



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the City Council

DATE ISSUED: November 7, 2016 REPORT NO: 16-088

ATTENTION: Honorable Council President Sherri Lightner and City Councilmembers,  
Agenda of November 14, 2016

SUBJECT: Uptown Community Plan Update

### REQUESTED ACTION:

Approve the Uptown Community Plan Update, associated rezones, and amendments to the Land Development Code.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

1. **CERTIFY** Final Program Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) SCH No. 2016061023 and **ADOPT** Findings, a Statement of Overriding Considerations, and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP); and
2. **APPROVE** a resolution amending the Uptown Community Plan and amending the General Plan; and
3. **APPROVE** an ordinance amending the Land Development Code to repeal Chapter 15, Article 12 related to the Mid-City Communities Planned District; and
4. **APPROVE** an ordinance amending the Land Development Code to repeal Chapter 15, Article 20 related to the West Lewis Street Planned District; and
5. **APPROVE** an ordinance rezoning land within the Uptown planning area consistent with the Uptown Community Plan.
6. **APPROVE** an ordinance amending the Land Development Code to amend Chapter 13, Article 2 (Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone) and amending the City's certified Local Coastal Program (de minimis amendment).

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ITEM BACKGROUND:

The update to the Uptown Community Plan was conducted in order to bring it into conformance with the 2008 General Plan and City's Climate Action Plan and to address growing issues surrounding urban design. The community plan update work program has resulted in a comprehensive update of the 1988. The draft Uptown Community Plan provides vision, guiding principles, policies and specific proposals to guide future growth and provide for the quality of life in this distinctive, vibrant historic community.

In 2008, the City Council adopted the Interim Height Ordinance (IHO) as a result of community concerns that proposed development projects would be out of scale with the character of the

community. The IHO restricts building heights below building heights allowed by the Planned District zones and provided discretionary review for large scale projects in others. Because building height was a major issue in the community, the City Council adopted the IHO to assist with facilitating the plan update process and to ensure that high-rise developments would not circumvent the debate on building height, neighborhood scale and character until the community plan was adopted.

#### DISCUSSION:

The Uptown planning area consists of 2,700 acres and lies north of Downtown San Diego. It is bounded on the north by the hillsides of Mission Valley, on the east by Park Boulevard, and on the west and south by Old Town San Diego and Interstate 5. The Uptown community is located on a mesa that is divided by canyons and bordered by Presidio Park to the northwest and Balboa Park to the southeast. The community consists of six neighborhoods: Bankers Hill/Park West, Hillcrest, Mission Hills, Medical Complex, Middletown, and University Heights.

The draft Uptown Community Plan is an update to the 1988 Uptown Community Plan which at the time of its adoption redefined residential development patterns. The 1988 community plan is an early example of smart growth planning. It provided a strong policy framework for preservation and rehabilitation of single-family and low-density neighborhoods, while also providing for higher density development along commercial corridors where transit is located, and where increased development intensity could be accommodated through parcel accumulation. The draft update largely maintains this foundation while making adjustments to reflect current conditions, address neighborhood scale and character issues, incorporate the community's updated vision, and implement the General Plan and Climate Action Plan.

#### A. Why is an update to the current Uptown Community Plan needed?

While the 1988 Uptown Community Plan was seen as a progressive Smart Growth document for its time, there are elements in the 1988 plan that were in need of an update to bring it into conformance with not only the General Plan (2008), but also the City's Climate Action Plan. Additionally, as development activity in the community continued especially in areas zoned for tall buildings and designated for high density, mixed-use development, issues over building height and compatibility of new development arose as major issues needing to be addressed in a community plan update process.

The Uptown Community Plan was comprehensively updated to be consistent with the General Plan and address the issues surrounding urban design. In addition to maintaining high to very-high density (44 to 109 dwelling units per acre) in transit-oriented villages and Transit Priority Areas (TPAs), the draft plan includes an urban forestry section; a historic preservation element that includes the identification and preservation strategies for historical resources; and a comprehensive urban design element that establishes specific height limits along transit corridors, and includes policies that address development transitions between lower density and higher density development. The draft community plan identifies multi-modal infrastructure and identifies locations of parks, recreation facility opportunities, park equivalencies, and refinements to the community's open space boundaries. The community plan also provides specific policies related to sustainable growth and development practices in order to implement the City's Climate Action Plan.

B. What does the Uptown Community Plan Update attempt to accomplish?

The community plan update identifies land use and multi-modal mobility strategies to cohesively guide growth and development consistent with the General Plan. It fosters walkable and transit-oriented communities. The draft community plan focuses future development along transit corridors and villages. Consistent with the 1988 Uptown

Community Plan, draft community plan maintains single-family and low-density residential areas that comprise the majority of land uses. The draft community plan focuses development along established transit infrastructure, which helps to reduce vehicle trips and miles traveled, and supports bicycling and walking as transportation choices.

C. What are some of the more significant changes being proposed in the plan update?

1. Land Use

While the draft community plan maintains a majority of the current adopted plan density ranges, the draft community plan proposes reductions in residential density along mixed-use corridors and within multi-family residential designated areas from the 1988 community plan. These reductions are proposed to protect existing neighborhood character by improving development transitions between new and existing development, to reflect physical constraints associated with the difficulty in maximizing density on small parcels, and to reduce pressure on infrastructure and facility needs within specific neighborhoods. The areas of proposed reductions in residential density would help preserve the small-scale business storefronts and lower-scale character predominate in residential neighborhoods. In other areas the proposed reductions would provide better development transitions to lower-scaled development by creating a more compatible variation in development intensity between the areas designated for higher intensity, commercial and mixed-use development and existing lower-scale, residences immediately adjacent.

The land uses densities proposed in the draft community plan balances the community planning group's recommendations for reduced residential densities and the need to maintain residential density along transit corridors to be consistent with the CAP. The draft Uptown Community Plan maintains transit-supportive density adjacent and along commercial transit corridors and village areas while including the density reduction in other locations.

2. Multi-Modal

The draft community plan envisions the development of a balanced, multi-modal transportation network that improves pedestrian, bicycle and transit access while also addressing vehicular traffic capacity. A major component of the draft community plan is to enhance the pedestrian environment throughout the community and consider circulation improvements in an effort to create a more efficient multi-modal circulation network. The Mobility Element describes improvements that support a "complete streets" network and

encourage alternative modes of transportation. Improvements include enhanced bike facilities and improved walkability, the inclusion of Intelligent Transportation Systems, and the inclusion of Transportation Demand Management program strategies. Refer to the Mobility Element for more information regarding the multi-modal aspects of the community plan.

### 3. Open Space Boundary

As part of the update effort, staff completed an extensive Multiple Species Plan (MSCP) mapping effort to adjust the open space boundary lines that are adjacent to single-family homes along canyons in order to accurately reflect existing development. Refer to Section 8.2 Natural Resource Conservation of the Conservation Element and Appendix B of the community plan.

### 4. Recreation & Conservation

Opportunities for additional park land and recreational facilities are anticipated to come primarily through the acquisition of private property for parks, development of public properties for parks and recreational facilities, and through the identification of park equivalencies. Given that vacant land is cost-prohibitive for population-based parks, the General Plan allows for the use of park equivalencies. The draft community plan consists of joint-use facilities, trails through open space, non-traditional parks, portions of resource-based parks (e.g. Balboa Park), and building expansion or upgrades to existing recreational facilities. Approximately, 44 acres of population-based parks and park equivalencies are proposed with the community plan update.

The Recreation Element summarizes the existing and future parks, recreation facilities, and park equivalencies that have been identified within the Uptown to supplement the community's existing population-based park and recreation facilities inventory. The Element includes recommendations related to developing non-traditional parks on excess public right-of-way such as on Normal Street in Hillcrest, joint-use facilities with elementary schools in Mission Hills, incorporating trail amenities within open space in Bankers Hill, and parks and recreational facility upgrades in Balboa Park. Privately-owned under-utilized and vacant properties are also identified as potential park sites through opportunistic purchases and would not preclude permitted development per the underlying land use or zone.

### 5. Urban Design

#### a. Building Transitions

The Urban Design Element focuses on building transitions and incorporates policies that place a greater emphasis on ensuring better transitions between future high density/intensity projects along the transit corridors and the lower density established neighborhoods adjacent to these areas. The draft community plan provides design direction to prevent the bulk of higher scale buildings from imposing upon adjacent or neighboring lower-scale buildings. The plan includes guidelines for designing development transitions between lower and higher density areas of the community,

where higher scale buildings consistent with the land use designation and zoning could be built adjacent to lower scale buildings. As illustrated in Urban Design Element Figure 4-11 of the draft plan, the figure shows how transition planes can guide the bulk and massing of higher scale buildings to minimize visual intrusiveness on neighboring lower scale buildings based on the location of the transition line in respect to the lot.

b. Building Height

The Interim Height Ordinance (IHO) would be rescinded with the adoption of the proposed Uptown Community Plan. Building heights within higher density multifamily and mixed-use corridors that were previously regulated under the IHO, would be addressed through the use of the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPIOZ), which allows the application of supplemental development regulations tailored to specific sites within the community. Under the proposed CPIOZ, building heights and the applicable level of development approval within the Mission Hills and Bankers Hill/Park West neighborhoods would be similar as they currently are under the IHO. Building heights within particular areas of Hillcrest would be increased to allow development up to 100 and 120 feet with discretionary review. These new building heights were selected to allow for more development flexibility especially in high density areas in the community. Additionally, these proposed building heights would not only reasonably accommodate high density residential development, but would also allow development transitions to lower-scale neighborhoods, the incorporation of creative design, and provide opportunities for public space on the ground floor.

In areas where CPIOZ is applied, the proposed height limits would control building scale and provide height limits where none are provided under the proposed base zoning. Under CPIOZ, height limits would be set to establish thresholds for ministerial and discretionary review and allow development flexibility in addressing development on small parcels, opportunities for public space on the ground floor, and creative design. The proposed Uptown Community plan identifies two CPIOZ types that allow for either ministerial or discretionary approval (Attachment 7):

- CPIOZ Type A: Identifies areas where ministerial approval is granted for development.
- CPIOZ Type B: Identifies areas where discretionary approval is granted through a Process 3 Site Development Permit for development.

6. Historic Resources

The Historic Preservation Element (HPE) of the proposed plan contains specific goals and recommendations to address the history and cultural resources unique to Uptown in order to encourage appreciation of the community's history and culture. These policies along with the General Plan policies provide a comprehensive historic preservation strategy for Uptown. The HPE was developed utilizing technical studies prepared by qualified experts, as well as

extensive outreach and collaboration with the community planning group and preservation advocacy groups such as Mission Hills Heritage and the Save Our Heritage Organization. The HPE contains detailed language and policies in relation to the preservation and protection of historic resources.

D. Is the Community Planning Area Boundary between Uptown and North Park being revised?

The University Heights neighborhood is within the Uptown and North Park community plan areas. Members of the University Heights Community Association (UHCA) have requested to have the portion of University Heights in North Park from Texas Street to Lincoln Street be located within the Uptown community planning area boundaries, so they can voice their concerns on land use matters to a single planning group as opposed to two, especially when development projects are proposed along Park Boulevard. The members of the UHCA have stated that they identify more with the Uptown Planner's positions on development projects, and prefer the adopted Uptown Community Plan's emphasis on individual neighborhood identity. Existing community planning area boundaries are generally determined by natural features such as coastlines and canyons, and major man-made features such as freeways. Staff has determined that there is not a compelling land use planning rationale for changing the boundary, and has not included a boundary change in the staff recommendation.

E. How does the Community Plan implement the Climate Action Plan?

The City of San Diego's Climate Action Plan (CAP) lays out five bold strategies to meet 2020 and 2035 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions targets. Community plan updates play a major role in implementing Strategy 3: Bicycling, Walking, Transit & Land Use. Key CPU-related measures under Strategy 3 include:

- Action 3.1: Implement the General Plan's Mobility Element and the City of Villages Strategy in Transit Priority Areas to increase the use of transit;
- Action 3.2: Implement pedestrian improvements in Transit Priority Areas to increase commuter walking opportunities;
- Action 3.3: Implement the City of San Diego's Bicycle Master Plan to increase commuter bicycling opportunities; and
- Action 3.6: Implement transit-oriented development within Transit Priority Areas.

Emissions reductions attributed to effective land use in Action 3.6 equal 1.0 percent of the total GHG reductions anticipated with implementation of the CAP by 2035 and 4.3 percent of the reductions resulting from local actions. All Strategy 3 Actions mentioned above total 3.6 percent of the total reductions and 14.9 percent of local actions for 2035.

As detailed in the qualitative analysis contained in Attachment 8, the Uptown community plan update complies with the CAP through: identification of village locations, applying land use designations and implementing zoning to support transit-oriented development, supporting transit operations and access, and designing a multi-modal mobility network, among other measures. Because of the citywide nature of the GHG reductions, the CAP does not include a specified quantitative target applicable to each individual community plan. Just as the General Plan acknowledges that implementation of the City of Villages strategy will vary by community, so too



do CAP measures require thoughtful discretion in application so that co-benefits are achieved to the maximum extent possible, and City responsibilities to implement additional state laws (related to general plans, environmental justice, water quality, air quality, housing, fire safety, and others topics) are addressed.

In addition, while the City has committed to meeting its GHG reduction targets, there is flexibility in how those targets are attained. As stated on page 29 of the CAP, “for identified local ordinance, policy or program actions to achieve 2020 and 2035 GHG reduction targets, the City may substitute equivalent GHG reductions through other local ordinance, policy or program actions.” This will allow the City to be responsive to changes in technology and public policy priorities, as well as to seek the most cost-effective and beneficial strategies over the long-term implementation of the CAP.

Quantitative precision in achieving reductions is an exercise that is most appropriately addressed on a citywide level during the annual monitoring of the CAP as a whole. However, City staff, in coordination with SANDAG and consultants, has prepared a supplemental planning report to further analyze the changes in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita, commuter travel trip length, and mobility mode share in Transit Priority Areas (see Attachment 9).

F. How will the community plan be implemented?

The draft community plan provides community-specific, tailored policies and a long-range physical development guide for City staff, decision makers, property owners, and citizens engaged in community development. Key tools to implement the plan include:

1. Impact Fee Study (IFS)

An IFS with associated Development Impact Fee (DIF) for Uptown is concurrently prepared as a part of the community plan update work program (Attachment 10). The IFS and associated DIF will be presented to the City Council for consideration and approval in conjunction with their consideration of the proposed update to the community plan. The DIF, when adopted, will

be a partial funding source for the public facilities envisioned for the community and contained within the respective IFS. Portions of facilities costs not funded by DIF will need to be identified by future City Council actions in conjunction with the adoption of Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budgets.

2. Zoning Program

The adopted Mid-City Communities Planned District Ordinance (MCPDO) and the West Lewis Street Planned District Ordinance (WLSPDO) would be repealed and replaced with citywide zones of the Land Development Code (LDC) in order to streamline and consolidate development processing. Attachment 11 reflects the proposed zoning map for the Uptown planning area.

### 3. Potential Historic Districts

The identification and prioritization of potential historic districts is an important component of the plan update process as Uptown is home to many valuable historic resources as evidenced by the number of designated historic resources. This includes individually-designated resources, as well as two designated historic districts that include the Mission Hills Historic District and the Stockton Line Historic District.

In order to further preserve the character and heritage of the community, City staff has identified a number of additional proposed historic districts that are included in the HPE. These proposed districts are illustrated on Figure 10-3 of the HPE. In determining how to process the potential historic districts, the Planning Department developed prioritization factors, weighted in order of importance, as follows: Priority for Uptown Planners (Community Planning Group); Survey-Identified vs. Community-Identified Districts; Volunteer effort currently underway; as well as redevelopment Interest. Based on this criteria, the following three proposed districts have been prioritized: Heart of Bankers Hill, Horton's Addition, as well as Arnold & Choates and The Park Boulevard Apartment West & East (Attachment 12). Once the draft community plan is adopted, the City will initiate steps to establish these top priority districts should the City Council approve the draft community plan.

Three districts could be processed annually based on the capacity of staff and the Historical Resources Board and funding availability. The size of the potential historic districts would also need to be taken into consideration. The City would annually process one district from North Park, Golden Hill, and Uptown. Once all districts in a planning area are processed, the work program would alternate two in one planning area and one in the other.

### 4. Streamlining for infill projects

CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.3 allows the City to streamline environmental review for individual infill projects. Future development projects can rely on the analysis in the PEIR prepared for the community plan update if the project meets applicable criteria for an infill project, and would only need to address project-specific impacts not addressed in the PEIR.

#### CITY STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S)/OBJECTIVE(S):

The community plan update is in direct alignment with the following City of San Diego Strategic Plan goals and objectives; specifically,

- Goal 2 – Work in partnership with all of our communities to achieve safe and livable neighborhoods) and,
- Goal 3 – Create and sustain a resilient and economically prosperous City.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS: None

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CONTRACTING INFORMATION (if applicable): N/A

PREVIOUS COUNCIL and/or COMMITTEE ACTIONS:



On October 19, 2016, The Smart Growth and Land Use Committee will provide a recommendation on the Uptown Community Plan Update.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS:

Starting in 2009, the City conducted an extensive community outreach process, where a wealth of valuable community information was received through a variety of avenues, including workshops, meetings and community outreach sessions, including formation of a community plan update advisory committee. The outreach included advisory committee meetings on various land use topics, historic resources and mobility open house events, and a workshop on urban design. A multi-day workshop or "charrette" was conducted and focused on community engagement and identified major issue areas to produce a community plan vision and conceptual planning framework. Subsequent input has been provided by the Uptown Planners, the officially recognized community planning group and at previous public meetings and hearings:

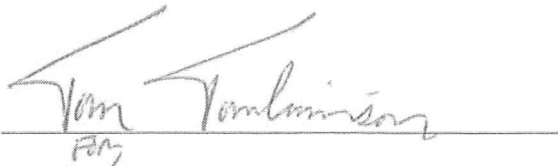
- On October 6, 2016, the Planning Commission voted 5-0-2 to recommend approval of the Uptown Community Plan Update with the following modifications: Include new Mobility Element policies related to bicycle commuter accommodations for large employers and electrical vehicle charging stations, keep the adopted community plan's land use map without the Interim Height Ordinance, include the community plan update policies, eliminate the Planned District Ordinances and use Citywide zoning, include recommendations on the Climate Action Plan, initiate a Specific Plan for the Uptown Gateway District proposal, adopt changes in Attachment 14 of the Planning Commission Staff Report, and to include the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone thresholds for community review and remove references to height control.
- On October 4, 2016, the Uptown Planners voted 11-2-1 to reaffirm support of the Density Redistribution Alternative, previously recommended height limits, and other resolutions on the community plan update (Attachment 2). The Uptown Planners also voted 11-1-0 to include the area within the RM-2-5 zone in University Heights into the CPIOZ Type A with a height limit of 30 feet.
- On September 20, 2016, the Historical Resources Board voted 5-1-0 to recommend approval of the Uptown Historical Survey, the Community Plan Historic Preservation Element, and the historical resources sections of the EIR with minor amendments.
- On August 10, 2016, the Technical Advisory Committee recommended against the use of the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone to limit height, the elimination of the Planned District Ordinances, and to use Citywide base zones for height.
- On June 16, 2016, the Park and Recreation Board voted unanimously to recommend approval of the Uptown Community Plan Recreation Element.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECTED IMPACTS:

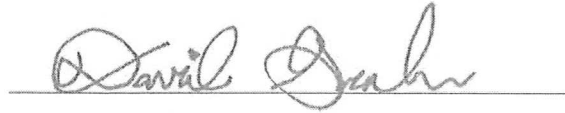
Residents, property owners and local business owners and their employees affiliated with the Uptown planning area; the Uptown Planners, and other community associations.

CONCLUSION:

The draft Uptown Community Plan provides the vision, guiding principles, policies and specific proposals to guide future growth and provide for the quality of life in this distinctive, vibrant and historic community consistent with the City's General Plan and Climate Action Plan. The community plan provides smart growth goals and policies, clear urban design guidance, and policies for preservation of the community's historic and natural resources. The community plan was drafted through a community-based process and greatly benefitted from the efforts of an engaged citizenry and stakeholders, including past and present members of the Uptown Planners.



Jeff Murphy, Director  
Planning Department



David Graham  
Deputy Chief Operating Officer

Attachments:

1. Draft Uptown Community Plan June 2016
2. Summary of Community Planning Group Recommendations
3. Final Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)
4. Draft PEIR Findings
5. Draft PEIR Statement of Overriding Considerations (SOCs)
6. Draft Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Program (MMRP)
7. Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPIOZ) Maps
8. Climate Action Plan (CAP) Conformance Evaluation
9. White Paper – Estimating Community Plan Update Contributions Towards Climate Action Plan Goals
10. Draft Uptown Impact Fee Study (IFS)
11. Proposed Zoning Map (C-Sheet)
12. Potential Historic District Factsheet, Issues, and Prioritization
13. Community Plan Comment Topics
14. Community Plan Document Edits since June 2016
15. Draft Resolution – Amending the Uptown Community Plan and General Plan
16. Draft Resolution – Certifying the Final EIR, MMRP, Findings, and SOCs
17. Draft Ordinance – Repealing the Mid-City Communities Planned District Ordinance
18. Draft Ordinance – Repealing the West Lewis Street Planned District Ordinance
19. Draft Rezone Ordinance
20. Draft Ordinance – Amendment to the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone