

Mission Valley Community Plan

Working Draft for
Community Review
August 10, 2018



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INTRODUCTION

Whether you are a resident, employee, or visitor, there are certain questions you ask, consciously or not, that greatly affect if you want to spend time in a community.

- ⬢ Do the destinations present provide the commodities you want and need in your daily life?
- ⬢ Does the mobility infrastructure allow you to connect to these desired destinations with ease?
- ⬢ Is the surrounding environment a place that appears clean, safe, free from excessive noise, and the right balance between developed and undeveloped space?
- ⬢ Does the physical condition of buildings and streets provide a cohesive, yet dynamic mosaic of visual interest?

Truly great communities inspire us to answer the aforementioned questions with an emphatic yes, and though we could answer yes to many of those questions in regards to much of Mission Valley, some areas within the community fall short of these ideals.

Mission Valley, situated in the center of San Diego (see Figure 1 and 2), is a thriving commercial center, providing quality jobs and retail amenities unmatched in many communities. There are abundant sidewalks, an emerging walking and biking trail along the San Diego River, dedicated bike facilities, access to five freeways, and a trolley line that connects east to west. The San Diego River also provides a connected green space, giving community members access to nature, and many undeveloped hillsides that provide visual relief from the built environment. There are also high-quality developments, where much attention was given to the aesthetic value and streetscape enhancements, providing both an interesting and welcoming atmosphere.

But Mission Valley has some remaining challenges, that if addressed can help it transform to a truly great community. As a longstanding commercial area, residential neighborhoods lack needed goods and services in close proximity. The mobility infrastructure is fragmented because of planned roadways that were never built, which leads to out-of-direction travel and increases travel times and congestion. Also, a complete bicycle network has not been created, leaving gaps in routes and creating difficulty in navigation. Freeway congestion trickles onto local streets because of on- and off-ramps that are improperly sized for the demand. Additionally, though the trolley is a major asset, stations can be hard to access and the frequencies do not always match needs.

Although Mission Valley is well-cared for, the proximity to so many freeways can lead to excessive noise and air pollution that can detract from the natural environment, and past decades of aggregate mining has created some topography challenges. In addition, the development of Mission Valley was not always cohesive and many sites were designed to function well internally, with little regard for the interaction with neighboring properties. Some areas have fragmented streetscapes, which are not visually appealing and can be hard to navigate.

Many of these challenges can be addressed by implementing policies to retrofit the community into a thriving urban center. A place where businesses can continue to flourish, new residential communities can be integrated into the existing development that is attractive to new residents, and memorable destinations can be created for the enjoyment of both community members and visitors alike.

Figure 1

Mission Valley Regional Location



- Orange Line Trolley
- Blue Line Trolley
- Green Line Trolley
- City Limits
- Mission Valley Community Planning Area

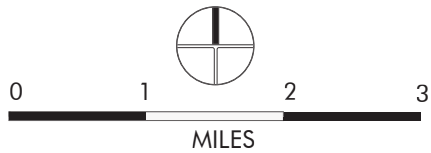
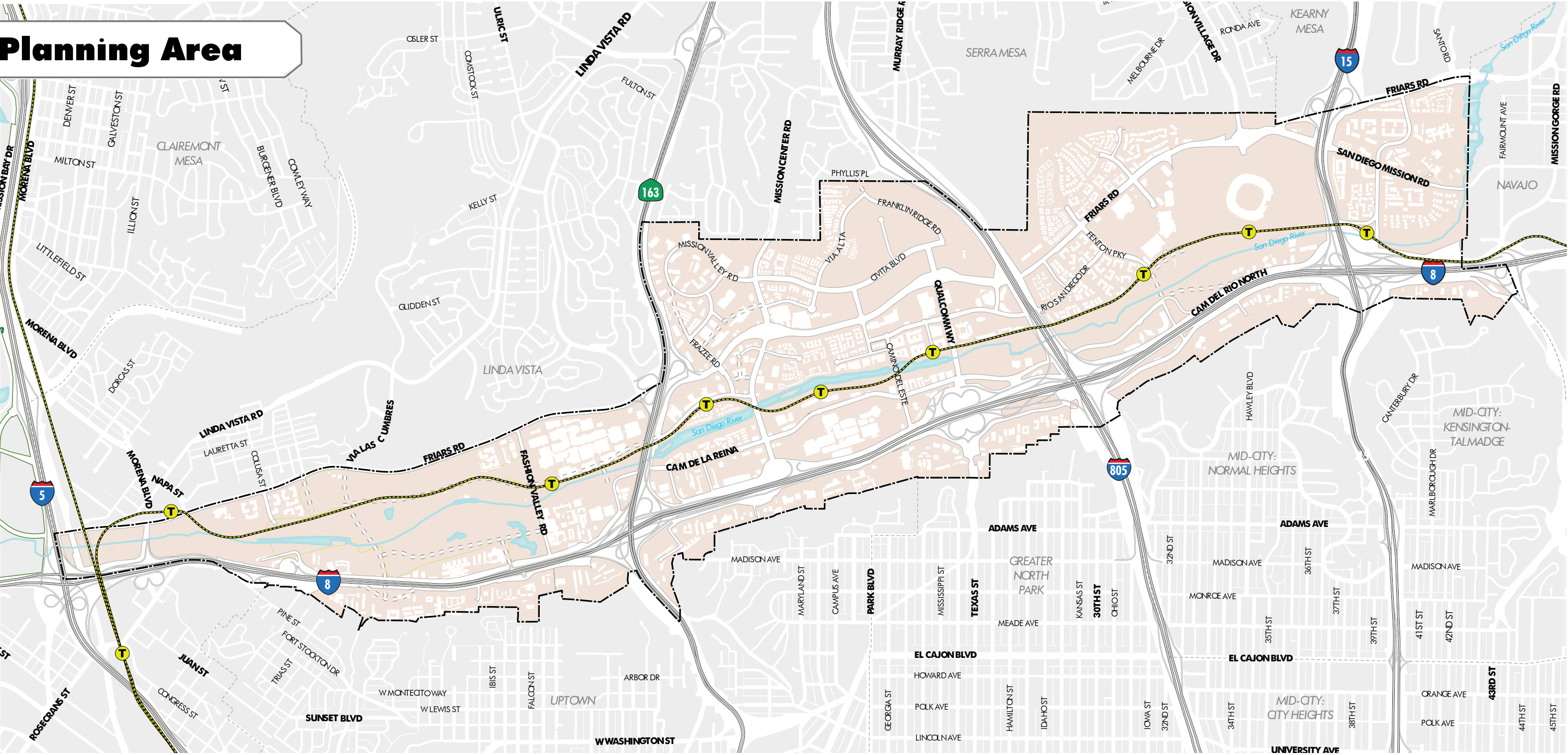


Figure 2



Trolley Stops

Planned
Roadway

Light Rail

Freeways

Ramps

Streams/Creeks

Lakes/Ponds/Bays

Mission Valley Community
Plan Boundary

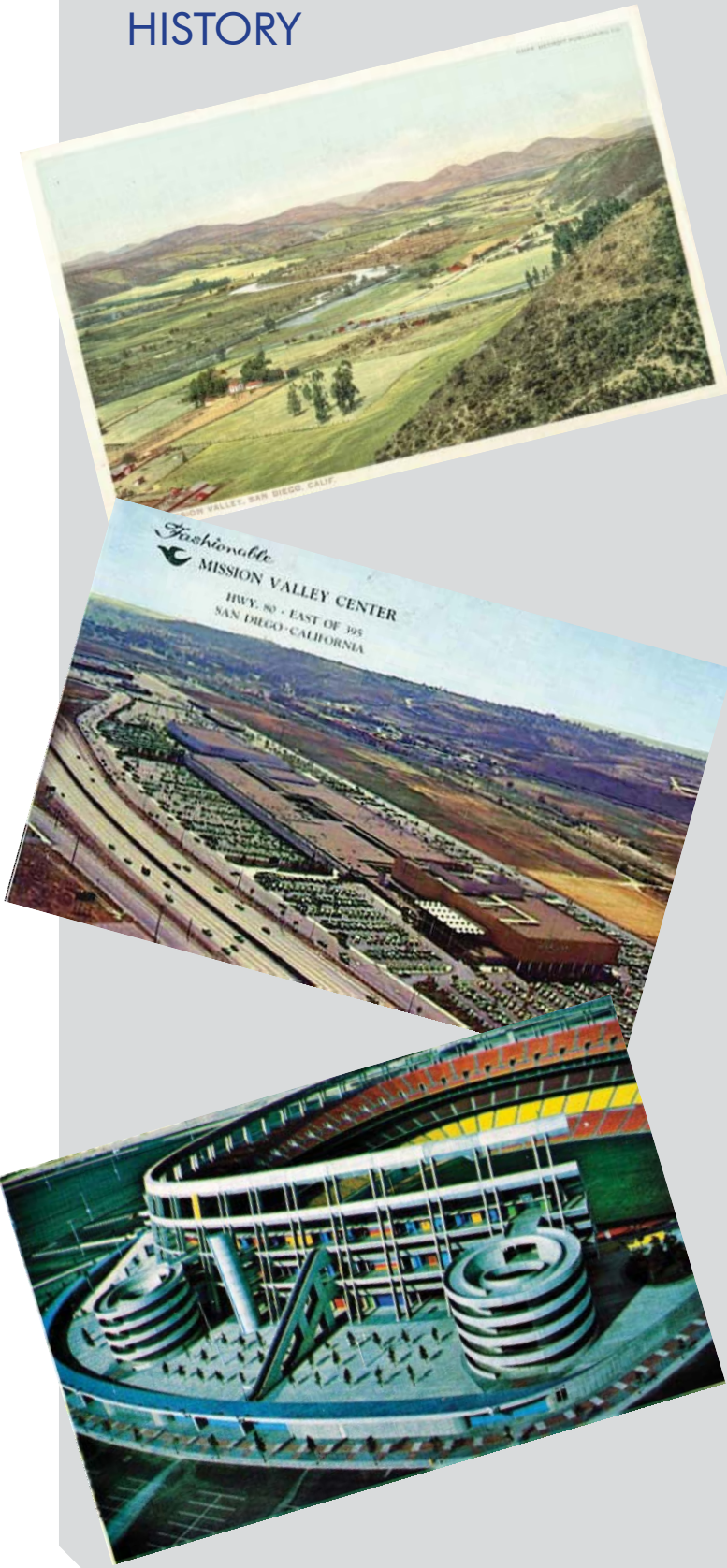
Community Planning Areas



0 1/4 1/2 1
MILES

40ac
10ac

MISSION VALLEY HISTORY



Mission Valley’s greatest natural asset, the San Diego River, has attracted people to the valley since prehistoric times. As a major source of irrigation for agriculture in the San Diego Metropolitan Area, the River shaped the community’s early history by attracting settlements of the Kumeyaay Indians and then the Spaniards at Mission San Diego de Alcalá. The presence and influence of the Mission resulted in the naming of Mission Valley and even sparked development of one of the largest residential areas in the community when the Poor Sisters of the Nazareth sold much of the land surrounding the Mission in the 1970s.

Beyond early settlement, the River continued to be a source for early agriculture that focused on livestock, dairying, and field cultivation. The vast natural resources further welcomed a period of sand and gravel extraction, which was eventually followed by the first major urban development, the Mission Valley Shopping Center.

During the initial urbanization of Mission Valley in the late 1950s and 1960s, the community became an essential component to San Diego’s tourism industry. Hotel Circle became the hiatus from the bustling schedule of a traveler out to visit Balboa Park, nearby beaches, Shelter Island, the San Diego Stadium, and downtown. Distinctive motels and alluring resorts formed the essence of Mission Valley as a destination for recreation, tourism, and commercial development.

Still, Mission Valley was not simply a place to drop off your bags, but also the place to go for shopping needs with its easy highway access and abundant parking. Slowly, Mission Valley also became a key employment center with significant areas dedicated to office development.

The Mission Valley Community Plan seeks to remedy current challenges and help Mission Valley to evolve into a truly great community. The plan contains the following elements to guide future changes:



Provides a conceptual picture of a future Mission Valley and defines strategies to improve the quality of life.



Depicts the public infrastructure needed to support the Vision. This includes standards for a future mobility system, a strategy to increase park and recreation space, a foundation to support safety and welfare, and design guidelines to direct how buildings and public spaces should interact to form a cohesive environment.



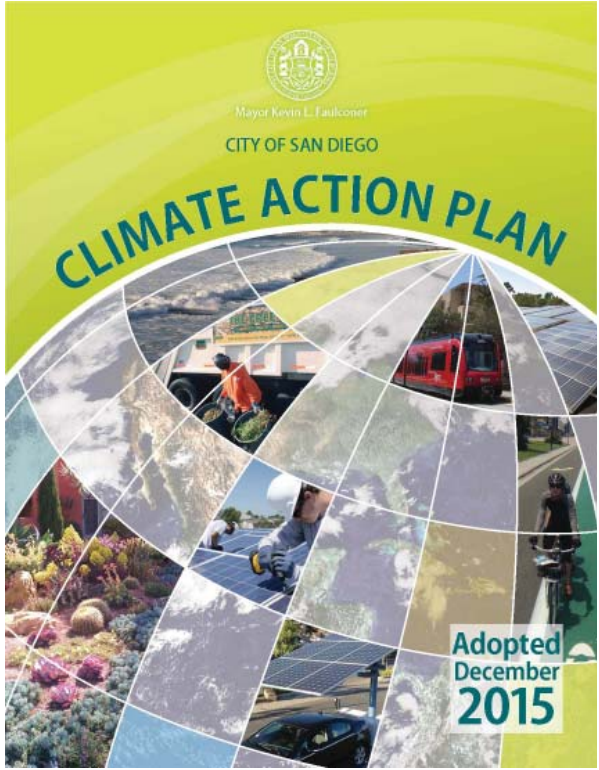
Contains an organized list of policies for which all future development should adhere.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

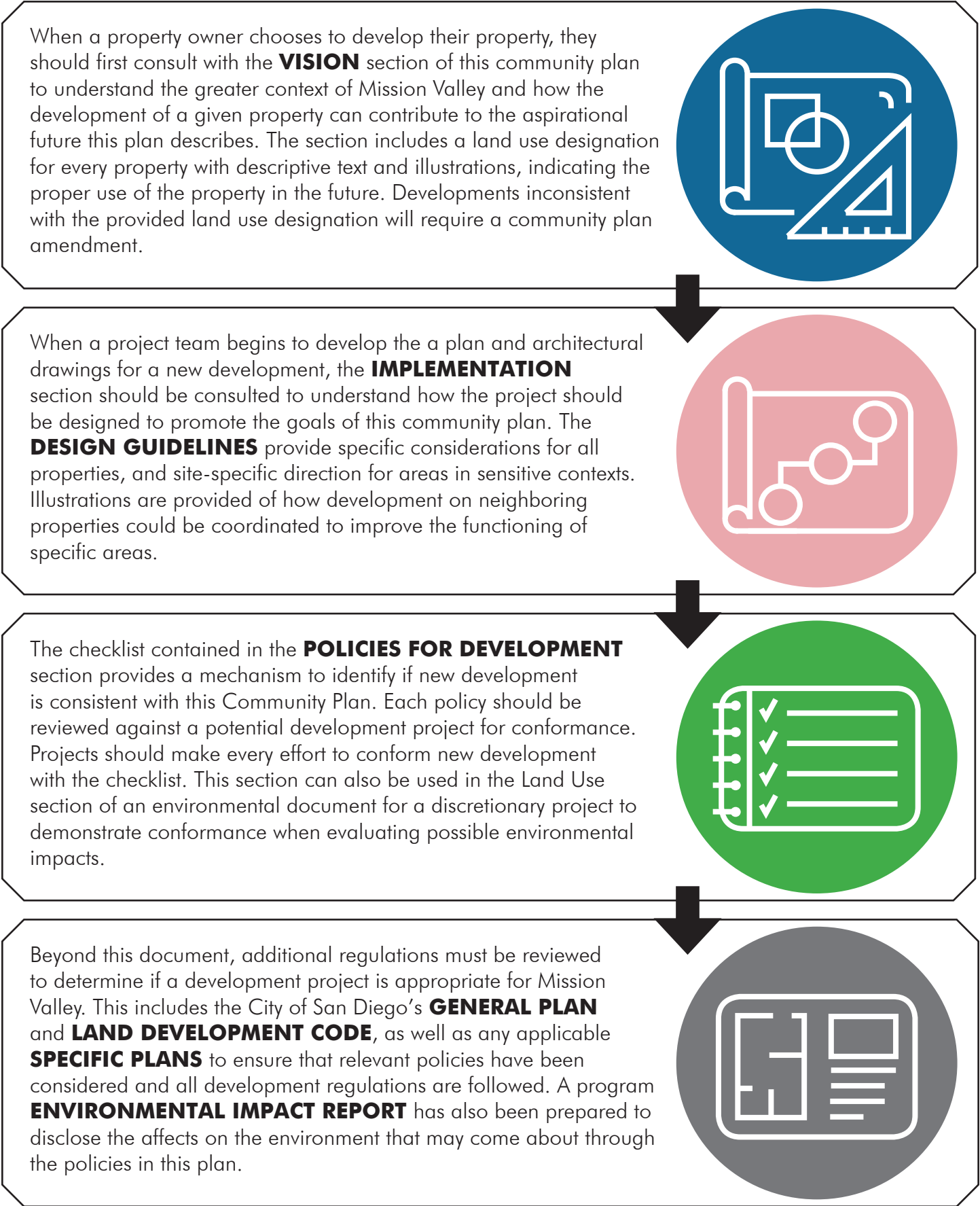
This document has been developed as a common guide for decision-makers, the local community, property owners, and developers to have a shared understanding on how Mission Valley will grow and change in the coming decades. It replaces the Mission Valley Community Plan that was adopted in 1985, and has been designed to have a buildout horizon year of 2050. This plan should be considered a living document because unanticipated changes in environmental, social, technological, or economic conditions may occur between plan adoption and the horizon year. To remain responsive to community and City needs, the plan will be monitored and amended when necessary.

The City of San Diego General Plan, adopted in 2008, is the comprehensive blueprint for San Diego’s growth and development in the coming decades, and is the foundation upon which all land use decisions in the City are based. The Mission Valley Community Plan provides context-sensitive direction, consistent with the General Plan, to guide future growth and development in Mission Valley. It also provides Implementing Actions within the Implementation section of the plan, which details needed infrastructure to provide for the growth anticipated now through 2050. The fees paid by development to help support this growth are identified in the Mission Valley Impact Fee Study, which is a companion document to this plan.

This document was also designed to help implement the City of San Diego Climate Action Plan (CAP). Adopted in 2015, the CAP provides detailed strategies calls for eliminating half of all greenhouse gas emissions in the City by 2035. The land use policies in this plan are consistent with the policy goals identified in the CAP.



DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



VISION





VISION

Through implementation of the policies in the Mission Valley Community Plan, Mission Valley will have the potential to become a truly great neighborhood. The community will be renowned for its walk- and bike-ability, accessibility to interstates and transit, recreational and employment opportunities, and a concentration of diverse food and unique shopping. All of these features will contribute to Mission Valley's identity as a vibrant community in San Diego that contributes to the city's great quality of life.

A completed San Diego River Trail will attract pedestrian activity as visitors, employees, and residents make it a priority to explore the riparian habitat, passive recreation opportunities, and urban oasis within a short distance of almost all of the community. The San Diego River, which is also the community's greatest natural asset, will serve as the backbone and organizing framework for a branching park and pedestrian pathway system in Mission Valley. Wide, well-lit, tree lined, pedestrian paseos will extend from the river's edge to allow walkers, cyclists, and the like the ability to traverse Mission Valley safely as a more enjoyable alternative to the automobile. These meandering pathways will join with green streets that have enriched pedestrian spaces including linear parks and nodes of pedestrian-scale, visually stimulating developments that contain restaurants, retail, offices, and residences. The paseos will further carry people to community parks where children can play on the ball fields, adults can stroll around walking tracks, and families can enjoy picnics in a natural environment.

Not only will the described park and active transportation environment make walking and cycling an appealing way to get around, vehicular mobility will also improve. Construction of new road connections and bridges will provide a safe and reliable means of traversing Mission Valley. Additionally, a strengthened grid system will create more options for buses and cars and support local and regional roadway network efficiency. The fluidity of movement will further improve as connected and autonomous vehicles permeate the roadways, but also via the extensive trolley system that spans Mission Valley.

Present and future trolley lines will hum with the commotion of commuters getting to and from the vast employment opportunities within Mission Valley and throughout the city. Surrounding these bustling trolley stations, mixed-use, transit-oriented development will take shape like a string of pearls comprised of attractive buildings with numerous windows, airy balconies, and al fresco dining. Strategically located mobility hubs will ensure workers can easily make it from the trolley station to their employment destination via multi-modal options such as ride hailing and bike sharing. Additionally, frequent, local transit service will be provided to fill transportation gaps within Mission Valley and transport residents, tourists, and employees to regional transit services as well as key destinations like shopping centers, employment areas, and parks.

Mission Valley’s parks, natural environments, and mobility options will create a new image of a sustainable, walkable community, which will attract employers eager for happy, healthy employees. The health of the employee and residents will further be supported by opportunities for fresh produce from farmers’ markets, access to grocery stores, and utilization of open space for community gardens. Land uses included in this Community Plan will continue to support the existing workforce, while attracting newly desired fields of work such as health care, finance, real estate, military defense, and technology. New and existing businesses will see the value of locating in Mission Valley and reinvest in existing development through improvements, infill, and overall reinvestment in office and commercial development.

Urban Design

With this Community Plan, Mission Valley will promote urban design as a “Placemaking Tool” and a fundamental driving framework for future development of the community. Through thoughtful site planning and high-quality architecture, this community will mature into its second century as a great place to live, work, and enjoy the best that San Diego has to offer. Urban design in Mission Valley will focus on five cornerstone elements of the community’s physical form and environment: the river, the streets, the public spaces, the architecture, and the hillsides.

The **river**, the community’s lifeblood and the organizing spine of its physical development, and the San Diego River Park, will be the most prominent image of Mission Valley. More than just a natural asset, the San Diego River will continue to thrive as the artery along which runs the community’s primary transportation corridor. As the community matures, growth will be focused along the transportation nodes of this spine and create, over time, a string of pearls that flows with the river.

Next to the river, the **streets** of Mission Valley will serve as the primary open space for public and civic life in the community. Super-blocks will be broken down in scale with a finer grain of streets that provide a second layer of neighborhood mobility more suitable to pedestrian and daily community trips (connecting residents to community resources such as parks and grocery stores). Streets will be spaces for people: a place to enjoy urban life and a means of serving mobility needs in the community and for the greater San Diego region.

In addition to streets, Mission Valley will continue to build valued and usable **public spaces** (e.g. parks, urban plazas, greenways, and paseos) that will compete with and complement shopping malls as the main places of community life.

Great **architecture** will play an increasingly prominent role in defining public space, through building forms that complement and shape open spaces. Architecture in Mission Valley will be distinctive and memorable, with greater attention paid to building quality, materials, details, and amenities that give back to the community.

Finally, the **hillsides** that form edges of the valley and give the community its unique natural setting will be enhanced and maintained, so that Mission Valley will continue to have a distinct sense of place as defined by the natural landscape of the city.

Mobility System

Mission Valley will become a model for the kind of walkable, accessible community envisioned in the City of Villages Strategy through the building of multimodal connections that ensure Mission Valley remains positioned for sustainable growth. By embracing key community resources such as the San Diego River Trail and the Trolley system, Mission Valley will leverage the community’s natural landscape and infrastructure investments to enhance regional multimodal connections. Incorporation of infrastructure like strong, well-connected, separated bicycle facilities and landscape buffered sidewalks/paseos will improve first and last mile connections to trolley stations. These improvements will take important steps toward several positive community outcomes, such as enhancing safe, comfortable connectivity for non-vehicular users; encouraging travel mode shift; accommodating new smart growth; and promoting Mission Valley as a healthy, active community.

Parks and Recreation

High quality parks and recreation facilities are becoming a cornerstone of Mission Valley’s identity. Now and into the future the community will continue to experience the creation of inviting places for people to take a break from work or walk out of their homes to enjoy the sunshine, breathe fresh air, run or cycle along the river, enjoy the trees and nature, play sports, spend time with family and pets, and get some exercise, while connecting to neighboring communities. The design of all recreation spaces in Mission Valley will reflect the importance and influence of the San Diego River by enhancing the local ecology, celebrating the area’s history, providing connectivity to the river trail, and using materials that reflect the riparian corridor.

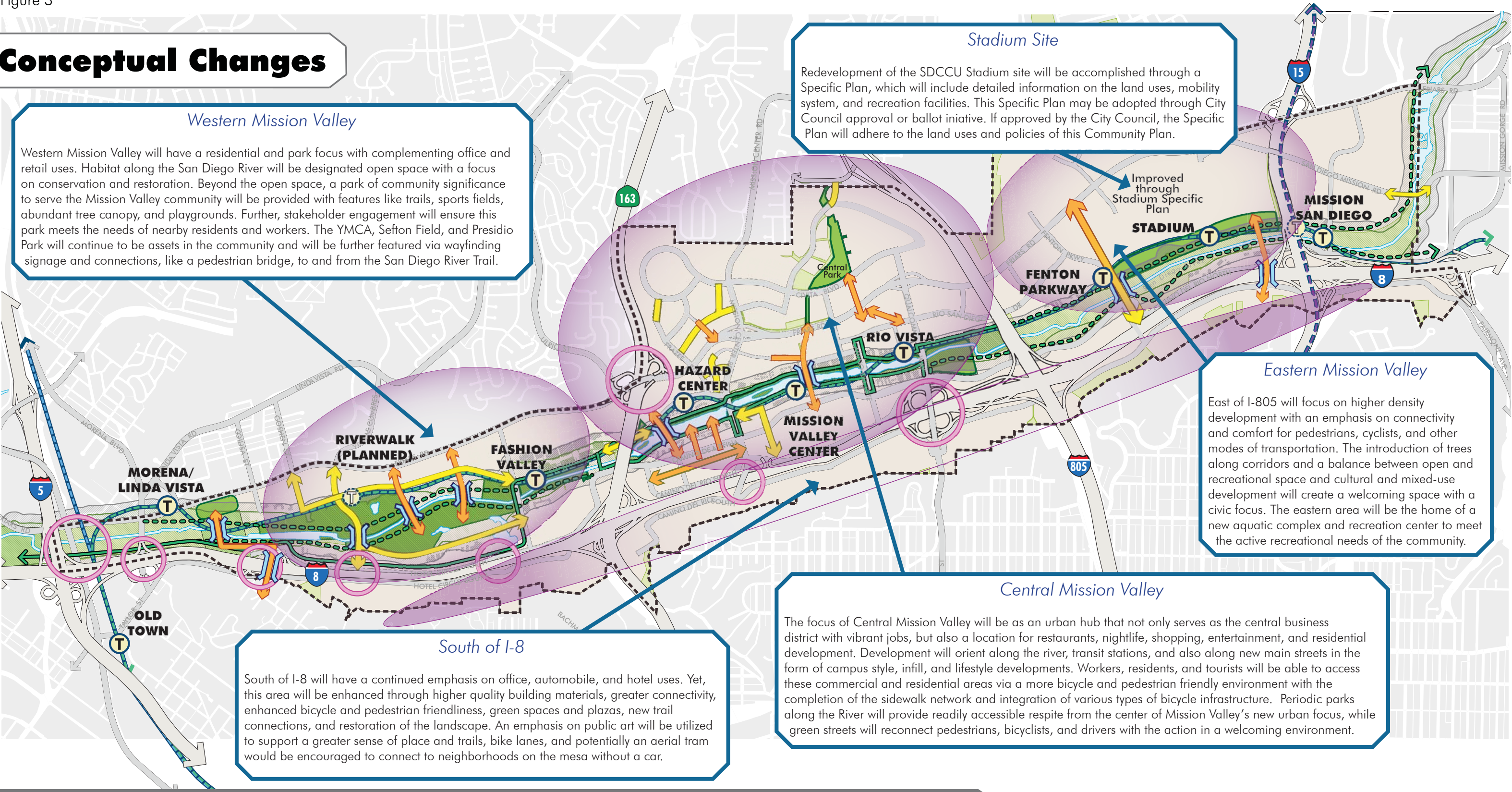
Land Use and Housing

New and creative housing opportunities will be a defining feature of a future Mission Valley. As the community continues to grow, existing sites will be re-envisioned to better integrate housing into the area. The future Mission Valley is designed to create a better balance between employment and shopping opportunities with housing. Much of Mission Valley is within a half-mile of high frequency transit service, referred to as a Transit Priority Area or TPA. Working with local community members, opportunity sites were identified within close proximity to transit service. A land use plan was designed to reinvest in the community and create opportunities to add housing on those sites that had previously been developed for commercial uses. Figure 3 provides a conceptual description of changes resulting from this community plan.

Much of the land in Mission Valley is now designated for mixed-use development. This development will occur either through total redevelopment of existing sites, or the creation of new uses coupled with existing buildings of differing uses. This plan will allow the economy of Mission Valley to continue to thrive while new homes are integrated into the landscape. It will be important that new housing provides a high quality of life through context-sensitive design, including thoughtful site planning, integrated green and open spaces, ample opportunities for non-motorized travel, and connectivity to adjacent properties. Through the policies in this plan, the future Mission Valley will be more sustainable, produce less per capita greenhouse gas emissions, and be a vibrant and thriving community that many will have the privilege to call home. The full land use designation map is provided as Figure 4. Aspirational places have also been provided that demonstrate built places consistent with plan policies.

Figure 3

Conceptual Changes



General Information

Mission Valley Community Plan Area

Transit

- Existing Trolley (Blue Line)
- Existing Trolley (Green Line)
- Planned Trolley (Purple Line)
- Planned Trolley Stop (Riverwalk)

Circulation Improvement

- Roadway Connection
- Pedestrian/Bicycle Connection
- New Bridge
- Existing San Diego River Trail
- Proposed San Diego River Trail
- Intersection Improvement

Park and Open Space

- Existing Park
- Existing Open Space
- Potential Park/Open Space
- River Corridor
- River Influence Area

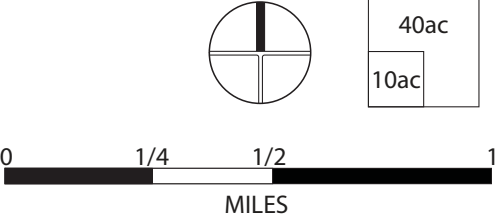
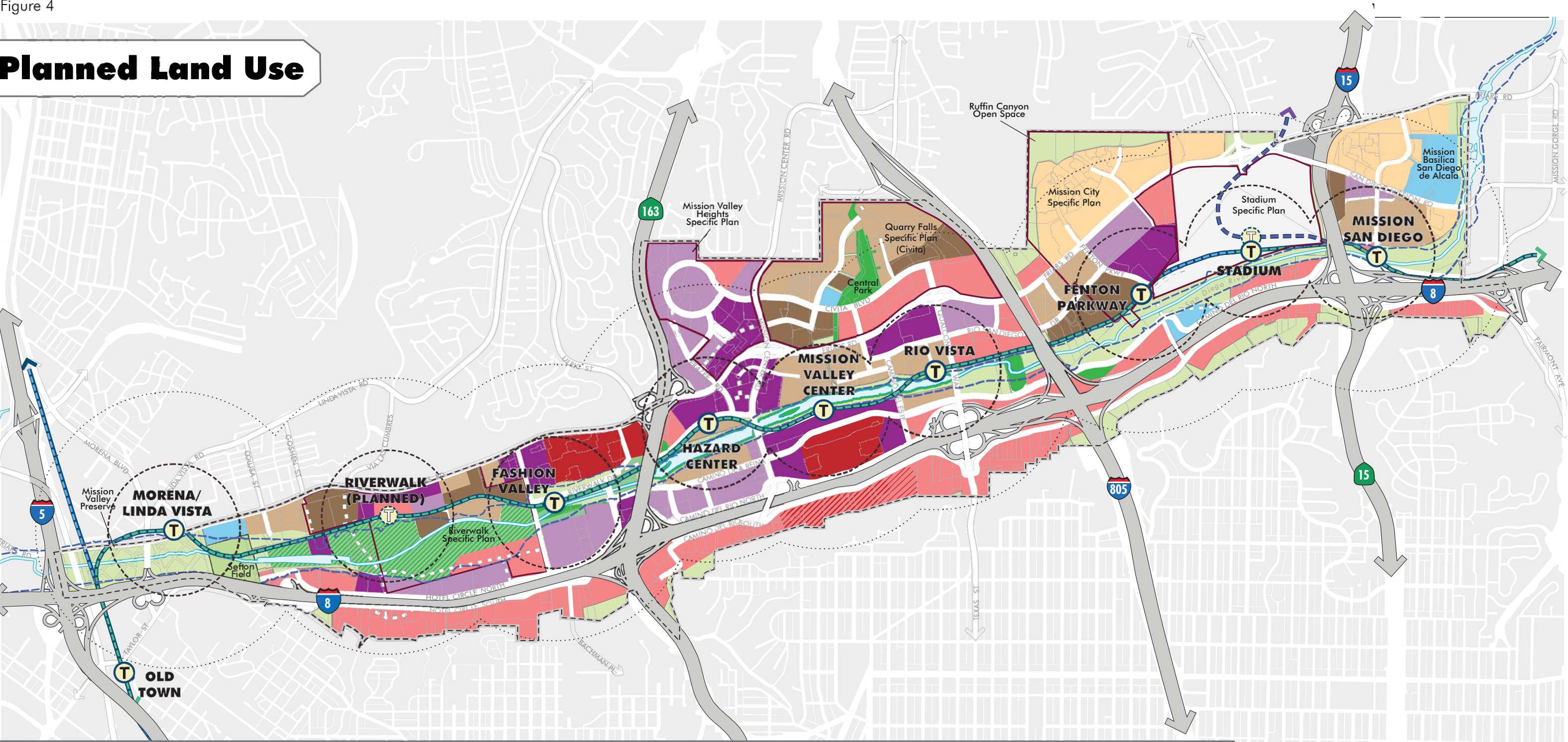


Figure 4

Planned Land Use



General Information

- Mission Valley Community Plan Area
- 100 Year Floodway
- Specific Plan
- Parcels
- Planned Roadway

Transit

- Existing Trolley (Blue Line)
- Existing Trolley (Green Line)
- Planned Trolley (Purple Line)
- Planned Trolley Stop (Riverwalk)

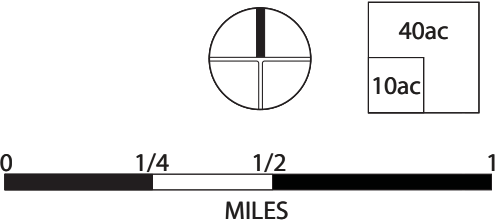
Land Use

- Mixed Use (HD)
- Mixed Use (MD)
- Residential (HD)
- Residential (MD)
- Residential (LD)

- Commercial/Office/Hotel
- Regional Retail
- Office/Hotel/Regional Retail
- Public/Institutional

Park and Open Space

- Existing Park
- Existing Open Space
- Potential Park
- Potential Open Space
- Potential Park/Open Space



Residential-Low



This designation allows for condominium/apartment buildings that typically consist of two or three story townhomes with attached garages. Units often have individual and shared open space areas and amenities.

- Up to 44 DU/Acre
- Height Controlled by Zone
- Garage Parking

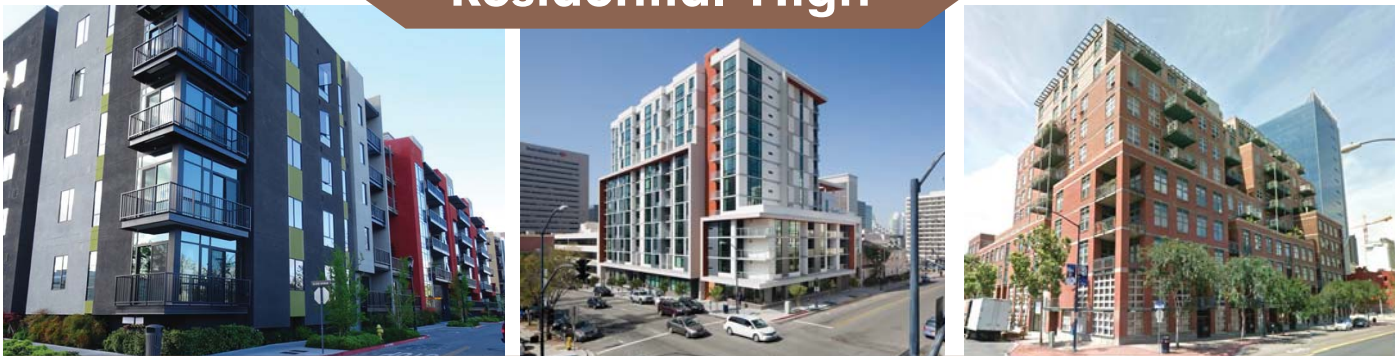
Residential-Medium



This designation allows for condominium/apartment buildings that typically consist of residential units that include a centralized amenity with individual or shared open space areas, along with structured parking.

- 44 to 73 DU/Acre
- Height Controlled by Zone
- Structured Parking

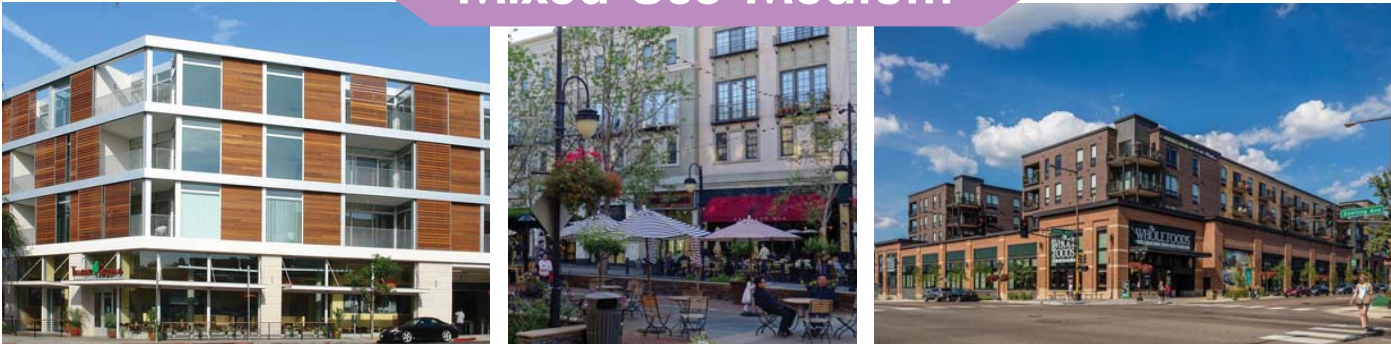
Residential-High



This designation allows for condominium/apartment buildings that typically consist of a large block of residential units that include integrated underground or structured parking, with shared open space areas and amenities.

- 73 to 109 DU/Acre
- Height Controlled by Zone
- Structured Parking

Mixed Use-Medium



This designation allows for a variety of resident- and employee-serving commercial uses. Residential uses are strongly encouraged in both horizontal and vertical formats, with above or below grade structured parking.

- Up to 85 DU/Acre
- No Height Limit
- Structured Parking

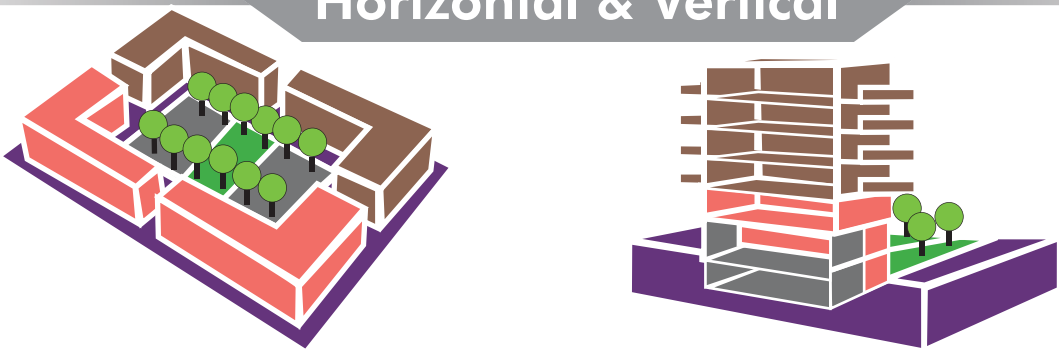
Mixed Use-High



This designation allows for a variety of employment-based uses that serve residents and workers in the community. Residential uses are strongly encouraged in both horizontal and vertical formats, with above or below grade structured parking.

- 73 to 140 DU/Acre
- No Height Limit
- Structured Parking

Horizontal & Vertical



The Mission Valley Community Plan encourages the use of both horizontal and vertical formats of mixed use development. Horizontal mixed use juxtaposes buildings of primarily single uses adjacent to each other on a single site. Vertical mixed use integrates multiple uses in a single building. Both formats are envisioned for the Mixed Use designations.

Public/Institutional



This designation allows for the development of public-serving uses, which includes, but is not limited to:

- Aquatic Centers
- Recreation Centers
- Stadiums
- Universities/Schools/Classrooms
- Infrastructure Support Buildings



Regional Retail

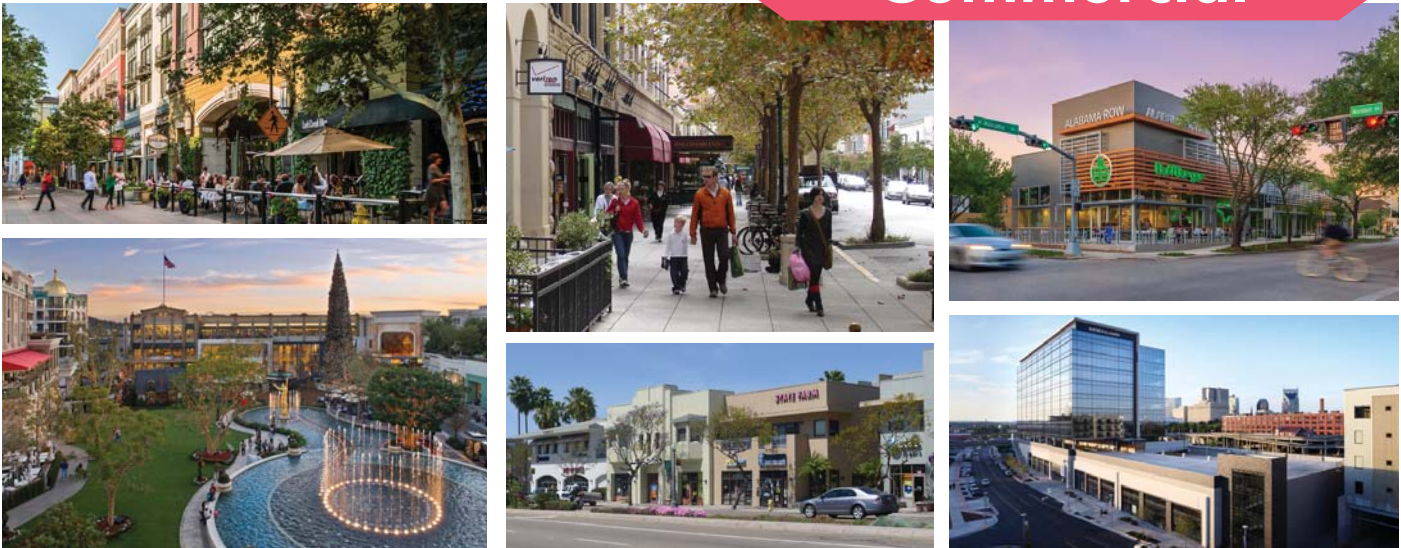


This designation allows for retail locations designed to provide for customers residing both inside and outside the community. Sites should be designed in an urban format with limited surface parking and plazas for community gatherings.

Sample types include:

- Malls
- Big Box Stores
- Car Dealerships

Commercial



Office



Hotel

This designation provides for a variety of commercial uses to create a complete community. The uses provide for goods, services, and employment opportunities for community members. Examples include:

- Lifestyle Center
- Main Street/Strip Commercial
- Professional Hub
- Urban Office
- Flex Office
- Campus Office
- Executive Hotel
- Leisure/Resort Hotel
- High Rise Hotel



Americana at Brand
Glendale, CA



This Mission Valley Community Plan emphasizes urban design policies and goals that prioritize placemaking and creating a strong public realm. Central Mission Valley will encourage the development of great places inspired by existing destinations like The Americana at Brand in Glendale, California. This development has successfully created a community feel with a centralized park that serves as a hub for gatherings surrounded by unique shopping opportunities, restaurants, markets, and a variety of housing options. Intimate, landscaped streets traverse the development for a comfortable environment for pedestrians and convenient access for vehicles. Americana serves as its own small town with diverse architecture styles and varying building heights and materials. Rather than serving as isolated developments, lifestyle centers inspired by Americana will be connected to the rest of Mission Valley via pedestrian paths, shuttles, green streets, and the trolley.

Tysons Corner
Fairfax County, VA



Tysons Corner, located in Northern Virginia, offers inspiration for Mission Valley as a vibrant community that draws commuters, residents, and visitors alike, who enjoy and utilize the diversity of its mobility options provided by its excellent connections to greenways, pedestrian connections, and the DC Metro. Part of the success of this area is the service of multiple rail lines. Like Tyson's corner, Mission Valley will leverage its transportation and land use connections to further establish the community's prominence as a regional hub. Mission Valley's excellent transportation foundation laid by the Green Line of the San Diego Trolley, the future Purple Line, the close connection to the Blue Line, multimodal opportunities along the San Diego River Path, and improvements to the pedestrian environment will be bolstered by complementary land uses that invite and receive those arriving by all modes of travel.

Buffalo Bayou
Houston, TX



Similar to the vision of the San Diego River Park Master Plan, Buffalo Bayou Park in Houston is a renewed 160-acre urban green space, anchored by the principal drainage system for much of the city. Stretching over 2.3 miles, the park offers visitors access to the bayou and over ten miles of pedestrian and bike paths, including four pedestrian bridges. It offers opportunities to explore the restored ecology of the bayou, while promoting healthy activities for Houston's growing population. Large event lawns, signature gardens, a nature play area, and flexible plazas provide the infrastructure to support year-round events. This park serves as a prime benchmark for a successfully executed vision for Mission Valley, applying creative design and use of critical green space, contributing water storage to help mitigate flood risks, and providing enhanced recreational opportunities along a key ecological resource in the heart of a world class city.

The Rise
Vancouver, BC



The Rise demonstrates the viability of mixing uses that are often not traditionally co-located in Southern California. The Rise provides 92 live/work rental homes along with a green roof that serves as a community gathering space and vegetable garden. These housing units are built above a home improvement store and grocery store demonstrating how much needed housing can be added strategically into urban environments, serving both retail and housing needs in a creative format. The Rise serves as a model for an urbanizing environment as envisioned for Mission Valley.