

PLANT SAN DIEGO

A quarterly newsletter from City Planning & Community Investment (CPCI) | Summer 2010



Bill Anderson, FAICP

Community Plans

Our General Plan guides the City's future development, conservation, and evolution. Most endeavors – whether

business, social action, conservation, military, or city formation – benefit from a plan to guide and coordinate future decisions. The General Plans of some of our neighboring suburban cities differ from the City of San Diego's in that our General Plan document does not provide policies for specific parcels – that happens in our Community Plans, which are technically components of our General Plan. This structure, which has been in place for many decades, is appropriate for our city.

San Diego is divided into 42 community plan areas, each with their own community plan, reflecting the rich diversity of our communities and their different planning contexts and issues. Many of our communities are larger than several other cities in San Diego County. Each one is unique. In our system, the Community Plan is where land use policy is presented that affects entitlements and zoning for specific properties.

As Community plans are updated, zoning and land use policies are reconciled. The Plan provides the community vision, present the facilities and recreation strategy, coordinate land use and the circulation system, identify areas for conservation, describe economic development opportunities, etc. Each Community Plan has an associated Public Facilities Financing Plan. For a public facility or infrastructure project to be put into the Capital Improvement Plan and built, it must be consistent with the Community Plan. Each community plan updated in recent years has an associated Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR), which projects consistent with the plan can refer. Thus, the Community Plan plays a central role in implementation.

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The Mercado is Coming!

By Sam Johnson

Celebration was heard throughout the Council Chambers as the Redevelopment Agency voted unanimously to support new development agreements for the Mercado del Barrio Project in Barrio Logan. Community forums, legal battles, and years of negotiations culminated in a project the community envisioned around 30 years ago. On June 29th the Redevelopment Agency and Housing Authority combined resources and dedicated \$16 million in an effort to turn the community's dream into a reality.

The mixed-use project will consist of a Northgate Gonzales supermarket, 54,000 square feet of retail, service and restaurant uses, and 92 affordable residential units, all within two blocks of a trolley station. Plazas, art elements and progressive architecture will complement the Barrio Logan Redevelopment Project Area by 2012. Shea Properties and Chelsea Investment Corporation worked with staff and the community for two years to make the Project happen. The Barrio Logan redevelopment team is grateful for the help of everyone who has supported the Project throughout the long process. The Mercado ribbon cutting ceremony will be a momentous occasion for San Diego.



"To engage San Diegans to envision, plan, implement, and maintain a sustainable city through the wise use of land, resources, and aesthetics ensuring a high quality of life for all generations."

“A livable, prosperous and sustainable San Diego that reflects the City’s planning, design and investment efforts.”

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The General Plan is intended to guide San Diego’s evolution for a 20-30 year period, in coordination with the Regional Comprehensive Plan. A Community Plan is intended to guide a specific community’s evolution for a 15-20 year period, or until it’s next updated. Since community plans are components of the General Plan, they must be consistent with the General Plan.

While the General Plan is updated once every few decades, community plans are updated on independent schedules. Each year, the City is working on one or more community plan updates, each involving extensive public processes, transportation modeling, zoning reviews, facility-financing strategies, historic surveys, program EIRs, and other technical studies. We are currently working on nine community plan updates – Otay Mesa, San Ysidro, Barrio Logan, Uptown, North Park, Greater Golden Hill, Midway, Old San Diego, and Ocean Beach. We’re also working on a major plan amendment for the Grantville area of the Navajo Community Plan. This is almost a quarter of the City. Working with the communities, we hope to update the rest of the community plans that have not been updated recently within the next 10-12 years. When we’re done, it will be time to start again on the older plans to keep current, kind of like painting the Golden Gate Bridge.

This staggered schedule, which is mostly tied to the availability of funding resources, offers some advantages. Our diversity of communities allows for innovation – a bold idea or strategy that one community is not yet ready to test, may be embraced by another community, which in the long-run provides lessons for others to improve upon. Plans updated in different years can accommodate changing circumstances, whether economic, environmental, demographic, or social. Finally, each plan update tests the application of General Plan policies, sometimes resulting in General Plan amendments. This keeps the General Plan a fresh and living document.

Thank you for your role in this ongoing and important process,



Bill Anderson, FAICP
Director

Explore Your Communities!

By Brian Schoenfisch

With the summer upon us it is the perfect time to get out and rediscover the City of San Diego’s 42 communities. In this issue of PlanIt San Diego we introduce a new column, Community Spotlight, in which we feature unique projects and places from



a particular community. Are you ready to explore San Diego’s communities? Whether its strolling through the Hillcrest farmers market on a Sunday morning, taking a step back in time with a walk through the Sherman Heights Historical District, enjoying a free summer concert at University Heights’ Trolley Barn Park, celebrating culture with a performance from a local dance group at Encanto’s Market Creek Plaza Amphitheater, taking a kayak ride across Mission Bay, visiting a winery in the San Pasqual Valley, observing the eclectic architecture of the Euclid Tower



in City Heights, discovering native plants with a walk through the 52-acre Mission Valley Preserve, playing a traditional game of bocce ball at Little Italy’s Amici Park, taking a long hike through the Carmel Mountain and Del Mar Mesa Habitat Preserve, meandering down Adams Avenue’s Antiques Row in search of a treasured collectible, exploring aviation history with a visit to the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum in Mira Mesa, taking a horseback ride along the many trails of the Tijuana River Valley, catching a live performance at Balboa Park’s Starlight



Bowl, reading the historic tombstones at Mission Hills’ Pioneer Park, listening to the sound of ocean waves while wandering the cliffs of La Jolla, participating in a volunteer cleanup of Serra Mesa’s Ruffin Canyon, taking a stroll across the Spruce Street Suspension Bridge, rock climbing high above the river gorge at Mission Trails Park, trying your hand

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at Morley Field’s disc golf course, going for an exhilarating ride on the Big Dipper at Belmont Park, delving into Chicano history with a visit to the murals of Barrio Logan’s Chicano Park, wandering through the historic promenade and rose garden of Point Loma’s Liberty Station, taking a mountain biking adventure through the Black Mountain Open Space Park, walking your dog while admiring the



hand-crafted birdhouses along Tweet Street, appeasing your appetite and thirst at the many cafés along 30th Street, enjoying panoramic views with a picnic at Kate Sessions Park, developing your rhythm with a walk across the 25th

Street Music Bridge, taking a ride across the Lake Hodges Bicycle Bridge, meandering through the historic Talmadge Gates on an urban trekking adventure, or simply relaxing with a book under a shade tree at Presidio Park... take time out to celebrate the unique offerings of San Diego’s diverse communities. As we develop this new column, we would like to hear from you – [email us](#) with some of the hidden gems and unique features that contribute to the individual character of your community.

The Community Plan Update Program

By Mary P. Wright

What exactly are community plans and what is their relationship to the City’s General Plan? This is a question that comes up quite often. In addition to the General Plan, the City of San Diego uses community plans to provide more detailed land use and policy direction for the City’s many community planning areas. Community plans work in tandem with the General Plan and provide a more specific blueprint for how a community will grow and develop over the next 15 to 20 years. Community plans are used by City staff, decision-makers, community members, developers and others to review public and private development proposals. In conjunction with community plan updates, zoning programs are prepared to provide development regulations to implement community plan policies. Facility financing plans are also prepared to identify financing strategies for providing public facilities for build-out of the community.

The City’s first community plans were adopted in the 1960s and the City has been preparing and updating plans ever since. Recently, CPCI has accelerated the community plan update program and currently has nine updates and one major amendment in process. These include the Otay Mesa, Ocean Beach and Barrio Logan Community Plan Updates which are 75-85% complete; the Uptown, North Park and Greater Golden Hill Community Plan Updates which began in the Fall of 2009 and are going into a ‘charrette’ process (an intense multi-day public workshop to identify plan alternatives) and the Midway, Old San Diego (Old Town) and San Ysidro Community Plan Updates which are just in the beginning stages. In addition to these updates, CPCI is working on the Grantville Master Plan, a comprehensive amendment to the Navajo Community Plan, to address transit-oriented development opportunities near the Grantville Trolley Station. There are many reasons to update a community plan including conflicting plan policies, development pressure and consistency with the General Plan. CPCI hopes to identify staffing and funding resources to update all of the City’s older community plans over the next 10 to 15 years.

Community plan updates typically take 2½ years and cost \$1.5-\$2 million each. Funding is obtained from a variety of sources which may include redevelopment funding (only within redevelopment areas), grants and the City’s General Fund. In addition, the General Plan Maintenance Fee, a modest fee applied to new residential development, contributes to the update effort.

Staffing for community plan updates includes a combination of City staff and technical consultants depending on the needs of the community and funding availability. A senior planner typically manages an update with assistance from other CPCI staff including planners, facilities financing staff, historic resource experts and park planners. The Development Services and Engineering & Capital Projects Departments also assist in the community plan update process, primarily through environmental review, zoning analysis and traffic modeling. Many other departments, outside agencies, non-profits, community members and other stakeholders contribute to the process as well.

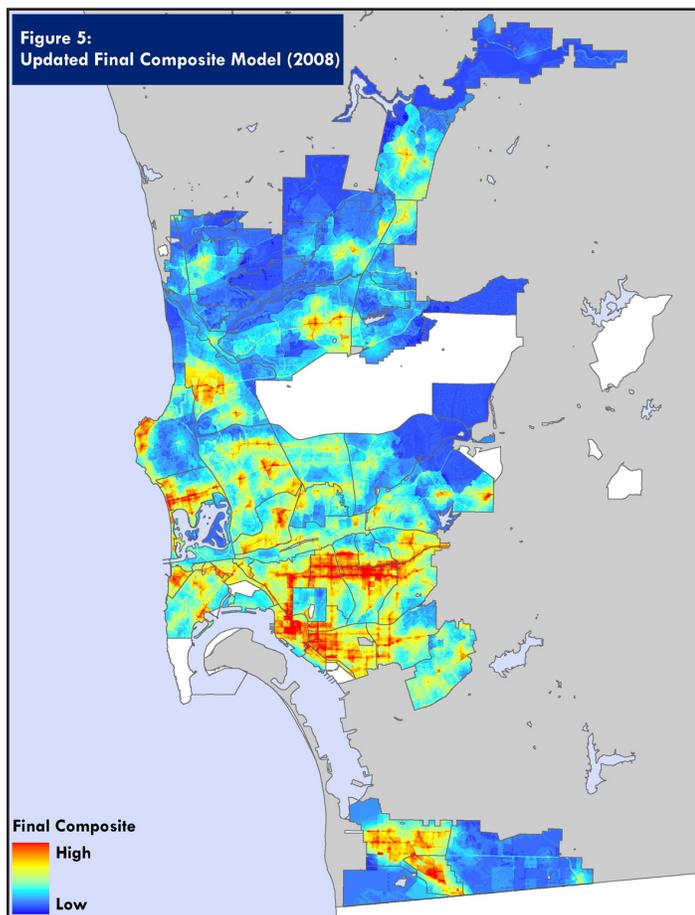
The community plan update process is a complex effort involving extensive public outreach and input, analysis, technical studies, environmental review and public hearings. The entire process, from what’s included in an update to the public outreach process, is outlined in the recently-prepared [Community Plan Preparation Manual](#).

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Pedestrian Master Plan

By Maureen Gardiner

In a significant step toward sustainability, the City of San Diego is developing a Pedestrian Master Plan (Plan) to promote policies, programs, and projects that influence the pedestrian environment. By proactively identifying and prioritizing pedestrian improvement projects, the Plan will promote walkability through their orderly implementation on a citywide basis.



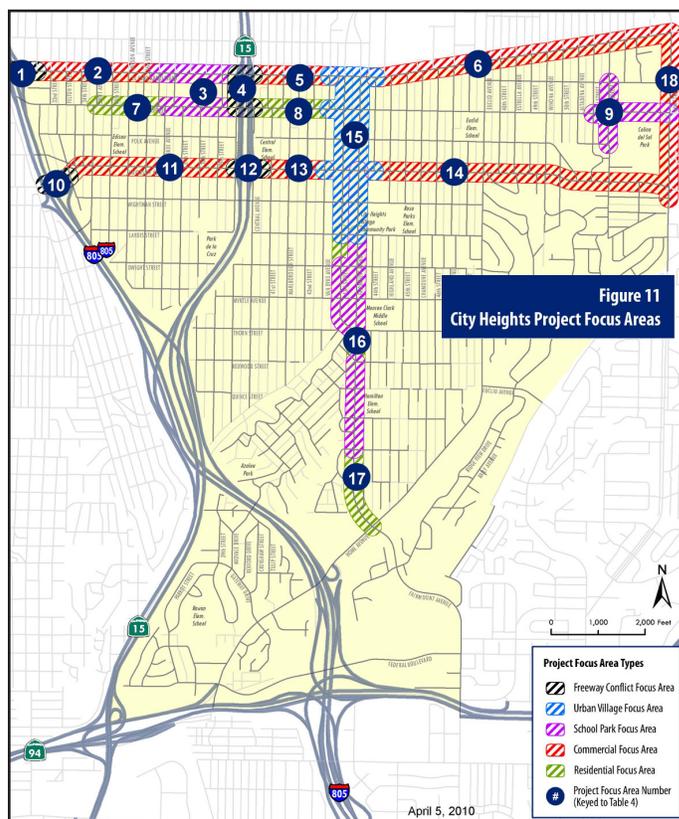
The Plan is being developed in multiple phases with Phase 1 providing an implementation framework that establishes citywide goals and policies, documents pedestrian issues and solutions, defines pedestrian route types and treatments, develops a pedestrian priority model and develops methodologies to assess each community’s existing pedestrian conditions. Subsequent phases are aimed at identifying and prioritizing appropriate pedestrian improvement projects for each community planning area.

Using GIS tools, the Plan identifies and prioritizes pedestrian improvement projects based on technical analysis and community input. The first seven communities in the city where work has begun include: Barrio Logan, City Heights, Greater Golden Hill, North Park, Normal Heights, Southeastern San Diego, and Uptown. In several of the communities these efforts are being coordinated with ongoing Community Plan Updates.

In each of the study communities this effort classified pedestrian routes; inventoried districts, corridors, and connectors to document sidewalk gaps, missing curb ramps, and sidewalk obstructions; identified and prioritized project focus areas; and developed specific recommendations to improve safety, accessibility, connectivity, and walkability for the highest priority focus areas.

The next phase of the Plan will continue the community outreach and Plan development in the next seven communities: San Ysidro, Midway-Pacific Highway, Old San Diego, Ocean Beach, College Area, Pacific Beach, and Kensington-Talmadge. Subsequent phases will address remaining communities in the City. The Plan will be developed in other communities as funding becomes available.

For more information, please visit the [Pedestrian Mobility Planning](#) webpage.



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International Border, Plans and Projects Moving Forward

By Tait Galloway

The City is in the process of comprehensively updating the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa community plans. While these updates will help to provide a future land use vision based on the City’s 2008 General Plan, there are also a number of major improvement projects and planning activities that are happening along the international border area. The City, along with regional, state, and federal agencies and private developers, are working on multiple improvement projects and planning activities to help address the current and future needs of the residents and businesses in the City’s border communities as well as the entire region.

International commerce is a key part of the region’s economic prosperity. Having a reliable and efficient passenger and commercial transportation systems along the Mexico border is critical to supporting economic growth. To address this need, the federal government is in the process of expanding the San Ysidro border crossing and has plans to do the same to the Otay Mesa crossing. Also known as a Port of Entry, the federal government has plans to build a new Port of Entry east of the existing Otay Mesa crossing.

Freeway and road improvements are being planned and built to better serve the new and expanded border crossings. The state is currently extending State Route 905 from Interstate 805 to the Otay Mesa Port of Entry. SANDAG, the region’s transportation planning agency, is planning State Route 11 to directly serve the future East Otay Mesa border crossing. To help tackle congestion on local streets, the City is also working with the state to improve the routing of trucks when they enter at the Otay Mesa crossing.

Public transportation plays an important role in reducing congestion, providing access to jobs, and improving the environment. For almost 30 years, the San Diego Trolley’s Blue Line has provided direct access from Downtown to the Border. SANDAG is planning a system wide makeover of the aging Blue Line which will include upgraded stations and tracks. The makeover will allow the operation of new low floor trolleys. To improve trolley, bus, and private transportation services at the San Ysidro border crossing, the City and SANDAG are looking at the potential to create a new intermodal transportation center.

Airports, in addition to being a part of the transportation system, provide substantial opportunities to foster local and regional economic development. The City is working with a local aviation developer to transform Brown Field into a first-class business serving airport. The project is intended to attract aviation businesses and provide aviation services to support the growing businesses in Otay Mesa. The City is also updating the Brown Field Master Plan to address future airport improvement needs. In addition to the Brown Field improvements, a private developer has proposed a facility that would provide direct passenger access from Otay Mesa to the Tijuana International Airport in an effort to improve access to commercial air passenger service. This project just received it’s Presidential



Permit, a critical first step in the Federal Approval Process. Quality of life is a key aspect of the City’s General Plan and the environment is an important part of the City’s quality of live. In Otay Mesa, the City is preparing a habitat conservation plan to help protect threatened and endangered species and habitat found in vernal pools. The City, working with the federal government, recently completed a coordinated sediment and trash reduction project to reduce the risk of flooding and restore the Tijuana River Valley as a wholly functional regional asset. The International Border Commission is upgrading the international wastewater treatment plan in the Tijuana River Valley to allow for the secondary treatment of wastewater from Tijuana.

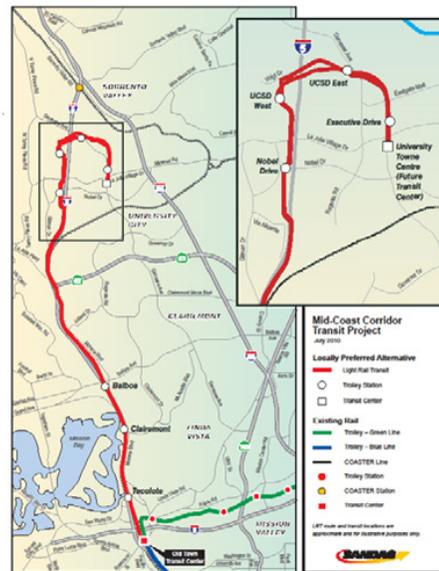
As part of the community plan update process, the City will continue to work with residents and businesses to examine and plan for infrastructure needs. This includes working with regional, state and federal agencies to make sure that future improvements continue to support the vision contained in each community plan.

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Clairemont Community Spotlight

By Brian Schoenfish

Known for its sweeping views of Mission Bay and its central location, the community of Clairemont will soon be connected to the region by way of the San Diego Trolley. That’s right, on July 23, 2010, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Board voted unanimously to move forward with the preferred route for what is known as the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project. Identified as the highest-priority transit project in the region, the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project will extend the San Diego Trolley from the Old Town Transit Station, through the Clairemont community, up to University City. The 11-mile extension will improve public transit services and connect corridor residents with other Trolley lines serving Old Town, Downtown, Mission Valley, East County, and South County communities, and to the International Border, thereby enhancing direct public access to regional employment, educational, medical, retail, and other activity centers.



With three Trolley stations proposed within the Clairemont community (Morena Boulevard at: Tecolote Road, Clairemont Drive, and Balboa Avenue), many area residents and businesses are excited about the prospect of a long-range planning effort to create destinations for people to live, shop,

and work near the Trolley stations. It is anticipated that future land-use planning efforts would further encourage mixed-use transit-oriented development in the Clairemont community, while preserving the established single-family neighborhoods. Future comprehensive planning could also study enhancing multimodal connectivity and access for pedestrians, bicyclists, autos, and transit riders, as well as address issues such as parking management, streetscape, and building design.

CPCI is currently coordinating with SANDAG on a funding request to the Federal Transit Administration as part of its New Starts program to secure funding for the station-area planning component of the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project. In the meantime, some active members of the Clairemont Community Planning Group have already begun to discuss the vision for encouraging smart growth along the community’s transit corridor’s, including the possibility for bus feeder service connecting residents and employment centers to the future Trolley stations along the major arteries.



Additionally, in 2005 the City Council adopted the [Balboa Avenue Revitalization Action Program](#) which established a vision for a more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly corridor to serve as a “main street” for the community, connecting the future Balboa Avenue Trolley station to the more urbanized community core and eastern areas of Clairemont. This post World War II community with its gently rolling mesa, extensive system of canyons, prominent hillsides, mix of established single-family neighborhoods, higher intensity mixed-use arterials, commercial centers and diverse industrial and employment centers, is beginning a new era of integrating transportation and land-use planning as the Mid-Coast Trolley Extension moves closer to becoming a reality.

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Tales from the Field

By Craig Hooker

Maintaining and managing a 52,000+ acre biological preserve is no small task, especially when you consider the large numbers of threatened and endangered species which call the City of San Diego their home. The Multiple Species Program (MSCP) in partnership with Parks and Recreation Department Open Space Division are tasked with stewardship over the 56 MSCP covered species within our City limits. Tales from the Field is a window into the challenges and opportunities presented by open space management.



Some of the most critical and challenging biological resources are those associated with plant species listed as threatened and endangered. For example, the threatened San Diego thornmint—known to botanists as *Acanthomintha ilicifolia*—is only six inches tall with a pretty purple and white flower, and grows only on clay soil extrusions. It is found in open space preserves from Otay Mesa to Sabre Springs, but at each of these sites the City’s annual monitoring data revealed an invasion of *Brachypodium distachyon*, a weed also known as purple false brome. City biologists grew concerned as the purple false brome increased from covering an average of 19% of thornmint areas, to over 90% for many sites within just a few years. Through coordination with state and federal agencies and other landowners and conservation groups in San Diego, the City developed a plan to remove weeds in thornmint areas and participates in a working group to experiment with methods for eradication of purple false brome. By working together, we can make sure that San Diego thornmint will grow forever in the MSCP preserves.

“Regional stakeholder groups such as SANDAG play an important role by coordinating the data collected by monitoring biologists around the county. Combining our data has shown just how large a threat *Brachypodium distachyon* is for thornmint, and convinced decision-makers to fund eradication of purple false brome in thornmint areas.”-Betsy Miller Biologist with the Parks and Recreation Open Space Division.

The following are links to better understand this and other San Diego Open Space issues:

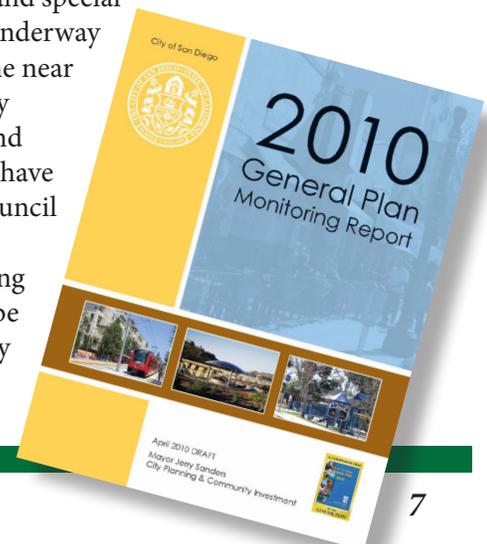
- [The Multiple Species Program \(MSCP\)](#)
- [Research by Center for Natural Lands Management](#)

General Plan Monitoring Report

By Melissa Devine

CPCI has prepared the first [General Plan Monitoring Report](#) for the City of San Diego General Plan (adopted in 2008). The purpose of the Monitoring Report is to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the General Plan.

The Monitoring Report provides an assessment of the City’s progress in implementing the goals and policies of the General Plan and completing the actions set out in the General Plan Action Plan (adopted in 2009). The Monitoring Report describes the progress on the eight priority implementation actions and includes a matrix documenting progress on the remaining implementation actions. Many actions identified in the General Plan Action Plan are underway. Some short-term actions have also been completed within reporting period. The community plan update program is the essential link for translating General Plan policies into community-specific recommendations. Several community plan updates, targeted amendments and special planning projects are underway or will commence in the near future. The Community Planners Committee and Planning Commission have recommended City Council acceptance of the first General Plan Monitoring Report. The item will be brought forward to City Council in the fall.



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San Diego River Park Master Plan

By Robin Shifflet, Park Planning

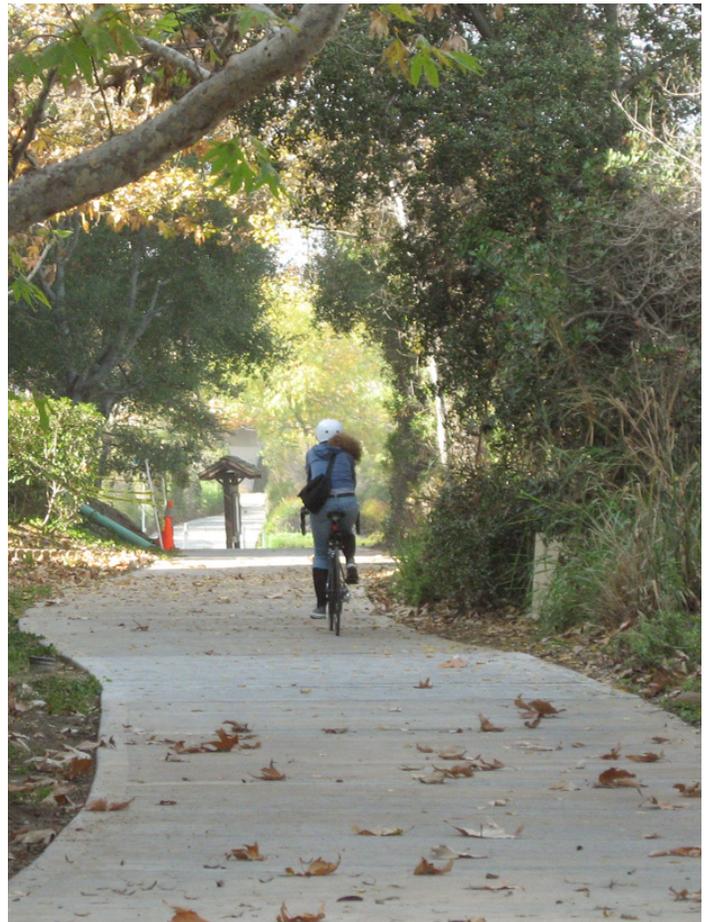
CPCI is finishing the draft Master Plan for the San Diego River Park this year and plans to take the draft document out to specific planning groups for public input in late Fall 2010. This master plan will serve as the policy document for the planning areas adjacent to the 17.5 mile river park within the City’s jurisdiction.

The San Diego River has long been a source of life and vitality in the San Diego region. The water and the rich alluvial floodplain drew the Native Americans to the valley thousands of years ago. As recently as the 1950’s, the San Diego River Valley provided rich agricultural land and open space for the growing downtown area. Since then, the river has suffered under the region’s increasing development pressure. Commercial, residential and industrial uses have expanded into the valley, pushing even closer to the river’s edge and impacting the health of the river and the wildlife habitat.



The San Diego River Park Master Plan provides the vision and guidance to reverse this condition, to restore the relationship between the river and its surrounding communities by creating a river-long park, stretching from the Pacific Ocean to the City of Santee. This plan is the result of the grass roots community efforts led by the San Diego River Park Foundation working in partnership with the City of San Diego.

The master plan is closely aligned with the City’s General Plan goals and provides a vision upon which planning principles, recommendations, design guidelines and an implementation section are based. Design Guidelines focus on the River Corridor Area (the 100-year Floodway and 35’ on either side of the floodway) and the River Influence Area (200’ on either side of the River Corridor Area).



Within the River Corridor Area, a bike/pedestrian pathway will be located with recreation amenities, such as picnic tables, benches, overlooks, and interpretive signs. Over time, the public pathway will connect Ocean Beach to the City of Santee. In the River Influence Area, redevelopment will occur and promote active use areas such as cafes, lobbies, restaurants, and galleries to face the river and promote a synergy of water, wildlife and people.

The draft master plan will also amend the Mission Valley, Navajo, Tierrasanta and East Elliot Community Plans and the Mission Valley PDO, the Navajo CPIOZ and the Mission Trails Design District of the Municipal Code to provide consistency between all the plans and codes. The draft master plan and amendments are anticipated to go before City Council for adoption in the late 2011.

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Plant Profile: Kelley Stanco



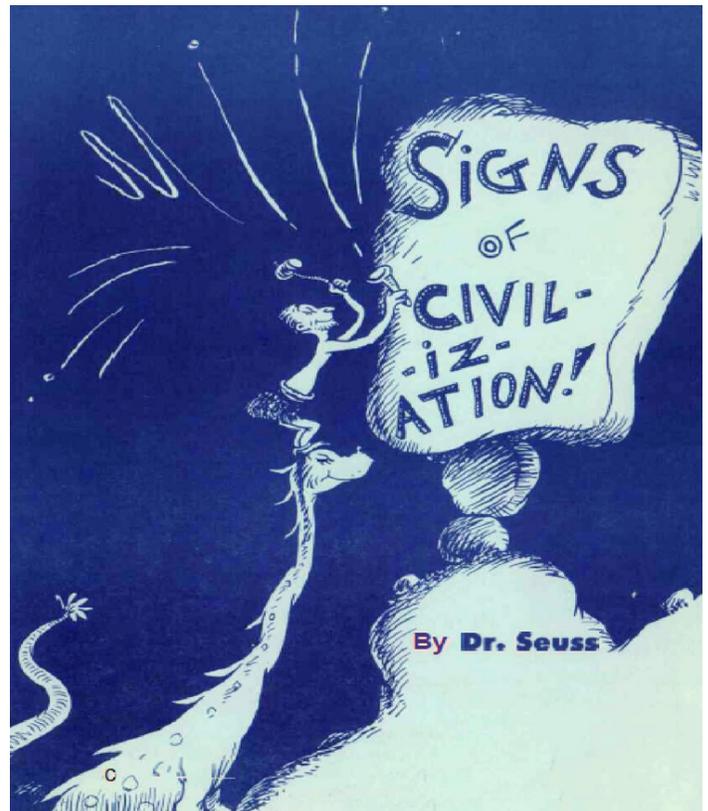
Kelley Stanco is a Senior Planner in the Historical Resources section of the CPCI's Urban Form Division. Her responsibilities as a preservation planner and staff to the City's Historical Resources Board (HRB) include review of projects impacting designated historic resources and historic districts; staffing the HRB's Design

Assistance Subcommittee; reviewing and processing nominations for historic resource designations; processing historic district nominations; work on historic context statements and surveys; developing and revising Board policy and guidelines; and providing consultation services to other departments and agencies on the presence of historic resources and impacts to those resources. In addition, Kelley serves as staff to the Old Town Design Review Board.

With degrees in History and in Urban Studies and Planning from UCSD, Kelley's work in historic preservation planning is a perfect union of her interests, and reflects her passion for the continued development of a diverse and engaging built environment through the preservation of San Diego's wonderful heritage. Originally from Orange County, Kelley is now a 10 year resident of San Diego and lives in San Carlos with her new husband, Joseph, and their two cats, Autumn and Zoey.

Did You Know . . .

In 1956 La Jolla resident Theodor Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss, authored *Signs of Civilization* an artistic booklet which became the *La Jolla Commercial and Industrial Sign Control District Ordinance*, supplementing the City-wide Sign Regulations.



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THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

City Planning & Community Investment
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CPCI's Recommended Readings:

"Guide to California Planning, 3rd Expanded Edition"

William Fulton, November 2005
Solano Press Books

"The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream"

Peter Calthorpe, 1993
Princeton Architectural Press, Inc.

Please send ideas and comments to: planning@sandiego.gov