

# Mid-City Communities Plan Update

## Historic Context Statement and Survey Report Technical Studies

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### [How Does the Mid-City Communities Plan Update address historic preservation?](#)

The Mid-City Communities Plan update provides an opportunity to plan for additional homes, businesses and public spaces along existing and planned bus rapid transit corridors. To ensure that historic resources are recognized and incorporated into the Community Plan, the update includes a Historic Context Statement and a Focused Reconnaissance Survey. These documents help to guide land use decisions, historic preservation policies within the Community Plan, environmental analysis, and future historic preservation work within the community. The findings also contribute to the contents of the Historic Preservation Element within the Community Plan.

#### [What are Historical Resources?](#)

Historical resources are the physical, tangible representation of the events, people, and architecture that has shaped our city in an important way and connect us to our collective past as we plan for our city's future. Historical resources include buildings, structures, objects, sites/landscapes, districts, archaeological resources and traditional cultural properties that meet one or more of the City's local historic designation criteria, or that are listed or determined eligible for listing on the state or national historic registers.

#### [What is a Historic Context Statement?](#)

Historical Context Statements describe the broad patterns of historical development of a community, identify the themes important to the history of the area or subject covered by the context, and provide guidance for identifying historical resources and determining whether they are significant. Historic Context Statements provide the foundation for preservation planning and successful historic survey work.

#### [What is the purpose of the Mid-City Communities Plan Area Historic Context Statement?](#)

The draft [Mid-City Communities Plan Area Historic Context Statement](#) identifies key periods, events, themes and patterns of development within the planning area's history

from Mid-City's beginnings in 1885 through the growth of Mid-City from 1915 to 1984 and immigration to Mid-City from 1975 through the 1990s. Events and themes from the most recent past are not included, because sufficient passage of time is required to place and evaluate themes and properties within a historical context.

### What is a Historic Survey?

Historic resource surveys identify, record, and evaluate historic properties within a community or neighborhood. Surveys provide many benefits, including the information needed to make informed planning decisions, prioritize preservation goals and objectives, develop and implement land use policies and educate the public and increase the understanding of and appreciation for the built environment as a tangible reminder of the community's history.

Surveys may be classified as reconnaissance- or intensive- level and used to evaluate individual properties as well as larger areas such as historic districts. A reconnaissance-level survey is intended to gather basic information for a broad group of resources and is suited to the scale, scope and budget of a community plan update. An intensive level survey is an in-depth evaluation of an individual property or grouping of properties including a construction history and evaluation of historic integrity, and is a follow-up, implementation action after a reconnaissance-level survey. Intensive level surveys are used to nominate potential historic districts for designation.

### What historic preservation work has been done previously in the Mid-City Communities planning area?

In 1996, the City completed the Greater Mid-City Reconnaissance Survey, which covered approximately half of the Mid-City Communities Planning Area. The 1996 Mid-City survey identified three potential historic districts within the survey boundary: Kensington & Talmadge in the Kensington-Talmadge community, and Carteri Center in the Normal Heights community. A historic district located in the City Heights community, the Islenair Historic District, was intensively surveyed and designated as a historic district in 2007. The Kensington & Talmadge potential historic districts and Carteri Center potential historic district have not yet been intensively surveyed by the City.

### What is the purpose of the 2025 Mid-City Focused Reconnaissance Survey?

Due to the size, diverse property types and wide range of building ages in Mid-City, the 2025 Mid-City Focused Reconnaissance Survey has the following objectives:

- Review the Kensington-Talmadge potential historic district and Carteri Center potential historic district identified in the 1996 Mid-City survey to determine if they still appear eligible as potential historic districts,
- Identify any additional areas of shared/common development history that may yield potential historic districts
- Map and evaluate the historic significance of post WWII master planned communities and identify areas that lack significance and should be exempt from the City's potential historic resource review, and
- Identify and photograph properties on the main commercial corridors to add to a study list for the Mid-City Communities Plan Area Historic Context Statement.

Potential historic districts and properties identified on the study list are not being nominated for historic designation with this survey, and future intensive-level survey work, evaluation, and public hearings are required to determine significance, refine boundaries, establish contributing and non-contributing resources, and designate eligible resources.

[Will the 2025 Mid-City Focused Reconnaissance Survey evaluate all properties in the Mid-City planning area?](#)

Due to the size of the plan update area, the 2025 Mid-City Focused Reconnaissance Survey was not scoped to survey all properties in the Mid-City planning area or to evaluate all eligible resources. However, the survey will guide future preservation work, including intensive-level survey and property-specific evaluations.

[What are the findings of the draft 2025 Mid-City Focused Reconnaissance Survey?](#)

The draft Mid-City Focused Reconnaissance Survey Report has several key findings related to the four objectives of the survey to review previously identified historic districts, identify new historic districts, map and evaluate post WWII master planned communities, and identify properties for inclusion in the study list.

### *Historic Districts*

The draft 2025 Mid-City Focused Reconnaissance Survey found that the potential historic districts identified in the 1996 Mid-City survey appear to still be eligible as potential historic districts, but with slightly different boundaries. The survey evaluated the portion of the original Talmadge Park subdivision that was outside the 1996 Mid-City survey area and identified the entire subdivision as a potential historic district. The Carteri Center potential historic district boundary has also been refined and reduced slightly. The Kensington potential historic district identified by the 1996 Mid-City survey has been separated into

two potential historic districts with a boundary at Alder Drive, due to the distinct history and development patterns between the historic subdivisions. No new historic districts were identified.

The draft 2025 Mid-City Focused Reconnaissance Survey did not identify any potential historic districts of cultural or social significance given the limits of this particular survey effort and the comparatively recent nature of demographic and cultural shifts within the community; however, the survey report does recommend future historic context statements and intensive-level survey efforts to better address the identification and preservation of cultural resources important to the community.

#### Post-WWII Master Planned Communities

One hundred forty-two (142) post-World War II subdivisions were reviewed and found to be ineligible for historic designation. City staff will propose that these subdivisions be exempt from future potential historic resource review to reduce permitting processes and costs for homeowners. Fourteen (14) post-World War II subdivisions were identified as needing future historic review, due to having a mixed development history and/or appear to potentially include individually eligible resources.

#### Study List Properties

Lastly, the survey includes a study list of seventy-one (71) properties throughout the Mid-City Communities planning area that were identified during the course of research and survey work which will require further historic review in the future.

#### What is a Historic District?

A historic district is a geographically defined concentration of resources – typically buildings – that collectively convey a shared significance under one or more of the City's historical resource designation criteria. Individual buildings within the boundary of the historic district may or may not be significant on their own, but much like pieces of a puzzle these properties come together to paint a picture and tell an important story about our City's past. A historic district is also a sum of its parts and is comprised of contributing resources that convey and contribute to the significance of the district and non-contributing resources that do not.

#### If a historic district is designated in the future, Are New Development and Homes allowed?

Yes. The purpose of a historic district is to protect the historic features and elements that tell the story of why a district is significant, not to prevent all change within the district.

Properties within historic districts can be adaptively reused for new uses, and new construction, including homes and Accessory Dwelling Unit homes, are permitted. If the improvements are consistent with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards and any applicable design guidelines, approval can be issued with a simple building permit. If the improvements are not consistent, or if demolition is proposed, a Site Development Permit is required. The City works with owners of historic properties to add to their historic buildings and permit new homes through a building permit process.

[How can I learn more about the Mid-City Communities Plan Update?](#)

Visit [PlanMidCity.org](http://PlanMidCity.org) for updates and to sign-up for email announcements.

Questions? Email [Planmidcity@sandiego.gov](mailto:Planmidcity@sandiego.gov)

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