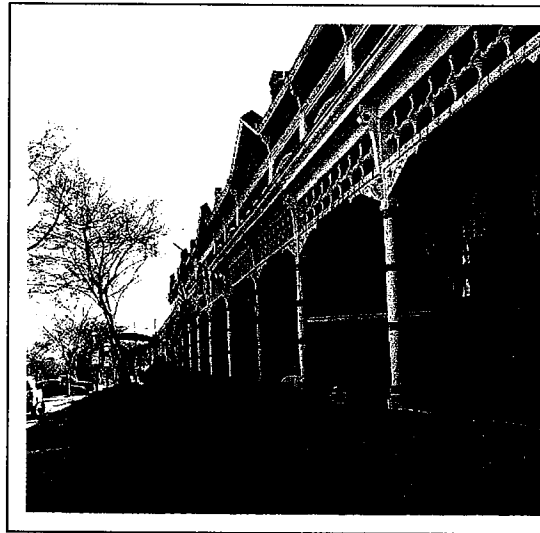


**NATIONAL CITY DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN**  
REDISCOVERING THE HEART

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NATIONAL CITY , CALIFORNIA

FEBRUARY 2005

**NATIONAL CITY DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN**  
**PREPARED FOR THE CITY OF NATIONAL CITY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
**BY THE NATIONAL CITY PLANNING CONSORTIUM**

**FEBRUARY 2005**

**APPROVED BY THE NATIONAL CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**NOVEMBER 1, 2004**

**ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF NATIONAL CITY**  
**FEBRUARY 1, 2005**  
**RESOLUTION NO. 2005-06**

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**PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

DIRECTOR

Roger Post

ACTING CITY ENGINEER

Steve Kirkpatrick

**Cover:**

Photo of Brick Row, 1888

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**Vignette Photos:**

There are multiple "vignette" photos found throughout this document that were taken within Downtown National City, and nearby neighborhoods.

Please view them and "look again" at National City while you enjoy "Rediscovering The Heart"



## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

**NICK INZUNZA**  
**MAYOR**

### TRANSMITTAL LETTER

On February 1, 2005 the City Council of National City adopted the Downtown Specific Plan. The day was significant for National City as it marked a milestone, a “coming of age” for our proud historic community. The need for a new specific plan is the result of a region-wide discovery that National City is a location worthy of investment and an enhanced and attractive living environment. Interest in new construction and rehabilitation in the core of National City increases the need for state-of-the-art development plans and regulations to help assure that downtown once again becomes the thriving, vibrant heart of the city.

The Downtown Specific Plan is not a final step, but a mid-point of a long-term effort to realize the full potential of National City’s central business district. Several years ago a number of business leaders became a forceful voice and strong advocate to change a business district encumbered by blight and under utilized properties to a destination that is a pedestrian friendly, retail oriented, mixed-use residential neighborhood. This is a plan based on reality, not fantasy and includes a realistic assessment of market forces with pragmatic development requirements. The plan sends a signal far and wide that National City is raising the bar to rebuild a downtown that includes superior architecture and urban design.

I want to thank staff, the professional planning team, and the many citizens and business owners who participated tirelessly in this effort. This undertaking included innumerable meetings and workshops during the past two years. The plan builds on a legacy of wise choices that included the restoration of Brick Row, and construction of Police Headquarters, Education Village, a state of the art library and fire station. This is the right time for National City to assume its proper role as the premiere city of the South Bay. It is now clear, more than ever that National City is a place where things get done... and done right.

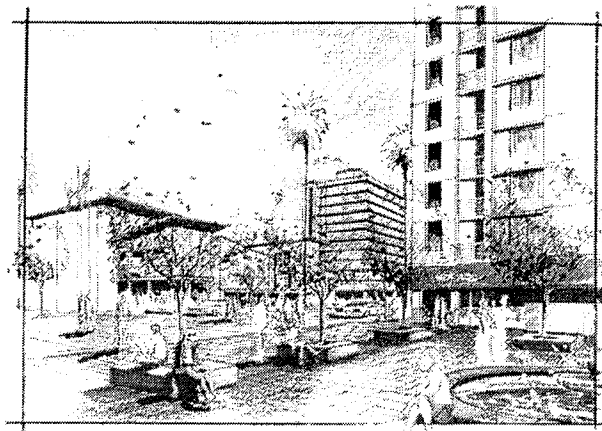
Sincerely,

Nick Inzunza  
Mayor

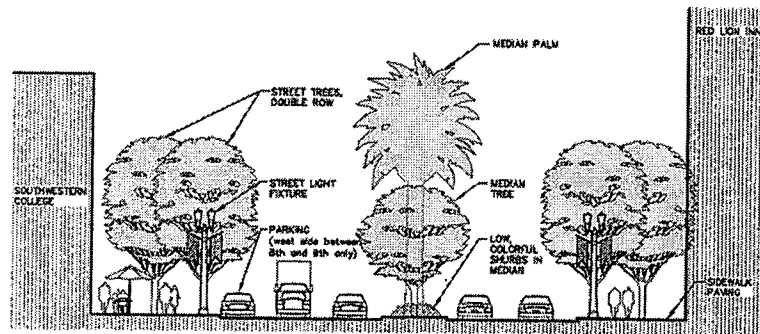
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## NATIONAL CITY DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN

The National City Downtown Specific Plan amends the adopted General Plan, serving as a refinement of the goals of the General Plan by affixing precise design and land use standards to development and redevelopment proposals within Downtown National City.



The plan is the product of an extended public input process. It reflects the ever-more-evident evolution of National City as a desirable and attractive place to live, invest and thrive. This plan is based on the solid foundation of refined economic analysis and the concepts identified herein are designed to fit the existing and anticipated marketplace so that they will be achievable.



SECTION: NATIONAL CITY BOULEVARD - 7TH STREET TO 9TH STREET

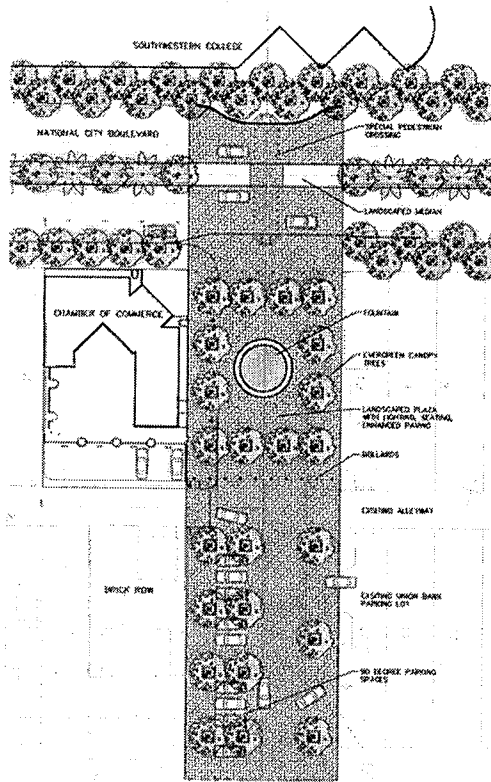
EX - 1

E X E C U T I V E   S U M M A R Y

FEBRUARY 2005

An effort has been made to create a downtown alive with pedestrians, shops, offices, cafes, hotels, students, residents, and visitors. The downtown is envisioned as a vertical central core keying on the intersection of two grand avenues - National City Boulevard and Eighth Street. High-rise residential and mixed-use buildings are envisioned defining a new downtown core,

while on the first floors shops, offices and café's line the streets. Farther from the intersection mid-rise and townhouse residential communities arise, vivid in life, filled with families, singles, empty nesters - a diverse and energized populace enjoying National City's urban hub of commerce. It is not a stretch to imagine downtown National City emerging regionally as a vibrant, urbane, cosmopolitan personal experience. Education Village, Brick Row, and Kimball Park, as well as the new library and many new development projects under way, or on the boards, are a clear sign that National City has already entered a "new era." This plan proposes to build on this momentum by encouraging a more varied and enchanting mix of uses near the heart, and a splash of intense landscaping and a major new public plaza that helps



PLAN: FOUNTAIN PLAZA

integrate the thriving central business district with Kimball Park. The plan also serves to affirm bonds between the downtown and emerging neighborhood commercial streetscapes such as Highland Avenue's El Pueblo and Cocina Mexicana merchants, Plaza Boulevard's Filipino Village and the famous National City Mile of Cars.

### USING THE SPECIFIC PLAN

The Specific Plan provides a complete analysis of the downtown as well as a series of recommendations that address identified issues and potential opportunities. This plan contains specific recommendations derived from a comprehensive process of civic engagement and professional refinement. This process included citizens, National City staff, interested parties, and professional planners and evaluators from related disciplines including architecture and economics. This is a sizable document because it

chronicles, in very specific detail, the progression of thought and diagnostic techniques that resulted in the recommendations chosen. This Executive Summary has been written in order that those who design or review development proposals and building plans for conformance with the Specific Plan will have clear, concise and comprehensive command of all of the intricate and proven standards and design philosophies that form the basis of the plan.

### **Planning as a Process**

If life is considered a journey, then "planning" can be seen as a roadmap. The reason plans such as these are created is that plans help us make choices, with the understanding that the right choices are those that are pragmatic and made with a unified sense of purpose – based on reality and with an eye toward a commonly desired goal. Determining the "right" choices for downtown National City required that the Specific Plan be developed with a solid understanding of the existing assets and burdens of the study area as well as a grasp of the current and future market conditions, and perhaps most importantly, a shared desire for achievable goals. Only then did the framers compose the Specific Plan recommendations in order to build toward the realization of a better future.

### **How to Use the Chapters of the Specific Plan**

**CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION** – Chapter I "Introduction" sets the tone and outlines the philosophies of the plan. The Introduction frames this plan, and exhibits the plan's personality. It serves to embolden the user to believe in National City and recognize that National City should approach development review from a position of well-documented strength.

*Use Chapter I as a tool to challenge development applicants to do more than simply comply with a set of minimum standards. Use this chapter to encourage proposals that meet the spirit as well as the letter of the regulations. The result should be projects that exhibit innovation as well as superior urban design that is worthy of National City.*

**CHAPTER II – DOWNTOWN PROFILE AND CHARACTERISTICS** – Chapter II: "Downtown Profile and Characteristics" provides the user with a community profile, including demographic (population and income) data that is vital to those who are considering investing in Downtown National City.

*Use the data in Chapter II to understand the marketplace and recognize projects that have the greatest opportunities for fitting into the local economy, or elevate the economic choices for the citizenry.*

## **CHAPTER IV – LAND USE REGULATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS and CHAPTER VI – URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES**

Chapter IV: "Land Use Regulations and Development Standards includes a series of specific recommendations and standards for each of fifteen "Development Zones." A table that summarizes the fundamental development intensity and land use preferences from the land use Regulations and Development Standards chapter is included at the end of this Executive Summary. Land use recommendations, urban design standards, strategies to enhance the commercial corridors, create central gathering places are located in Chapter VI: "Urban Design Guidelines". There are focused ideas regarding plazas, shops, streetscape enhancements, parking, building setbacks, mixed-use strategies, gateways, landscaping, street signs, and links to Kimball Park in Chapter VI. There has been a conscious effort to identify approaches that are achievable so that limited time and energy can be devoted to efforts that offer the greatest chance for success and produce the most profound and broad-based results.

*Use Chapters IV and VI to gain a more complete understanding of the base development standards. There are a large number of drawings in the chapter that can provide guidance to both the drafters and reviewers of projects who desire compliance with the shared vision for the resurgence of Downtown National City*

**CHAPTER VII - FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS** - Chapter VII: "Future Implementation Programs" outlines the specific steps to be taken to carry forth the recommendations in the Specific Plan. Implementation of the land use recommendations, urban design standards, and related strategies is proposed to be executed through the development of a Business Improvement District (BIP), a Landscape Maintenance District (LMD), a Parking District and a Storefront Improvement Program. A major component of the Future Implementation Programs Chapter is the Streetscape Master Plan, since improvements to the public infrastructure are essential to the success of the effort.

*Use Chapter VII to form the foundation for the formulation of agencies, business groups, and other semi public or public bodies whose primary task is to execute the recommendations.*



## LAND USE PREFERENCES

DEV'T ZONE	DENSITIES		MAX HEIGHT	PREFERRED LAND USE																			
	DU/AC DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE	MAX FLOOR AREA RATIO		RESIDENTIAL					COMMERCIAL					OTHER									
				SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED	TOWNHOME	MEDIUM DENSITY	HIGH-DENSITY	MIXED USE	MOTEL	HOTEL	THEATERS & CAFES	RESTAURANTS	RETAIL	PROFESSIONAL OFFICE	AUTO-ORIENTED RETAIL	PUBLIC PARKING	INSTITUTIONAL / COLLEGE	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL	PARK / PLAZA				
1A	-	6:1	None					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
1B	-	6:1	None					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
2	-	4:1	75'			✓																	
3	-	4:1	75'			✓		✓															
4	-	6:1	90'			✓		✓		✓				✓									
5A	20-30	3:1	36'			✓		✓															
5B	-	4:1	90'			✓		✓															
6	-	6:1	None			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	-	6:1	None			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	20-30	3:1	36'		✓																		
9	-	5:1	90'				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	20-30	3:1	36'		✓																		✓
11	-	4:1	50'			✓																	
12	-	5:1	90'			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓								
13	-	4:1	75'			✓																	
14	-	4:1	75'			✓																	

**15 KIMBALL PARK**

**NOTES:**  
 36' Height Limit for townhouses in all districts. Additional height, beyond the 36-foot limit, is not allowed for an additional occupied floor, but can be approved for stair houses, garden rooms, trellis structures and similar.

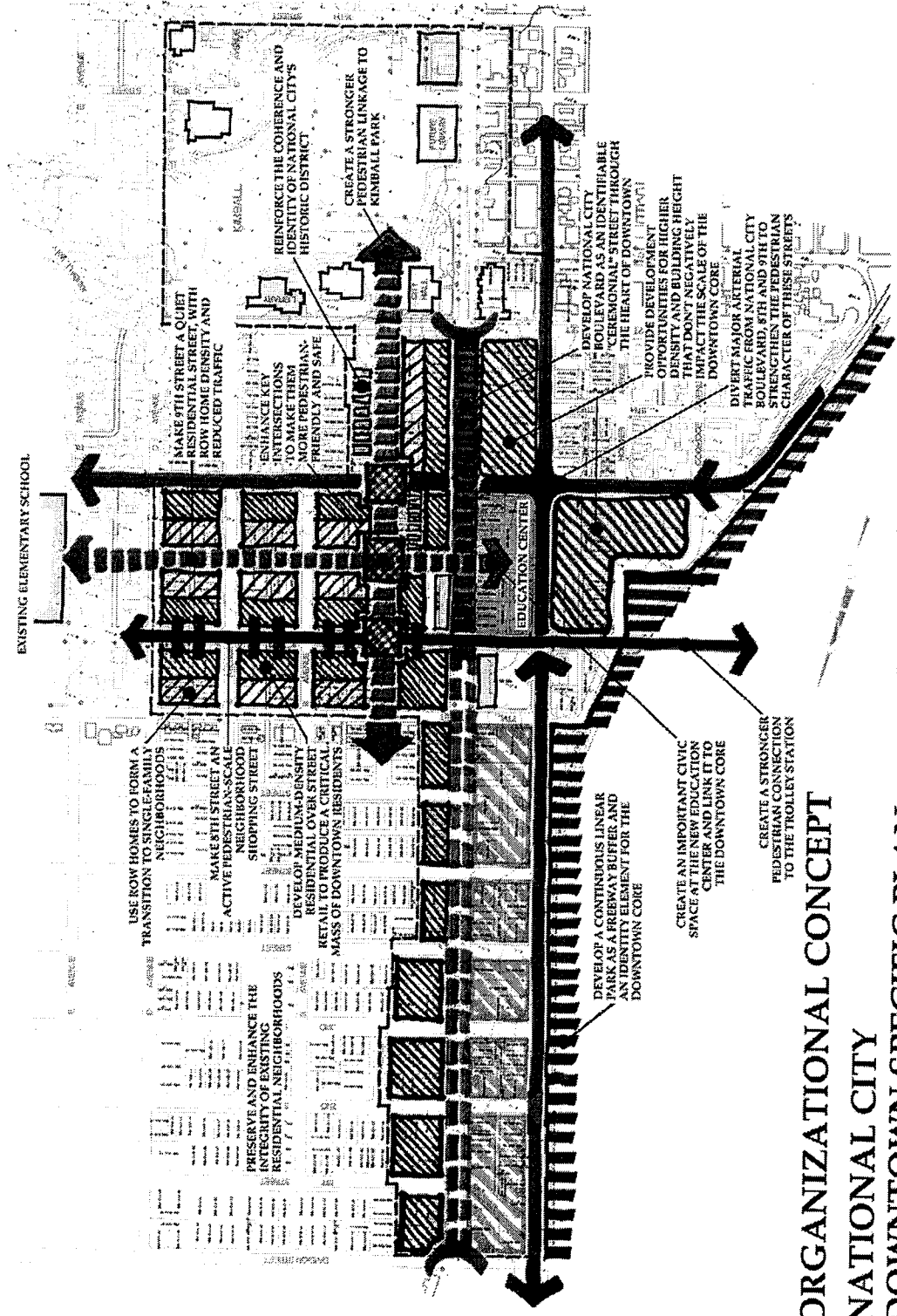
Specific height limits are not applied to Development Zones 1A, 1B, 6 and 7, the ultimate height will be governed by Floor Area Ratio and the pragmatics of market capacity and the floor plate requirements of a chosen building use.

Limits on densities, as described in "dwelling units per acre", only apply to Townhouse Development Zones 5, 8, and 10. Otherwise, Floor Area Ratio and height govern the intensity of development.

## PARKING REQUIREMENTS

<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>	
NUMBER OF BEDROOMS	MINIMUM REQUIRED OFF STREET PARKING SPACES PER DWELLING UNIT
Studio	1
One Bedroom	1
Two Bedroom	1.2
Three or More	1.4
<b>NON RESIDENTIAL</b>	
MINIMUM REQUIRED OFF STREET PARKING SPACES PER 1,000 SQ. FT. GFA*	
2.5**	

**NOTES:**  
 \*Includes Gross Floor Area plus below Grade Floor Area and Excludes Floor Area Devoted to Parking  
 \*\*The minimum parking ratios apply to all non-residential uses and only eating and drinking establishments that do not have a common parking area with any other uses. There is no minimum parking requirement for outdoor dining.



**ORGANIZATIONAL CONCEPT  
NATIONAL CITY  
DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN**

EX - 6

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FEBRUARY 2005

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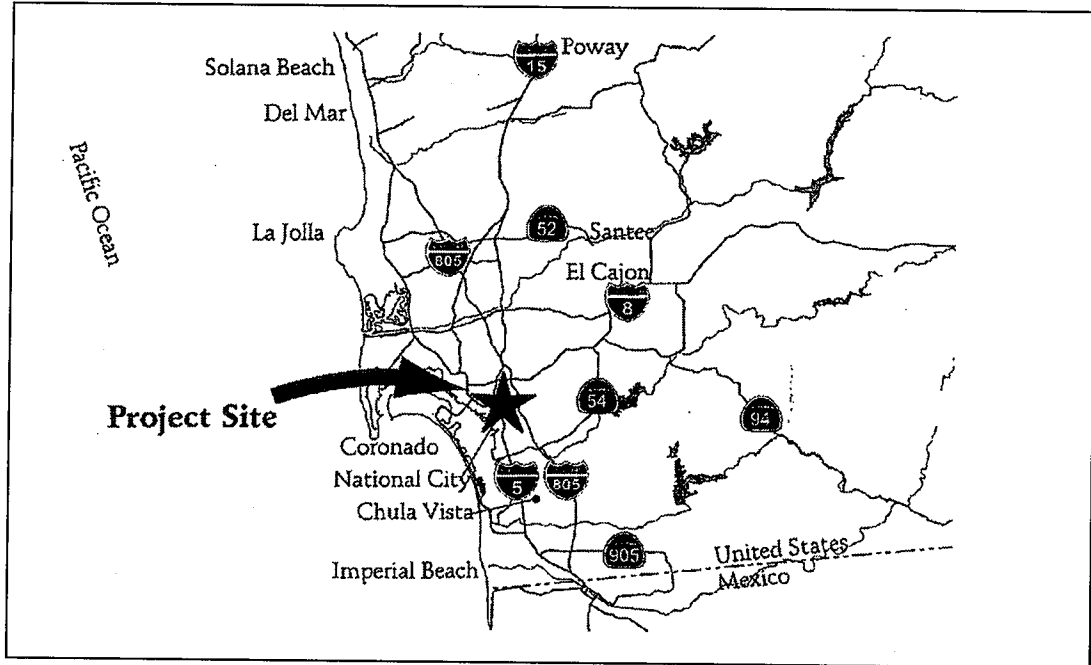
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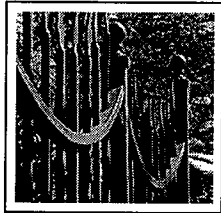
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I

# INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

### CELEBRATING NATIONAL CITY

An oxyacetylene torch combines pure oxygen and acetylene to yield a flame of 3,480 degrees Celsius. It is the only mixture known that will burn hot enough to cut steel. National City knows this. National City cuts steel. National City builds, repairs, loads, and sails ships. This 140-year-old city on San Diego Bay embodies a proud and rich tradition of commerce and meaningful production. From the 32<sup>nd</sup> Street Naval Station to the National City Marine Terminal, and along the Sweetwater Channel, National City flexes its considerable economic muscles with drama, poise and class. The neat and modern 21<sup>st</sup> Century industrial parks near the waterfront teem with activity. Fork lifts dash and dart, transferring wares and goods between truck and terminal. Thousands of new cars from across the planet occupy vast storage lots. In addition to its maritime roots, the high technology research that occurs here signifies National City's emergence into the most modern of economic mainstreams. Meanwhile in this city of communities, rich cultural traditions are celebrated in vivid, diverse, and authentic enclaves. Highland Avenue's El Pueblo and Cocina Mexicana merchants offer a distinctive and growing variety of choices. Neighborhoods like Plaza Boulevard's Filipino Village reflect multiplicity both broad and deep. Thousands of people from throughout the region are drawn to National City Boulevard to purchase their cars.



National City has amassed a consistent legacy of achievement. From the railroad museum, Brick Row, the marina district, the Chamber of Commerce building, the Mile of Cars to the new Education Village. This city of 56,000 does important things, and does them well. National City gets things done.

Having given so much to the country, National City now turns its attention inward. The intent of this specific plan for Downtown National City is to elevate its commercial and cultural core by taking best advantage of its splendid array of attributes and accelerating the momentum provided by exciting new development opportunities.

A plan is more than a study - it is a process. National City, in going through this planning process, has learned more about itself along the way. There are certain absolutes that will apply whether or not all aspects of this plan come to full fruition. Downtown is changing; changing for the better. And because the investment climate, and the attitudes that govern it, are dynamic, there will be unanticipated events and opportunities that will compel some of these recommendations to be reconsidered - that is the nature of all planning exercises. In this case, however, National City can rest assured that this plan anticipates



current energies and trends that will propel the process into the future.

There is comfort in a plan that is grounded in sound verifiable analysis, a plan that identifies existing - and often divergent - trends, and harnesses their energy in one positive direction for the greater common good. Education Village, the emergence of Highland Avenue and Filipino Village, the new fire station, library, and several large scale private projects just on the horizon, infuse the Downtown development atmosphere with vigor and optimism.

It is understood that there is a limit to funds and effort. This plan provides a very achievable and efficient framework for the expenditure of these precious assets because it is the product of daunting research, keen observation, valuable experience and common sense.



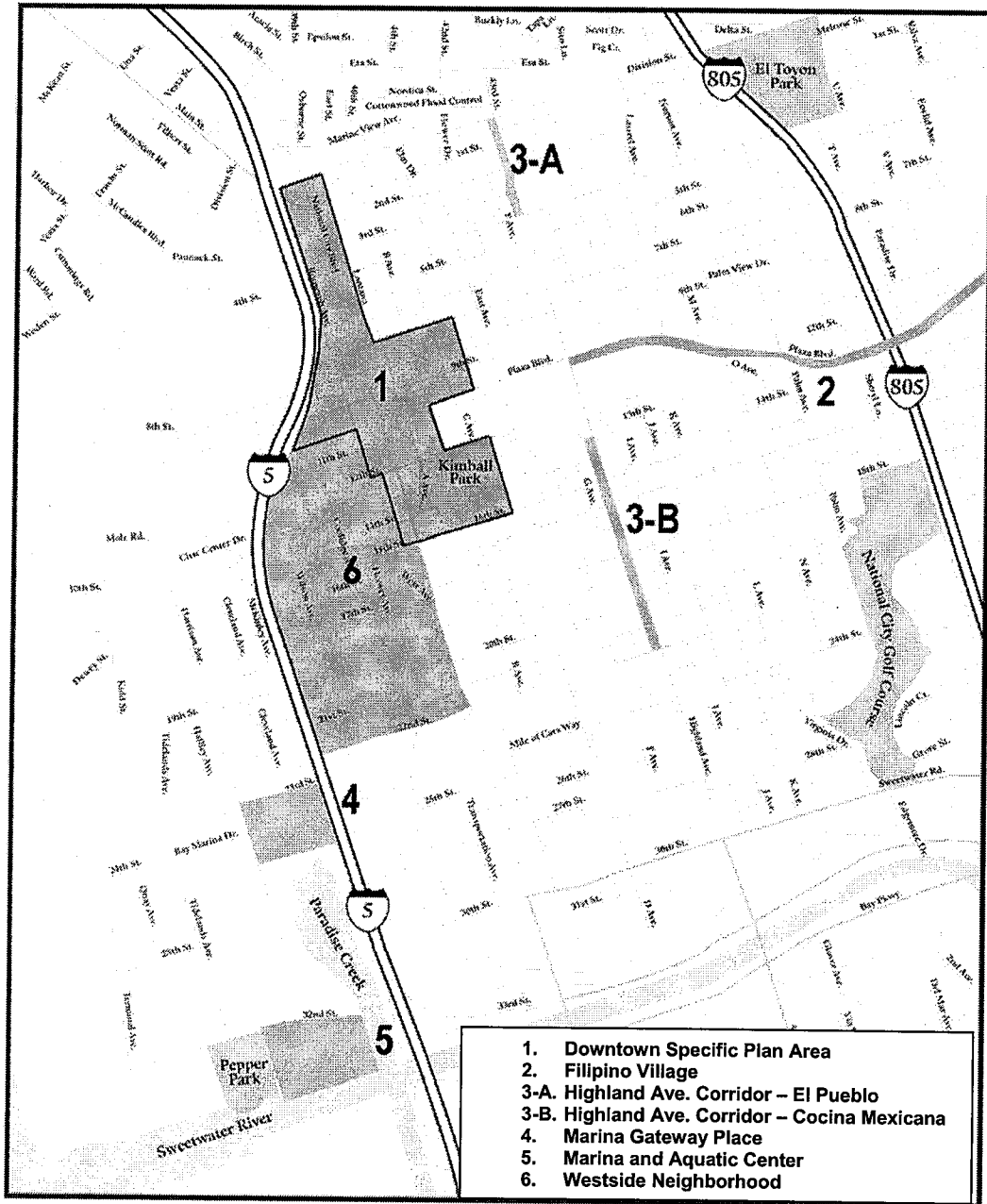
What has been learned? We have learned that National City has more opportunities than issues, more potential than problems, and more interest from investors than ever before. This process has reaffirmed that the basic structure of Downtown National City is sound, and holds within it the foundation for a truly successful, rich, and varied urban experience. Exciting new projects not only promise to fill gaps, they send a signal to outside observers, and the citizens of National City, that the Downtown is in the midst of a historic rediscovery. Certainly, it will take time to bring Downtown National City to

full fruition. It can happen if all involved exercise patience, determination, courage, and faith. As those who helped craft this plan will attest - Downtown National City has only begun to realize its potential. It is the intent of this plan to convert this evident potential into a vivid reality.

As the reader will see in subsequent chapters, it is apparent that there is a market for additional development in Downtown National City. And, though this market is substantial, it is nevertheless ultimately limited, and will vary over time.

In the interest of building immediate revitalization momentum and maximizing the impact of initial new development, this plan proposes that the mass of this market potential be concentrated in the core. This has been done by arraying the largest Floor Area Ratios and greatest heights in the development districts nearest the key intersection of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and National City Boulevard. To complete this revitalization tableau, it is then proposed that lower Floor Area Ratios and reduced maximum heights be applied to development districts that lie farther from the core. This is done to help achieve a natural transition from the vertical "signature" core of Downtown National City to the low-rise neighborhoods and commercial districts that surround it.

The future is inevitable. This plan proposes to help National City face this inevitability with promise, hope, and prosperity.



## National City Specific Planning Areas

II

DOWNTOWN PROFILE  
&  
CHARACTERISTICS



II - 1

DOWNTOWN PROFILE & CHARACTERISTICS

FEBRUARY 2005

