



# Cultural Designation: *The Corridor*

## *Teralta Park*

USC City Heights Studio | Spring 2019

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## **I. City Heights Community Context**

### **A. History**

Back in the 1880s, the neighborhood we now call “City Heights” was 240 acres of land outside of City of San Diego bought by two private developers (City Heights Town Council, 2019). As population drastically increased, in 1912, the land was incorporated into City of East San Diego; and later in 1923, City of East San Diego was incorporated into City of San Diego, and the area was known as “City Heights” neighborhood (City Heights Town Council, 2019). From 1930s to 1940s City Heights gradually became a node for commercial activities; but the commercial life started to decline in the 1960s due to competition from commercial developments in other neighborhoods (City Heights Town Council, 2019).

Businesses supported up zoning of the community in the hope that more population will bring more business activities and income (Environmental Health Coalition, 2011). As a result, the community plan of 1965 allowed multifamily units in much of City Heights, spurring development of apartments (EHC, 2011). In 1971, the proportion of multifamily housing increase from 9 percent to 31 percent; and more recently, the percentage of multifamily housing become approximately 60 percent (EHC, 2011).

Refugees of Vietnam War flowed into City Heights in the 1970s; soon after, refugees from Kosovo, East African countries, and Central America, etc. also moved into the community (EHC, 2011). Attracted by relatively lower rents, lower income households in San Diego started to move into City Heights as well (EHC, 2011). The growth of population from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds shaped City Heights today, where residents collectively speak over thirty languages (EHC, 2011).

Unfortunately, crime rate was also on the rise in the 1970s -1990s (EHC, 2011). Decline was visible after Caltrans claimed many parcels of housing to prepare for the extension of the I-15 freeway: the homes were not torn down immediately, creating blight and reducing sense of safety (EHC, 2011). In the 1990s, the City Heights Community Development Corporation organized residents to demand freeway coverage that connects the east and west sides of I-15 (EHC, 2011). Due to funding constraint, Caltrans approved partial coverage in the form of a community park, which is now known as Teralta Park (EHC, 2011). The University Ave and El Cajon freeway bridge decks were also widened for bus stations (EHC, 2011).

Since 1994, Price Charities and other public, private and nonprofit organizations formed partnership to redevelop several blocks of City Heights, known as the “City Heights Urban Village” (EHC, 2011; City of San Diego, 2010). This eight-block redevelopment project transformed a portion of City Heights by adding housing, retail, and community serving land uses such as libraries and schools (City of San Diego, 2010).

### **B. Past & Existing Plans**

#### **1. Mid City Community Plan**

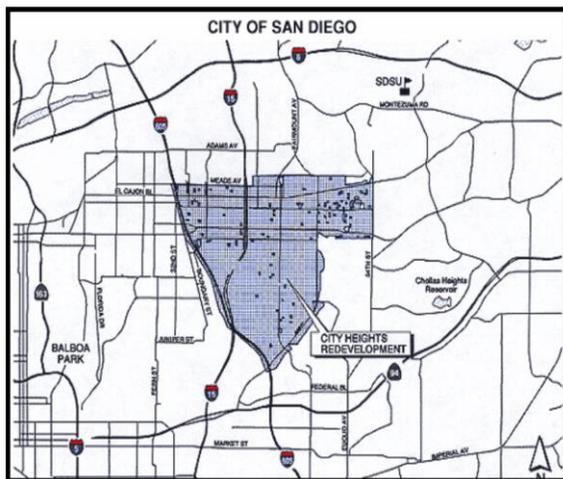
Community plan in City Heights is covered under the Mid Cities Community Plan of 1998. Due to “the lack of adequate community facilities”, the Plan states that in the residential zones, the maximum allowed density was reduced from 55 units per acre (as in the 1984 plan) to 29 units per acre (City of San Diego, 1998, p.1). In mixed-use zones, the maximum density is 73 units per acre versus 108 units per acre in the 1984 plan (City of San Diego, 1998). Light manufacturing developments were encouraged due to their benefit on job creation and the Plan supported their frontage to face streets (City of San Diego, 1998).

The 1998 Plan recommended businesses to focus on “community goods and services” because they would attract commercial activities within the community; the Plan also suggested businesses to highlight their

strength in cultural diversity and work towards creating an “international marketplace” (City of San Diego, 1998, p. 2). The Plan envisions that, by 2020, the community becomes a “vital commercial, business, and employment center” and contains “streets, businesses, and public gathering spaces that promote interaction among [community] residents ... and that will draw people from elsewhere to discover Mid-City” (City of San Diego, 1998, p.5).

## 2. City Heights Redevelopment

To remove blight in City Heights, the San Diego Redevelopment agency proposed to provide opportunities for affordable housing, new commercial space, better transit access, jobs, youth services, and improved schools (San Diego Redevelopment Agency, 2002). Within the City Heights Redevelopment Project Area, the City of San Diego provided residents and interested developers with assistance to gain permits, and incentivized business owners to make storefront improvements by participating in rebates on facade improvements (SDRA, 2002).



The redevelopment programs include the “City Heights Urban Village” that develops eight blocks of mixed-use community including housing, commercial, educational, and civic uses; the “Home in the Heights Homebuyer and Rehab Programs” that supports residents’ relocation resulted from proposed redevelopments and new constructions; the “San Diego State University Community Center” that provides space for job training, youth development, teacher professional development, and City Heights Community Development Corporation offices; and last but not the least, infrastructure improvements projects such as the “State Route 15 Improvements”, “University Avenue Improvements”, water pipeline and sewer line improvements (SDRA, 2002).

Fig. 1 City Heights Redevelopment Project Area Map (SDRA, 2002)

## C. Community Activism Leading to the Construction of Teralta Park

In the 1990s, Caltrans claimed 8 blocks along 40th St in City Heights to make way for the construction of I-15 connection (Daniels, 2017). The construction was not planned to start right after Caltrans’ takeover of the land, so a portion of the land would be sitting vacant until construction begin in 1996 (Daniels, 2017). The City Heights Community Development Corporation gathered community input and found that neighboring residents would like to invite a community garden on the vacant land before it was excavated by Caltrans. The community made it happen. From 1991 to 1996, City Heights community garden thrived on the vacant land where later was excavated into the ditch carrying the I-15 freeway (Daniels, 2017). During the five-year life span of the community garden, community residents from different backgrounds came together: residents who speak seven different languages and come from multiple nationalities grew healthy produce on the same land; artists created public art on the garden fence; children and adults installed the art pieces together (Daniels, 2017). Community identity was built by the “dancing carrots” art pieces, celebrating community connection and hope (Daniels, 2017).

The beautiful connection between land and individuals, as well as connection among individuals, fostered a resilient community that transcended stereotypes of a low-income and crime-plagued community. We cannot summarize the magical effect of identity-creation better than what City Heights resident Anna Daniels (2017) reflected on San Diego Free Press:



*“What we grow at the garden transcends the plots filled with mustard, garlic, peppers and corn, plots which put food on the table of over 200 families, most of us poor. Our garden is a tangible expression of cultural identity through the specific types of vegetables and plants grown and even through the growing techniques ; it connects gardeners to the seasons, permitting us to exist for a while outside of the harsh arbitration of the clock hands. We garden because it connects us to homelands we will probably never see again.” (Daniels, 2017).*

Fig. 2 City Heights Community Garden Prior

to I-15 Construction (Daniels, 2017)

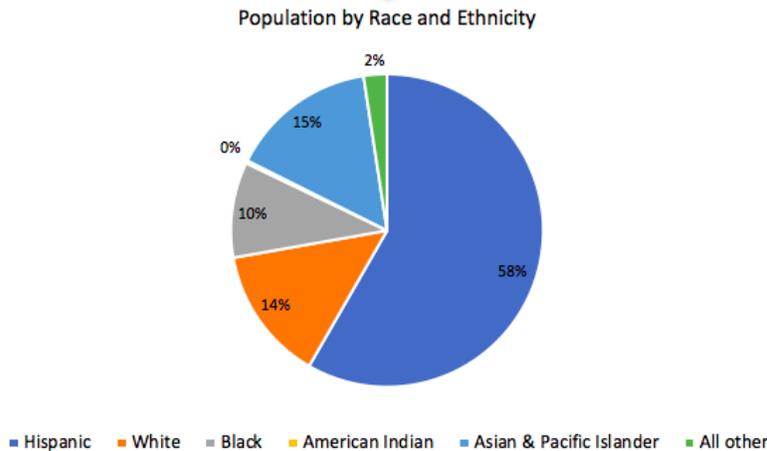
When 1996 eventually came and the land had to be excavated for I-15, the community lost this vibrant and precious public space (Daniels, 2017). They wanted to seek other options to create open space, mitigate effect of community separation, and build community-serving facilities (Daniels, 2017). After hearing from successful precedents of freeway covers, community organizers led by City Heights Community Development Corporation were convinced to negotiate for freeway covers of five blocks (Daniels, 2017). The community asked for not only the freeway covers but also advocated for a rapid bus that goes North-South on I-15. Eventually, due to funding constraint, Caltrans approved a two-block freeway cover and constructed the Teralta Park in 2001 (Daniels, 2017). The rapid bus, known as “Centerline”, was added in 2017 after tremendous community organizing efforts (Daniels, 2017).

Despite that Teralta Park provides open space and community gathering spot for residents, safety issues on Teralta Park are also brought to attention. While it provided space for children to hang out and play sports, gang members have also claimed it as their territory and shunned children from playing there (Carless, 2008). Community member Joyce Brown, a property manager back in the 2000s living near Teralta Park, heard this issue from children in her apartment complex, and started mobilizing the community into watching the safety at Teralta Park (Carless, 2008). She advocated for the implementation of a security camera system on the park and organized community walks called “metro miles” (Carless, 2008).

News articles still occasionally cover crime activities on Teralta Park, but the legacy of community activism and the persistent fight for a better future is an example of how a underprivileged and diverse community insist on creating cohesion and a thriving future. A place with such ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity and such long-lasting activism is worth preserving and deserve recognition.

#### **D. Demographics of Overall Community**

## 1. Race/Ethnicity



The San Diego Association of Governments 2016 population estimate shows that 58 percent of residents in City Heights are Hispanic/Latino, 15 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, 14 percent White, and 10% Black.

Fig. 3 Race/Ethnicity in City Heights (SANDAG, 2017)

## 2. Income

According to San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG, 2017) 2016 demographic estimates, the median household income in City Heights is \$29,209 (adjusted for inflation, based on 2010 dollars).



Fig. 4 Median Household Income in City Heights (SANDAG, 2017)

## 4. Housing

Fifty six percent of the housing units in City Heights are multi-family units (SANDAG, 2017). Additionally, twenty-four percent of housing units are categorized as “single family-multiple-unit” housing, which includes “row houses, townhouses, and duplex/triplex developments” (SANDAG, 2017; SANDAG, 2018).

### HOUSING AND OCCUPANCY

	Total Housing Units	Households	Vacancy Rate
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>23,872</b>	<b>22,851</b>	<b>4.3%</b>
Single Family - Detached	4,863	4,661	4.2%
Single Family - Multiple-Unit	5,648	5,389	4.6%
Multi-Family	13,361	12,801	4.2%
Mobile Home and Other	0	0	--

Fig. 5 Housing and Occupancy (SANDAG, 2017)

## 5. Key industries

According to City Heights Community Development Corporation, the presence of informal economy in City Heights is significant (CHCDC, 2013). Residents frequently access food establishments, clothing, and other basic services that are informal businesses (CHCDC, 2013). Besides the people employed in the informal economy, a significant portion (around 34 percent) of all employees in City Heights work in the service industry (ACS, 2017).

## II. Background on CA Cultural District Designation

### A. California Cultural District Designation Overview

A Cultural District, as defined by the California Cultural Districts program, is “a well-defined geographic area with a high concentration of cultural resources and activities” (California Arts Council, 2017). Established in 2016, the program aims to help leverage California’s abundant cultural assets and capitalize on the creativity, diversity, and artistic identities of local communities. It creates an innovative tool for the cultivation of California’s cultural assets is further supported by the adoption of AB 189, which requires the California Arts Council to develop criteria and guidelines for state-designated cultural districts.

The application process requires cultural asset mapping. The applicants should identify existing cultural resources and facilities and then provide a cultural asset survey/ inventory. Multi-sectoral leadership & partnership is also necessary and evidence of community support is a must. The application should involve qualified, diverse, and committed NPOs, arts enterprises, artists, and communities, and local residents should have their representation in leadership. In order to be selected, the applicants should articulate “the vision for the district, measurable goals and defined evaluation measures, achievable objectives for each of the first two years, and defined management budget with associated income and expenses” (California Arts Council, 2016).

Through open application process, a cohort of 10 to 15 districts will be designated. According to the California Arts Council (2017), these districts will have different identities in regard to their context and related cultural focus so as to form a comprehensive typology. Urban district might focus more on cultural production, while suburban districts will have a higher concentration in cultural consumption. And rural districts will have a focus on the preservation, support, and development of existing cultural heritage. The first cohort of 14 state-designated Cultural Districts was announced in 2017, three of which are located in San Diego, including Balboa Park Cultural District, Barrio Logan Cultural District, and Oceanside Cultural District<sup>1</sup>.

The selected Cultural Districts will receive lots of benefits, including official state certification, promotional, technical, and marketing support, as well as participation in the program evaluation with a stipend of \$5,000. These benefits create attractive opportunities for the communities to boost economy, stimulate local business, and generate jobs.

### B. An Example: Barrio Logan Cultural District

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.caculturaldistricts.org/about-the-districts>

Barrio Logan neighborhood is located south of downtown San Diego, on the coast of the San Diego Bay. It is an hub of Mexican-American culture and features a rich history, authentic cultural assets, as well as a grassroots coalition of artists, residents, NPOs and businesses. In 1970, the neighborhood fight the battle over park space and won themselves the Chicano Park. With a pretty similar story to tell about Teralta Park and a more diversified population, our site could learn a lot from the example of Barrio Logan in term of what makes a successful Cultural District Designation:

1. A clear geographical boundary with historically formed internal cohesion.
2. Pre-existing density and thriving forces of urban growth.
3. Abundant cultural diversity and unique artistic identities derived from socio-economic and ethnic diversity.
4. A high concentration of artistic, cultural, heritage, or entertainment resources and activities, including authentic cultural assets, active local artists, creative enterprises and arts venues, etc.
5. Walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment and good accessibility.

### **C. Other Resources**

Our site is within the City Heights Business Improvement District<sup>2</sup> and can utilize resources specific to the district. Apart from the California Cultural District designation, other programs worth considering include San Diego Historic District designation<sup>3</sup>, San Diego Business Incentive Program<sup>4</sup>, San Diego Small Local Business Enterprise (SLBE) Program<sup>5</sup>, and integration into the San Diego Promise Zone<sup>6</sup>.

### **D. Scope of Work**

Our project client is City Heights Community Economic Development Collaborative. Our group is assigned to study one of four nodes in City Heights, highlight its assets, evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and provide recommendations on 1) whether an walkable area around the node is suitable for the cultural district designation; and 2) what interventions are needed to improve the node's competitiveness in applying for the cultural district designation.

### **E. Research Methodology**

To conduct background research, we walked around the blocks and observed the area. On University Ave between I-15 and I-805, we have also conducted walk-in interviews with business owners or store assistants.

*Lizy Giddy African Market & Lagos Kitchen*

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<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.sandiego.gov/economic-development/about/bids>

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/programs/historicpreservationplanning/historicdistricts>

<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://www.sandiego.gov/economic-development/industry/bip>

<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://www.sandiego.gov/eoc/programs/slbe>

<sup>6</sup> Source: <https://www.sandiego.gov/economic-development/sdpromisezone>



Photo by Team

We chatted with the owner’s daughter and was informed that their business has been in City Heights for 5 years. In 2005, the owner and her family immigrated to the U.S. from Nigeria; she used to do similar business in Nigeria, so she kept doing the supermarket & restaurant business in City Heights.

As the only Nigerian market in San Diego County, the business draws customers from all round San Diego. It attracts not only Nigerian immigrants but also customers from different races. Another factor benefitting the business is the “Lagos Kitchen” restaurant within the market—the restaurant attracts many customers as well.

*Diego Tattoos*



Photo by Team

Located near the University Ave & I-805 entrance, Diego Tattoos is a Tattoo shop with colorful murals painted on exterior wall. We talked with a store assistant and was informed that the business has been there for 2 years. The owner selected the location to do business because the location allows tattoo shop permit. Customers of Diego Tattoos come from all around San Diego.

*San Diego’s Finest Donuts Bakery*



Photo by Team

The Donut Bakery is owned by a Cambodian family who are ethnically Chinese, who also own the building property. They started business in the neighborhood since 1992. According to our conversation with the owner's son, around 80% of their customers are community residents, and the other 20% come from people who drive off the freeway. The owner is attracted to the location to do business because it is close to the freeway, which implies good access.

The family can accept a mural on the exterior wall; they have been in contact with Edwin and artists about selecting a mural design, but haven't found the design that the family likes yet.

### *Aqua Fruito*



Photo by Team

Aqua Fruito is a juice shop on University Ave. We talked with a store assistant. She said the business draws customer from the neighborhood as well as customers who drive by. The business has been there for 8 years. The business is going well, and it gets more customer in warm season between April and November.

Her favorite thing in the neighborhood includes the murals on University Ave. As for safety, she sometimes feels unsafe at night.

### *Jupiter Records and Tapes*

We chatted with owner of the store, who is also a resident of the Corridor neighborhood in City Heights. The business had been there since June 2018. The owner likes the diversity in the neighborhood; it is safe but not gentrified; many buildings have unique characters. Comparing to the portion of El Cajon Blvd between I-805 and I-15, the University Ave feels busier and El Cajon Blvd feels emptier.

The store invites some foot traffic because many people walk on the street and attract customers through words-of-mouth. The owner also markets the store on Instagram to attract a broader customer base. The painted sign of the store helps attract some customers too. If any new shops

were to be added to the neighborhood, he thinks it's important to think what the shop is for: does it serve community members? Is it something that people in the community needs and can afford?

*Suner Tattos*

According to our conversation with the owner of Suner Tattos, he said he was attracted to the location because of the relatively affordable business rent price and that it is next to the 805 freeway. He likes that there's no big box store on the portion of University Ave near his business. His business has customers from the neighborhood (walk-in customers) as well as old clients when he had a tattoo shop elsewhere. When asked about his ideas on what businesses will help invite outside customers, he thinks restaurants or specialty shops will help attract more outside customers.

### III. Individual Site Analysis

#### A. Why We Selected It

We selected the Corridor neighborhood to study, because of the strong presence of small businesses and family owned business. Drawing from our interviews with businesses, we found that these small businesses make the community unique. It is also the gateway to City Heights, connecting to the rest of City Heights through the freeways and thoroughfare. In addition, the close proximity from Teralta Park to the neighborhood makes the community stands out more.

#### B. Geography / Boundaries

Corridor, located in the west side of City Heights, is one of San Diego's unique neighborhoods. It is bounded by the 15 freeway on the east, the 805 freeway on the west, El Cajon Boulevard to the north and University Avenue to the south. The neighborhood is very diverse due to its large immigrant population, containing a variety of small businesses and restaurants of Mexican, Southeast Asian and East African origin. In the neighborhood, there is a mix of single family and multi-unit housing.



Fig.6 Corridor Neighborhood (Price Philanthropies, 2019)

#### C. Demographics, Housing, and Safety

The site area consists of census tract 16 (west Corridor) and 22.01 (east Corridor) of San Diego County (Social Explorer, 2018). Total population is 8,437 (ACS, 2017). Median household income of the site area is a lot lower than the median household income of San Diego County as a whole, while population below poverty level is almost twice higher than that of San Diego County. However, the labor force participation rate is higher than that of San Diego County. Educational attainment of the site area population is a bit lower than that of San Diego County, but there are still almost 25% people with

bachelor’s degree or higher (ACS, 2017). Median age is young, at 31 years old, less than the county median age (ACS, 2017).

Demographics Overview	Site Area	San Diego County
Average population density (people per sq. mi)	21,540*	735.8*
Median annual household income	\$38,265.50	\$70,588
% Population below poverty level	25%	13.30%
% Population in the labor force	70.80%	65.40%
Unemployment rate	9.50%	7.10%
% High School graduates or higher	73.20%	86.70%
% Bachelor's degree or higher	23.70%	37.40%
Median Age	31	35.4

Fig. 6 Demographics Overview (ACS 2013-2017 5 year estimates; \*ACS 2010)

**Age:** One-fifth of the population in the site area are between 25 and 34 years old (ACS, 2017). Those below 34 years old form 54.4% of the total population in these two census blocks (ACS, 2017).

**Race/Ethnicity:** About half of the population in our site area is hispanic or latino (ACS, 2017). Non-hispanic whites and Black or African American population each compose of about 20% of the total population (ACS, 2017). Asian population is around 12% (ACS, 2017). The percentages of latino and Black or African American population are significantly higher than San the data for the whole San Diego County.

**Income:** In the site area, 64% of households earn less than \$50,000 annually, while in San Diego County only 36% of households earn less than \$50,000 (ACS, 2017). According to the household income distribution, San Diego county as as whole is significantly wealthier than our site area.

**Distribution of Industries** (of the employed population above 16 years old):

The percentage of population employed in transportation, warehousing, and utilities is a lot higher than San Diego County as a whole, which is also demonstrated in the abundance of auto repair shops, tire shops, and other light industrial use in the area. The close proximity to two major freeways also gives the area a special advantage in auto-related industries. Percentage of population employed in the retail trade industry is also a bit higher than that of the whole county, potentially due to the concentration of businesses along the commercial strips of University Ave and El Cajon Blvd.

**Housing:** According to the zoning map, the majority of the parcels adjacent to University Ave are zoned as CC-5-4, which allows a mix of commercial uses, limited industrial uses, as well as residential uses

(San Diego Municipal Code, 2018). This zone allows maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 1500 square feet, with maximum height of 30 feet, and base floor area ratio of 1:1 (San Diego Municipal Code, 2018). The parcels near the intersection of University Ave and Interstate-15 are zoned as CUPD-CU-2-3 (central urbanized planned district), which allows for commercial uses such as retail, restaurant, or instructional studios; and light industrial uses such as recycling collection facility (San Diego Municipal Code, 2018). The maximum density allowed is 1 dwelling unit per 1000 square feet, with maximum height of 50 feet, and base floor area ratio of 1:1 (San Diego Municipal Code, 2018).

In our site area, the estimated total housing units is 3,806 (ACS, 2017). The area is heavily renter-occupied: among the occupied housing units, 12.4% are owner-occupied and 87.6% are renter occupied (American Community Survey, 2017). The median home value in the Corridor neighborhood is \$456,700, while the median home value of San Diego city is \$632,700, and the median home value of the west adjacent neighborhood of North Park is \$629,000 (Zillow, 2019). The median home value in the Corridor neighborhood is a 13.5% increase from the previous year. In January 2015, the median home value was approximately \$303,000, which reflects the increasing value of homes in the area.

**Community Safety:** Overall, the neighborhood of Corridor has average crime levels relative to the rest of San Diego County. Between January and November 2018, there were 4 rapes, 16 burglaries, 26 cases of aggravated assault, 67 cases of larceny theft, 42 cases of vehicle theft and 125 cases of property crime. (City of San Diego, 2018). According to the crime map on Trulia, the southeast corner of Corridor bordered by Polk Avenue and 37th Street has the highest risk of crime in the neighborhood (Trulia, 2019).

#### **D. Transportation Network**

Teralta Park is a great central location for the University Avenue Cultural Designation, especially if one day in the future, State Road 15 (SR15) would become continuously capped from the existing Teralta Park to University Avenue.

As for now, there are paths on both the eastern and western sides of SR15. Only one block away from the 7, 10, and 235 (SR15) buses, this park can ground or anchor better development both along University Ave (revitalization, not displacement), and a more inviting transit center along University Ave and SR15.

With the replacement of the elementary school, a new Right-of-Way will open, with us aiming for allow 41<sup>st</sup> Street to reconnect going north, giving better access to both the new development and Teralta Park. This pathway can be a primary pedestrian/bicycle route, with parking available (paved appropriately).

Western path: Along 39<sup>th</sup> and Polk Sts.

Eastern path: Along SR15 (existing) or 41<sup>st</sup> St and Polk Sts (proposed)

Also, we'd like to reduce the size of the roads, to discourage speeding, but not to hinder the bus speed. Recommendations include: bus-controlled signal timings, near-side bus stations (so while the bus is loading/unloading, the light is red, allowing opposite traffic on minor street to continue), better transit shelters (like those along El Cajon), improved sidewalk lighting, street trees and flowers, signage, and small roundabouts where appropriate.

Lastly, a gateway sign is needed for the City Heights community. If this sign were located in the University Ave Cultural Designation, it would be located either at Wabash Park or along University Avenue between Swift Ave and 35<sup>th</sup> Street.

Fig. 8 University Ave Dimensions

<p>Widest: 96'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Two bus bays &amp; Right-turning lane (13' each)</li> <li>● Four travel lanes (11' each)</li> <li>● Two left turning lanes (11' each)</li> <li>● Median (4')</li> </ul>	<p>Thinnest: 52'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Two lanes of parking (8' each)</li> <li>● Two travel lanes (12' each)</li> <li>● One turning lane (11' each)</li> </ul>
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Fig. 9 Proposed University Ave Dimensions

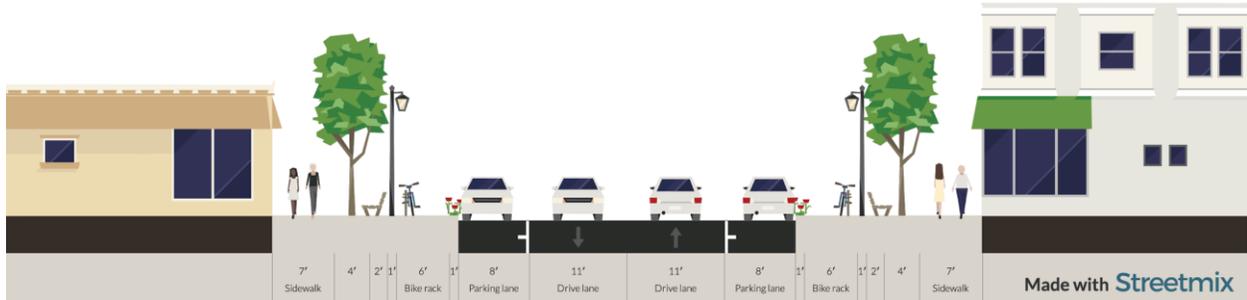
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### E. Streetscape / Walkability

The streetscape and walkability of the site area along University Avenue is best where the mature street trees have been allowed to flourish, which is only a small portion of the area. The shade is a great benefit to pedestrians and cyclists, while cars typically slow down around this area due to the change in lighting. A complete street (shown below) approach would be needed to transform the street from a street made for cars, to a street made for all.

Fig. 10 Street Section of the University Avenue

## University Ave



## University Ave (Transit Center)



Pedestrian safety is key in attracting more pedestrian traffic to the area in order to support the small businesses located along University Avenue. Sidewalks would be widened to allow for both pedestrian and cyclist traffic, with pedestrians on the inside nearest the buildings and cyclists nearest the car traffic. These modes will be separated by street trees and street furniture such as benches and street lighting. These simple improvements will bring a consistent canopy of trees for those along the sidewalks, while ensuring safety with wider sidewalks and better lighting underneath those trees.

Other streetfront improvements include improvements of the storefronts themselves - store signage, exterior design, and architecture. A byproduct of a bygone era in City Heights, bars on windows and poorly lit retail spaces plague the commercial spaces along University. More inviting, yet culturally vibrant design is needed to both showcase their community and invite outsiders to City Heights. All designs need to consider their nighttime presence as well - this provides a better sidewalk and driving experience if bright colors and lights are used rather than designs that may only look amazing before sundown.

Lastly, the asset that is Teralta Park is monumental for the community and aids in the bettering of City Heights as a whole by patching a piece of what splits the larger community into two pieces. Located along an express transit route between two express stations, a block away from University Avenue, this park serves as a monument to City Heights, who fought for years to have this among many other improvements brought to their community. A first in what is hoped to be many wins for the community, Teralta Park should be considered as an anchor for the possible designation.

## F. Community Assets

The area has a high concentration of retail businesses and auto-related businesses, as well as schools and churches that supports a community to thrive. The well-known Teralta Park is also on the east edge of our site. Murals drawn by artists, tattoo shop owners, local students, and community residents can be found on nearly every block on University Ave. These murals are started by a community organization that engages with local artists, students, businesses, and landowners to paint murals on the commercial strip with the owner's consent.

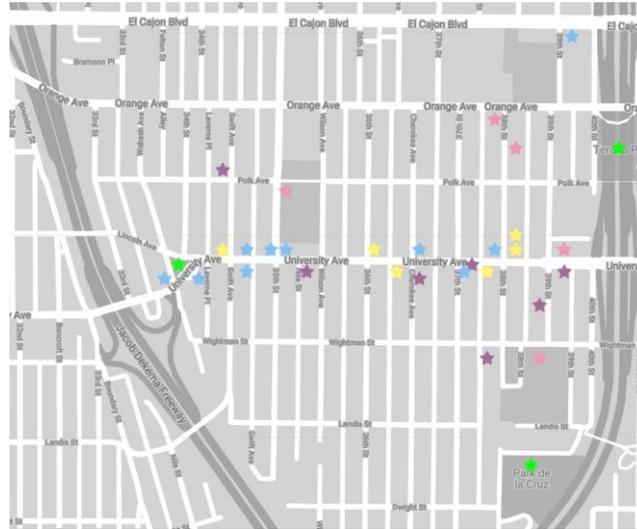


Fig. 11 Community Asset Map of the University Avenue - Teralta Park Area

- **Pink Stars - Schools:** Edison Elementary School, Wilson Middle School, Arroyo Paseo Charter High School, Health Sciences High & Middle College, Cherokee Point Elementary School
- **Purple Stars - Religious organizations:** Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal MI San Diego; St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Community Christian Church, The University Church, Church of Jesus Christ, Cherokee Point Assembly of God, Good News Missionary Baptist
- **Yellow Stars - Restaurants & retailers:** Super Cocina, Canada Steak Burger, Filiberto's Mexican Food, El Salvador Restaurante Y Pupuseria, Tumblewood Coffee, Loli's Flowers, Lizy Gidy African Market & Lagos Kitchen
- **Blue Stars - Auto-related business:** multiple tire shops, auto repair shops, car wash
- **Green Stars - Parks:** Teralta Park, Wabash Park, Park de la Cruz

### Key Features and Unique Assets

1. Center of diverse cuisines: With a diverse population, the site features delicious and authentic foods from different cultures.
2. Auto-centered neighborhood: The site is an automobile-centered neighborhood for its proximity to the highway. A large portion of business along University Avenue is auto services, which creates a connection with the outside of the neighborhood.
3. Significant green spaces: Teralta Park not only provides the space for recreation and communication, but also witnessed the community's history of fighting for their rights and serves as an important part of the community's identification.

4. Devoted community group: Focused on the University Avenue between the 805 and 15 Freeways, The Avenue Business Group works to

5. Street art hub: One of The Avenue's efforts is to have local artists and famous muralists on social media paint murals on any wall that is available. They also hold open-air festivals and other events with the murals as background.

## G. SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

The Corridor neighborhood has various strengths that can be maximized for its development. Firstly, it has a vibrant community and arts culture that makes it an attractive destination for artists, visitors and local residents. Because of its high Hispanic/Latino population, the neighborhood has a robust and authentic Latino culinary scene with restaurants like Super Cocina known throughout the city. The area is also filled with walled murals that reflect the diversity and artistic nature of the community. They help tell the story and history of the Corridor neighborhood, and are a good example for other neighborhoods to learn from in terms of using art to enhance branding and attracting visitors. Secondly, it has a labor force participation rate and employment rate that is higher than the county's. When looking at specific industries, the neighborhood has a higher rate of percentage employed in the retail trade, information, professional/scientific/management services, educational/health care services, and arts/entertainment/recreation services sectors compared to the county. This stands as a strength that can be used to boost the neighborhood's economic development.

### Weaknesses

The Corridor neighborhood has various weaknesses that have inhibited its development. Firstly, it is a low-income neighborhood that lags behind San Diego County in terms of various metrics. The population below the poverty level is almost twice as high as the county, while educational attainment is slightly lower than that of the county. The median household income in Corridor is significantly lower than the median level in the county. Secondly, the neighborhood lacks a pedestrian-centered transportation network and thus, lack of complete streets. Since the neighborhood is automobile-centric, the vibrancy of the neighborhood is inhibited by the lack of walkability.

### Opportunities

The Corridor neighborhood has different opportunities to boost its economic and cultural development. As mentioned before, the neighborhood can build upon its strengths as an diverse and immigrant-heavy area, and find ways to economically support its small businesses and arts culture. Doing this will help boost the neighborhood's viability to become a cultural hub and designated district. The neighborhood can also enhance land use efficiency, and optimize the use of vacant lots for resources it needs, including housing, retail, open and public space. Such interventions will help improve the overall quality of life in the neighborhood.

### Threats

- Ownership
  - Who owns the buildings that need repair?
  - Who works in the retail spaces? Do they own the building they work in?
  - Same questioning for residential buildings, especially multi-unit buildings.

- Language Barriers
  - Due to the fact that City Heights has over 100 language spoken throughout the neighborhood, translation and clearly explaining concepts and ideas will be key.
- Cultural Identity
  - Not one culture dominates the population or visual cues such as Little Saigon, so being able to package the Corridor neighborhood as a cultural designated place, but a multi-cultural destination.
- Financial Constraints
  - Property taxes, incentives, current construction and projects, infrastructure overhauls, other needs vs. wants in the community and surrounding neighborhoods.
  - How to raise the money / keep a financial system in place that is self-generating?
- Existing *De Facto* Culture
  - Fear of law enforcement
  - Invisible informal markets / lack of formal retail / lack of quality retail experiences
  - Lack of community investments (infrastructure and financial)
  - Looming gentrification from North Park and possibly neighborhoods to the north.

## IV. Individual Site Recommendations

### A. Recommended Improvements

#### 1. Streetscape: Improve Pedestrian and Cycling Safety

As our previous analysis mentioned, to create a safe bike lane on University Ave, we recommend to widen sidewalk so that a bike lane can be accommodated. Pedestrian path will be near building frontages while bike lane is near street. Trees, sidewalk benches, and light poles will be able to serve as a natural barrier between cyclists and pedestrians. This intervention will make tree and light coverage more consistent, enable safe and active transportation, and enhance walkability. An illustration is shown in the streetscape/walkability section.

#### 2. Connectivity from Teralta Park to University Ave/I-15 bridge deck

One block to the East of I-15 freeway, the 41st St, creates an opportunity to better connect Teralta Park to the City Heights Transit Center on University Ave/ I-15 bridge deck. The Central Elementary school get replaced. With the replacement of the elementary school, the 41st St can be reconnected between Polk Ave and University Ave. To make Teralta Park more accessible by transit, walking, and biking, we recommend this new pathway to be primarily a pedestrian and bicycle path, with parking spots available.

#### 3. Storefront Improvement: Remove Burglar Bars and Use Roll-Up Doors Instead

Using roll-up doors instead of window bars can help businesses to be more visually inviting during the day while ensuring safety after-hours. We recommend using the non-transparent version of roll-up doors because they are cheaper than those that can be seen through. When the doors are rolled down, businesses can invite artists to paint murals on the doors, enhancing the existing mural culture on University Ave between I-805 and I-15.

### B. Policy Recommendations

1. Seek partnership with affordable housing developers to reuse vacant buildings

To address the housing shortage and mitigate rising rent in the area, we recommend affordable housing development on vacant buildings along University Ave between I-805 and I-15.

3. Preserve small business and prevent unjust business tenant evictions

Small businesses who are not owners of their building may face rising rent and higher cost of business. Since small businesses are a strength of the community, we recommend efforts to educate business owners about laws on evictions so that they are aware what are unjust evictions, and how they can use legal tools to help them pay fair rent and stay.

5. Create opportunity for street vendors to gain vendor permit on I-15/University Ave bridge deck

While vendor permit is obtainable, many vendors face language barriers so that they may prefer to stay unpermitted. We see the City Heights Transit Center bridge deck as an opportunity to invite street vendors. The transit node induces need on commercial activities for people commuting to/from destinations. We encourage the formation of community support program that assist vendors to get permit so that they can be more trusted by customers and stay more stable in their businesses.

6. Seek collaboration with the City to foster youth development programs

In order to reduce gang violence and foster positive socio-emotional growth among youth from underprivileged backgrounds, the community can seek potential to operate youth development program on Teralta Park such as after school activities, art projects, or community service projects, in order to enhance the community fabric and potentially reduce youth participation in gangs.

### C. Walkable Boundary Recommendation

We recommend the area along University Ave between Wabash Park near I-805 and the I-15 freeway be potentially considered for a cultural district designation. We highly suggest including Teralta Park in the designation area as well, since it is about a 10-minute walk to the City Heights Transit Center on I-15 bridge deck.



Fig. 12 Possible Areas for Designation

If the University Ave & Fairmont node is found to be strong for the designation, then we suggest including Teralta Park and I-15 bridge deck in that designation area in order to highlight community activism and resiliency.

## D. Funding Sources

### 1. San Diego Storefront Improvement Program

The City of San Diego Storefront Improvement program provides funding assistance to storefront improvement projects led by small business owners (businesses with less than 25 employees), including design consulting at no cost and financial incentives (City of San Diego, 2019). The application form is in English, so providing assistance for business owners who speak limited English can be helpful. This language support can either come from a local non-profit, the business association, or a neighboring business who want to provide in-kind help.

### 2. California Strategic Growth Council Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program

Funded by “Cap-and-Trade” program, the AHSC program gives funding assistance on affordable housing projects developed near transit (CSGC, 2019). Since University Ave is strong in transit access, any potential affordable housing development on University Ave near the City Heights Transit Center may consider applying for the program.

### 3. Land Value Tax

Total Population (ACS 2017)	8,237
Land Area (Sq. Miles)	SD: 327 Corridor: 0.34
City Budget per Sq. Mileage	SD: ~ \$3.8 billion (All) Corridor: ~ \$4 million
<b>Only Land Value Tax at 5.5% =</b>	<b>\$5 million - \$8 million</b>
Takeaways	Commercial land less valuable than residential  Extra funding could help fund business improvement districts  Taxes the landlords, not the tenants - density reduces the tax significantly
Percent renter-occupied	88% renter

Fig. 13 Lad Use Tax Estimation

In a city limited by geography such as San Diego, land becomes very valuable. Those who need to live near the center of town to work jobs that keep the city running such as teachers, firefighters, sanitation workers. The center of town is expanded through a great transit or transportation network, but geographies such as canyons are a formidable force. Recognizing the associated challenges, land becomes that much more valuable, with the need to use land efficiently heightening with each new resident.

Above are the numbers regarding what a land value tax, or a single annual tax on the value of your land, would mean for an area the size of the Corridor neighborhood. At only 0.34 square miles, it only requires a small percentage of the San Diego budget, assuming the budget is spread across the city evenly. This tax would only need to be 5.5% to raise \$5 million - \$8 million. A resident that owns their home and thus the land would only be taxed on the land, not the improvements upon the land such as the home. Therefore, if the home is worth \$500,000 and the land is only worth \$100,000 - the resident is only taxed on the latter. In San Diego, the reverse is more often true for single family homes and duplex properties. Still, if their land were worth \$500,000; the tax would equal \$27,500 or \$2,292 per month. This encourages density on land that is highly valued. If ten residents lived on that same parcel as the single family house, this tax become \$229.20 per month, which plus utilities and profit, is a rent price so low that it does not exist today.

The excess in tax money could be used to fund the business improvement districts, which will bring more small scale improvements along University and El Cajon throughout City Heights. This money could also be used to help bring about the ownership of homes and businesses to residents of City Heights. Not everyone can own, but having owners that live in the community rather than leasing it from a central headquarters is much better for the community. Money spent will circulate within the community much more, and the local community will have the means to keep up with maintenance and improvements, lessening the burden and reliance on the city government. It is noted that this recommendation will take time if ever approved, and that the challenge to have this approved is great, however the reception of the idea was also great, and therefore is still being considered.

## V. Conclusion

City Heights has becoming an attractive destination for those eager to explore its diverse culture and creative arts. Among all the subareas in City Heights, the University Avenue - Teralta Park site caught our eyes for its vibrant ecology of small business. After reviewing the planning context of broader City Heights and analyzing the demographic, socio-economic, environmental, as well as transportational features of our site, we identified and mapped all the community assets. Our site is encompassed by an auto-centered neighborhood. The significant community open space, Teralta Park, is located within the boundary of our site. The diverse ethnicities of local population bring a variety of delicious cuisines from different cultures. And the place also provides a dynamic environment for the production of street arts.

Building upon its strengths of rich art culture and high labor force participation rate, the site can seize the opportunities to boost economic and cultural development. Given the weakness of our site and the threats it faces, we recommend that improvements should be made to pedestrian & cycling safety, connectivity from Teralta Park to University Ave/I-15 bridge deck, as well as storefront spaces. Attention should also be paid to making the housing and commercial spaces affordable. Informal economy should be considered an important element in the economic development. And importance should be attached to youth development.

Since most of the cultural assets are concentrated along the University Avenue, we recommend the area along University Ave between Wabash Park near I-805 and the I-15 freeway as the designated cultural district. Inclusion of Teralta Park is highly suggested for its proximity and convenient access to the recommended part of the University Avenue. Taking other groups' sites into consideration, we would suggest the University Ave & Fairmont group to include Teralta Park and I-15 bridge deck in their walkable boundary of recommended cultural district as well.

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