

9

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Downtown's historical attributes, reflecting 150 years of evolution, contribute greatly to its complexity and sense of place. The fine collection of memorialized buildings—such as the El Cortez, County Administration Building, U.S. Grant Hotel, and concentration in the Gaslamp Historic District—help to convey downtown's historicity. Just as important are enduring representations of the public realm such as streets, sidewalks, parks, and neighborhood centers. This chapter of the Community Plan establishes the strategy for meaningful preservation of historic resources as part of downtown's continued growth and development.

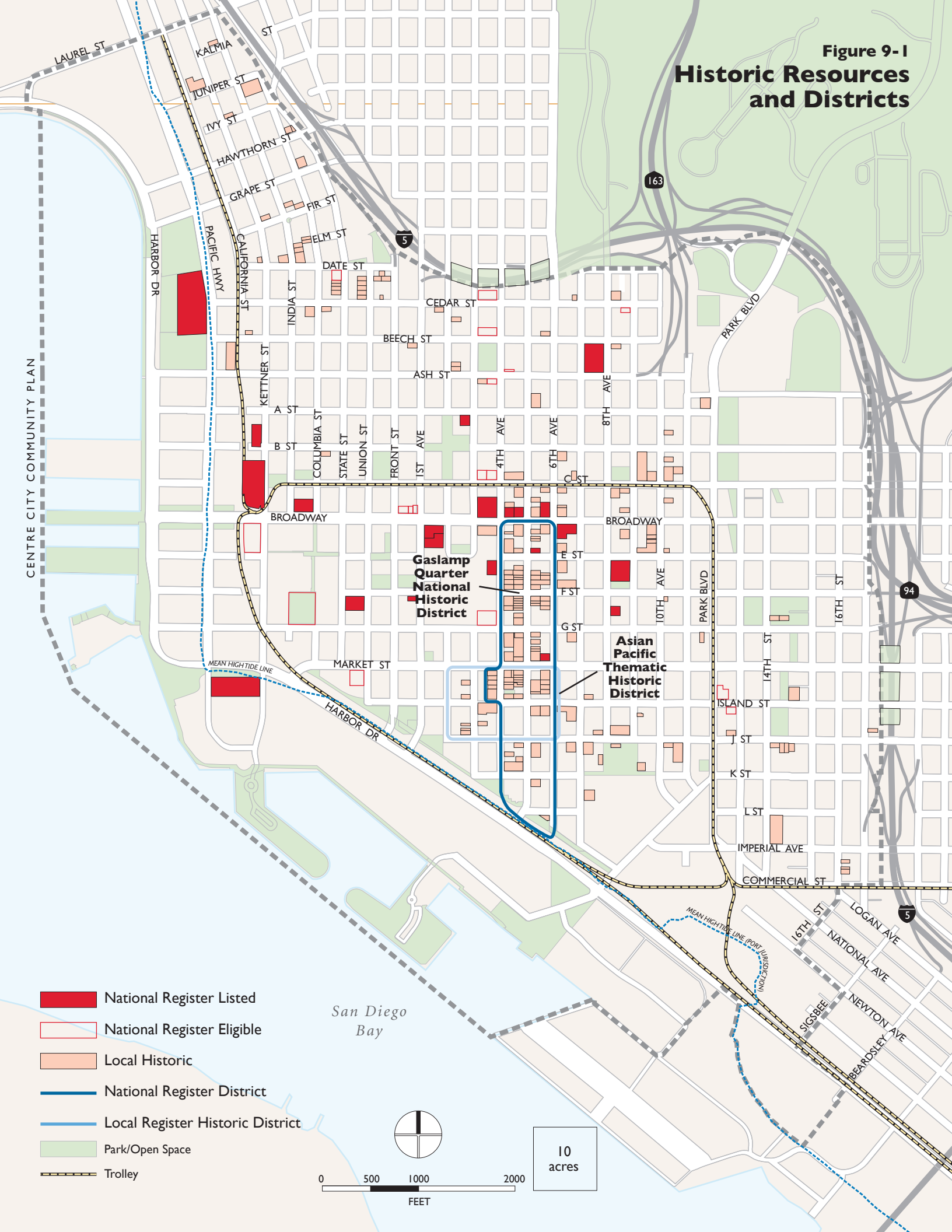
Historic buildings and districts downtown are identified under a well-defined, three-tiered system. Based on their classification, appropriate development incentives and regulations are applied. The National Register of Historic Places—representing the highest level of designation, and marking resources contributing to the nation's history—bestows the greatest protection. Listing on the California Register of Historic Resources also establishes substantial protections in recognition of the contributions

to state heritage. The San Diego Register of Historical Resources includes properties and districts deemed to have contributed significantly to regional history and culture. A variety of building types reflecting downtown's heritage are designated at the national and local levels – from the hotels, civic buildings, theaters, and commercial establishments representative of downtown's early roots as the city's center, to the warehouses associated with waterfront activity. State listings are limited to two markers and two historic vessels docked at the waterfront.

Some of the most exciting opportunities and challenges in downtown San Diego involve integrating pieces of the past into the future, while facilitating the dynamics of an evolving, contemporary high-intensity center. The Community Plan's direction for historic preservation is premised on maintaining National Register sites as downtown anchors, integrating buildings and districts of state and local historic significance into the downtown fabric, and looking at historical precedents for fostering connections with Balboa Park and the surroundings.



**Figure 9-1
Historic Resources
and Districts**





9.1 HISTORIC CONSERVATION

The strategy for conserving downtown historic qualities largely relies on the established process through National Register, California Register, and Local Register designations of individual properties and districts. Each designation is associated with preservation goals and development restrictions. The designated properties downtown are shown in Figure 9-1. Table 9-1 summarizes the preservation goals associated with the designations. The responsibility for designating Local Register sites and districts belongs to the City's Historical Resources Board, while the federal Department of Interior and State Office of Historic Preservation respectively designate National Register and California Register sites and districts.

Table 9-1: Historic Designations and Preservation Goals

Designation	Preservation Goal
National Register of Historic Places – Listed	Retention on-site; any improvements, renovation, rehabilitation, and/or adaptive reuse should facilitate preservation, consistent with the <i>Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings</i> . Historical resources contributing to a National Register District have the same protection status as individually-listed resources.
National Register of Historic Places – Eligible	Evaluate and encourage listing in the National Register through the State Office of Historic Preservation or the National Park Service. Resources determined eligible by either agency shall have the same protection status as individually-listed resources in the National Register. If not listed in, or not determined eligible for listing in the National Register, determine eligibility for listing in the San Diego Register and, if designated, provide San Diego Register protections.
California Register of Historical Resources – Listed	Retention on-site; any improvements, renovation, rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse should facilitate preservation. Resources contributing to a California Register District have the same protection status as individually-listed resources. Resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places or determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register are automatically listed in the California Register of Historical Resources.
California Register of Historical Resources – Eligible	Evaluate and encourage listing in the California Register through the State Office of Historic Preservation. Historical resources determined eligible for listing have the same protection status as individually-listed resources in the California Register. Retention on-site; any improvements, renovation, rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse shall be consistent with the <i>Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings</i> .
San Diego Register of Historical Resources – Listed	Whenever possible, retain resource on-site. Partial retention, relocation or demolition of a resource shall only be permitted through applicable City procedures. Resources contributing to a San Diego Register District have the same protection status as individually-listed resources.
Potential Designation to San Diego Register of Historical Resources	The Land Development Code and Planned District Ordinances require review and processing for potential designations for resources over forty-five years of age, including those listed on applicable surveys



Historic sites—such as the National Register listed El Cortez (top), Santa Fe Depot (middle), and County Administration Center (above)—impart our region's heritage and downtown's evolution as well as contribute to the richness of the environment.



Downtown San Diego is characterized by diversity in neighborhoods and business districts as well as people and culture. Celebrating the unique contributions of movements and places—and preserving the living history—is in part accomplished by designated geographic and thematic districts (see Figure 9-1).

There are two existing historic districts:

- **Gaslamp Quarter District:** Encompasses the historic entertainment district centered on Fifth Avenue that extends from Broadway south to Harbor Drive near its historic waterfront terminus (now the Convention Center). As part of a National Register District, the buildings designated as contributing to the historical significance of the Gaslamp Quarter have protected status. As a geographically-based district, new infill developments must follow tightly defined design standards to create a consistent fabric of historicity.
- **Asian Pacific Thematic District:** Marks the contributions and architecture of early Asian businesses and residents, and is listed on the San Diego Register of Historical Resources. Structures contributing to the district are subject to preservation goals per the San Diego Register provisions, as well as development regulations per the San Diego Municipal Code. Diversity in infill structures is allowed in accordance with those goals and regulations. A Master Plan for the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District was adopted by the Redevelopment Agency in 1995 and remains a valuable source of historic information on the area.

Two additional thematic districts are currently under study for San Diego Register designations: the Warehouse District in downtown's southeastern quadrant and the African-American District south of Broadway. If designated for listing on the San Diego Register, these districts will accommodate flexible integration of new development.



Downtown's designated historic districts—the Gaslamp Quarter (top and middle) and Asian Thematic District (above)—commemorate and protect important vestiges of historic development, commerce, and culture while at the same time providing unique and popular environments for modern pursuits.

Goals: Historical Conservation

- 9.1-G-1** Protect historic resources to communicate downtown's heritage.
- 9.1-G-2** Encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of historical resources.
- 9.1-G-3** Allow development adjacent to historical resources respectful of context and heritage, while permitting contemporary design solutions that do not adversely affect historical resources.

Policies: Historical Conservation

- 9.1-P-1** Maintain review procedures for projects potentially affecting resources listed in, or eligible for listing in the National Register, State Register, or San Diego Register either individually or as contributors to historic districts.
- 9.1-P-2** Offer incentives to encourage rehabilitation and reuse of historical resources, including transfer of development rights, floor area bonuses and exceptions to parking requirements.



9.1-P-3 Assist in the rehabilitation of historic properties through five on-going programs:

- Rehabilitation loans and grants,
- Low- and moderate-income housing loans and grants,
- Off-site improvements,
- Façade improvements, and
- Grants and funds.

9.1-P-4 Encourage the retention of historical resources on-site with new development. If retention of a historical resource on-site is found to be infeasible under appropriate City review procedures, the potential relocation of the historical resource to another location within downtown shall be explored, and if feasible, adopted as a condition of a site development permit.

9.2 INTEGRATING HERITAGE IN DOWNTOWN'S FUTURE

Downtown continues on a path of major transformation. Considerable strides have been made in designating, preserving, and restoring historic assets. Additional historical resources preserved through rehabilitation and/or re-use will contribute to the future downtown environment. The preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, reconstruction, and retention of designated historical resources, and their incorporation into new development projects, whether in whole or in part, is strongly encouraged. However, some loss of properties listed on the San Diego Register may inevitably occur to accommodate growth and population goals. The relocation or demolition of designated historical resources shall only be permitted when alternatives are not feasible, and adequate mitigation is provided.



A wide variety of exemplary historic building re-use and restoration projects exist downtown, including the Pannikin Building with ground-floor retail and upper floor office (left) and the Balboa Theatre restoration accommodating return of its original use (right).



Several properties in the eastern portion of downtown are under study for eligibility for San Diego Register listings. Since this is the last district to experience major redevelopment, a number of older buildings still exist, including warehouses, commercial structures and modest “worker cottages.”

Downtown’s historical integrity will be preserved with a combination of rehabilitated buildings, historic districts, portions of older buildings integrated in new projects (like warehouses in East Village), emphasis on downtown’s historic public realm, and on-going architectural and cultural history interpretive programs.

The places where public life takes place—the streets laid out in a grid system, sidewalks, parks, plazas, and Neighborhood Centers—are part of the historic armature. The historic platting of small block sizes and the connections to surrounding neighborhoods and Balboa Park are also important. The organization and character of these components makes downtown different from other places in the City, and convey downtown’s unique development history. As downtown evolves and new neighborhoods come to life, the historic public realm will be strengthened. Reinforcing these components is addressed in *Chapter 3: Land Use and Housing*; *Chapter 4: Parks, Open Space, and Recreation*; *Chapter 5: Urban Design*; *Chapter 6: Neighborhoods*; *Chapter 7: Transportation*; and *Chapter 10: Arts and Culture*.

Another aspect of the historic conservation strategy is to continue interpretive programs, particularly those related to the historic districts. Such programs should target San Diegans as well as tourists who seek travel experiences enriched with cultural pursuits and ethnic connections. The goal should be to communicate downtown’s evolving physical and cultural development, and to convey the factors that are attributed to change and growth.



Integration of distinguishing features of noteworthy historic buildings into new development allows for achievement of redevelopment and population goals while retaining important ties to downtown’s roots, as illustrated in the incorporation of a historic warehouse in Petco Park (top) and a landmark corner in new residential development (middle). The Community Plan gives historic open space, such as Pantoja Park in Marina (featured above), and the original street grid platting with small blocks special emphasis as public realm, an essential component of downtown’s historicity.



Goals: Integrating Heritage in Downtown's Future

- 9.2-G-1** Integrate historical resources into the downtown fabric while achieving policies for significant development and population intensification.
- 9.2-G-2** Preserve and enhance downtown's historic public realm in redevelopment planning.
- 9.2-G-3** Keep history alive through interpretive programs.

Policies: Integrating Heritage in Downtown's Future

- 9.2-P-1** Incorporate elements of historical buildings in new projects to impart heritage.
- 9.2-P-2** Partner with business, community, cultural, and historic organizations associated with designated historical resources to prepare and implement interpretive programs, such as walking and audio tours or a "story pole," permanent displays and signage, informational pamphlets, banners, and special events celebrating downtown's history.
- 9.2-P-3** Promote the adaptive re-use of intact buildings (designated or not) and/or significant elements, as a cultural and sustainability goal.
- 9.2-P-4** Encourage the historic interpretation of various cultural resources as they are established over time, including but not limited to Asian-Pacific, African American, warehouse buildings, etc.