



# Canyon Enhancement Planning for San Diego's 150+ Canyons

## ***There Are Over 150 Urban Canyons Woven Throughout San Diego***

They bisect every neighborhood and community to form our "geographic DNA".

### **Canyon Values & Needs**

Our canyons provide urban dwellers with valuable open space and "green infrastructure" that provide a range of benefits. They harbor incredible biodiversity. Their "green infrastructure" provides valuable ecosystem services, including work to clean and filter our urban runoff, and to mitigate the increasing urban heat island effect to cool our city. They also provide an escape to nature from an otherwise completely paved and urbanized environment, and serve as "nature classrooms" to educate and instill a sense of stewardship within the next generation of San Diegans.



However, development around most of our canyons has left a legacy of neglect and degradation. Although numerous volunteer "Canyon Friends" groups have made tremendous headway in reversing that legacy, most of these precious open spaces are in dire need of enhancements, including safe and enjoyable access (physical and/or visual) to reclaim them from nefarious uses (including drug use hangouts and homeless encampments), wetland and upland habitat restoration, and taking advantage of the opportunities to integrate these natural areas into the fabric of our urban environment, by "sewing" them together to connect open spaces and neighborhoods.

***That's the aim of Canyon Enhancement Planning (CEP).***

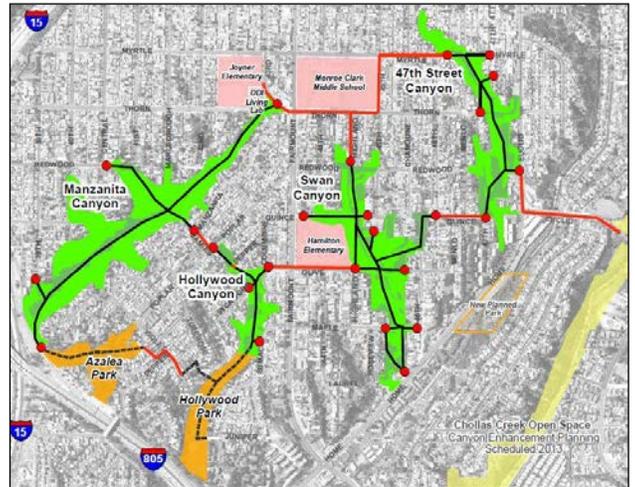
### **Role of San Diego Canyonlands**

In 2006, local members of C-3, Civic Solutions, and The Sierra Club developed a *White Paper* ([San Diego Canyonlands: The Creation of a San Diego Regional Canyonlands Park](#)) that outlines a series of steps and goals to ensure the **protection and enhancement** of San Diego's 150+ canyons as a Regional Park. In 2007, as a result of the White Paper, 6,600 acres of City-owned open space and urban canyons were protected as "dedicated" open space parkland via state legislation ratified by City Council. The next year, San Diego Canyonlands (SDCL) was formed as a new non-profit aimed at making the San Diego Regional Canyonlands Park a reality, through its mission to *promote, protect and restore the natural habitats in San Diego's canyons and creeks by fostering education and ongoing community involvement in stewardship and advocacy, and by collaborating with other organizations.*

The City of San Diego's 2008 General Plan includes **objectives that call for the protection and enhancement of San Diego's canyons**, including linking them together into an open space system that is integrated into the fabric of our built environment). Following passage of this 2008 plan, SDCL established a **committee** of urban design visionaries, professional landscape architects, and others to implement the regional vision of the *White Paper* by weaving the natural open spaces into the fabric of our urban environment through: **(1) canyon protection via "dedication", and (2) canyon enhancements via a Canyon Enhancement Planning Program for stakeholders.** Specific CEP objectives are to achieve visual and physical canyon access, restoration, preservation, environment-based education and ecologically sensitive recreation. The overall process is designed to cut time, cost and red tape for comprehensive canyon enhancement plans and for implementing individual canyon projects.

## Progress to Date

For three years (2009-2012), SDCL spearheaded the effort to protect more City open space canyons as dedicated land, and another **6,500 acres of canyonlands were successfully dedicated** in late 2012 (bringing the 2007 and 2012 dedication totals to over 20 square miles of City-owned open space). SDCL's **CEP Program** and associated **CEP Guide** have also achieved significant success. In 2009, SDCL began implementing CEP in City Heights, an underserved and park-deficient community in central San Diego. SDCL began with Manzanita Canyon as its pilot canyon, and - using a set of Existing Conditions Maps - held a series of stakeholder planning workshops. In early 2011, stakeholders finalized their **Manzanita Canyon Enhancement Action Plan**. Through several important collaborations - including the City Open Space Division - progress was quickly made on several of the Enhancement Action Plan's projects, including USFWS funding for wetland restoration and a **refurbished connector trail** between Azalea Park and the south end of the canyon, formerly a dead end. CEP expanded in City Heights through 2012, as SDCL completed Enhancement Action Plans for nearby **Hollywood, Swan** and **47th Street** Canyons. This successful community planning helped SDCL obtain a \$365,000 State "Urban Greening" grant to implement most of the planned enhancements. A larger goal for City Heights Canyons is the creation of a **loop trail that connects** the four City Heights Canyons. SDCL anticipates this loop trail expand to include the Oak Park branch of Chollas Creek to the southeast, and has obtained 2013 funding to host community stakeholder workshops and produce a canyon enhancement action plan for the area.



## Creating the “San Diego Regional Canyonlands Park”

While several larger San Diego canyons (e.g. Tecolote, Los Penasquitos, Rose and San Clemente) are already established as regional parks with functioning advisory groups, SDCL is working to unite the other, “orphaned” canyons under a single umbrella: the *San Diego Regional Canyonlands Park*. Elevating the canyons to the status of “regional park” will promote and celebrate this unique San Diego feature, and ultimately provide a framework for the future of our region. Dedication and Canyon Enhancement Planning are critical to the implementation of this vision.

**SDCL is implementing Canyon Enhancement Planning canyon-by-canyon and working to protect City open space through dedication, to transform this incredible vision into the *San Diego Canyonlands Regional Park*. [Click here for a summary of CEP steps.](#)**

## The San Diego Regional Canyonlands Park Won't be a Luxury, But a Necessity.

Restoring our “green infrastructure” is necessary not only to maintain our quality of life, but to achieve the goals of economic and environmental sustainability as we grow into the future.

### For More Information

[sdcanyonlands.org/cep](http://sdcanyonlands.org/cep)