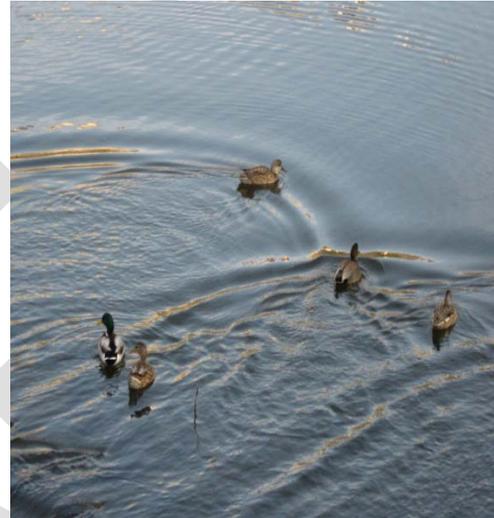


San Diego River Park Master Plan



City of San Diego, California

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San Diego River Park Master Plan



The City of San Diego

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Mayor

Jerry Sanders

City Council

District 1, Councilmember Sherri Lightner

District 2, Council Pres. Pro Tem Kevin Faulconer

District 3, Councilmember Todd Gloria

District 4, Councilmember Tony Young

District 5, Councilmember Carl DeMaio

District 6, Councilmember Lorie Zapf

District 7, Councilmember Marti Emerald

District 8, Councilmember David Alvarez

City Attorney

Jan Goldsmith

Planning Commission

Eric Naslund, Chairperson

Tim Golba, Vice-Chairperson

Robert Griswold

Stephen Haase

Mary Lydon

Sue Peerson

Michael Smiley

Acknowledgements

Development Services Department

Kelly Broughton, Director
Mary P. Wright, Deputy Director
Christine Rothman, Program Manager
Nancy Bragado, Principal Planner
Robin Shifflet, Park Designer/SDRP Project Manager
Jeff Harkness, Park Designer
Myra Herrmann, Senior Planner
Dan Monroe, Senior Planner
Dan Normandin, Senior Planner
Brian Schoenfisch, Senior Planner

City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board

Wilbur Smith, Chairperson
Bruce Brown
Rick Bussell
Amy Denhart
William Diehl
Claudia Dunaway
Vickie Granowitz
Bobby Hughes
David Kinney
Michael Stepner
Kathryn Warburton

San Diego River Park Foundation and San Diego River Coalition

Rob Hutsel, Executive Director
Michael Beck, Chair of the Board of Directors
M. Lea Rudee, Ph.D., Vice Chair
Janie DeCelles, Secretary
Charles V. Berwanger, Treasurer
Jo Ann Anderson
Kurt Benirschke, M.D.
Sam Duran
Joan Embery
Alan Grant
Cary Lowe
James Peugh
Phil Pryde
James Ryan
Tom Sudberry

Master Plan Design Consultants

Civitas, Inc.
ICF Jones & Stokes
Jones & Jones Architects and Landscape Architects, Ltd.
Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects
L.J. Black Consulting
Nasland Engineering
Katz, Okitsu and Associates

San Diego River Conservancy

Michael Nelson	Executive Officer
Benjamin Clay, Chair	Public at Large
John Donnelly	Wildlife Conservation Board
Todd Gloria	Council Member, City of San Diego District 3
Ann Miller Haddad	Public at Large
Ruth Hayward	Public at Large
Dianne Jacob	Supervisor, County of San Diego Second District
John Laird	Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency
Ana Matosantos	Director, Department of Finance
Andrew Poat	Public at Large
Jerry Sanders	Mayor, City of San Diego
Gary Strawn	San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
Lorie Zapf	Council Member, City of San Diego District 6

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 have drawn humans to the valley for thousands of years. As recently as the 1950's, the San Diego River Valley provided green relief from the surrounding urban environment as a rich agricultural plain.

Since then, the river has suffered under the region's increasing development pressure. Commercial, residential and industrial uses have expanded into the valley, pushing ever closer to the water's edge. Extensive mining operations have excavated the river bed for sand and gravel. The proximity of current development threatens the integrity of both the river and the wildlife habitat it supports. Yet, despite the proximity, the river and the land uses adjacent to it are disconnected; the river is no longer the focus of the communities through which it flows.

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

This Master Plan is closely aligned with the City's General Plan goals for land use, mobility, urban design, economic prosperity, public facilities, recreation, conservation and historic preservation. The San Diego River Park vision, principles, recommendations and implementation strategy included in this Master Plan provides the City with a strong policy document for the future development along the river. The major components of the Master Plan are described on the following pages.

VISION AND PRINCIPLES

Creating the San Diego River Park requires a new and innovative vision. This vision must form a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing physical needs, such as improving water quality and river health, expanding wildlife habitat, as well as harder-to-quantify social and cultural opportunities, such as revealing the river's rich history and bringing people to the river. The vision for the river park is:

Reclaim the valley as a common, a synergy of water, wildlife and people.

This vision is supported by five principles that are the guiding ideas against which future design and implementation decisions will be measured. The five principles are:

- Restore and maintain a healthy river system
- Unify fragmented lands and habitats
- Create a connected continuum, with a sequence of unique places and experiences
- Reveal the river valley history
- Reorient development toward the river to create value and opportunities for people to embrace the river.



Unique places create opportunities to engage with the river



Mission Trails Regional Park offers opportunities to explore both nature and the history of the region

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Master Plan’s recommendations are divided into general recommendations for the entire river park area and specific reach recommendations for the six distinct geographic areas of the river (Estuary, Lower Valley, Confluence, Upper Valley, Gorge and Plateau). General recommendations for the entire river park are organized as they relate to each of the five principles. The specific reach recommendations provide an overview of the area and recommendations on how to achieve the principles. Within some reaches, key sites are identified where special opportunities exist, or where conditions define the site as a critical component to the implementation of the Master Plan.

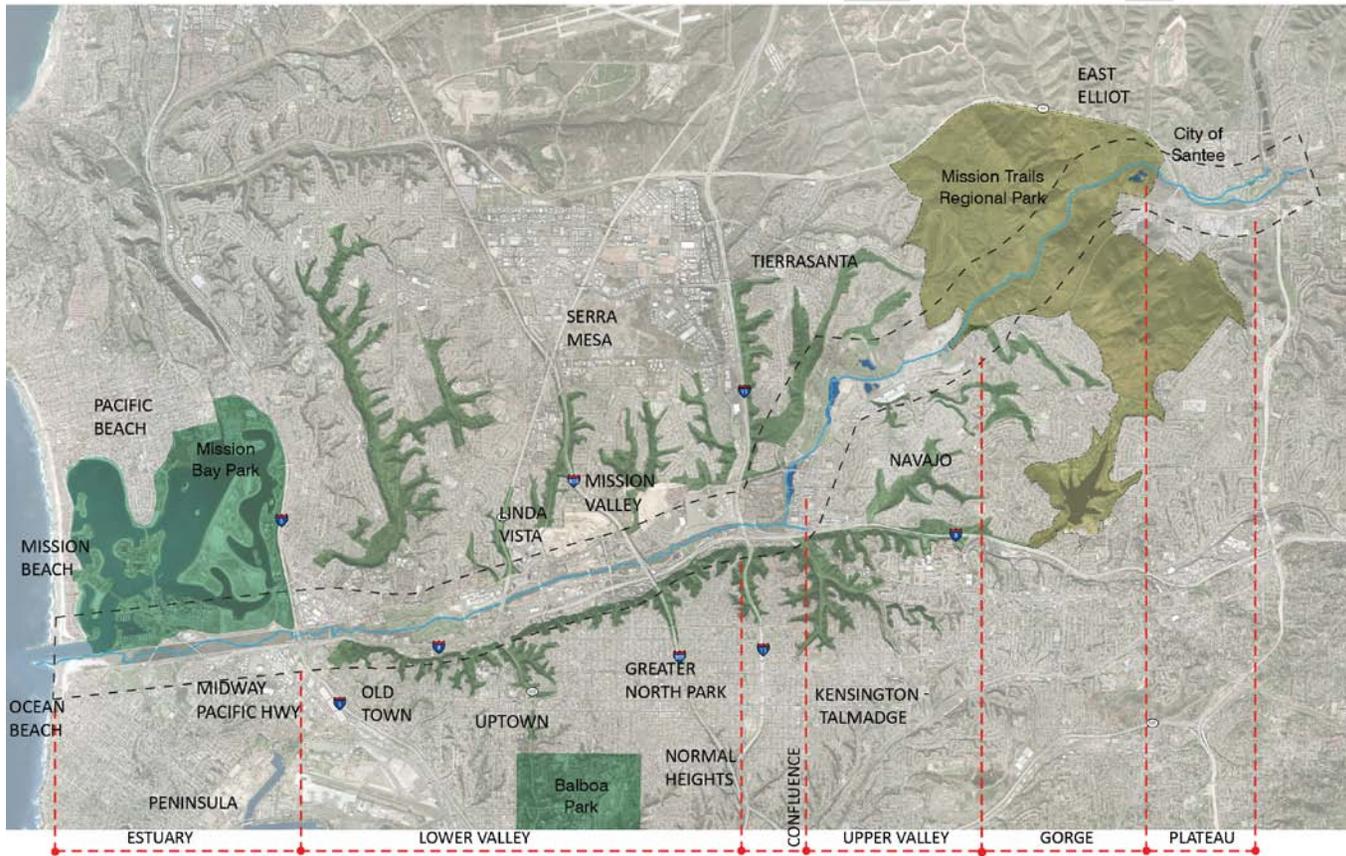


Figure 1. Six Distinct Reaches

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The purpose of the design guidelines is to provide written and graphic information to support the Master Plan’s vision, principles, and recommendations and to support the development regulations of the City’s Land Development Code and the community-specific regulations: the Mission Valley Planned District Ordinance, the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone for the Navajo Community, and the Mission Trails Design District Ordinance. The design guidelines apply to the River Corridor Area and the River Influence Area only. The River Corridor Area is the 100-year Floodway (as mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA), plus 35 feet on both sides of the floodway to accommodate a pathway corridor, see Figure 5. The River Influence Area extends 200 feet beyond the River Corridor Area on both sides of the river. The design guidelines for the River Corridor Area focus on the site planning of the floodway and the 35-foot wide pathway corridor, the design and materials for trails and the river pathway, recreational amenities within the pathway corridor and appropriate plant materials. Within this section of the guidelines is a discussion on how the River Corridor Area interfaces with the City’s Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA), Wetland Buffer overlay and what takes precedence. The River Corridor area must also comply with the Land Development Code for Storm Water Runoff and Drainage Regulations. For the River Influence Area, the guidelines provide information on building requirements such as building setbacks, building orientation, and type of access to the river park from adjacent development, building transparency and reflectivity, location for off-street parking, equipment and storage areas, and appropriate plant materials.



A continuous pathway will link from the Pacific Ocean to the City of Santee



A pathway corridor will be established adjacent to the 100 year floodway

IMPLEMENTATION

Along the 17.5 miles of the San Diego River within the City of San Diego are private and public land owners. Implementation of the Master Plan will rely on both private and public investment in the river valley. The implementation strategy includes an implementing framework, implementation tools, maintenance, management and security strategies, and public outreach/education methods to make the river park a success. The implementation framework looks at how the five principles have been implemented in the six reaches of the river and identifies areas where improvements are still needed. Federal, state and local funding sources, development tools and the required government approvals are discussed within the implementation tools. The maintenance, management and security section provides strategies for the future that could include a special maintenance district, a ranger program, an 'Adopt the River' program and the creation of a conservation corps or neighborhood youth corps program. In addition, public outreach and education that will foster stewardship of the river valley is also discussed as a means to implement the river park.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The San Diego River Park Master plan is the policy document upon which all land use decisions along the river will be based. In addition, the river area is also governed by the policies and permits of the Federal, State and Local agencies. The regulatory framework section of the Master Plan provides details on the applicable citywide planning policy documents and applicable agency jurisdiction and permits for the San Diego River area.

Applicable Citywide Planning Policy Documents include:

- General Plan
- Community Plans and Specific Plans
- Park Master Plans
- Multiple Species Conservation Program Subarea Plan
- San Diego River Watershed Urban Runoff Management Plan
- Bicycle Master Plan
- Pedestrian Master Plan

Local, state and federal agencies also have direct or indirect involvement with the land planning, resource protection and permit approvals for the San Diego river area. Depending on the type of project proposed within the river valley, these agencies may need to be consulted and in some cases permits may be required.

Applicable Agency Jurisdiction and Permits:

- United States Army Corps of Engineers
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- California Coastal Commission
- California Department of Fish and Game
- Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975
- City of San Diego Municipal Code and Land Development Code

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