

DATE ISSUED: September 17, 2003

REPORT NO. 03-185

ATTENTION: Honorable Mayor and City Council  
Docket of September 23, 2003

SUBJECT: Amendment to the Mission Trails Design District Ordinance, Design District Manual and Map. Process 5.

#### SUMMARY

Issues - Should the City Council adopt the amendment to the Mission Trails Design District (Design District) Ordinance to make it consistent with the boundaries of the Mission Trails Regional Park (Regional Park), and an amendment to certain guidelines within the Design District manual, and the addition and deletion of certain areas to the map which are in the East Elliott, Navajo and Tierrasanta Community Plan areas?

Manager's Recommendations - Recommend City Council to: 1) adopt the amendment to the Design District Ordinance, 2) approve the amendment to the Design District Manual, 3) adopt the changes to the map, and 4) certify that the information contained in the LDR File No. 42-1320 has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and State CEQA guidelines.

Planning Commission Recommendation - On July 24, 2003, the Planning Commission recommended unanimously that City Council approve the staff recommendation for the proposed changes.

Community Planning Group Recommendations - On March 17, 2003, the Navajo Community Planning Group voted 16 to 0 in support of the proposed changes to the Design District and map, as submitted in this report for areas 1 to 11. This vote included areas 7 and 8 to be added to the Design District, with the existing Design District along Mission Gorge Road to remain. On June 16, 2003, the Navajo Community Planning Group voted 8 to 7 to delete areas 7 and 8 on the map.

On June 18, 2003, the Tierrasanta Community Planning Group voted unanimously in favor of the staff recommended changes to the Design District and the map with the exception of areas

7 and 8 in the Design District. For areas 7 and 8, the Tierrasanta Community Planning Group voted to retain areas 7 and 8 and the existing Design District along Mission Gorge Road.

The East Elliott Community Planning Group is inactive at this time.

Mission Trails Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) Recommendation - On March 4, 2003, the Mission Trails CAC, voted unanimously to recommend approval of the proposed amendments to the map and Design District Manual with the addition of areas 7 and 8 within the Design District. On July 1, 2003, the Mission Trails CAC voted unanimously to retain areas 7 and 8 on the map until the San Diego River Park Master Plan is approved with replacement design guidelines.

Mission Trails Regional Park Task Force Recommendation - On May 21, 2003, the Regional Park Task Force voted unanimously to recommend approval of the recommendations for areas 1 to 6 and 9 to 11, and to delete the technology park from the Design District along Mission Gorge Road (areas 7 and 8).

Environmental Impact - A Negative Declaration has been prepared for this project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Initial Study discussion analyzed potential impacts related to Visual Quality/Aesthetics and Land Use. It was determined that no significant environmental impacts would result from the proposed project, and therefore no mitigation would be required, and the Negative Declaration was prepared.

Fiscal Impact - The cost associated with processing this rezone is part of the Planning Department work program for fiscal years 2004.

Code Enforcement Impact - None with this action.

Housing Affordability Impact - The adoption of the amendments to the Design District Ordinance, the Design District Manual and map will not directly affect housing affordability.

## BACKGROUND

The Design District Ordinance (No. 0-15566NS) was created in 1981 to respond to the community's desire to have design guidelines that provide direction to projects that have a direct visual relationship to the Regional Park. The guidelines apply to parcels outside of the Regional Park and do not affect the park itself. The Design District covers areas within the East Elliott, Navajo and Tierrasanta Community Plan areas (see Attachment 1). An emergency interim ordinance was adopted by the City Council in 1980 for the duration of nine months, while the Design District was being created. This ordinance applied a moratorium for construction of any buildings exceeding four stories in height within a thousand yards of the Regional Park. The Design District Ordinance was adopted by the City Council, by Ordinance No. 0-15566NS on August 10, 1981.

The City Council adopted the Regional Park Plan on April 29, 1985 by Resolution No. R-263065. Some of the park boundaries overlapped with the Design District and therefore, an update of the Design District would eventually be necessary. More recently, some of the parcels currently in the Design District have been questioned as to their direct visual relationship to the Regional Park.

Members of the Regional Park CAC recommended some of these parcels be removed from the Design District and that the design guidelines within the Design District be reviewed.

On May 15, 2003, the rezone initiation request to amend the Design District Ordinance was brought before the Planning Commission and approved by a unanimous vote. On July 24, 2003, the Planning Commission voted unanimously in favor of the staff recommendation for the amendments.

The adopted Design District contains three subarea categories for application of the Design District guidelines. Each subarea relates to distinct areas surrounding the park: Subarea 1 includes commercial, multifamily and residentially-zoned areas of the Design District which are currently undeveloped or which could potentially redevelop. Subarea 2 addresses guidelines for steep hillsides. Subarea 3 addresses two portions of the Mission Gorge Road area. The Design District is implemented by discretionary permits required for any development proposed within the boundaries of the Design District. Staff reviewed the Design District Ordinance and applicable boundaries for the Design District and then considered amendments to the map and the Design District Manual. The following discussion is the result of the staff analysis.

## DISCUSSION

The documents recommended for adoption include the Design District Ordinance, the Design District Manual and the map. The discussion that follows addresses: 1) properties that are recommended to be added to and deleted from the Design District; 2) proposed new design guidelines for the Design District Manual; 3) proposed changes to the Design District Ordinance; 4) community input; and 5) interdepartmental coordination.

### Properties That are Recommended to be Added and Deleted From the Design District Map

The Design District map is proposed to be amended to include those areas within the East Elliott, Navajo and Tierrasanta communities that have a direct visual impact on the Regional Park. The revised map includes changes to the Regional Park boundaries as well as changes to the Design District. The Park boundaries were updated in 1985 and these map corrections will make the Design District boundaries consistent with the Regional Park boundaries (see Attachment 2 for the proposed map changes). Two areas received the most discussion for the proposed amendments to the map. (For a full discussion of all of the proposed changes, refer to Attachment 3.)

The Design District ordinance currently applies to a large area within the East Elliott area. Since the construction of SR-52, the Regional Park boundaries were changed southward of SR-52 leaving a portion of East Elliott with direct visual impact to the Park, but not covered by the Design District Ordinance. For that reason, and to apply consistent design guidelines throughout East Elliott, staff recommends that the remaining areas of East Elliott be in the Design District Ordinance. All four

groups recommended unanimously to apply the Design District to East Elliott. Areas 7 and 8 on the map received different input from the community planning groups, the Regional Park CAC and the Regional Park Task Force with different recommendations for expansion, retention, and deletion of the study area from the Design District. After careful consideration and input from the various interested groups, staff is recommending a moderated solution to address the different recommendations received. Staff recommends that along Mission Gorge the first 1,000 feet from the park should be retained in the Design District, the multifamily parcels south of Mission Gorge Road be added to the Design District, and that the remainder of the Design District along Mission Gorge Road be deleted from the ordinance once the San Diego River Park Master Plan is adopted by ordinance. This recommendation would provide more latitude in design for the proposed technology park that is currently being planned in this area.

#### Proposed New Text for the Mission Trails Design District Manual

The following proposed changes are new additions to the Design District Manual, and would apply to all subareas within the Design District (see Attachment 4 for the strikeout/underline version of the proposed changes to the Design District Manual).

- Additional language is included to encourage pathways and linkages into the park.
- New language is proposed to address landscaping as it can serve as a transition between the park and the built environment.
- New language is proposed to address architectural materials and colors to have new projects blend into the natural backdrop of the park.
- A new height limitation is proposed for all buildings to be four stories or 50 feet, including mechanical equipment.
- New design guidelines are proposed to screen wireless communications facilities from public view, provide landscaping with trees to adequately screen the facilities, construct the new facilities to maximize public views to the park, and be located outside of the public view sheds.

#### Proposed New Text for the Mission Trails Design District Manual, Subarea 3 – Mission Gorge Areas

Three new design guidelines are proposed for inclusion in this section to address: rear elevations, stepping back structures from the river floodway, and providing a landscaping buffer between parking areas and the river. Parts of this subarea will be subject to the San Diego River Park Master Plan and the Navajo Community amendment for a technology park that will include this Mission Gorge area.

#### Proposed Changes to the Mission Trails Design District Ordinance

There is proposed new language to the ordinance that will include the first 1,000 feet surrounding the park, (excluding East Elliott) in the Design District. For those parcels that are zoned single family, the Design District will only apply if these parcels are rezoned sometime in the future to another zone.

(See Attachment 5 for strikeout/underline language proposed.)

#### Community Input

Planning staff has worked with the Regional Park CAC for over a year to develop the proposed changes to the Design District Ordinance and map. Staff has also worked with the Regional Park Task Force for a recommendation on the proposed changes. Staff has worked with the Navajo and Tierrasanta Community Planning Groups prior to the two groups recommending approval of the proposed changes to the Design District and map. At this time, the East Elliott Community Planning Group is inactive and, for that reason, staff mailed a courtesy notice to the property owners to inform them of the update work in progress and solicit input. The final recommendation votes from the Navajo, Tierrasanta and Mission Trails Regional Park CAC were in favor of the proposed changes to the Design District text and the proposed changes to the map for items 1 to 6 and 9 to 11. Different recommendations were received for areas 7 and 8 and staff is proposing a moderated solution to address these differing recommendations.

#### Interdepartmental Input

Staff has worked with the Community and Economic Development staff regarding the Design District boundaries that are being proposed to be amended as well as additional design guidelines for landscaping and architectural materials. Community and Economic Development staff supports the staff recommendation to include the first 1,000 feet within the Design District in areas 7 and 8 and to delete the remainder of the Design District in this area.

Staff will continue to work with the Park and Recreation staff to coordinate the development of appropriate design guidelines for the San Diego River Park Master Plan along the San Diego River. In particular, staff will coordinate the future Navajo Community Plan (Community Plan) amendment for the proposed technology park with the San Diego River Park Master Plan to achieve consistent design guidelines for the technology park, the Community Plan and the Design District. A portion of the technology park is directly adjacent to the western boundary of the Regional Park.

The adoption of the proposed changes to the Design District Ordinance would bring the Design District Ordinance map into conformance with the Regional Park boundaries, remove unnecessary parcels from compliance with the Design District guidelines, and provide regulatory relief of a Site Development Permit for those parcels. Adoption of the proposed changes would also include new parcels to be added to the Design District that do relate directly to the Regional Park and warrant design review pursuant to the Design District and review by the appropriate community groups. The proposed changes to the Design District include the text changes to the Design District Manual, and the proposed map changes.

#### ALTERNATIVES

1. Do not recommend adoption of the proposed update to the Design District. This action would forego the necessary corrections to ensure consistency with the Regional Park boundaries and

appropriate interface with the Design District. This alternative would not affect the existing Design District Ordinance currently in place. However, parcels that the community groups have recommended for exclusion from the Design District would still require a Site Development Permit.

2. Approve portions of the recommended amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

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S. Gail Goldberg, AICP  
Planning Director

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Approved: P. Lamont Ewell  
Assistant City Manager

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Note: The attachments are not available in electronic format. A copy is available for review in the Office of the City Clerk.

- Attachments:
1. Existing Mission Trails Design District Ordinance Map
  2. Proposed Mission Trails Design District Ordinance Map
  3. List of Properties Proposed for Addition and Deletion from the Design District
  4. Strikeout/underline of Mission Trails Design District Manual
  5. Mission Trails Design District Overlay Zone, Section 123.1201