

Urban Design Element





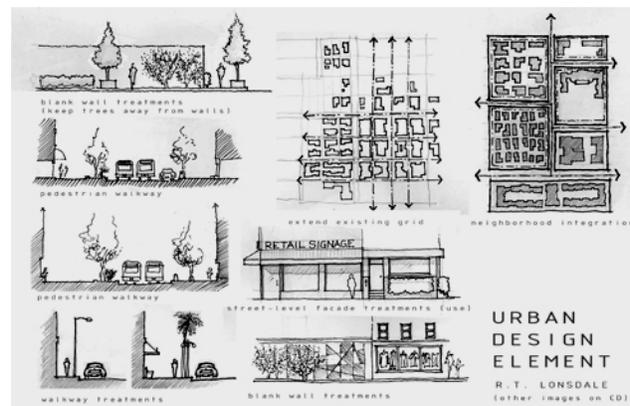
Urban Design Element

Purpose

To guide physical development toward a desired scale and character that is consistent with the social, economic and aesthetic values of the City.

Introduction

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 necessary to ensure that the built environment continues to contribute to the qualities that distinguish the City of San Diego (City) as a unique living environment.



Each resident and visitor may perceive San Diego's aesthetic character differently, although there are several basic design elements that are commonly recognized by all. San Diego's distinctive character results from its unparalleled natural setting, including beaches, bays, hills, canyons and mesas that allow the evolution of geographically distinct neighborhoods. The network of small human-scaled canyons creates a natural open space system that extends through many parts of the City and is unparalleled in other American cities. The topography and San Diego's year-round climate are ideal for outdoor pedestrian activity of all kinds.

Construction of Balboa Park and Mission Bay Park modified the natural environment but created unique public and civic spaces that are still much used and admired. Many of San Diego's older neighborhoods built prior to World War II capitalized on the City's natural features and temperate climate. The open porches on early twentieth century craftsman style homes and the bungalow courts focused on common open space. Much of the post war development did not respond to San Diego's climate or natural conditions. Porches were eliminated and pedestrian connections deemphasized. The older commercial corridors in San Diego were more suitable to San Diego's pleasant climate with walkable shopping districts downtown and in North Park.



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A major challenge for the City is to return to the traditional pedestrian-oriented forms of development but with modifications to reflect modern realities such as crime, safety and automobile dependency. There is a need to address urban form and design through policies aimed at respecting our natural environment, preserving open space systems and targeting new growth into compact villages as San Diego becomes more urbanized. As the availability of vacant land becomes more limited, designing infill development and redevelopment that builds upon our existing communities becomes increasingly important. A compact, efficient, and environmentally sensitive pattern of development becomes increasingly important as the City continues to grow. In addition, future development should accommodate and support existing and planned transit service.

Urban Design Strategy

There are several urban design principles relating to the existing City form and a compact and environmentally sensitive pattern of development envisioned in the City of Villages strategy. These principles are identified below to provide a framework for the goals of the Urban Design Element:

- ◆ Contribute to the qualities that distinguish San Diego as a unique living environment;
- ◆ Build upon our existing communities;
- ◆ Direct growth into commercial areas where a high level of activity already exists; and
- ◆ Preserve stable residential neighborhoods.

The Urban Design Element further implements the “core values” related to urban form that were adopted as a part of the Strategic Framework Element (2002) and are now incorporated into the General Plan in Appendix A, Section SF-1. The core values related to urban form include:

- ◆ The natural environment;
- ◆ The City's extraordinary setting, defined by its open spaces, natural habitat and unique topography;
- ◆ A compact, efficient, and environmentally sensitive pattern of development; and
- ◆ The physical, social, and cultural diversity of our City and its neighborhoods.



The Urban Design Element addresses urban form and design through policies aimed at respecting our natural environment, preserving open space systems and targeting new growth into compact villages. Urban form and how it functions becomes increasingly important as changes increases in density and intensity occur over time, as San Diego



evolves. The urban design principles established in this element are intended to help achieve an identity for the City as a whole while encompassing its physical, social and cultural diversity. A higher overall quality of urban design is another fundamental goal. Urban design applies at multiple levels from citywide to community to neighborhood and ultimately to individual projects. Urban design is a process to foster quality in the built and natural environment as the City changes.

Urban Design Element policies help support and implement land use and transportation decisions, encourage economic revitalization and improve the quality of life in San Diego. Ultimately, the General Plan's Urban Design Element influences the implementation of all elements of the General Plan and community plans as it establishes goals and policies for the pattern and scale of development and the character of the built environment. It is intended that the urban design policies be further supplemented with site-specific community plan recommendations.

A. General Urban Design

Goals

- ◆ A built environment that respects San Diego's natural environment and climate.
- ◆ An improved quality of life through safe and secure neighborhoods and public places.
- ◆ A pattern and scale of development that provides visual diversity, choice of lifestyle, and opportunities for social interaction.
- ◆ A City with distinctive districts, communities, neighborhoods, and village centers where people gather and interact.
- ◆ Maintenance of historic resources that serve as landmarks and contribute to the City's identity.
- ◆ Utilization of landscape as an important aesthetic and unifying element throughout the City.

Discussion

The City's urban form is loosely based upon a naturally connected system of open space, characterized by valleys, waterways, canyons and mesas. Remaining natural features should be preserved to the greatest extent possible. The City of Villages strategy provides guidance to determine where and how new growth should occur. The strategy seeks to target growth in village areas at core locations within communities adjacent to community facilities, existing and future transit facilities, and supportive land uses.



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There are several urban design issues relating to existing City form and the compact and environmentally sensitive pattern of development envisioned in the City of Villages strategy. These issues provide a framework for the goals of the Urban Design Element. The policies that implement these goals are intended to contribute to the qualities that distinguish San Diego as a unique living environment and highlight the value of our open space resources as part of the overall built environment. Another key element of the policies contained in this element is the importance of building upon our existing communities. This includes implementation of the City of Villages growth strategy that seeks to direct growth into areas where a high level of activity and transit service exist.

The design of the built environment plays a significant role in reducing crime and the perception of risk to one's safety. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) concepts provide recommendations on designing safer environments. Many of the CPTED concepts are complementary to the City of Villages approach, since strategies to increase opportunities for surveillance are similar to those used to accomplish greater walkability. The CPTED policies can change over time and are a resource used in design. A link to the complete [CPTED\[S1\]](#) concepts can be found on the City of San Diego Police Department website.



The following policies apply citywide to all commercial, industrial, institutional and residential and mixed-use development. They are intended to influence project design, and to be used in the development review process. Overall, the policies call for the City's urban form to be defined and shaped by the natural environment, to improve upon what is best about San Diego's neighborhoods, and to foster the creation of convenient, and where appropriate, well-designed village centers where commercial and residential development are concentrated.

San Diego has little remaining land that is vacant and available for development. Most of the remaining open space is designated for permanent open space or agricultural use and will not be urbanized. As San Diego continues to evolve, new development should not seek to imitate existing development, but should be sympathetic to the scale, form, proportion and materials of the more distinctive existing development, particularly in the historic neighborhoods. As the City grows and matures, new approaches to design will be fostered, so this element does not recommend particular architectural styles. The overall citywide urban design policies are intended to achieve quality design over time, to reinforce a sense of community, and respect the City's historic diversity.



Policies

Natural Features

- UD-A.1. Preserve and protect natural landforms and features.
- Protect the integrity of community plan designated open spaces (see also Conservation Element, Policy CE-B.1).
 - 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.

Open Space Linkages

- UD-A.2. Use open space and landscape to define and link communities.
- Link villages, public attractions, canyons, open space and other destinations together by connecting them with trail systems, bikeways, landscaped boulevards, formalized parks, and/or natural open space, as appropriate.
 - Preserve and encourage preservation of physical connectivity and access to open space.
 - Recognize that open spaces sometimes prevent the continuation of transportation corridors and inhibit mobility between communities. Where conflicts exist between mobility and open space goals, site-specific solutions may be addressed in community plans.



Development Adjacent to Natural Features and Park Lands

- UD-A.3. Design development adjacent to natural features in a sensitive manner to highlight and complement the natural environment in areas designated for development.
- Integrate development on hillside parcels with the natural environment to preserve and enhance views, and protect areas of unique topography.
 - Minimize grading to maintain the natural topography, while contouring any landform alterations to blend into the natural terrain.



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- c. Utilize variable lot sizes, clustered housing, stepped-back facades, split-level units or other alternatives to slab foundations to minimize the amount of grading.
- d. Consider terraced homes, stepped down with the slope for better integration with the topography to minimize grading in sensitive slope areas.
- e. 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.
- f. Provide increased setbacks from canyon rims or open space areas to ensure that the visibility of new development is minimized.
- g. 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.
- h. Use building and landscape materials that blend with and do not create visual or other conflicts with the natural environment in instances where new buildings abut natural areas. This guideline must be balanced with a need to clear natural vegetation for fire protection to ensure public safety in some areas.
- i. 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.
- j. Design and site buildings to permit visual and physical access to the natural features from the public right-of-way.
- k. Encourage location of entrances and windows in development adjacent to open space to overlook the natural features.
- l. Protect views from public roadways and parklands to natural canyons, resource areas, and scenic vistas.
- m. Preserve views and view corridors along and/or into waterfront areas from the public right-of-way by decreasing the heights of buildings as they approach the shoreline, where possible.



- n. Provide public pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian access paths to scenic view points, parklands, and where consistent with resource protection, in natural resource open space areas.
- o. Provide special consideration to the sensitive environmental design of roadways that traverse natural open space systems to ensure an integrated aesthetic design that respects open space resources. This could include the use of alternative materials such as "quiet pavement" in noise sensitive locations, and bridge or roadway designs that respect the natural environment.

Sustainable Development

UD-A.4. Use sustainable building methods in accordance with the sustainable development policies in the Conservation Element.

Architecture

- UD-A.5. Design buildings that contribute to a positive neighborhood character and relate to neighborhood and community context.
- a. Relate architecture to San Diego's unique climate and topography.
 - b. 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.
 - c. Provide architectural features that establish and define a building's appeal and enhance the neighborhood character.
 - d. Encourage the use of materials and finishes that reinforce a sense of quality and permanence.



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- e. Provide architectural interest to discourage the appearance of blank walls for development. This would include not only building walls, but fencing bordering the pedestrian network, where some form of architectural variation should be provided to add interest to the streetscape and enhance the pedestrian experience. For example, walls could protrude, recess, or change in color, height or texture to provide visual interest.
- f. Design building wall planes to have shadow relief, where pop-outs, offsetting planes, overhangs and recessed doorways are used to provide visual interest at the pedestrian level.
- g. Design rear elevations of buildings to be as well-detailed and visually interesting as the front elevation, if they will be visible from a public right-of-way or accessible public place or street.
- h. Acknowledge the positive aspects of nearby existing buildings by incorporating compatible features in new developments.
- i. Maximize natural ventilation, sunlight, and views.
- j. Provide convenient, safe, well-marked, and attractive pedestrian connections from the public street to building entrances.

UD-A.6. Create street frontages with architectural and landscape interest to provide visual appeal to the streetscape and enhance the pedestrian experience.

- a. Locate buildings on the site so that they reinforce street frontages.
- b. Relate buildings to existing and planned adjacent uses.
- c. Ensure that building entries are prominent, visible, and well-located.
- d. Maintain existing setback patterns, except where community plans call for a change to the existing pattern.
- e. [Minimize the visual impact of garages, parking and parking portals to the pedestrian and street façades.](#)

Historic Character

UD-A.7. Respect the context of historic streets, landmarks, and areas that give a community a sense of place or history. A survey may be done to identify "conservation areas" that retain original community character in sufficient quantity and quality but typically do not meet designation criteria as an individual historical resource or as a contributor to a historical district.





- a. Create guidelines in community plans to be used for new development, so that a neighborhood's historic character is complemented within the conservation areas where appropriate. (See also Historical Preservation Element, [Policy HP-A.2Section A.](#)) ~~Pursue the use of identifying conservation areas at the community plan level, based on historical resources surveys, to maintain community character and provide a buffer transition area between potential historical districts and areas expected to redevelop at higher densities.~~
- b. 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.

Landscape

- UD-A.8. Landscape materials and design should enhance structures, create and define public and private spaces, and provide shade, aesthetic appeal, and environmental benefits.
- a. [Maximize the planting of new trees, street trees and other plants for their shading, air quality and livability benefits.](#) (See also [Urban Forestry section of Conservation Element, Policies CE-A.11, CE-A.12, and Section J.](#))
 - b. [Encourage water conservation through the use of drought-tolerant landscape.](#)
 - c. [Use landscape to support storm water management goals for filtration, percolation and erosion control.](#)
 - d. Use landscape to provide unique identities within neighborhoods, villages and other developed areas.
 - e. Landscape materials and design should complement and build upon the existing character of the neighborhood. (~~See also Conservation Element, Section J.~~)
 - f. Design landscape bordering the pedestrian network with new elements, such as a new plant form or material, at a scale and intervals appropriate to the site. This is not intended to discourage a uniform street tree or landscape theme, but to add interest to the streetscape and enhance the pedestrian experience.
 - g. Establish or maintain tree-lined residential and commercial streets. Neighborhoods and commercial corridors in the City that contain tree-lined streets present a streetscape that creates a distinctive character.
 1. Identify and plant trees that complement and expand on the surrounding





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- street tree fabric.
- 2. Unify communities by using street trees to link residential areas.
- 3. Locate street trees in a manner that does not obstruct ground illumination from streetlights.
- h. Shade paved areas, especially parking lots.
- i. Demarcate public, semi-public/private, and private spaces clearly through the use of landscape, walls, fences, gates, pavement treatment, signs, and other methods to denote boundaries and/or buffers.
- j. Use landscaped walkways to direct people to proper entrances and away from private areas.
- k. Consider landscaped areas as [useable and functional](#) amenities [for people activities](#).
- l. Reduce barriers to views or light by selecting appropriate tree types, pruning thick hedges, and large overhanging tree canopies.
- m. Utilize landscape adjacent to natural features to soften the visual appearance of a development and provide a natural buffer between the development and open space areas.

~~k. Encourage water conservation through the use of drought-tolerant landscape.~~

~~l. Use landscape to support storm water management goals for filtration, percolation and erosion control.~~

Transit Integration

- UD-A.9. Incorporate existing and proposed transit stops or stations into project design. (See also Mobility Element, [Sections A, B, and C Policies ME-B.3 and ME-B.8.](#))
- a. Provide attractively designed transit stops and stations that are adjacent to active uses and recognizable by the public. (See also [Land Use Element, Policy LU-I.11.](#))
 - b. Design safe, attractive, accessible, lighted, and convenient pedestrian connections from transit stops and stations to building entrances [and street network](#). (See also [Land Use Element, Policy LU-I.10.](#))
 - c. Provide [generous necessary](#) rights-of-way for transit, transit stops or stations.
 - d. Locate buildings along transit corridors to allow convenient and direct access to transit





stops/stations.

Streets

UD-A.10. Design or retrofit streets to improve walkability, bicycling, strengthen connectivity, transit integration, and enhance community identity. Streets are an important aspect of Urban Design as referenced in the Mobility Element. (See also Mobility Element, Sections A, B, C, and F.)

Structured Parking

UD-A.11. Encourage the use of underground or above-ground parking structures, rather than surface parking lots, to reduce land area devoted to parking. (See also Mobility Element, Section G.)

- a. [Provide a tall, largely transparent ground floor along pedestrian active streets, functional for commercial uses.](#)
- b. Design safe, functional, and aesthetically pleasing parking structures.
- c. Design structures to be of a height and mass that are compatible with the surrounding area.
- d. Use building materials, detailing and landscape that complement the surrounding neighborhood.
- e. Provide well-defined, dedicated pedestrian entrances.
- f. Use appropriate screening mechanisms to screen views of parked vehicles from pedestrian areas, [and headlights from adjacent buildings.](#)
- g. Pursue development of parking structures that are wrapped on their exterior with other uses to conceal the parking structure and create an active streetscape.
- h. Encourage the use of attendants, gates, natural lighting, or surveillance equipment in parking structures to promote safety and security.



Surface Parking

UD-A.12. Reduce the amount and visual impact of surface parking lots. (See also Mobility Element, Section G.)

- a. Encourage placement of parking along the rear and sides of street-oriented buildings.

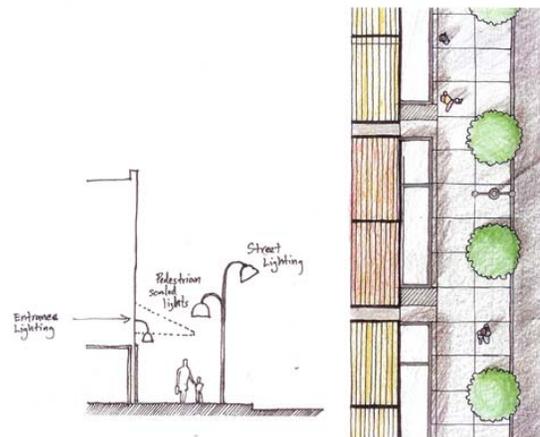


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- b. Avoid blank walls facing onto parking lots by promoting treatments that use colors, materials, landscape, selective openings or other means of creating interest. For example, the building should protrude, recess, or change in color, height or texture to reduce blank facades.
- c. Design clear and attractive pedestrian paseos/pathways and signs that link parking and destinations.
- d. Locate pedestrian pathways in areas where vehicular access is limited.
- e. Avoid large areas of uninterrupted parking especially adjacent to community public viewsheds.
- f. Build multiple small parking lots in lieu of one large lot.
- g. Retrofit existing expansive parking lots with street trees, landscape, pedestrian paths, and new building placement.
- h. [Promote the use of pervious surface materials to improve groundwater recharge.](#)
- i. Use trees and other landscape to provide shade, screening, and filtering of storm water runoff in parking lots.
- j. Design surface parking lots to allow for potential redevelopment to more intensive uses. For example, through redevelopment, well-placed parking lot aisles could become internal project streets that provide access to future parking structures and mixed land uses.

Lighting

- UD-A.13. Provide lighting from a variety of sources at appropriate intensities and qualities for safety.
- a. Provide pedestrian-scaled lighting for pedestrian circulation and visibility.
 - b. Use effective lighting for vehicular traffic while not overwhelming the quality of pedestrian lighting.
 - c. Use lighting to convey a sense of safety while minimizing glare and contrast.
 - d. Use vandal-resistant light fixtures that complement the neighborhood and character.
 - e. Focus lighting to eliminate spill-over so that lighting is directed, and only the intended use is illuminated.





Signs

- UD-A.14. Provide comprehensive project sign plans to effectively utilize sign area.
- Design signs as a means to communicate a unified theme and identity for the project.
 - Include pedestrian-oriented signs to acquaint users to various aspects of a development. Place signs to direct vehicular and pedestrian circulation.
 - Post signs to provide directions and rules of conduct where appropriate behavior control is necessary.
 - Design signs to minimize negative visual impacts.



Wireless Facilities

- UD-A.15. Minimize the visual impact of wireless facilities.
- Conceal wireless facilities in existing structures when possible, otherwise use camouflage and screening techniques to hide or blend them into the surrounding area.
 - Design facilities to be aesthetically pleasing and respectful of the neighborhood context.
 - Conceal mechanical equipment and devices associated with wireless facilities in underground vaults or unobtrusive structures.

Utilities ~~Undergrounding~~

- UD-A.16. Minimize the visual and functional impact of utility systems and equipment on streets, sidewalks, and the public realm.
- Convert those overhead utility wires and poles, and associated overhead structures for supplying electric, communication, community antenna television, or similar service to underground.
 - Design and locate public and private utility infrastructure, such as phone, cable and communications boxes, transformers, meters, fuel ports, back-flow preventors, ventilation grilles, grease interceptors, irrigation valves, and any similar elements, to be integrated into adjacent development and as inconspicuous as possible. To minimize obstructions, elements in the sidewalk and public right of way should be located in below grade vaults or building recesses that do not encroach on the right of way. If located in a landscaped setback, they should be as far from the



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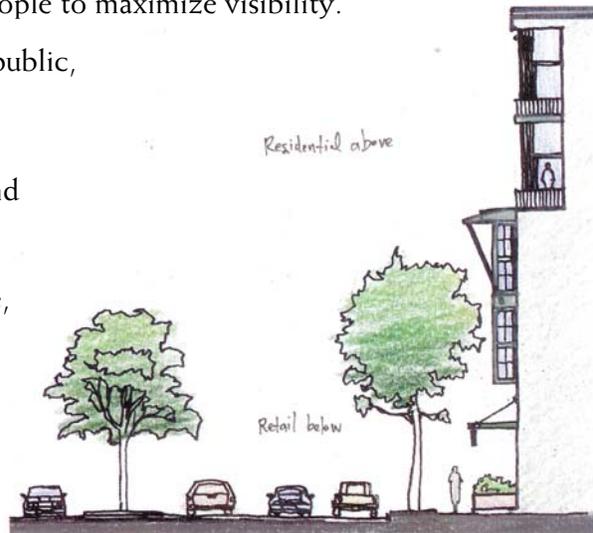
sidewalk as possible, clustered and integrated into the landscape design, and screened from public view with plant and/or fence-like elements.

- c. Street lights, traffic signals, control boxes, street signs and similar operational features should be located and consolidated on poles, to minimize clutter, improve safety, and maximize public pedestrian access, especially at intersections and sidewalk ramps. Other street utilities such as storm drains and vaults should be carefully located to afford proper placement of the vertical elements.

Safety and Security

UD-A.17. Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) measures, as necessary, to reduce incidences of fear and crime, and design safer environments.

- a. Design projects to encourage visible space and "eyes on the street" security that will serve as a means to discourage and deter crime through the location of physical features, activities and people to maximize visibility.
- b. Define clear boundaries between public, semi-public/private, and private spaces.
- c. Promote regulations, programs, and practices that result in the proper maintenance of the measures employed for CPTED surveillance, access control, and territoriality.
- d. Consider pedestrian scale lighting and indirect techniques to provide adequate security but not glare and flood-light conditions.



B. Distinctive Neighborhoods and Residential Design

Goals

- ◆ A city of distinctive neighborhoods.
- ◆ Development that protects and improves upon the desirable features of San Diego's neighborhoods.
- ◆ Architectural design that contributes to the creation and preservation of neighborhood character and vitality.
- ◆ Innovative design for a variety of housing types to meet the needs of the population.



- ◆ Infill housing, roadways and new construction that are sensitive to the character and quality of existing neighborhoods.
- ◆ Pedestrian connections linking residential areas, commercial areas, parks and open spaces.

Discussion

In conjunction with the General Urban Design Goals identified in the previous section, the following policies are intended to provide further guidance for maintaining our distinctive neighborhoods and achieving high-quality residential design. The design and quality of infill housing is critical to ensuring that new housing fits into our existing neighborhoods. Preserving neighborhood character does not mean maintaining the status quo. Sometimes change is welcome, as private and public investment can contribute to the beauty, vitality, and functionality of a neighborhood. However, new development, whether it is in the form of infill, redevelopment, or first-time development, should contribute to the creation and preservation of neighborhood character and creation of a sense of place.



San Diego's distinctive neighborhoods are a great asset to the City. Some neighborhoods date back to the early days of San Diego's history and a few are still emerging, but each has elements that set it apart from the others and establish its identity. 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.

Residential housing types include conventional single-family homes, small-lot single-family homes, townhouses, duplex, and triplex dwellings, and a wide variety of apartment and condominium units. While densities, unit mix, and design parameters will vary based on individual community plan recommendations, there are overall policies that are applicable citywide.

The residential design policies are intended to foster the development of high quality housing that becomes an integrated part of the larger neighborhood and community. The distinctive neighborhoods policies strive to preserve the desirable distinctive qualities of existing neighborhoods while encouraging a coherent image of the City as a whole. It is intended that these general policies be supplemented with site-specific guidance in community plans.



Policies

Residential Design

- UD-B.1. Recognize that the quality of a neighborhood is linked to the overall quality of the built environment. Projects should not be viewed singularly, but viewed as part of the larger neighborhood or community plan area in which they are located for design continuity and compatibility.
- a. Integrate new construction with the existing fabric and scale of development in surrounding neighborhoods. Taller or denser development is not necessarily inconsistent with older, lower-density neighborhoods but must be designed with sensitivity to existing development. For example, new development should not cast shadows or create wind tunnels that will significantly impact existing development and should not restrict vehicular or pedestrian movements from existing development.
 - b. Design new construction to respect the pedestrian orientation of neighborhoods.
 - c. Provide innovative designs for a variety of housing types to meet the needs of the population.
- UD-B.2. Achieve a mix of housing types within single developments (see also Land Use and Community Planning Element, Section H, and Housing Element).
- a. Incorporate a variety of unit types in multifamily projects.
 - b. Incorporate a variety of single-family housing types in single-family projects/subdivisions.
 - c. Provide transitions of scale between higher-density development and lower-density neighborhoods.
 - d. Identify sites for revitalization and additional housing opportunities in neighborhoods.

Subdivisions

- UD-B.3. Design subdivisions to respect the existing lot pattern established within neighborhoods to maintain community character.
- a. Create lot divisions that respect the existing pattern of development for neighborhood continuity and compatibility.
 - b. Design lot divisions to have a portion of each created lot in areas of less than 25 percent gradient.

Residential Street Frontages

- UD-B.4. Create street frontages with architectural and landscape interest for both pedestrians and neighboring residents.



- a. Locate buildings on the site so that they reinforce street frontages.
- b. Relate buildings to existing and planned adjacent uses.
- c. Provide ground level entries and ensure that building entries are prominent and visible.
- d. Maintain existing setback patterns, except where community plans call for redevelopment to change the existing pattern.
- e. Locate transparent features such as porches, stoops, balconies, and windows facing the street to promote a sense of community.
- f. Encourage side- and rear-loaded garages. Where not possible, reduce the prominence of the garage through architectural features and varying planes.
- g. Minimize the number of curb-cuts along residential streets.

Neighborhood Streets

- UD-B.5. Design or retrofit streets to improve walkability, strengthen connectivity, and enhance community identity.
- a. Design or retrofit street systems to achieve high levels of connectivity within the neighborhood street network that link individual subdivisions/projects to each other and the community.
 - b. Avoid closed loop subdivisions and extensive cul-de-sac systems, except where the street layout is dictated by the topography or the need to avoid sensitive environmental resources.
 - c. Design open ended cul-de-sacs to accommodate visibility and pedestrian connectivity, when development of cul-de-sacs is necessary.
 - d. Emphasize the provision of high quality pedestrian and bikeway connections to transit stops/stations, village centers, and local schools.
 - e. Design new streets and consider traffic calming where necessary, to reduce neighborhood speeding. (See also Mobility Element, Policy ME-C.5.)
 - f. Enhance community gateways to demonstrate neighborhood pride and delineate boundaries.
 - g. Clarify neighborhood roadway intersections through the use of special paving and landscape.
 - h. Develop a hierarchy of walkways that delineate village pathways and link to regional trails.
 - i. Discourage use of walls, gates and other barriers that separate residential neighborhoods from the surrounding community and commercial areas.
- UD-B.6. Utilize alleys to provide improved and alternative pedestrian access to sites. This would include consideration of a promenade or paseo design for alleys with enhanced



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landscaping, and residential units or uses that face the alleys to activate them as alternative pedestrian streets. This could provide an alternative function for alleys that is non-vehicular, but still provides linkages to other sites and uses and adds to a neighborhood's connectivity.

- UD-B.7. Work with community groups and property owners to ensure adequate street maintenance, public landscape maintenance, law enforcement, code enforcement, and litter and graffiti control to maintain safe and attractive neighborhoods.

Open Space and Recreation

- UD-B.8. Provide useable open space for play, recreation, and social or cultural activities in multifamily as well as single-family projects.
- Design attractive recreational facilities, common facilities, and open space that can be easily accessed by everyone in the development it serves.
 - Design outdoor space as "outdoor rooms" and avoid undifferentiated, empty spaces.
 - Locate small parks and play areas in central accessible locations.





C. Mixed-Use Villages and Commercial Areas

Goals

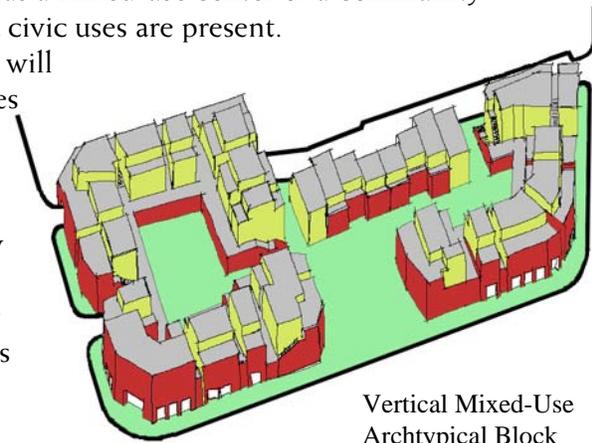
- ◆ Mixed-use villages that achieve an integration of uses and serve as focal points for public gathering as a result of their outstanding public spaces.
- ◆ Vibrant, mixed-use main streets that serve as neighborhood destinations, community resources, and conduits to the regional transit system.
- ◆ Neighborhood commercial shopping areas that serve as walkable centers of activity.
- ◆ Attractive and functional commercial corridors which link communities and provide goods and services.

Discussion

The City of Villages strategy identifies a village as a mixed-use center of a community where residential, commercial, employment and civic uses are present.

The intent is that a high quality of urban design will achieve the maximum possible integration of uses and activities connected to the surrounding community fabric and the transit system.

Villages will be compact and walkable, with inviting streets and public spaces for community events. Villages will serve as focal points for public gatherings as a result of their outstanding public spaces. In addition to compact residences and retail establishments, villages will contain public spaces that include plazas, public art, cultural amenities, transit centers, enhanced streetscapes, urban trailheads, parks and pocket parks. Publicly-oriented buildings including civic buildings and monuments, public facilities and services, and social services will also contribute to villages as activity centers.



Vertical Mixed-Use
Archtypical Block

The Land Use and Community Planning Element identifies six categories of villages: Regional Center, Subregional Employment Districts, Urban Village Centers, Neighborhood Village Centers, Community Village Centers, and Transit Corridors. The policies contained in this section are intended to address the physical integration of uses, provision of a variety of housing types, significant public spaces, and public facilities within a pedestrian environment for all village types. The intent is to create villages that are pedestrian in scale, accessible by diverse multi-modal means, and varied with uses and activities that serve local daily needs.



Urban Design Element

Village development will occur, in part, through the development and redevelopment of shopping centers. The following policies address key, overall urban design principles for village development, and allow for community plans to provide more specific guidance tailored to each location. Appropriate design will help make these villages true centers of neighborhood activity, rather than just renovated shopping centers.

Commercial corridors are important areas that link neighborhoods together and in many cases, cross community boundaries. The commercial corridors provide convenient local shopping destinations and space for small businesses to take root. Some commercial corridors are transit corridors that are served with higher frequency transit service, some are designed with a pedestrian-friendly "main street" appearance, and others have a more auto-dominated "strip commercial" design. Auto-dominated design is typified by parking located between the front of the building and the street, auto-oriented signs, and minimal landscape.

The policies in this section are intended to offer guidance on how to preserve and enhance commercial corridors to achieve the City of Villages goals of creating walkable communities and encouraging transit use. The design policies also apply to commercial corridors not identified as transit corridors, with the goal of redesigning these commercial corridors so they enhance the community and are attractive to pedestrians, transit riders, and bicyclists, in addition to drivers.

Commercial centers outside of villages, as well as employment centers, and other types of activity centers should also be designed in accordance with many of the same design policies that apply to village and commercial areas (see also ~~the~~ Land Use Element, Section A).

Urban Main Street Program City of San Diego

San Diego is the first city on the West Coast to implement a Main Street Program. It is affiliated with a nationally recognized economic development approach that focuses on revitalizing the commercial components of downtowns and neighborhood districts in an effort to promote small business development. These programs traditionally use historic preservation and grassroots-based economic development. Efforts at improving and maintaining "main streets" in San Diego provide small businesses with a competitive edge against "big box" retailers and shopping malls.

The City works with Main Street communities to renovate store fronts, plan and coordinate major streetscape improvement and public arts projects, create redevelopment areas to attract investors, and develop marketing plans to attract customers and businesses. North Park, the City's pilot project, was implemented in 1996 and has shown signs of renewal. Other main street projects in progress include Ocean Beach and Mission Hills.

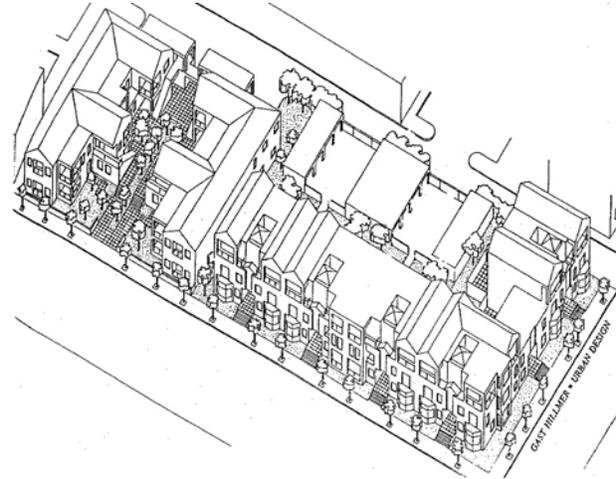


Policies

Mixed-Use Villages

UD-C.1. In villages and transit corridors identified in community plans, provide a mix of uses that create vibrant, active places in villages.

- a. Encourage both vertical (stacked) and horizontal (~~side-by-side~~separate buildings) mixed-use development.
- b. Achieve a mix of housing types, by pursuing innovative designs to meet the needs of a broad range of households.
- c. Encourage placement of active uses, such as retailers, restaurants, services, cultural facilities and amenities, and various services, on the ground floor of buildings in areas where the greatest levels of pedestrian activity are sought.
- d. Encourage the provision of approximately ten percent of a project's net site area as public space, with adjustments for smaller (less than ten acres) or constrained sites. Public space may be provided in the form of plazas, greens, gardens, pocket parks, amphitheaters, community meeting rooms, public facilities and services, and social services. (See also UD-C.5 and UD-E.1.)
 1. When public space is provided in the form of public parks in accordance with Recreation Element, Policy RE-F.9, the public park space may be used to meet population-based park requirements.
 2. Where multiple property owners are involved in a village development, develop incentives or other mechanisms to help achieve equity in the distribution of development rights and the provision of public spaces.
- e. Create new zoning categories for mixed-use development.
 1. Provide standards that address the particular design issues related to mixed-use projects, such as parking, noise attenuation and security measures, and minimize negative impacts on the community.
 2. Provide standards that address bulk, mass, articulation, height, and transition issues such as the interface with surrounding or adjacent development and uses, and minimize negative impacts on the community.
- f. Encourage location of mixed-use projects in transition areas and areas where small-scale commercial uses can fit into a residential neighborhood context.





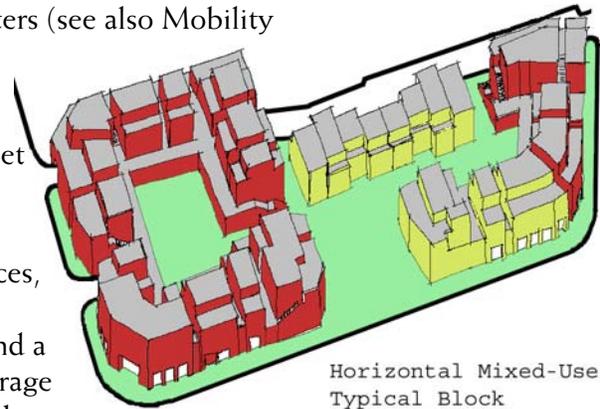
Urban Design Element

- UD-C.2. Design village centers to be integrated into existing neighborhoods through pedestrian-friendly site design and building orientation, and the provision of multiple pedestrian access points.
- UD-C.3. Develop and apply building design guidelines and regulations that create diversity rather than homogeneity, and improve the quality of infill development.
- Encourage distinctive architectural features to differentiate residential, commercial and mixed-use buildings and promote a sense of identity to village centers.

Pedestrian-Oriented Design

UD-C.4. Create pedestrian-friendly village centers (see also Mobility Element, Sections A and C).

- Respect pedestrian-orientation by creating entries directly to the street and active uses at street level.
- Design or redesign buildings to include pedestrian-friendly entrances, outdoor dining areas, plazas, transparent windows, public art, and a variety of other elements to encourage pedestrian activity and interest at the ground floor level.
- Orient buildings in village centers to commercial local streets, or to internal project drives that are designed to function like a public street, in order to create a pedestrian-oriented shopping experience, including provision of on-street parking.
- Provide pathways that offer direct connections from the street to building entrances.
- Break up the exterior facades of large retail establishment structures into distinct building masses distinguished by offsetting planes, rooflines and overhangs or other means.
- Where feasible, use small buildings in key locations to create a human scale environment in large retail centers. Incorporate separate individual main entrances directly leading to the outside from individual stores.





Village Center Public Space

UD-C.5. Design village centers as civic focal points for public gatherings with public spaces. (See also UD-C.1 for village center public space requirements and UD-E.1 of this element for the design of public spaces.)

~~a. Establish build-to lines to create village center public space and pedestrian streets.~~

~~◆ Provide public spaces such as plazas, greens, gardens, pocket parks, amphitheaters, community meeting rooms, public facilities and services, social services, and retail centers within commercial mixed-use projects and villages.~~

~~◆ Encourage provision of approximately ten percent of a project's net site area as public space, with adjustments for smaller (less than ten acres) or constrained sites.~~

~~◆ Allow reasonable use of public spaces by all members of the public, regardless of patronage.~~

a. Ensure public spaces are easily accessible and open to the public. The mechanisms used to provide the public space will vary as appropriate and could include, but are not limited to: land dedications, joint use agreements, and public access easements. Public space areas may include reasonable hours of use restrictions, demarcation of private and publicly accessible areas, and other signage to communicate public access rights, responsibilities and limitations.

b. Encourage provision of public space in the earliest possible phase of development, as determined by the public's ability to use and access the space.

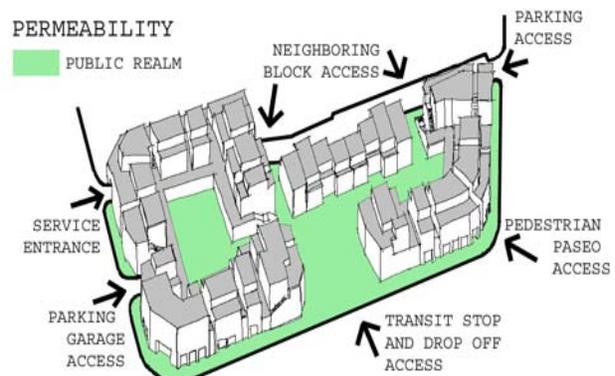


Village Street Layout and Design

UD-C.6. Design project circulation systems for walkability.

a. Extend existing street grid patterns into development within existing fine-grained neighborhoods.

b. Design a grid or modified-grid internal project street system, with sidewalks and curbs, as the organizing framework for





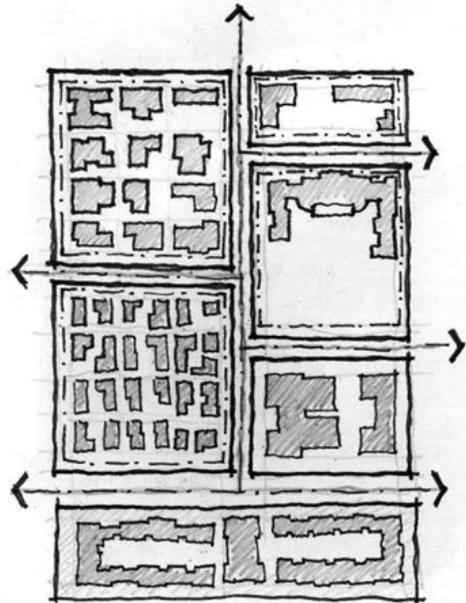
Urban Design Element

- development in village centers.
- Diagonal or "on-street" parallel parking may be appropriate along driveways in order to contribute to a "main street" appearance.
 - Provide pedestrian shortcuts through the developments to connect destinations where the existing street system has long blocks or circuitous street patterns.
 - Use pedestrian amenities, such as curb extensions and textured paving, to delineate key pedestrian crossings.
 - Design new connections, and remove any barriers to pedestrian and bicycle circulation in order to enable people to walk or bike, rather than drive, to neighboring destinations (see also Mobility Element, Sections A and F).
 - Lay out streets to take advantage of and maximize vistas into public viewsheds.
 - Share and manage commercial, residential and public parking facilities where possible to manage parking for greater efficiency (see also Mobility Element, Section G).
 - Incorporate design features that facilitate transit service along existing or proposed routes, such as bus pullout areas, covered transit stops, and multi-modal pathways through projects to transit stops.

Streetscape

UD-C.7. Enhance the public streetscape for greater walkability and neighborhood aesthetics. (See also UD-A.10 and Section F of this element.)

- Preserve and enhance existing main streets.
- Establish build-to lines, or maximum permitted setbacks on designated streets.
- Design or redesign buildings to include architecturally interesting elements, pedestrian-friendly entrances, outdoor dining areas, transparent windows, or other means that emphasize human-scaled design features at the ground floor level.
- Implement pedestrian facilities and amenities in the public right-of-way including wider sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting and signs, landscape, and street furniture.



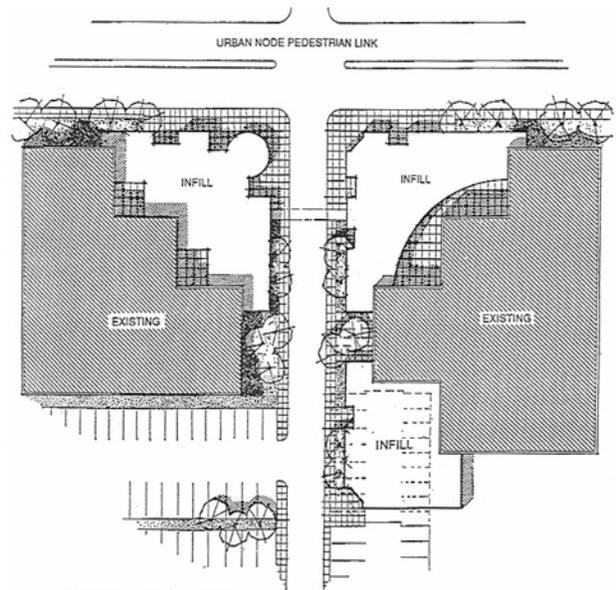


- e. Relate the ground floor of buildings to the street in a manner that adds to the pedestrian experience while providing an appropriate level of privacy and security.
- f. Design or redesign the primary entrances of buildings to open onto the public street.

Superblocks

UD-C.8. Retrofit existing large-scale development patterns, such as "superblocks" or "campus-style" developments, to provide more and improved linkages among uses in the superblock, neighboring developments, and the public street system.

- a. Coordinate the redesign of roads, sidewalks, and open spaces of adjacent developments.
- b. Locate new infill buildings in a manner that will promote increased pedestrian activity along streets and in public common areas.
- c. Implement exterior improvements such as public art, pedestrian-scale windows and entrances, signs, and street furniture.





D. Office and Business Park Development

Goals

- ◆ Promote the enhanced visual quality of office and industrial development.
- ◆ Provide increased pedestrian and transit orientation within office and industrial developments.



Discussion

The design of our employment areas is a critical element of our City's built environment. It is important to provide pleasant working environments, and for employment centers at the edge of residential neighborhoods and ~~our~~ open space systems to be sensitively designed. This may be achieved by applying architectural and site planning guidelines unique to ~~our~~ employment centers. In addition to encouraging office and industrial development to be well designed and aesthetically pleasing, it is important to provide easy access to ~~our~~ employment areas. This may be achieved through additional integration of transit within ~~our~~ employment areas, and the creation of safe and direct bicycle and pedestrian connections. The provision of multi-modal connections to ~~our~~ workplaces is a critical element to not only link people to their work sites, but to also provide employees access to a convenient mix of supportive uses around their workplaces. Another important element of ~~our~~ employment centers are places for people to gather and recreate. It is important to design amenities into workplaces that allow employees or visitors to gather and recreate, such as plazas and courtyards.

Policies

Pedestrian-Oriented Design

- UD-D.1. Provide expanded opportunities for local access and address the circulation needs of pedestrians within and among office and business park developments.
- a. Design safe pedestrian routes between developments, preferably separated from vehicle traffic.
 - b. Design pedestrian routes to provide interest to the walker and promote their use. Interest can be created by paving materials, landscaping, public art, and uses such as retail, restaurant, and plazas for public events such as concerts.
 - c. Identify pedestrian crossings of streets or parking lots through the use of special paving.



- d. Provide project recreational and/or urban plazas that link visually and/or physically to the pedestrian network or network of public spaces.

Architecture

- UD-D.2. Assure high quality design of buildings and structures. The design and orientation of buildings within projects affect the pedestrian- and transit-orientation.
- a. Design buildings to have shadow-relief, where pop-outs, offsetting planes, overhangs, and recessed doorways are used to provide visual interest, particularly at the street level.
 - b. Design the rear elevations of buildings to be as well detailed and visually interesting as the front elevation if it will be visible from a public street.
 - c. Locate outdoor storage areas, refuse collection areas, and loading areas in interior rear or side yards and screen with a similar material and color as the primary building.
- UD-D.3. Assure high-quality design in parking areas, which often provide the first impression and identification of a project to a client, employee or resident.
- a. Utilize a combination of trees and shrubs at the edge of parking areas to screen parking lots and structures from the street.
 - b. Distribute landscape areas between the periphery and interior landscaped islands.
 - c. Design landscape to break-up large paved areas.

E. Public Spaces and Civic Architecture

Goals

- ◆ Significant public gathering spaces in every community.
- ◆ Distinctive civic architecture, landmarks and public facilities.

Discussion

Public gathering spaces have the potential to strengthen the social fabric and identity of neighborhoods. The City of Villages strategy calls for significant public space to be provided in every village development. Thoughtful design is needed to ensure that these spaces





Urban Design Element

become treasured neighborhood assets. In addition, investments in infrastructure and facilities serve specific needs, but also may enhance the identity of a community and be a catalyst to high quality private investment.

Policies

Public Spaces

UD-E.1. Include public plazas, squares or other gathering spaces in each neighborhood and village center (see also [the Public Spaces policies in the Public Art and Cultural Amenities section of this element and UD-C.1d and UD-C.5 for additional public space requirements in village centers, and UD-F.3 for policy direction on public art and cultural activities in public spaces](#)).

- a. Locate public spaces in prominent, recognizable, and accessible locations.
- b. Design outdoor open areas as “outdoor rooms,” developing a hierarchy of usable spaces that create a sense of enclosure using landscape, paving, walls, lighting, and structures.
- c. Develop each public space with a unique character, specific to its site and use.
- d. Design public spaces to accommodate a variety of artistic, social, cultural, and recreational opportunities including civic gatherings such as festivals, markets, performances, and exhibits.
- e. Consider artistic, cultural, and social activities unique to the neighborhood and designed for varying age groups that can be incorporated into the space.
- f. Use landscape, hardscape, and public art to improve the quality of public spaces.
- g. Encourage the active management and programming of public spaces.
- h. Design outdoor spaces to allow for both shade and the penetration of sunlight.
- i. Frame parks and plazas with buildings which visually contain and provide natural surveillance into the open space.
- j. Address maintenance and programming.



Civic Architecture and Landmarks

- UD-E.2. Treat and locate civic architecture and landmark institutions prominently.
- a. Where feasible, provide distinctive public open space, public art, greens and/or



plazas around civic buildings such as courthouses, libraries, post offices and community centers to enhance the character of these civic and public buildings. Such civic and public buildings are widely used and should form the focal point for neighborhoods and communities.

- b. Incorporate sustainable building principles into building design (see also Conservation Element, Section A).
- c. Civic buildings at prominent locations, such as canyon rims, sites fronting open space, sites framing a public vista, and those affording a silhouette against the sky should exhibit notable architecture.
- d. 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.
- e. Support the preservation of community landmarks.

F. Public Art and Cultural Amenities

Goal

- ◆ A City enhanced with distinctive public art and cultural amenities.

Discussion

Public art and cultural amenities have the potential to enliven public spaces and build a sense of community identity. The City of San Diego's Public Art Program dates back to 1984 and has developed over the years, including adoption of the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture's Public Art Master Plan in 2004. Public art and cultural amenities can help to implement the City of Villages strategy, as they are an effective means to improve the quality of the built environment, contribute to economic



ISIS by Mark di Suvero

prosperity, create great public spaces, foster cultural diversity, attract tourists, and celebrate the distinctiveness of San Diego's neighborhoods. Public art and cultural activities can also contribute to the City of Villages goal of creating more walkable communities by enlivening the streetscape and other public spaces. The following policies are intended to provide an overview of how public art and cultural amenities relate to the City's planning and urban design goals. The following are policies related to public art and cultural amenities.



Urban Design Element

Policies

Community Identity

UD-F.1. Incorporate public art and cultural amenities that correspond, in complementary or contrasting ways, to their surroundings. Consider the unique nature of the community and character of the area in the development of artworks.

- a. Use arts and culture to strengthen the sense of identity of the Neighborhood and Urban Village Centers of each community.
- b. Use artwork and cultural activities to improve the design and public acceptance of public infrastructure projects.
- c. Use public art to enhance community gateways.
- d. Reinforce community pride and identity by encouraging artworks and cultural activities that celebrate the unique cultural, ethnic, historical, or other attributes of each unique neighborhood.
- e. Use public art and cultural amenities as a means to assist in implementation of community-specific goals and policies.
- f. Use public art and cultural amenities as community landmarks, encouraging public gathering and wayfinding.
- g. Encourage [community planning group](#) involvement [of recognized community planning groups](#) in the decision-making process regarding public art and cultural amenities.



Trolley Comes to Town
By Linda Joanou & Alber de Matteis

Citywide Identity

UD-F.2. Use public art and cultural amenities to celebrate San Diego's diversity, history, and unique character.

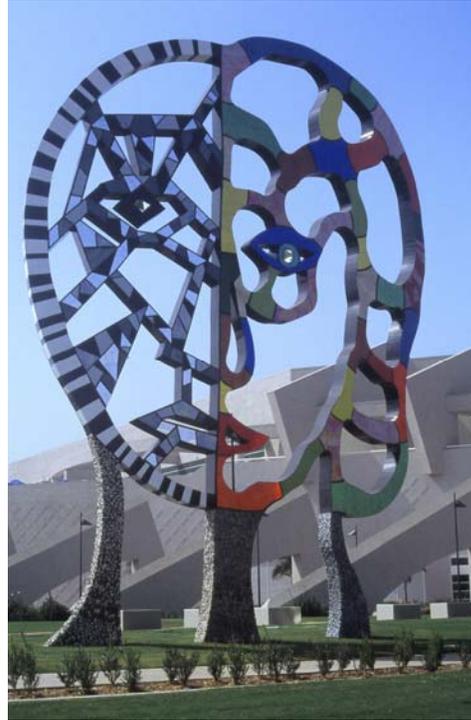
- a. Take advantage of opportunities to emphasize, through arts and culture, the connections between San Diego, Mexico and the Pacific Rim.
- b. Use public art and cultural amenities to help commemorate local history and culturally significant places.
- c. Support artworks and cultural activities that explore and reflect the diverse facets of San Diego life.
- d. Reinforce San Diego's commitment to diversity by using public art and cultural activities to interpret and celebrate the histories and cultures of its population.



Public Spaces

UD-F.3. Enhance the urban environment by animating the City's public spaces.

- a. Utilize public art and cultural activities such as festivals to create vibrant and distinctive public squares, plazas, parks and other public gathering spaces.
- b. Ensure that public artworks respond to the nature of their surroundings both physically and conceptually.
- c. Encourage the use of the arts in highly visible places as a directional assistance that can be used to delineate access routes and entrance points.
- d. In high foot traffic areas, use pedestrian-oriented art interventions to enhance the pedestrian experience.
- e. Highlight points of interest throughout the City through the use of artwork and cultural amenities.
- f. Encourage artworks and activities that animate public spaces and energize the cityscape.
- g. Encourage temporary public artworks to create a frequently changing and engaging environment.
- h. Encourage artist-designed infrastructure improvements within communities such as utility boxes, street-end bollards, lampposts, and street furniture.
- i. Encourage incorporation of vandal-resistant and easily repairable materials in art to reduce maintenance requirements.
- j. Encourage the programming of changing exhibits and public uses through active management and programming of public spaces.
- k. Encourage a range of activities, easy access, a clean and attractive environment, and a space for people to socialize in order to attract legitimate users and thereby discourage improper behavior.



Coming Together
By Nikki de St. Phalle
Owned by the Port of San Diego



Urban Design Element

- l. Provide front porches, parks, plazas, and other outside public spaces for residents to socialize. *Development Quality*

UD-F.4. Improve the quality of new development through public art and spaces for cultural use.

- a. Provide a humanizing element to public and private developments through the installation of public artworks and spaces for cultural use.
- b. Include art in development projects as a means to distinguish and enliven spaces viewed or experienced by the public.
- c. Create a more livable community by encouraging public art as a part of development as outlined in Council Policy 900-11 and required in the Municipal Code (Chapter 2, Article 6, Division 7).

Public Participation

UD-F.5. Provide opportunities for the collaboration of artists and community members.

- a. Encourage the incorporation of public art plans and programs in the initial stages of the development process, rather than as an afterthought.
- b. Conduct outreach efforts and engage community members in the public art process.
- c. Ensure that artists conduct research and gather community input before generating concepts for public artworks.

Public Works Projects 2 percent for Art

Council Policy 900-11 outlines a process for including public art in selected Capital Improvement Program and Redevelopment Agency projects. The Public Art Program is to be funded by two percent of the budget for all eligible Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects and Redevelopment Agency projects over \$250,000. Artists are to be involved in the early stages of project design so that they may become an integral part of the design process.

Private Development 1 percent for Art

The City Council has amended the Municipal Code (Chapter 2, Article 6, Division 7) to require certain private developers to set aside one percent of their project budgets for art and cultural enhancement. The ordinance applies to eligible private commercial and industrial developments with a total building permit valuation equal to or in excess of \$5 million dollars. This requirement may be satisfied by the financing of cultural and artistic facilities and/or on-site artwork. Private developers also have the option to pay a one half percent in-lieu fee. In-lieu fees are used for artistic enrichment of the City's public spaces.