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1. Introduction

Old Town San Diego has significant historical importance for the City of San Diego. It is the site of initial settlement in the City and the birthplace of the State of California. The rich heritage of this community is of immense value to present and future generations. Old Town is a historic and cultural destination for visitors, which supports the community's retail and restaurant businesses, hotels, and museums. The Community Plan provides a vision that preserves and enhances the historical significance and supports a balance between residential and visitor-oriented uses. Figure 1-1 shows Old Town's location and its surrounding communities.

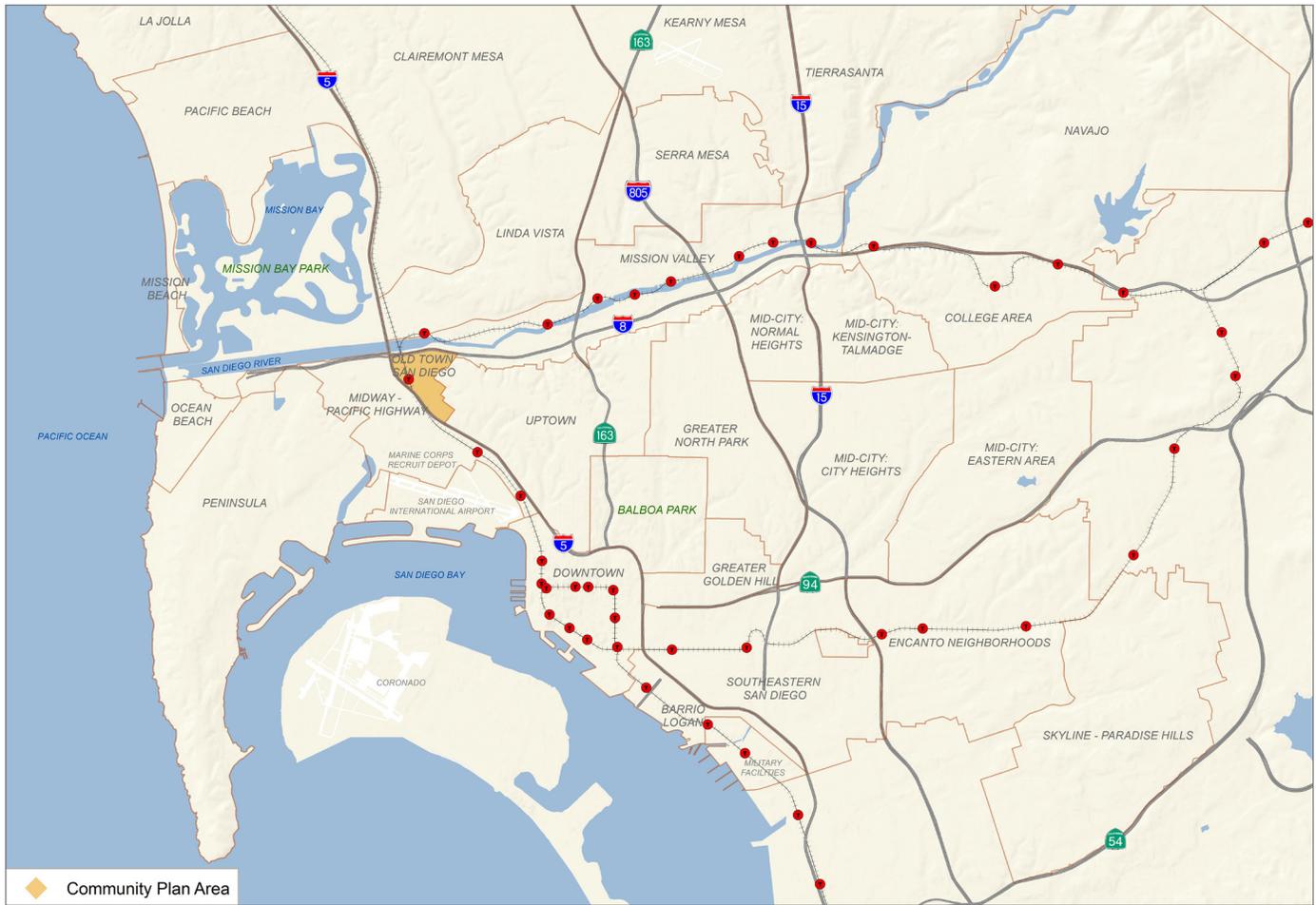
1.1 Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles are at the heart of the Community Plan. They express a vision for Old Town as the "Birthplace of the State of California," together creating the overarching goals that the Plan strives to achieve. The Principles provide the platform for the detailed policies of the Plan, which will guide further development in pursuit of this vision in a manner consistent with the General Plan goals and policies. The Old Town Planned District Ordinance along with citywide regulations implements the Community Plan vision and policies.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- A Community of National and International Historic Importance. The Community Plan respects the importance of Old Town San Diego as the site of initial settlement in the City and the birthplace of the State of California. The Plan envisions a community with buildings that replicate, retain, and enhance the distinctive character that existed prior to 1871.
- A Community Founded by People of Diverse Heritages. The Community Plan acknowledges that Old Town San Diego was the site of the Native American Kumeyaay village of Kosaii, and founded as San Diego by the Spanish explorers and missionaries, and later expanded and shaped by Mexican and American settlers.
- A Visitor Destination and a Residential Community. The Community Plan recognizes the importance of Old Town as both a visitor destination and an established residential community.
- A Small and Local Business Core. The Community Plan bolsters Old Town San Diego as a historic and cultural destination that supports the creation of small and local businesses that serve residents and visitors and attracts office and service uses.
- A Pedestrian-Oriented Community with Historic Block Patterns. The Community Plan acknowledges that Old Town San Diego functions as a pedestrian-oriented town with an established small block grid pattern. The Plan envisions a mobility system that provides options for people to walk, ride a bicycle, or take transit to parks, shops, hotels, historic and cultural attractions, and housing to enhance the historic character of the community and that maintains the historic block pattern.
- A Community Connected to its Heritage and Open Space Areas. The Community Plan seeks to strengthen historical relationships between Old Town State Historical Park, Presidio Park and the San Diego River Park with pedestrian and bicycle connections.

FIGURE 1-1: COMMUNITY LOCATION



1.2 Purpose

The Community Plan provides:

- A vision with goals and policies to guide the future growth and development within Old Town San Diego, consistent with the General Plan;
- Strategies and implementing actions to accomplish the vision;
- Guidance to design and evaluate development proposals and improvement projects;
- The basis for implementation including zoning, development regulations, and a public facilities financing plan;
- Specific direction for implementing actions that may need to be developed further and/or carried out by the City, or another governmental agency.

1.3 Plan Organization

The Community Plan is organized into nine Elements, an introduction chapter and an implementation chapter. Each element contains an introduction section and is further divided into sections that discuss specific topics. Each element contains one or more goals that express its broad intent, and community-specific policies that provide guidance and direction to implement those goals. These community-specific policies supplement the relevant citywide General Plan policies.

1.4 Planning Process

PLANNING HISTORY

In 1966, following the passage of the 1964 Cameron-Unruh Beach, Park, Recreational and Historical Facilities Act, the State of California took steps to initiate the creation of a State Historic Park at Old Town in San Diego. The City of San Diego agreed to assist in the effort to create Old Town State Park, through funding a portion of the land acquisition costs and establishment of the Old Town San Diego Architectural Control District Ordinance regulations designed to ensure building designs compatible with the historical context of the community. In June 1966, the Old Town San Diego Community Planning Committee, comprised of interested residents, property owners, business owners, historians, and others, was officially recognized and began development of a long range development plan for Old Town jointly with City staff. The first Old San Diego Community Plan was adopted in 1968. The Old San Diego Architectural and Site Development Standards and Criteria, a supplement to the Architectural Control District Ordinance (renamed the Planned District Ordinance), were adopted in 1973 to provide visual illustrations of the historically compatible architectural and urban design vision for Old Town.

Development outside of the State Park in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily commercial and hotel uses, was often larger in scale than the pre-1871 historical building precedents in Old Town and incorporated a mix of historical and modern building characteristics. In response to these development trends, an updated Old Town San Diego Community Plan and Planned District Ordinance were prepared by City staff and Old Town stakeholders and adopted in 1987 to provide updated community goals and objectives to achieve the vision of the 1968 Community Plan.

2015 COMMUNITY PLAN

This Old Town San Diego Community Plan provides a framework of land use and urban design policies to assist development in Old Town over the next 20 to 30 years to realize the goal of the 1968 Old San Diego Community Plan: a historically compatible and vital community with an appearance reflective of the community's history prior to 1871.

The Community Plan has been prepared in a collaboration between Old Town stakeholders and City staff to address the community's development needs and improve the available policy and regulatory tools (Community Plan, Old San Diego Architectural and Site Development Standards and Criteria, and Old Town San Diego Planned District Ordinance) that define the architectural styles and public realm elements which together create the desired Old Town community character.

The Old Town San Diego Community Planning Group, along with additional stakeholders, formed a Community Plan Update Advisory Meeting that convened in a series of public meetings to identify issues and land use concepts to be explored during the development of this Community Plan. Public input was obtained through workshops where residents, property owners, business owners and operators, advocacy groups, and stakeholders weighed in on issues and provided recommendations.

Key features of this Community Plan are:

- Updated plan organization, discussions, and policies to improve the reader's understanding of the historic context of Old Town and the architectural and urban design standards and requirements for new development in the community;
- Incorporation of the content of the 1973 Old San Diego Architectural and Site Development Standards and Criteria document into the Community Plan to improve implementation of the Old Town architectural and urban design requirements; and
- Updated photographs, illustrations, graphics, and maps that: capture examples of historically compatible architecture and urban design within Old Town; clearly illustrate the Community Plan discussions and policies; and enhance the appearance and function of the Community Plan.

1.5 Historical Background

Old Town San Diego is the birthplace of the State of California. Old Town San Diego's geographic location at the confluence of San Diego Bay and the San Diego River made it ideal for food gathering for early settlers, such as the Native American tribe of the Kumeyaay. The Kumeyaay established the village of Kosaii (also known as Cosoy or Kosa'aay), which was generally located along the San Diego River. This same location was the site of the first permanent European settlement on the Pacific Coast of the United States in 1769, when Don Gaspar de Portola and Padre Junipero Serra established the first mission and Presidio in California as part of the Spanish colonization of Alta California.

In 1822, San Diego became part of the Mexican Republic, following the independence of Mexico from Spain. By 1827, as many as 30 homes existed around the central plaza. Old Town and the ship landing area, La Playa, were the centers of activity of San Diego. In 1850, California officially became part of the United States. Old Town remained the largest development in San Diego County, as its architecture began to display eastern American influences. In 1869, the administrative and economic center of San Diego shifted from Old Town (Old San Diego) to New Town (Downtown).

In March of 1870, the first plat map of Old Town San Diego was made under the direction of the Board of City Trustees. Old Town's overall physical structure reflects its history and evolution from a Spanish settlement to an early American town site. It is defined by its unique grid pattern with square blocks and narrow streets, except for San Diego Avenue which is wider and partially bisects the grid.

The first transcontinental train arrived in San Diego in 1885. The expansion in trade this development brought included an increase in availability of building materials, and consequently wood buildings gradually began to replace adobe structures. In 1886, the first electric streetcar transit system debuted in San Diego, running from Downtown to Old Town, and eventually expanding to Balboa Park. Residential, commercial and institutional development outside of the original core likely occurred as a result of the construction of the San Diego and Old Town Railway and the expansion of the San Diego Electric Railway into the area.



Old Town's street grid shown in 1904 USGS Map. Image courtesy of the Office of the San Diego City Clerk.

In the early 1900s, with the construction of US 101 (Pacific Highway) connecting Los Angeles to the Mexican border in San Ysidro, Old Town residents began to see preservation as an opportunity to increase tourism and commerce which led to restoration activities and to the reconstruction of previously demolished buildings. Old Town began documenting its historic resources in the 1930s, shortly following the establishment of the Historic American Buildings Survey program in 1933.

In the 1960s, the construction of Interstate 5 and Interstate 8 created rigid boundaries between Old Town, its adjacent communities, and the San Diego River. Old Town's historic structures were degraded and in need of restoration and repair, and historic buildings were lost among incompatible or architecturally contrasting developments. In 1965, the City established the Historical Site Board to focus on the protection, retention, and preservation of historic sites, including the Old Town San Diego Historic District. The Board documented all historic sites, buildings and structures, initially only addressing buildings of the Mexican period that fronted on the Plaza, which would later become the State Historic Park.

In 1966, the City adopted the Old Town San Diego Architectural Control District Ordinance in recognition of Old Town's historic character, and created an Architectural Control Board to administer the zoning ordinance. The regulations placed architectural restrictions on new structures as well as the alteration or relocation of existing buildings to assure building designs compatible to the historical context of the community.



Heritage Park on Juan Street preserves excellent examples of Victorian architecture from various neighborhoods in San Diego.

Also in 1966, the City established the Old Town San Diego Community Planning Group to work with City staff to prepare a Community Plan to provide a long-term vision to restore Old Town's historical character. The City adopted the Old Town San Diego Community Plan in 1968, which proposed the creation of the State Historic Park.

In 1968, the State, along with City and County, transformed the central core of Old Town into the State Historic Park. The State purchased the land and restored the buildings with State, City and County funding. In 1969, the County established Heritage Park, and between 1969 and 1978 seven Victorian buildings were relocated to the Park.

With the exception of the State Historic Park and Heritage Park, much of the development in later years was out of scale with the historical precedent of the late 1800s, counter to what was originally envisioned by the Community Plan. The Community Plan was updated in 1984 to address the development during the 1970s and 1980s that was inconsistent with the original Community Plan's intent for building scale and character.

In 1996, the Old Town Transit Center was established between Pacific Highway, Congress Street and Taylor Street and led to the realignment of Congress Street. The Transit Center has brought visitors and transit-riders into the Community.



The Old Town Transit Center provides convenient access to Old Town State Historic Park (in background) and other regional destinations.

1.6 Legislative Framework

RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan provides a policy framework to guide the City's growth and development into a sustainable citywide development pattern while enhancing quality of life. The Old Town San Diego Community Plan provides policies that address community-specific goals that aim to maintain and enhance its historic character and to provide a balance between its residential and visitor-oriented uses. The Community Plan is consistent with the General Plan, and the two documents work together to establish the framework for development and improvements that enhance the livability of Old Town San Diego. Consistency between the Community Plan and the General Plan will be ensured through periodic comprehensive reviews with the Old Town San Diego Community Planning Group, which may result in plan amendments if required.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE MUNICIPAL CODE

The Municipal Code implements the Community Plan policies through zoning, development regulations, and other controls within the Old Town San Diego Planned District Ordinance pertaining to land use density and intensity, building massing, landscape, streetscape, and other development characteristics due to the historical significance of Old Town San Diego. With the exception of public projects on property owned by other government agencies, all development in Old Town San Diego must comply with the Municipal Code.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Government owned property not including streets and freeways comprises approximately 116.6 acres, including City-owned property, which comprises 63.1 acres or 27 percent of the land area contained within the Community Planning area (230 acres). The City does not have land use authority over the property within the jurisdiction/ownership of other government agencies, as identified in Box 1-1.

BOX 1-1: GOVERNMENT JURISDICTIONS

Federal Government

The federal government owns the U.S. Navy Public Works complex (approximately 3.1 acres) on Pacific Highway.

State of California

The State owns approximately 39.2 acres, including the Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, located between the Taylor Street, Twiggs Street, Congress Street and Juan Street; the Old Town San Diego State Historic Park – Transit Center parking lot, which also includes the State Parks Department's San Diego Coast District office on Pacific Highway; and the California Department of Transportation District 11 Offices, located on Taylor Street.

County of San Diego

The County owns Heritage Park, the parking lot located at Juan and Harney Street, and the Whaley House (approximately 6.5 acres).

San Diego Unified School District

The School District owns the Ballard Parent Center (formerly Fremont Elementary School), which is 4.34 acres in size.

Metropolitan Transit System

Metropolitan Transit System leases the land for the Old Town Transit Center from the State Parks Department, and owns a small area adjacent to the Transit Center (approximately 0.4 acres).

City of San Diego

The City of San Diego owns the Old Adobe Chapel, the parking lot on Twiggs Street, El Campo Santo Pocket Park, and Presidio Park (63.1 acres in total).

1.7 Environmental Impact Report

The Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) provides a programmatic assessment of potential impacts that could occur with the implementation of the Community Plan, in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City will determine whether potential impacts of proposed development or improvement projects were anticipated in the Community Plan PEIR analysis or whether the project will require additional environmental review. Projects consistent with the Community Plan PEIR may not need further environmental review. The Federal Government conducts environmental review in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for projects on Federal Government-owned property. The State, County, and School District conduct CEQA analysis for projects on their property.



Old Town State Historic Park preserves historic structures from early San Diego and recreates the atmosphere of the town from the period of 1821 to 1872.