



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT URBAN DIVISION STRATEGIC PLAN

Fiscal Year (FY) 2023–(FY) 2027



CREATING A DOWNTOWN FOR ALL OF US

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES – URBAN DIVISION

As we continue to recover from the challenges of the pandemic, the City of San Diego Development Services Department's Urban Division is uniquely positioned in its role of fostering a Downtown For All of Us with a diversity of housing types and affordability levels; a culturally vibrant and active urban core with parks, museums, and public spaces; and an economically prosperous employment center that supports a thriving regional economy.

Planning for the years ahead, Downtown San Diego is well-situated for significant growth over the next decade with transformational development projects under construction including IQHQ's RaDD development, one of the largest Life Sciences developments on the west coast; Tailgate Park, converting a large surface parking lot to a vibrant mixed-use project; and Horton Plaza, in line to be a major employment campus. Paired with dynamic infrastructure projects including the Gaslamp Promenade; the emerging Downtown Arts District; a comprehensive system of cycleways and greenway streets; a revitalized Children's Park; and the addition of East Village Green, Downtown's largest park; Downtown is in line to once again reinvent itself as the flourishing center of San Diego's urban core communities. This comes at a critical time for downtowns all-across the world as urban centers emerge from the massive shift to remote work and look for unique ways to attract people back and to connect people to resources in an equitable way.

Urban Division staff are busy fostering new development and planning for future growth by continuing to develop solutions to make it easier to build housing, employment, and public facilities Downtown. Because Downtown has its own specific zoning code, we are in a unique position where we can pilot innovative new streamlining measures to further help implement and incentivize new development. As staff works to advance implementation of the Downtown Community Plan, we are ready to say yes to transformational change and bring the big city energy needed to build back Downtown San Diego stronger than ever.

The Strategic Plan outlined on the following pages will serve as a roadmap for the Urban Division, guiding the initiatives, staffing levels, and day-to-day efforts for the next five years. At the same time, we have the flexibility to adapt this Strategic Plan as needed to address changing conditions around us. A critical component to the implementation of this Strategic Plan is the regular monitoring of each initiative to ensure success and make any necessary adjustments, thus creating a replicable model that can be applied across other areas of the City.



Strategic Priority 1: Plan Implementation (Development Project Review)

Description: The Urban Division continually reviews all building permits for development located in Downtown San Diego to ensure consistency with applicable zoning regulations. In addition, Urban Division staff serves the Development Project Manager role for discretionary development permit applications located Downtown. For the past several decades the permitting process implemented in Downtown San Diego has been looked at as the model for efficiency for the City with reduced review times and consistent, transparent, and effective customer service to all stakeholders. Moving forward the Urban Division will continue to enhance the review process by implementing business process improvements and regulatory reform that reduces permit and project review times. The addition of a Senior Civil Engineer and a Development Project Manager in FY23 will significantly help to expedite the permitting process.

Timeline: Ongoing

Staff Resources: Senior Planner (Existing), Associate Planner (Vacant), Senior Civil Engineer (Vacant), Development Project Manager II (Vacant)

✓Create Homes for All of Us

- Reviews include the issuance of permits for homes to serve a diversity of incomes and family sizes.

✓Protect & Enrich Every Neighborhood

- Ensures new development is consistent with adopted policies to protect and enrich all neighborhoods of Downtown San Diego.

✓Advance Mobility & Infrastructure

- Ensures new development projects provide needed infrastructure either through the direct delivery of the infrastructure or through the payment of Development Impact Fees.

✓Champion Sustainability

- Results in development that is consistent with the City's environmental regulations.

✓Foster Regional Prosperity

- Facilitates new development which fosters regional prosperity.



Strategic Priority 2: Downtown Zoning Code Update

Description: As part of the 2022 Land Development Code Update process, the Urban Division is preparing amendments to the Centre City Planned District Ordinance (CCPDO) to provide for corrections, clarifications, and regulatory reform focused on facilitating implementation of the Downtown Community Plan. Streamlining amendments focus on reducing both the size and complexity of the CCPDO, making it easier to build housing, employment, and public facilities. The existing CCPDO is overly long and complex, making it difficult for both the development community and the public to navigate. This has resulted in many areas of Downtown not achieving the types of development and the densities envisioned in the Community Plan.

Timeline: FY23

Staff Resources: Deputy Director (Existing), Development Project Manager II (Vacant)

✓ Create Homes for All of Us

- Streamlines the approval and construction of homes by providing clear and consistent regulations to ensure new development is implementing the goals and vision of the City's Housing Element and the Downtown Community Plan.

✓ Protect & Enrich Every Neighborhood

- Increases opportunities for the delivery of public spaces, parks, and infrastructure Downtown.

✓ Advance Mobility & Infrastructure

- Promotes the ability for residents to walk, bike or take transit.

✓ Champion Sustainability

- Encourages energy conservation, recycling and other measures to promote sustainability.



Strategic Priority 3: More Homes, More Choices (Expedite Program)

Description: This initiative would implement a new streamlined building permit process focused on providing a housing mix that is more reflective of the diversity in our City by creating more high density, infill, missing-middle, mixed-income, and affordable homes within the City's urban core communities. This program takes an equity-based approach by focusing on the delivery of a diverse range of housing types within the City's urban core, increasing both the supply and affordability of homes in the area where they can be best served by pedestrian, bicycle, and transit investments. This also includes a focus on family-sized units, critical to the environmental and economic future of the City of San Diego.

Timeline: FY24-FY25

Staff Resources: Principal Planner (New), Senior Planner (Existing), Associate Planner (New), Senior Civil Engineer (Vacant), and dedicated staff from other review disciplines.

✓Create Homes for All of Us

- Promotes housing strategically in areas close to transit, jobs, schools and parks.

✓Advance Mobility & Infrastructure

- Facilitates the construction of new homes in areas served by multi-modal infrastructure.

✓Champion Sustainability

- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions by building new homes located close to where people need to go.



Strategic Priority 4: Downtown Community Plan Refresh

Description: The Downtown Community Plan serves as the long-range vision for the land use, mobility, urban design, public facilities and services, natural resources, historic and cultural resources and economic development. The Plan was comprehensively updated in 2006 and amended in 2016 to incorporate the policies of the Downtown San Diego Mobility Plan. It was amended again in 2019 to reflect the Tailgate Park development criteria. While the Plan is now over 15 years old, much of its framework and policies, including the zoning and land use components, are still very much relevant today. This initiative will focus on amending the Plan to update maps, figures, statistics and images; remove outdated references related to redevelopment; making any necessary corrections and changes to reflect municipal code updates; and incorporating the City's Strategic Plan goals into the Plan, with a specific emphasis on equity and climate resiliency.

Timeline: FY24-FY25

Staff Resources: Deputy Director (Existing), Principal Planner (New), Development Project Manager II (Vacant), Senior Planner (Existing), Associate Planner (Vacant), Senior Civil Engineer (Vacant)

✓Create Homes for All of Us

- Focuses housing in areas close to transit, employment, and public amenities

✓Protect & Enrich Every Neighborhood

- Identifies opportunities for public spaces and amenities.

✓Advance Mobility & Infrastructure

- Identifies mobility infrastructure opportunities that improve connectivity for people walking, biking and using transit.

✓Champion Sustainability

- Promotes opportunities for urban greening and street trees to address stormwater runoff and climate change.

✓Foster Regional Prosperity

- Allows additional opportunities for housing, employment, and tourism in the City's central core.



Strategic Priority 5:

Connecting Neighbors

Description: A key role the Urban Division plays in implementing the Downtown Community Plan is Public Park and Infrastructure Planning. As downtowns all across this nation continue to recover from the impacts of the pandemic, the importance of vibrant open spaces is critical to the future development and growth of the urban core. The Urban Division will implement the parks and greenway program for Downtown by prioritizing investments that serve the most people in an equitable way by providing connections from surrounding communities to Downtown's parks, urban plazas, museums, and other resources. Staff will focus on filling our urban core with life by creating vibrant and walkable streets, incorporating recreation, arts, culture, and creativity into the public realm. Several key projects currently underway include the East Village Green, Children's Park Revamp, the 14th Street Greenway, North Central Square Park, coordination with private developers on implementation of the Urban Open Space Program, and partnerships with several non-profit organizations to facilitate implementation of public promenades and urban green spaces.

Timeline: Ongoing

Staff Resources: Senior Planner (Existing), Senior Civil Engineer (Vacant)

✓ Create Homes for All of Us

- Delivers the infrastructure needed to support new home construction for all of us.

✓ Protect & Enrich Every Neighborhood

- Provides infrastructure that serves the most dense population in the City and connects to surrounding communities.

✓ Advance Mobility & Infrastructure

- Creates safe and efficient ways for people throughout the City's urban core to connect to amenities and to each other.

✓ Champion Sustainability

- Focuses opportunities for urban greening to address stormwater runoff and climate change.

✓ Foster Regional Prosperity

- Promotes economic prosperity through investment in high quality public spaces which can serve as a central connectivity district.



Strategic Priority 6: Gaslamp Zoning Code Update

Description: As part of the 2023 Land Development Code Update process, the Urban Division will prepare amendments to the Gaslamp Quarter Planned District Ordinance to provide for corrections, clarifications, and regulatory reform focused on facilitating implementation of the Gaslamp Quarter Design Guidelines and the Downtown Community Plan. Items to be included in the update will be identified through a variety of ways, including the Land Development Code Update Online Portal and stakeholder meetings.

Timeline: FY24

Staff Resources: Deputy Director (Existing), Senior Planner (Existing), Development Project Manager II (Vacant)

✓ Create Homes for All of Us

- Ensures permitting and approval processes are clear and can be implemented efficiently.

✓ Protect & Enrich Every Neighborhood

- Results in development that is consistent with the historical character of the Gaslamp District.

✓ Advance Mobility & Infrastructure

- Promotes the ability for residents and visitors to walk, bike or take transit.

✓ Champion Sustainability

- Encourages energy conservation, recycling and other measures to promote sustainability.

✓ Foster Regional Prosperity

- Facilitates new development and public improvements which increases visitors and fosters regional prosperity.



Strategic Priority 7: Downtown Development Toolkit

Description: To facilitate the level of new development envisioned in the Downtown Community Plan, the Urban Division will increase awareness of the simplified permitting process, including existing and new incentive programs available for those looking to develop a project in Downtown San Diego. Staff will launch a new, revamped webpage full of resources that applicants and the public can use to understand the full range of permitting options offered, including short video tutorials, interactive story maps, and a quick reference Toolkit. This will include a comprehensive resource guide to identify all of the various organizations and agencies involved with the development of Downtown San Diego. Further, staff will conduct education and outreach to a diverse range of stakeholders, with a particular focus on those who are not familiar with the development process or the streamlined development regulations for Downtown San Diego.

Timeline: FY25

Staff Resources: Senior Planner (Existing), Associate Planner (Vacant), Development Project Manager II (Vacant),

Other Resources: Graphics/Communications Consultant (Up to \$50,000)

✓ Create Homes for All of Us

- Promotes a clear and concise permitting process for housing to be developed in areas close to transit, employment, and infrastructure.

✓ Advance Mobility & Infrastructure

- Promotes incentive programs which will deliver new infrastructure concurrent with development.

✓ Foster Regional Prosperity

- Identifies a streamlined process for new development which fosters regional prosperity.



Strategic Priority 8:

Healthy Places

Description: This initiative will establish the framework for partnerships with nonprofit organizations and other private entities to implement cost-effective, quick-impact public improvement projects throughout Downtown. It will create a pilot program with opportunities for innovative, culturally relevant and interactive public spaces through placemaking and small-scale improvement projects. Also known as Tactical Urbanism, this approach to neighborhood building will promote a healthy urban environment. Working in collaboration with community organizations Urban Division staff will seek grant funds in addition to funds collected through the existing FAR Bonus Payment Program, and other outside funding to facilitate implementation of quick-impact projects, including a focus on projects located within the area of downtown identified as having low access to resources on the City's Climate Equity Index map. Examples could include projects such as the Children's Museum Public Promenade, Grow Urban Tree Planting Initiative, Nolen Urban Loop, Fragrant Streets, and Children's Park Activation Pilot Project.

Timeline: FY25

Staff Resources: Senior Planner (Existing), Senior Civil Engineer (Vacant)

✓Protect & Enrich Every Neighborhood

- Establishes partnerships with non-profits, community organizations, and other entities to deliver new public amenities.

✓Advance Mobility & Infrastructure

- Provides more opportunities for cost-effective infrastructure improvements to be delivered more quickly to Downtown neighborhoods.

✓Champion Sustainability

- Enhances the environment through new investments in urban greening; pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-friendly public spaces.

✓Foster Regional Prosperity

- Facilitates new investments in infrastructure to attract new residents, businesses, and visitors Downtown.



Urban Division Proposed Resources 5-Year Outlook

Staff

Staff Position	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
Deputy Director	1 FTE (Existing)	-	-	-	-
Senior Planner	2 FTE (Existing)	-	-	-	-
Associate Planner	1 FTE (Vacant)	1 FTE (New)	-	-	-
Senior Civil Engineer	1 FTE (Vacant)	-	-	-	-
Development Project Manager II	1 FTE (Vacant)	-	-	-	-
Principal Planner	-	1 FTE (New)	-	-	-

Non-Personnel Expenses (NPE)

- Annual allocation of Citywide G.P.M.F (Up to \$100,000 annually, subject to revenue collected)
- FAR Bonus Payment Fund Revenue (Subject to revenue collected)
- Downtown Parking District Revenue (Subject to revenue collected)
- Downtown Commercial DIF Revenue (Subject to revenue collected)
- Downtown DIF – spend down of projected deferred DIF revenues (Estimated \$36 million)
- No new NPE is proposed