

Residents Name Neighborhoods

You and your neighbors know the name of their neighborhood and may even relish belonging to it for any number of reasons, be it for its natural beauty, their neighbors, or just because it's where they've made their home. You may say your neighborhood name with a sense of pride, and even feel pity for non-residents who are confused and ask "Where am I?"

One possible source of confusion in the case of the Sorrento Valley neighborhood may come from San Diego's Community Planning division. Although this City department is unknown to most San Diegans, it was developed over 40 years ago and divides San Diego into 52 separate "community planning areas."

Planning areas serve as master blueprints to assist City engineers in developing areas to ensure that communities have adequate resources and to avoid the sorts of pitfalls that can occur with rapid development and inadequate planning, such as what happened with the expansion in the seventies in the Mira Mesa area. The [infrastructure was insufficient](#) to support the booming population. We all need to thank those early Mira Mesa residents for diligently working with the City to mitigate and prevent the rapid growth issues by developing the Mira Mesa Community Plan.

Unfortunately, many of the early volunteers and neighborhood leaders continued to think of the entire planning area as the Mira Mesa "neighborhood" long after new development in the planning area resulted in new neighborhoods. During the time that passed since the creation of the first Mira Mesa Community Plan, the Mira Mesa neighborhood has become one of many neighborhoods encompassed by the large community planning area for upwards of 100,000 people. Community planning maps designate industrial and residential zones, and community structures such as schools, libraries, parks, and fire stations. They do not address neighborhoods at all. They have nothing to do with neighborhood names or boundaries.

The planning areas often include multiple whole or partial neighborhoods. The borders of planning areas may cross over many other established boundaries, such as City Council and County districts. The Sorrento Valley neighborhood falls within the borders of three separate Community Planning Areas, with the majority of it landing in the Mira Mesa Community Planning Area, but also falling into the Torrey Pines and University City planning areas.

Sorrento Valley has a long history. In the 1800's, a European scouting expedition named this area Sorrento Valley because it reminded them of the town overlooking the Bay of Naples, Italy. When the railroad was installed in the 1880's at what is now the foot of Sorrento Valley Blvd, it was named the "Sorrento Station." And in 1887, a land sale advertised one-acre parcels at \$100 and 50-foot home sites at \$50 each in "Sorrento."

The feeling of neighborhood pride has proven to be essential to the Police Department's ongoing efforts to make community-oriented policing work in San Diego. To help the Police secure our streets, they needed clear boundaries between one community and another. Police officials said it became clear to them that what was needed was a map of neighborhoods to give citizens and police a common geography to which they could refer in discussing community problems.

Because neighborhoods are named by the people who live in them, the police had a plan. "For the first time, we actually went out in the neighborhoods and, at community meetings, had residents draw the boundaries," said Assistant Chief John Welter, who led the department's neighborhood policing efforts. "We threw a map up on the wall and asked them to show us where they lived," as

reported in the San Diego Union Tribune in 1997. The result, after a year of neighborhood meetings, resulted in a city map that included the neighborhood of Sorrento Valley. The full map identified 99 neighborhoods in San Diego, with the neighborhood of Sorrento Valley labeled as #931, as shown below. The current and official City map of San Diego neighborhoods remains basically unchanged and can be found on the City website at this link: [City of San Diego Neighborhood Map](#).

Today, the neighborhood of Sorrento Valley is known nationally as the high-tech center of San Diego. It also includes a substantial residential population, and was even rated #1 Neighborhood by a realty group one year due to its many desirable features, including its close proximity to the beach, the Penasquitos Canyon Preserve, a major jobs center, and UCSD, and because of its easy freeway access. Sorrento Valley residents each have their own reasons for loving the neighborhood, and each are very happy to call it Home.

