10 ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and culture play an important role in Southeastern San Diego in creating vibrant and meaningful spaces and providing an opportunity to express ideas about nature, community, history, current events, and culture in the built environment. In Southeastern San Diego, arts and culture are expressed in many forms across the community, including on the streets and sidewalks, as well as in parks, plazas, transit stations, and private spaces like homeowners' yards. The Arts and Culture Element of this plan supports the creation and maintenance of art in the public realm and cultural activities in Southeastern San Diego, to ensure that they continue to be integral and defining characteristics of the community.

Street vendors, signs, brightly colored storefronts, fences, and garden walls add to the visual interest and cultural identity of the community's streets.

GOALS

1. Southeastern San Diego Neighborhoods identified as a thriving cultural and arts center.
2. A community culture that promotes local artists and arts-supportive community organizations.
3. A vibrant cultural character enhanced through public art, food, music and dance.

TABLE 10-1: ARTS AND CULTURE TOPICS ALSO COVERED IN OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

ARTS AND CULTURE TOPIC AREAS	LAND USE	MOBILITY	URBAN DESIGN	ECONOMIC PROSPERITY	RECREATION	HISTORIC PRESERVATION
Cultural Tourism	X		X	X		X
Public Art		x	X		X	

Other aspects of the Plan overlap with the Arts and Culture Element. Cultivating tourism based on arts and culture is an economic strategy discussed in the Economic Prosperity Element, and it also overlaps with the Historic Preservation Element. Public art is also an aspect of urban design, as discussed in the Urban Design Element, and the settings for public art as part of transit or streetscape projects and Chollas Creek improvements create connections with the Mobility and Recreation elements. See Table 10-1.

10.1 Cultural Character

Diversity is a defining attribute of the built environment in Southeastern San Diego, creating the varied yet consistently rich flavor of the community. Southeastern San Diego is a community that has grown over time, adapted to the needs and expressing the character of its residents. It is the appropriation of space and the built environment by its residents that makes it a special place in San Diego. Signs, advertisements, and brightly colored storefronts add to the visual interest and cultural identity of the community's streets, particularly on main commercial corridors such as Imperial and National avenues. In many residential areas in the community, fences and garden walls speak as much about the individual character of each resident as do the buildings.

Land form and natural features also contribute to a sense of place. Southeastern San Diego has views to Downtown, the mountains, and other neighborhoods. In hilly areas, development steps with the hillside rather than projecting over it, and the City grid is maintained.

10.2 Public Art

Throughout the public realm in Southeastern San Diego, art plays an important part in bringing life and identity to the streets and public spaces. The mural at 32nd Street and Imperial Avenue and the art work at the Sherman Heights Community Center are notable pieces of public art in the community.

Another notable work of art is at the 25th and Commercial Trolley Station. The sculptural art piece, entitled "Achievement/Progress/Community: In the Spirit of Cesar E. Chavez," is the work of a local art team.

The Chollas Creek South Branch Implementation Program makes site specific recommendations for creek restoration and public access enhancements, and art can play a role in making the creek a source of pride. There are numerous sites targeted for arts improvements, particularly where the creek crosses under freeways.

Murals and art at Trolley stations are existing examples of public art in Southeastern San Diego.

Dia de los Muertos (top and middle) and the Cooper Family Juneteenth Celebration take place in Southeastern San Diego (bottom, image courtesy San Diego Union-Tribune).

10.3 Arts Programs and Facilities

San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts is a public arts magnet school near Southeastern San Diego that is a center for arts programs and spaces that serves the region.

The Sherman Heights Community Center plays a significant role in bolstering the arts and culture for Southeastern San Diego. One popular annual event held there is the Day of the Dead Celebration (Dia de Los Muertos), where local families create traditional Mexican altars (ofrendas) and share in food and folk art activities.

Cultural Tourism Opportunities

The abundance of arts and culture in Southeastern San Diego presents an opportunity to bolster economic prosperity in the community through cultural tourism. The unique character of the community as expressed through arts and cultural activities can attract visitors and enhance the local economy A focus on arts and culture presents an opportunity to reinvent and revitalize the community.

The Sherman Heights Neighborhood Cultural Council (SHNCC) was founded in 2001 under the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Share Your Heritage program to promote the unique and authentic cultural heritage of the Sherman Heights Historic District. With encouragement from the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, SHNCC members and supporters include residents, business owners, artists, and others who care about the unique character of the neighborhood. The SHNCC promotes "Sherman Heights: the Victorian Neighborhood with Latino flavor – An Unexpected Cultural Mix!"

Music and dance are a central part of Southeastern San Diego's identity and enrich the public realm with celebrations of the community's history and culture through festivals and performances. The Latino Music Festival takes place at the Sherman Heights Community Center annually in collaboration with the Historic Barrio District. This free family event celebrates the food, arts, and sounds of Latino culture and features live music by local artists, food, art, unique hand-crafted items, and activities for kids.

The Cooper Family Juneteenth Celebration is held annually at 29th Street and Imperial Avenue to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States. It provides a free educational and culturally-enriching event and cultivates a sense of pride in the African-American community.

Policies

P-AC-1: Pursue art installations that are diverse in content, media and siting, that help to create and reinforce the uniqueness of Southeastern San Diego and reflect the array of regional cultural and environmental influences.

P-AC-2: Include public art or cultural amenities in each new development project. Engage artists early in the project design process to achieve integration between art and architecture.

P-AC-3: Strengthen Southeastern San Diego's identity as a local cultural and arts center through the use of art in public spaces such as trolley stations, sidewalks, streets, parks, and building lobbies.

P-AC-4: Promote cultural tourism in Southeastern San Diego to attract visitors interested in cultural events.

P-AC-5: Support the diversity of history, culture, climate, environment, and people through inclusive arts and cultural offerings accessible to non-English speaking residents, seniors, and visually and hearing impaired populations.

P-AC-6: Utilize vacant and/or underutilized storefronts and other non-residential buildings for temporary art exhibitions.

P-AC-7: Encourage the provision of spaces for performances and art events in neighborhood parks, community centers, schools, transit stations, residential developments, and public areas within private development.

P-AC-8: Continue efforts to create meaningful, memorable, and culturally-significant public spaces in Southeastern San Diego that are integrated with public art.

P-AC-9: Emphasize public art installations on Market Street, Imperial Avenue, Logan Avenue, National Avenue, and at major intersections.

P-AC-10: Involve artists in the design of gateway elements proposed for key entrances to the community, as identified in the Urban Design Element.

P-AC-11: Encourage the continuation and expansion of cultural arts events and programs, such as those at the Sherman Heights Community Center and Logan Heights Library, as well as seminars, workshops, concerts, and community cultural festivals. Improve and enhance existing arts and culture facilities.

P-AC-12: Explore opportunities to accommodate current or emerging cultural arts programs within existing facilities. Work with community groups for sharing of performance and exhibit space and consider the potential for new facilities.

P-AC-13: Support the efforts of non-profit, private, and community organizations to apply for public and private grants and promote donations to support arts and culture in the community.

The Plan supports diverse art installations, public art in new development, and art in public spaces and on public buildings.

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