	Hidden Valley Road	Intermittent or Partial Vista looking west towards the coast
	Ardath Road	Road from which coastal body of water can be seen looking west towards the coast
	Girard Avenue	Scenic Overlook northwest towards the coast
	Jenner Street	View Corridor looking northwest towards the coast
	View corridor easement through 7963 Prospect Place to ocean	Scenic Overlook west towards the coast
	Easement across from John Coal Book Store from Prospect St and Recreation Center	Scenic Overlook west towards the coast
	Hillside Drive (portions)	Scenic Overlook west towards the coast
	Caminito Avola/Via Avola	View Cone looking north, east and west towards the coast
	Via Siena at Hillside Drive	View Cone looking north, east and west towards the coast
	Rue Denise	Scenic Overlook northwest towards the coast
	La Jolla Scenic Drive South (portions)	Scenic Overlook northwest towards the coast
	Mt. Soledad (north of Ardath Rd)	View Cone looking east towards canyons
	Rue Adriane	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Rue Michael	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Senn Way	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Rue de Roark	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Coast Blvd. Park and South Coast Blvd	Viewshed south and west along the coast
	View corridor at southwest side of Scripps Hotel site, from Prospect Street	View corridor west towards the coast
	La Jolla Community Center Park, Cuvier Street	View Cone looking west towards the coast
	From top of Cuvier Street at Prospect	View corridor northwest towards the coast
	Via Capri (portions)	Scenic Overlook towards the coast



**Table 3.16-1  
Community Plan Identified Public Vantage Points**

COMMUNITY	IDENTIFIED PUBLIC VANTAGE POINT	DESCRIPTION
	Mount Soledad	Viewshed panoramic views north, south, west, and east
	Country Club Drive	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Marine St (Jones Beach)	View corridor west towards the coast
	Sea Lane	View corridor west towards the coast
La Jolla	Belvedere St	View corridor west towards the coast
	West Muirlands Dr	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Neptune Place and La Jolla Strand Park	Road from which coastal body of water can be seen looking west towards the coast
	Westbourne Street	View corridor west towards the coast
	Nautilus St	View corridor west towards the coast and road from which coastal body of water can be seen looking west towards the coast
	Muirlands Drive between Nautilus and La Jolla Mesa Drive	Intermittent or Partial Vista looking west towards the coast
	Soledad Mountain Rd	Intermittent or Partial Vista looking south towards downtown and the coast
	Windandsea Park	View Cone looking west along the coast
	El Camino del Teatro	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Portions of La Jolla Scenic Drive South	Road from which coastal body of water can be seen looking south and west towards the coast
	Bonair St	View corridor west towards the coast
	Plaza del Norte and Playa del Sur	Intermittent or Partial Vista west along the coast
	Gravilla St	View corridor west towards the coast
	Kolmar St	View corridor west towards the coast
	Rosemont St	View corridor west towards the coast
	Palomar St	View corridor west towards the coast
	Fay Avenue Bike Path	Views of open space, canyons
	Inspiration Dr	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Hermosa Terrace Park	Viewshed south and west along the coast
	Newkirk Dr	Scenic Overlook towards the coast

**Table 3.16-1  
Community Plan Identified Public Vantage Points**

COMMUNITY	IDENTIFIED PUBLIC VANTAGE POINT	DESCRIPTION
	Rodeo Dr	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Via Espana	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Camino de la Costa (includes Cortez Place, Costa Place)	Viewshed south and west along the coast
	Desert View Dr	Intermittent or Partial Vista towards the coast
	La Jolla Rancho Rd	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Ravenswood Rd	Intermittent or Partial Vista towards the coast
La Jolla	La Jolla Hermosa Park	Viewshed north and west along the coast
	La Jolla Mesa Dr (from Cottontail Lane to Skylark St)	Road from which coastal body of water can be seen looking south and west towards the coast
	Moss Lane, off Dolphin Place	View Cone at the coast
	Bird Rock Ave	View corridor west towards the coast
	Dolphin Place	Intermittent or Partial Vista towards the coast
	Coral Lane	View corridor west towards the coast
	Chelsea Place	Intermittent or Partial Vista towards the coast
	Forward St	Viewshed looking south towards the coast
	Midway St	Viewshed looking south towards the coast
	Colima St (end of road closest to the ocean)	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Calumet Park	Viewshed south and west along the coast
	San Colla Street	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Ricardo Place	Scenic Overlook towards the coast
	Bandera St	View corridor west towards the coast
	Sea Ridge Dr	Intermittent or Partial Vista towards the coast
	Linda Way	View corridor south towards the coast
	Tourmaline Surfing Park	View corridor and view cone west towards the coast
	La Canada Canyon	Viewshed west towards the coast
	Princess St	View Cone north overlooking the coast
Linda Vista	Tecolote Canyon	Protect public views from the canyon

**Table 3.16-1**  
**Community Plan Identified Public Vantage Points**

COMMUNITY	IDENTIFIED PUBLIC VANTAGE POINT	DESCRIPTION
Mid-City	Communitywide	Framed views of existing aesthetic resources such as parks and community landmarks
	Communitywide	Panoramic views of the bay, open spaces, and mountains from street rights-of-way and other public areas
Midway/Pacific Highway Corridor	Pacific Highway between Sassafras St. and Laurel St.	Preserve scenic vistas to the bay and other coastal areas... and utilize building design along view corridors to enhance views to the waterfront from public rights-of-way
Mira Mesa	Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve	Provide view of canyon with scenic overlooks
Miramar Ranch North	Miramar Lake	Views from and of these areas across the lake
	Western escarpment of community	Maintain views to the ocean while providing a high quality visual experience to onlookers from the mesas below to the west
Mission Beach	Views not in current community plan	
Mission Valley	Communitywide	Views should be provided from public streets into the river corridor.
	Communitywide	Aerial views from the hillsides into the river area from public areas such as parks and roads in surrounding communities.
Navajo	Views not in current community plan	
Old Town	Views not in current community plan	
Otay Mesa	Communitywide	Preserve privacy and views
Otay Mesa - Nestor	Palm Avenue Transit Center/Park-and-Ride	Provide a viewpoint overlooking the valley, north of the trolley station parking lot. Provide physical access, via a stairway, into the valley.
	Midway Baptist Church	Encourage the Church to provide a public viewpoint overlooking the valley.
	Palm Avenue	This site is the only area between I-5 and I-805 that provides direct views into the valley from Palm Avenue. Preserve visual access and provide a public viewpoint from Palm Avenue. Provide public trail and vehicular access along the existing unimproved road alignment from Palm Avenue into the valley.
	Montgomery High School	Provide pedestrian access through the school campus to the sites north of the ball fields and stadium. Improve this area of natural bluffs overlooking the valley as a passive recreation and viewing area.
	Cochran Avenue	This site is proposed as a mini park. Provide a public viewpoint

**Table 3.16-1**  
**Community Plan Identified Public Vantage Points**

COMMUNITY	IDENTIFIED PUBLIC VANTAGE POINT	DESCRIPTION
		overlooking the valley, including landscaping and seating. Design of this area should prevent vehicular access north of Lindberg Street, and should discourage and prevent trash dumping over the cliff.
	Finney Elementary School	Provide pedestrian access through the school campus to the north of the ball field and playground. Improve this area of natural bluffs overlooking the valley and finger canyons as a passive viewing area.
	Murrieta Circle	An existing utility easement road provides access from Murrieta Circle down to the valley. Work with SDG&E to provide public access to this trailhead and viewpoint overlooking the valley.
	Servando Avenue	Provide viewpoints along the alignments of Valentino Street and Bluehaven Court by clearing non-sensitive vegetation along the south side of this street, adjacent to the Tijuana River Valley. The viewpoints will provide aesthetic enjoyment for local residents and assist the U.S. Border Patrol in their operations.
Pacific Beach	Loring St.	View corridor facing west toward the ocean
	Law St.	View corridor facing west toward the ocean
	Chalcedony St.	View corridor facing west toward the ocean
	Missouri St.	View corridor facing west toward the ocean
	Diamond St.	View corridor facing west toward the ocean
	Emerald St.	View corridor facing west toward the ocean
	Felspar St.	View corridor facing west toward the ocean
	Mission Blvd	Intermittent public view of the ocean
Pacific Beach	Bayard St (south)	Intermittent public view of the ocean
	Pacific Beach Dr.	Intermittent public view of the Sail Bay
	Lamont St.	View facing south to Mission Bay
	Grand Ave (west and central portion community)	Intermittent public view of the ocean and bay
	I-5 (southern portion of the community)	View facing south to Mission Bay
	Riviera to Crown Point Dr.	Views of the bay
Pacific Highlands Ranch	Gonzales Canyon and east-west urban amenity	Open space overlook
	Near elementary school/park overlooking	Overlooking McGonigle Canyon

**Table 3.16-1**  
**Community Plan Identified Public Vantage Points**

COMMUNITY	IDENTIFIED PUBLIC VANTAGE POINT	DESCRIPTION
	McGonigle Canyon	
	South terminus of eastern neighborhood parkway	Open space overlook
	Community-wide	Utilize public view opportunities on the edge of the MHPA
Peninsula	Catalina Blvd (southern portion)	Coastal vistas facing east and west
	Shelter Island Dr	Bay and downtown view facing north, west and south
	Rosecrans	Facing southeast
	Talbot	Facing east toward the San Diego Bay
	Canon	Facing southeast toward the San Diego Bay
	Garrison	Facing southeast toward the San Diego Bay
	Chatsworth	Facing northeast
	West Point Loma Blvd	Facing south/southeast
	Famosa Blvd	Facing south
	Santa Barbara	Facing northwest toward the coast
	Point Loma Ave	Facing northwest toward the coast
	Sunset Cliffs Blvd	Coastal vistas facing west
	Sunset Cliffs Shoreline Park	Unobstructed ocean view
	Former NTC site	Southeastern view corridors from Womble Street to Sims Rd
Rancho Bernardo	Views not in current community plan	
Rancho Penasquitos	Communitywide	Public access to canyon rims and views should be provided at suitable locations in the form of paths, scenic overlooks and streets
	Communitywide	Encourage retention of wildlife habitat value in connected open space systems by providing visual access where possible by overlooks
Sabre Springs	Four viewpoints and passive areas along Chicarita Creek and Penasquitos Creek	
San Pasqual Valley	Views not in current community plan	
San Ysidro	Views not in current community plan	
Scripps Miramar Ranch	Miramar Reservoir	Public viewpoints overlooking the reservoir
	Pomerado Road	Overlooking Carroll Canyon

**Table 3.16-1  
Community Plan Identified Public Vantage Points**

COMMUNITY	IDENTIFIED PUBLIC VANTAGE POINT	DESCRIPTION
	SDG&E Easement (Area "E")	View toward open space
Serra Mesa	Views not in current community plan	
Skyline - Paradise Hills	Communitywide	Views of undeveloped hillsides, canyons, and mountains toward the east, should be protected
Sorrento Hills	Views not in current community plan	
Southeast	Communitywide	Care should be taken to maintain and enhance views to designated open space areas from public rights-of-way. These views should be considered in the review of discretionary permits.
Tierrasanta	Communitywide	Public views toward open space including Mission Trails Regional Park and Admiral Baker Field.
Tijuana River Valley	Views not in current community plan	
Torrey Highlands	Views not in current community plan	
Torrey Pines	Views not in current community plan	
University	Communitywide	Visual access to open space areas from public roadways
Uptown	Adams Ave at Campus Ave	Viewshed facing northwest
	10th Ave and Johnson Ave	Viewshed facing north/northeast
	Northern edge of 3rd Ave	Viewshed overlooking Mission Valley
	Northern edge of Stephens St. at West Arbor Dr	Viewshed facing north toward Mission Valley
	Pringle St at Neale St	Viewshed facing southwest
	Laurel St at 1st	Viewshed facing west
Via de la Valle	San Andres Dr and Via Campestre	View facing north overlooking golf course
	West of San Andres Dr and East of Highland Dr	View facing southeast
	South of San Andres Dr and North of Via de la Valle	Views facing south

## Notes and References

Centre City Development Corporation.

2004        *Implementation Plans for the Period July 2004 – June 2009 For the Centre City and Horton Plaza Redevelopment Projects.* June 15, 2004.

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2002    *Strategic Framework Element Final Environmental Impact Report.* June 14, 2002.