National City Marina District

Land Use Analysis • Fall 2014

Development Proposals by
Clean and Sustainable Development
Recreational & Environmental Planners
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“This report represents original student work and recommendations prepared by students in San Diego State University’s Sage Project for National City. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from San Diego State University.”
Acknowledgments

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We would especially like to thank the following representatives of National City for inspiring the class to explore new possibilities:

**Brad Raulston**  Executive Director of Community Development for the City of National City

**Robert “Dukie” Valderrama**  National City Port Commissioner

**Sage Project Staff**

**Jessica Barlow**  Program Director

**Piper Whalen**  Graphic Design Intern
About the Sage Project

The Sage Project is a partnership between San Diego State University (SDSU) and a city or government entity in the San Diego region. The mission of the program is to engage students from across the University in assisting a local government with projects that address their smart growth, quality of life, and sustainability goals. As part of the Sage Project, students have the opportunity to engage in meaningful real-world projects and make positive contributions to a community in SDSU’s service area. Specifically, the program’s vision is to connect SDSU students and faculty with high-priority, high-need community projects, thereby generating interest and fresh ideas that create momentum and provide a real service to the community. The Sage Project embodies the University’s commitment to serving local students, engaging alumni, and contributing to the public good by focusing thousands of hours of course-based student involvement with high-impact activities. The program is based on the highly successful and award-winning Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) at the University of Oregon and is a part of the SCYP network. National City, California, is the Sage Project’s partner city for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years. Participating courses come from the following disciplines: Anthropology; Audiology; Child and Family Development; City Planning; Civil Engineering; Communication; Exercise and Nutrition Science; Geography; Graphic Design; Homeland Security; International Security and Conflict Resolution; Marketing; Political Science; Public Administration; Public Health; Recreation and Tourism Management; and Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences.

About National City

National City is a highly urban community of about 60,000 residents in south San Diego County. It is the second oldest city in the county and boasts a rich history, a diverse community, and is known as one of the most walkable cities in San Diego County. Located just south of downtown San Diego and just north of the US-Mexico border, the city is flanked by freeways and is home to large-scale industries. National City is a mid-size city that faces big city challenges, and, like many municipalities, the city is challenged to meet community needs and new demands of sustainability. By providing new ideas and human capacity, this partnership with the Sage Project will help National City implement sustainability concepts and practices into projects that will improve livability.
Executive Summary

The necessary knowledge and resources for the following land use analysis reports were acquired through an upper division Geography 572 course titled “Land Use Analysis” taught by Professor Diana Richardson. The groups created development proposals within the given project site in the National City Marina District that considered existing and potential land use opportunities. The class project is part of a two-year partnership between the City of National City and the SDSU Sage Project.

The Marina District is influenced by multiple agencies that have jurisdiction over the area, therefore the groups carefully considered the land use designations for the surrounding properties while generating their site proposals. The groups also considered the physical landscape, community character and needs, and economic opportunities within the proposed site plan. Students examined relevant plans for the area and other policies inherent in planning. Each group strictly adhered to land use regulations at the federal, state, and local levels, including the National City General Plan, the Unified Port of San Diego’s Port Master Plan, the Harbor District Specific Area Plan, the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan, the California Coastal Commission guidelines, the federal Endangered Species Act, and the California Environmental Quality Act.

The students also considered constructive input from National City staff when planning for the Marina District. During his presentation, Martin Reeder, the principal planner for the city, distinguished three vital needs of National City: affordable housing, employment growth, and tax-generating commerce. The four plans considered each of these needs at length, in addition to smart growth principles that complement the project site. The proposals preserve the culturally rich identity of National City and promote sustainable development. The city has the potential to advance a prosperous economy, maintain a healthy environment, and promote social equity by considering the following plans.
Project Site Background

The National City Marina Gateway Plan includes the parcels directly adjacent to Bay Marina Drive, west of I-5 to the intersection of Bay Marina Drive and Marina Way, as well as parcels south of the intersection of Marina Way and W. 32nd Street. The Harbor District is surrounded by critical habitat and natural resources; Paradise Marsh is situated on the easternmost side, which connects to the Sweetwater Channel to the south, while the San Diego Bay borders the west.

The Existing Land Use Map, Figure LU-1 in the National City General Plan, states the current zoning designations of the area as industrial, open space, vacant, and commercial. The site is also under the jurisdiction of various stakeholders; therefore, planning must be governed by multiple specific plans and consider present overlay zones. The guidelines mentioned in the Port Master Plan, National City General Plan, Harbor District Specific Plan, Local Coastal Program, and SDNWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan are complied with. Each group also embraced the nine citywide elements that are integral to the planning process.

The nine General Plan Elements

Land Use and Community Character (LU)
Circulation (C)
Housing (H)
Safety (S)
Noise and Nuisance (NN)
Open Space and Agriculture (OS)
Conservation and Sustainability (CS)
Health and Environmental Justice (HEJ)
Education and Public Participation (E)
The majority of the industrial-zoned site is under the jurisdiction of the Port of San Diego, a vital component of National City’s economic and community character. According to the General Plan, the National City Marine Terminal supports maritime operations, ship builders, and other commercial and industrial businesses consisting of vehicles, lumber, and cargo. Pasha Automotive and Distribution Services, a private company, which generated nearly $9 million in revenue to the Port in 2013, operates the facility. The commercial zones are located adjacent to the marina and north of Pepper Park parking lot.

I-5 is the nearest freeway, located on the easternmost border of the Marina District and wildlife refuge. Visitors can access the site by driving westward on Bay Marina Drive and south on Marina Way. The nearest transportation hub is the trolley station that is situated approximately 1000ft northeast of I-5.
The lack of development throughout the Marina District does not allow for much community interaction or visitation by tourists. The main attractions of the study area currently include Pepper Park, the Waterfront Grill, and the marina boat launching dock. However there is substantial potential to increase public interest in the area through implementation of green design principles that are aesthetically pleasing and represent the character of National City. Creating a development plan that stimulates a public-friendly atmosphere, generates commercial revenue, and respects the preservation of the surrounding natural resources—especially the refuge—can benefit the city substantially.

Measurements of project sites:

- Triangle lot is roughly 8.5 acres.
- The two vacant lots north of Bay Marina Drive are roughly 1.3 acres each.
- The current auto storage lot north of Pepper Park is roughly 3.3 acres.

Each group focused on different portions of the project area, which are elaborated in each proposal section.

Figure 2  Existing land use designations.
Introduction

National City upholds a vision of integrating innovative solutions to mitigate pressing issues such as climate change, population growth, resource conservation, public health, education, and economic prosperity. In order to become a community that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, a great deal of consideration must be given to land use. A successful green city addresses the social, environmental, and economic aspects of sustainability equally; maintaining balance of these pillars must always be considered in the planning process. In partnership with the SDSU Sage Project, National City collaborated with students from Diana Richardson’s Geography 572 Land Use Analysis course to explore the potential development opportunities for National City’s Bay Marina District.

Students engaged with coursework that utilized a comprehensive theoretical and practical approach to land use and planning. Local, state, and federal planning policies were strictly complied with. The project objective involved developing a land use proposal that was environmentally friendly, healthy for communities, and provided positive benefits to the society and economy. One of the most important components of the course was the open dialogue between students, representatives of National City, and associates of the SDSU Sage Project.

During the year 2000, the Community Development Commission of National City (CDC) instituted the redevelopment of the Harbor District. It was mandated that in the years to come the National City Redevelopment Project must consider improving efficiency and accessibility of the area. Commercial developments in the vacant lots directly to the west of I-5 were to be the center of new land use possibilities. The intent of the project was to reinvigorate this area of National City, allowing for it to become a sustainable community that reduces its impact on the environment, while simultaneously maintaining economic proceeds and promoting a high quality of life for community members. However, many obstacles over the years have slowed the planning and decision-making process of the area; therefore, to accelerate progress, students were encouraged to visualize creative yet practical land use plans.

Each of the development proposals described below were influenced by city staff recommendations, the neighborhood dynamics and needs, physical site opportunities and constraints, readings concerning sustainable growth principles, and guidance from various specific plans. The ideas suggested in the following reports reflect the countless land use possibilities the city could embrace to become a leader in sustainable development.
Associates for Integrated Regional Planning
Matthew Fong, Erika Lindstrom, Patrick Macpherson, Sara Toma

The Associates for Integrated Regional Planning (AIRP) seeks to empower community participation through social landscapes. This group recognizes the disconnect between public transportation centers and the Marina Gateway, which results in the area mainly being accessed by private automobile. Therefore they look at opportunities to mend the connection by improving accessibility. The AIRP suggests all of the following proposals with the community in mind, while integrating sustainable development and smart growth principles that balance constraints and community needs. The community is at the heart of their proposal.

This proposal fully utilizes three unoccupied sites, aiming to promote community well-being through sustainable landscapes. The main idea for the site plan is to improve aesthetic appeal of the area and street linkage functionality. Lot A, the westernmost site situated north of Bay Marina Drive, is surrounded by commercial and heavy industrial land uses. This space is dedicated mainly for mixed-commercial use, while Lot B to the east is reserved primarily for commercial use. Site C, also known as the triangular lot, is reserved as a mixed-use area, consisting of open space, recreation, and commercial land uses.

The proposed development plan for Site A includes a mixed-use building for office space and commercial use. The first floor is designed as office space available for rent by potential businesses, while the second floor is designed specifically for commercial uses such as a deli, snack shop, and a bike rental shop. Seating will be available upstairs in addition to the “plaza” on the ground level. Site A is designed to be community oriented, incorporating more alternative modes of transportation. Site A can serve as a hub to create safer walkability, bike-ability, and public transportation.

Figure 3 Green roof design.
The vision for Lot B, located directly to the west of I-5, is a two-story restaurant and brewery with a small “square” for community members and restaurant patrons to enjoy. The building can utilize sustainable designs to reduce energy and water use, including a native drought tolerant green roof. The brewery and restaurant will be less than 35 feet high, approximately 16,000 square feet in area, and will have a parking lot capacity of 90 vehicles, which is consistent with National City parking regulations. Additionally, the restaurant and brewery may offer a shuttle bus running from the trolley station to the Marina Gateway area in order to encourage public transportation. Site B can create public interest in the overall area from the surrounding community members, residents of the wider San Diego County, and tourists staying in the nearby hotel. The team believes that this can improve connectivity and access throughout the adjacent areas.

Figure 4  Vacant lot directly west of I-5.
The AIRP suggests mixed-use land consisting of open space, recreation, and commercial land uses on Lot C. The majority of the 8.5-acre triangular parcel would be designated as open space for recreational use. This will serve as an additional community park, increasing opportunities for National City residents to spend more time outdoors. Sustainable building principles including reduction of energy and water consumption are achievable by using recycled shipping containers. Using recycled shipping containers with green roofs for commercial infrastructure creates retail opportunities and encourages a stronger identity in the area.

Recycled shipping containers are an alternative way to reduce building material waste and gross energy consumption of buildings. The shipping containers also embrace the maritime industrial character of the Marina District; further promoting the unique qualities of National City. The AIRP also suggest that the current bike path be relocated closer to the marsh buffer zone to improve fluidity of the pathway and increase safety for cyclists. A weekly farmer’s market has the potential to promote healthy eating, support local farmers, and help increase community interest in the area. To further strengthen community character, the site will include an art piece fabricated by a local artist.
Clean and Sustainable Development
Rogelio Avila, Leila DeSilva, Andrew Novak, John Riley, David Sevilla, Robert Wheeler

Clean and Sustainable Development (CASD) is dedicated to fostering healthy, sustainable, and successful communities by combining smart growth principles and proactive planning. They strive to create communities built around integrated land uses, conservation of natural resources, and aesthetically appealing character. This group believes that merging nature within the urban fabric of the city can strengthen the community of National City’s sense of place in the Marina District. CASD wants to create an area that embodies the spirit of National City while catering to the needs of its residents.

This group used the elements of the National City General Plan as a framework to support the land use proposals on the following three sites. An amendment to the General Plan to zone Lot A for affordable housing is suggested; it will also be mixed-use with commercial entities. Lot B is dedicated to commercial use with a local brewery and culturally relevant market. Lot C is to be zoned mixed-use commercial, preserving open space and promoting the outdoors.

CASD acknowledges that population is projected to increase 60% by 2050; therefore, Lot A is proposed to incorporate mixed-use buildings to support housing demands and commercial businesses, such as a small market or artist studio. The unit is designated as high density residential, allowing for 23 to 75 dwelling units per acre. Development of affordable housing can potentially be funded through bonuses granted through the State Density Bonus Law. Lot A is designed with smart growth principles that align with the Conservation and Sustainability element of National City’s General Plan (CS) and the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification project checklist. These design principles include green roofing with native vegetation and xeriscapes to lower water consumption, prevent storm water runoff during rain events, and increase insulation for the buildings. Solar panels and rain barrels to mitigate storm water runoff will also be placed on both roofs. This can provide a long-term, low-cost, and low-impact power source that complies with the CS goal to lower per capita energy demands.
State Density Bonus Law

California Government Code Section 65915 et seq.: a developer, upon request, shall be granted a density bonus, incentive(s), concession(s), and/or modification of development standard(s) if the developer proposed to build a qualified project satisfying criteria set forth in the city’s Density Bonus Ordinance. This applies to both the residential and mixed-use designations. (3-16).

LEED Certification- Green building leadership

The United States Green Building Council provides guidelines to achieve affordable buildings that have a positive impact on the health of occupants, while promoting renewable, clean energy. When sustainable requirements in regards to site location, building materials, water efficiency, energy efficiency, and indoor air quality are satisfied, a certain amount of points is awarded. There are four levels of certification ranging from ‘certified’ to ‘platinum’, the number of points a project earns determines the level of LEED certification.
Development on Lot B includes a brewery and market, both of which are to revolve around the community character of National City. The market is to be modeled after successful culturally relevant supermarkets such as Vallarta and North Gate; this can be a place for visitors to enjoy authentic, fresh food and drinks. An outdoor patio between the brewery and market can entertain local industry workers, residents, and tourists. On the outside, both buildings will be constructed with ‘living walls’ and double-pane windows to reduce noise pollution.

Currently, traffic is the biggest noise generator in National City. The site is affected by significant noise sources: the I-5 freeway, heavy load trucks, and the trolley. The ‘living wall’, also known as a green wall, is a vertical garden composed of vegetation that mitigates noise and energy usage. This measure mitigates for noise pollution, meeting the requirements of the NN element. In addition to satisfying the CS element, the green wall can instill appreciation for an area, preventing minor crimes like graffiti, fighting, or loitering; thus the S element is met simultaneously.

Figure 7 Green wall.
This group also suggests ways to alleviate transportation and circulation issues in the project site area. One method involves opening up a bikeway to the west of Bay Marina Drive to increase safety for bikers and encourage biking amongst residents. CASD recommends increasing public access to the area by connecting the nearby trolley station to the project area. A railway-themed trolley car funded by the brewery or market can help bring in visitors to the Marina District.

For Lot C, CASD imagines limited development in order to preserve the integrity of the Sweetwater Marsh. They want to encourage community engagement in recreational activities such as walking and biking on nature trails, urban agriculture activities like community gardens, and passive recreation such as nature watching on the wildlife preserve. Two dog parks, one for smaller dogs and one for larger ones, will be established in respect to the 100 ft. marsh buffer zone, becoming the first of its kind in the area. The lot will hold a community center that can provide classes in dog training, energy conservation, Sweetwater Marsh education, and employment opportunities. A small café and general store will overlook the Aztec desert park, serving as a hub for those passing through on bikes or foot. Additionally, development of Lot C can help combat food insecurity by hosting a weekly farmers market and the public community garden.
Recreational & Environmental Planners

Eddie Alvarez, Andrew Bucchele, David Grems, Nicholas Roth

The following proposal focuses on improving economic tourism and development, properly protecting Paradise Marsh, and promoting clean energy and sustainable planning. The Recreational & Environmental Planners (REP) plan looks to expand the Harbor District Specific Area Plan (HDSAP), rezone and repurpose existing lots with infill development, and create onsite locations for faster responses to environmental needs. Transportation and mobility issues are addressed through rerouting the Bayshore Bikeway and increasing parking options. Their Marina Gateway Plan seeks to address community needs by improving aesthetics, economic output, and recreational opportunities through unifying architectural themes and additional green space.

The REP believes that improvements can be made to three distinct areas of the project site: Lot A and Lot B, Marina Way, and Lot C. Since multiple agencies have jurisdictional influence over the project area, this group proposes combining the area surrounding Paradise Marsh into one specific plan, including areas not currently included in the HDSAP. Both Lot A and Lot B will be zoned commercial, serving as a center for tourists and locals. Additional improvements include acquiring 1.1 acres of land from Pasha to expand the Marina Way bike path, habitat protection, and commercial revenue opportunities. Lot C is composed of the triangular lot next to the marsh and an additional 3.7 acres to be obtained from Pasha.

Figure 9 Recreational & Environmental Planners Site Plan.
The sites are affected by various zoning regulations enacted by different stakeholders; therefore, the team suggests a new Joint Planning Agency for the region. This agreement might allow stakeholders and decision makers to work together on developing the area in a proactive manner. They believe that each plan should be compatible with one another in order to create a community that balances development and protection of natural resources. The REP recognizes the potential development opportunities that may arise from a few amendments to the General Plan. These include rezoning the northern lots from industrial to commercial, as well as adding this change to the HDSAP. The new land acquired from Pasha will also be rezoned for its respective purposes.

The vacant northern parcels west of I-5 along Bay Marina Drive shall be developed in a manner that incorporates smart growth principles and railroad-themed architecture resembling the visual style of the historic National City Depot. The National City Depot is included in all design aspects of the Marina Gateway planning area to ensure that the desired uniform aesthetic qualities of the area are upheld. Smart growth features for development of Lot A and Lot B include, but are not limited to, pervious concrete for run-off control, solar photovoltaic shade structures covering portions of additional parking lots and structures, green roofs, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible design standards.

![Image of wayfinding signs](image.jpg)

**Figure 10** Current theme of some modes of wayfinding in the project area.
These northern lots can serve as major wayfinding spots, alleviating confusion in the Marina Bay Drive area and increasing mobility amongst automobiles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. One two-story parking structure and one new parking lot will be constructed utilizing solar shade structures and pervious pavement. The commercial objectives of both lots will be achieved through small eateries and shops that can create jobs close to home for community members. The 1.1 acres at the southwest corner of Bay Marina Drive and Marina Way will serve as a commercial zone with a corner market that will service recreationalists, Port employees, and National City residents. Along Marina Way, the group proposes increasing the presence of trash receptacles to decrease impact on the refuge.

Wayfinding

Including mediums of wayfinding: signs, maps, or other graphic typographies of an area, enhance the experience for visitors by increasing mobility and offering an accessible navigation tool to the public. Wayfinding improvements in the Bay Marina District can integrate the traditional railroad theme, adding to the aesthetic charm of the area. Sign tower improvement through wayfinding can also encourage access to the pier by making its location more noticeable and easier to access.
Lot C will be expanded to include 3.7 acres of land formerly owned by Pasha. In exchange for this expansion, 1.1 acres will remain zoned industrial and under their authority. The eastern side of the parcel will host services for recreationists such as a bike shop, bait and tackle shop, and boating supply store. Development in this lot will have a nautical architectural theme and views of the industrial areas will be obscured with a green wall displaying native succulents and perennial flowering plants. Open space makes up the rest of the acreage in the form of a Frisbee golf course with drought-resistant grass and a green field. This additional land allows the Bayshore Bikeway to be rerouted away from Tidelands Avenue to the outskirts of a new 100ft-wide habitat buffer to supply cyclists with a safer, more scenic route. Only native vegetation like coastal sage scrub shall be used within the buffer area.

The REP proposes a nautical-themed microbrewery with a minimum LEED silver requirement for the structure on the triangle lot closest to the refuge; this development offers views of the marsh and can increase interest in the area. In line with the Harbor Specific Plan, this brewery can meet industry expectations by exporting products while stimulating commercial revenue. The northernmost part will remain undeveloped, providing visuals of the marsh and educational displays about the habitat.
Geography, Planning, and Sustainability

Aglais Aguirre, Marlon Bautista, Tom Cowan, Crystal Johnson, Chris Londos, Daniel Romero

The plan by Geography, Planning, and Sustainability (GPS) intends to not only meet, but to exceed the standards set by the San Diego Unified Port District and National City. GPS developed a vision that may further enhance the National City bay front. The proposal stresses the importance of incorporating green design principles that reconnect the populace with nature and improve access to public transportation. GPS believes that human interaction is the most important component to create a sustainable, healthy, and vibrant community. They recommend development of efficient infrastructures that serve as educational resource centers, places of business, or increase recreation opportunities within the Marina District.

Figure 12 Birds eye view of project sites.

The project area is divided into three individual sites. Site A represents the existing Pepper Park, which is zoned recreational. Site B is an extension of the current park and is zoned for commercial use. The largest area, Site C, is designated maritime industrial and tourist commercial.

GPS built the development proposal around the “three pillars of sustainability”. The social aspect is satisfied by increasing public space and accessibility, providing educational programs, and improving mobility through wayfinding. Environmental considerations include additional green space, LEED certification for buildings, increasing recycling,
reducing air pollution, and encouraging low emission transportation. Economic needs are met through the establishment of local businesses to generate revenue and create more jobs for members of the community.

Site A already has a well-maintained neighborhood park known as Pepper Park, which is a total of 5.5 acres. The park is surrounded with picnic areas, a boat ramp, and a fishing pier. GPS recognizes the uniqueness of Pepper Park; visitors can enjoy the open access to the waterfront, and it strengthens the community character of National City. Modifications to the existing park include installing captivating sunshade systems to protect park-goers from harmful UV rays and expand use during summer months as well as decorative fencing around industrial borders.

GPS recognizes that the zoning of Site B is commercial and Pasha holds a long-term permit on the lot. However, the expansion of green space is consistent with the OS element and the vision of National City. This extension includes the removal of current concrete to be replaced with sustainable buffalograss, which requires 75% less water than other grasses. The center of Site B will be used as a multiuse sports field while also incorporating multiuse biking, jogging, and walking paths along the perimeter. A recreation center will offer educational programs, sport league sign-ups, and park information like reservation fees and National City community events. Additional parking designed with porous concrete is designated to the west of Site B (total of 450 feet) allowing for twenty-two spaces per 300 feet.
The group also suggests expansion of the fishing pier to add another access point that can create a natural flow between the water and park areas. Informational signs will include multiple languages and be posted throughout the length of the pier. Expanding the pier will increase activity and allow for possible economic revenue in the form of a small bait/tackle shop. They also recommend the establishment of a three-level berthing facility off the current Pier 32 Marina dock to generate additional revenue.

Site C is reserved as mixed-use with a 237,000 sq. ft. plaza that hosts affordable housing, a hotel, a local-caught fish market, public art installations, a marine-related brewery, and office spaces. The purpose of this space is to engage the community members and attract visitors. Various art pieces throughout the plaza will reflect the cultural richness of National City and fortify a “sense of place”. GPS suggests development of a brewery similar to Pizza Port, which will be compatible with the surrounding maritime-themed commerce industry. A social establishment of this nature allows for possible exporting and importing of products, steady revenue, and employment.
GPS would also like to implement a bikeshare program in the site area near the Bayshore Bikeway. This program will promote recreational use of the area and alleviate health complications by increasing physical activity. The placement of bike stations at mass transit stops or pathways helps to combat the individual breakpoint, which is the distance one walks before using an automobile. Alternative modes of transportation are the focal point for smart growth within cities and a bikeshare program gives incentive for such activity. GPS suggests federal, state, or local grants, usage fees, and private contributions as viable funding for the bikeshare program.

Figure 17 The DECOBIKE solar powered self-service station.

DECOBIKE

Operated in partnership with the City of San Diego, this is the only citywide bikeshare program in San Diego. It offers access to bicycles, alternative modes of transportation that are environmentally friendly, healthy, and fun. The sharing stations are powered by solar energy and bike rentals are accessible 24 hours per day. Individuals may choose to use a DECOBIKE as a Bike Share Member or an Hourly Rental. A bikeshare program will increase connectivity of the surrounding area.
Conclusion

The four group proposals presented in this land use analysis report epitomize progressive development concepts that are rooted in practicability and creativity. Each proposal suggested viable strategies to satisfy National City’s needs for affordable housing, tax-generating commerce, and employment growth. All of the projects integrated principles of smart growth, sustainable development, and proactive planning. National City’s vision for the future and guiding principles as well as elements of the city’s General Plan exist at the core of each proposal.

The objective of these plans was to create a dynamic and durable proposal that embraced the connection of key urban planning issues, responds to the needs of a diverse community, and identifies realistic measures that can help National City progress towards reaching its vision. The following are the most prominent innovative features expressed within the proposals.

Land Use

For this particular element, each group planned for and identified where future development and redevelopment should be directed in the Marina District. Each proposal includes a diversity of mixed land uses including maritime industrial, recreational, commercial, and open space. The changes suggested for land use are essential to supporting a sustainable community that also preserves the unique identity of National City.

The CASD encouraged a zoning amendment on the northwest lot to allow for high-density residential housing that can alleviate a population that is projected to increase by 60% by 2050. The group notes that development of affordable housing can be financed through the State Density Bonus Law, as well as collaboration efforts amongst the key stakeholders of the area. In addition to residential use, the group advocates for additional open space to reconnect National City residents to natural environment.

The REP recognizes that it is important for each stakeholder to voice desired planning outcomes and expect adherence to their respective plans. The establishment of a new Joint Planning Administration will allow decision makers to work together on developing the area proactively. Adding the Port of San Diego and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as decision makers to the Marina Gateway area will bring in more resources that can result in faster development. Exchanging of land between Pasha and the National City will enable rezoning to include maritime industrial, commercial, and recreational use.

A specific land use goal mentioned by National City involves expanding public green space, an act that can alleviate health problems and strengthen the relationship residents have with the environment. GPS recommends the expansion of Pepper Park and
rezoning of the vacant lots as mixed-use for both commercial and recreational opportunities. The expanded park will include a recreation center that can offer educational programs, community event listings, and sport league sign-ups.

Figure 18 Pepper Park is the only existing open space and access to the waterfront for residents in the Marina District.

Figure 19 Birdseye view of current land uses in the Marina District
Circulation

Each group proposed modifications to the existing street infrastructure that integrates multi-modal transportation options that support public transit, bicycling, walking, vehicular traffic, and a few parking options. Addressing this element allowed groups to integrate development patterns that benefit the residents and the environment by yielding increased mobility in the area.

Although a common goal was to advocate for alternative modes of transportation, all of the proposals included minimal parking spaces to accommodate new individuals exploring the area by vehicle. GPS provides diagonal parking spaces along the west side of Lot B that are made with porous concrete to allow for subsurface infiltration. REP suggests additional parking structures be designed with solar photovoltaic panels to increase energy efficiency. The AIRP made street improvements to improve safety, link ability, and the aesthetic appeal of roadways.

Increasing bicycle friendliness of the project area was also a central theme in the proposals. CASD proposed opening up a bikeway to the west of Bay Marina Drive to increase safety of bikers and encourage the activity amongst residents. REP suggested that the Bayshore Bikeway be rerouted along the new border of the proposed lot and new habitat buffer in order to supply cyclists with a safer scenic route through the area. GPS recognizes the potential benefits that a bikeshare program can promote within the project area. Such a program can increase zero-emission transportation methods and promote healthier lifestyle options.

Two of the groups stressed the importance of National City’s history with the railway and call for the recovery of the streetcar system as a means for tourist attraction and a unique way to visit the site. Both the AIRP and CASD recognize that public transportation to the project area can potentially be funded by future businesses such as a brewery or market. The nearby trolley station and eventually the surrounding neighborhoods will be serviced by the revival of a streetcar that reflects the historic National City Depot.

Figure 20 An example of potential street improvements by SANDAG.
Open Space and Agriculture

All four groups committed to the preservation and conservation of natural resources encompassing the area. A great deal of attention was given to protecting the marsh and increasing the amount of open space within the project site. Since the National City community is highly developed, numerous challenges can arise when attempting to incorporate additional open space and recreational facilities. To address these challenges, the groups intend to utilize opportunities that exist within the present-day urban fabric to create new recreational, open space, and agricultural areas.

According to the Port Master Plan, only 6.4 acres, or 1%, of the port lands in the site area are dedicated to public recreation. Solutions consistent across all groups involved diversifying green space. Ideas included rooftop gardens, incorporating trail systems into utility corridors, turning vacant parcels into parks or community gardens, enhancement of public use as open space, a Frisbee golf course, two different-sized dog parks, and preservation of the Sweetwater Marsh.

The residents of National City face significant food insecurity; a majority of residents are low-income and have low access to healthy, nutritious food. The city is officially listed as a food desert on the United States Department of Agriculture’s Food Access Research Map. This crisis has contributed to the need for an Agriculture element in keeping with the city’s desire to increase the production and distribution of locally grown food for the community. Additional food markets and gardens also satisfy National City’s HEJ element by alleviating food insecurity.

Although two groups suggested the presence of a weekly farmers market held within the Marina District, CASD delivers the most optimum plan for open space on the triangular lot. Development includes a communal garden, a pocket park landscaped with native vegetation and benches, as well as two fenced-off dog parks, one for smaller dogs and one for bigger dogs, while continuing to respect the 100-ft buffer zone of the marsh. A community garden not only combats food insecurity, but also fosters community interaction by encouraging residents to be active in their local food system.

Figure 21 The continued preservation and restoration of Paradise Marsh is mentioned in each proposal.
Community Character

Each group developed the project site area in a manner that enriched and preserved National City’s community character. The sites included infrastructure embedded with smart growth principles that is culturally relevant to the history of National City. Strengthening the identity of the community with mixed-use development influenced by the Unified Port, the Historic Depot, Paradise Marsh, and the current Pier 32 Marina was at the forefront of every proposal.

Community gathering spaces such as fresh food markets; neighborhood parks, a community garden, a recreational building, and multi-use plazas were collectively suggested. For three of the groups a plaza symbolized community togetherness and a way to encourage a social atmosphere. These spaces also served as a haven for events that celebrate National City’s culture and as locations for unique art installations. The AIRP, CASD, and GPS advocated for a community art piece or sculpture to strengthen the city’s sense of place.

The AIRP paid homage to the maritime industrial aspect of the Marina District by utilizing recycled shipping containers as a way to minimize building cost, greenhouse gas emissions, and create the desired commercial space. The GPS team suggests the development of a maritime-themed Pizza Port Brewery as tribute to the Port of San Diego. REP also designs the brewery and scenic overlook with nautical-themed architecture in compliance with the Harbor Specific Plan. CASD uses the National Historic Depot as inspiration for the architecture of buildings and theme of wayfinding signage. The AIRP converted the current, unused rail tracks into “street islands” to increase aesthetic appeal of the site and highlight the history of the railway.

Figure 22 A mixed-use community plaza that all visitors can enjoy.
Figure 23 Street art in North Park done by a local artist
Conservation and Sustainability

It was crucial to consider the conservation and protection of biological resources that are integral to maintaining biodiversity and health of nearby ecosystems. Each group thoughtfully integrated green design principles throughout the sites and took the necessary precautions to ensure zero impact on the neighboring nature preserve. Each group observes the mandatory 100ft buffer zone and only permits the planting of native vegetation.

Energy use was a factor in development decisions for the groups as well. National City’s energy goals to achieve zero net energy use for new residential development by 2020 and zero net energy use for new commercial development by 2030 were considered. The groups constructively applied the LEED checklist to design concepts such as added building insulation, pervious pavements, maximizing natural light input, rain collection technologies, double-pane windows, low-energy use light bulbs, xeriscape landscaping, green roofing, and solar panels. Using such green techniques prepares the city for the potential effects of climate change such as reduced water supply or greater future energy demands.

Figure 24 Balancing the three pillars of sustainability when planning for land use is extremely important.
Sustainable development of the Marina District also included emphasizing alternative modes of transportation that promote healthy, active lifestyles. Two groups planned for an additional shuttle route funded by the local businesses in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles. Groups also listed maintenance and rerouting the bike path as ways to increase safe pedestrian flow of the area and improve street functionality.

Figure 25 Example of high-density buildings with green roofing.

The original ideas recommended in this report were built upon comprehensive research influenced by class lecture, land use analysis documents, and presentations delivered by guest representatives of National City. Each proposal encouraged development that is economically feasible, socially responsible, and environmentally conscious. National City can achieve its vision of becoming a sustainable community by applying the development plans presented within this report.