



REPORT

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

DATE ISSUED: May 10, 2024

REPORT NO.: 103

ATTENTION: Parks and Recreation Board
Agenda of May 16, 2024

SUBJECT: Hillcrest Focused Plan Area (FPA) Amendment to the Uptown Community Plan

SUMMARY

Issue: Should the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council approval of the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment to the Uptown Community Plan?

Staff Recommendation: Recommend to the City Council Approval of a resolution adopting the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment to the Uptown Community Plan and amending the General Plan.

Other Recommendations: None

Fiscal Impact: Not Applicable

Water and Energy Conservation Status: Not Applicable

Environmental: [Draft Program Environmental Impact Report](#)

BACKGROUND

The Uptown community, situated adjacent to downtown San Diego, encompasses several neighborhoods including Hillcrest, Mission Hills, Bankers Hill/Park West, University Heights, Middletown, and the Medical Center. The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment area encompasses approximately 380 acres of the Hillcrest and Medical Complex neighborhoods within the Uptown Community. Hillcrest is a vibrant pedestrian-oriented commercial and entertainment center, and contains a diverse mix of retail, office, and mixed-use buildings as well as a varied residential character.

The Uptown Community Plan was last updated comprehensively in 2016 to reflect local needs and in accordance with the General Plan and Climate Action Plan. However, the Community Plan Update did not increase housing capacity, but rather maintained the residential densities established in the previous update of the Community Plan in 1988, as reflected in the existing planned land uses. Since then, with a growing housing crisis and a changing climate, more is needed to address housing costs, enhance access, use of transit, and provide public spaces for all to use. The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment (FPA) will address these needs and increase housing capacity, identify opportunities for public spaces, strengthen mobility connections, support local business, and celebrate the rich LGBTQ+ culture and history of the community focusing within the Hillcrest and Medical Complex areas of the community plan.

DISCUSSION

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment proposes amendments to land uses that enhance housing opportunities, further enriching the vibrancy of Hillcrest neighborhood, which already enjoys lively, walkable streets, mixed-use buildings, and a diverse array of retail, office, and entertainment options. The proposed amendments align with existing land uses while seeking to increase allowable density and intensity. The Uptown Community Plan has approximately 24,800 existing homes which includes approximately 4,900 homes in the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment area. Approximately 10,300 additional homes could be developed based on the adopted Uptown Community Plan. This also includes 1,000 homes proposed by the UCSD Hillcrest Campus 2019 Long Range Development Plan. Based on the proposed land use scenario, the Hillcrest FPA could have a maximum of up to 17,200 additional homes above the adopted Uptown Community Plan over the next 30 years and beyond.

The Hillcrest FPA has been shaped by extensive public outreach and input including community meetings, online engagement, stakeholder interviews, planning group meetings, Planning Commission workshops, and feedback collected on the discussion draft and first draft. As part of this outreach, Park Planning staff actively engaged the community in discussions regarding new parks and recreation opportunities, fostering economic growth while promoting vibrant public spaces and businesses. Through various forums and surveys, community members expressed their preferences and priorities for park amenities and urban design features. Feedback emphasized the desire for enhanced public spaces and recreational facilities, reflecting a shared commitment to fostering a vibrant and inclusive community.

While important progress has been made in park development, including recent projects like the Olive Street Pocket Park and the Normal Street Promenade, opportunities remain to meet the evolving needs of the growing population. To address the need for parks and public spaces, the Hillcrest FPA includes amendments to the Recreation Element of the Uptown Community Plan, as well as the implementation of Supplemental Development Regulations (SDRs) through a Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPIOZ) that will create new opportunities for public spaces and amenities as part of private development projects.

Recreation Element Amendments

The Recreation Element of the Uptown Community Plan includes goals and recommendations that address parks and recreation facilities; preservation; accessibility; and open space lands and resource-based parks. These goals and policies, along with the broader goals and policies of the General Plan and the Balboa Park Master Plan, provide a comprehensive parks strategy intended to accommodate the community at full community development. As part of the Hillcrest FPA, the Recreation Element of the Uptown Community Plan will be updated to be consistent with the Parks Master Plan, which was adopted in 2021. The Recreation Element will now reflect the recreational value standard and park typologies found in the Parks Master Plan.

Recreation value emphasizes the activities and experiences that residents can enjoy, rather than solely the acreage of parkland. It measures the inherent benefits of park spaces – the ability for park facilities to support active recreation and exercise; encourage socializing; link people to transit, bike facilities, trails, and active public areas; and invite activity throughout the day. The proposed parks, trails and recreation spaces that are identified in Figure 8-1 of

the Recreation Element are planned to maximize the recreation opportunities that will serve the increasing number of community residents.

The table below lists existing and proposed Recreation Value Points in relation to the current and forecasted population of the Uptown community. The Recreation Value Points Goal represents the total community-wide points that would meet the standard adopted in the Parks Master Plan (100 points per 1,000 residents).

Existing and Planned Parks and Recreation Facilities Matrix	
Statistics – 2021 Population	
Total Population:	50,593
Recreation Value Points Goal, 100 Points Per Thousand:	5,059
Current Recreation Value Points:	978
2050 Population, Planned Facilities Built	
Projected 2050 Population:	109,800
Recreation Value Points Goal, 100 Points Per Thousand:	10,980
Current Recreation Value Points:	978
Planned Additional Recreation Value Points:	3,315
Current + Planned Recreation Value Points Total:	4,293

In addition to identifying additional park facilities that should be pursued to support an increased population as new homes are built; the Recreation Element is also being amended to update and strengthen existing language regarding how parks are planned and implemented in an urbanized community such as Uptown. The Recreation Element states that opportunities for additional park land and recreation facilities within Uptown are anticipated to come primarily through redevelopment of private and public properties and through the application of the proposed Supplemental Development Regulations, which will create public space and possible park opportunities as part of private development.

Additionally, a primary goal of the Recreation Element is to obtain land for population-based parks, an effort that will be supported in part by the Development Impact Fees charged to new development for park facilities, a portion of which is set aside for land acquisition. Where vacant land is limited, unavailable or cost-prohibitive, the City’s General Plan allows for the application of multiple park typologies, as defined in the Parks Master Plan to be determined by the community and City staff through city-wide park acquisition and development prioritization efforts. The amended Recreation Element includes updated policies that support the pursuit of various park typologies, including non-traditional opportunities, to serve the recreational needs of the people of Uptown.

Supplemental Development Regulations

The Hillcrest FPA proposes Supplemental Development Regulations to integrate public spaces, park improvements, and promenades into larger-scale redevelopment projects, fostering pedestrian-friendly environments and facilitating community interaction. Furthermore, initiatives such as the LGBTQ+ Interpretive Trail underscore the commitment to promoting diversity and inclusivity.

- *Public Spaces*
 Public space within the development site will be required for all new development on a property equal to or greater than 25,000 square feet and with a total gross floor area

equal to or greater than 75,000 square feet. Development on a property that does not meet this threshold but choose to comply with the public space supplemental development regulations will be granted a floor area ratio (FAR) bonus of 1.0. Developments will be required to provide maintenance, public access to the public space and include public space amenities that can be chosen from a menu of options including, but not limited to patio seating, community gardens, interactive and/or placemaking elements, recreation areas, off-leash dog areas, fitness circuits, and performance/event spaces.

- *Park Improvements*

Developments that construct on-site park improvements in accordance with SDMC Section 142.0640 and City Council Policy 600-33 can be provided as an alternative to the public space requirement. City Council Policy 600-33 outlines requirements for on-site park improvements that go beyond what is required by the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone public space requirements and therefore they are provided as an alternative. City Council Policy 600-33 outlines notification requirements and a public participation process. Park Improvements that count toward recreational value points may be eligible for a development impact fee waiver.

- *Promenades*

Development along the north side of University Avenue, between Sixth Avenue and Park Boulevard, and along the north side of Robinson Avenue, between First Avenue and Seventh Avenue, will be required to provide a promenade area outside of the public right-of-way that is open to the public. Promenades are to be built within a development site and do not include the public right-of-way area known as the parkway, which is from the curb to the property line. The University Avenue Promenade will have an average width of 10 feet measured perpendicular from the edge of the parkway to the street wall, with a minimum width of 10 feet at any point. The Robinson Avenue Promenade will have an average width of 5 feet measured from the edge of the parkway to the street wall, with a minimum width of 10 feet at any point.

- *LGBTQ+ Interpretive Trail Paving*

To support the LGBTQ+ Cultural District, Public Spaces and Promenades are also required to provide a 12-inch-wide band of multi-colored paving in a meandering pattern parallel to the parkway which conforms to the design guidelines in Appendix F of the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The City Planning Department will be presenting the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment to the Planning Commission on May 30, 2024 with Land Use and Housing Commission and City Council to follow in Summer 2024. Information regarding the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment, including process, schedule and documents, are available on the project website: www.PlanHillcrest.org.

Through the extensive public engagement process, the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment recommends a land use plan and zoning to strengthen the business district of Uptown, increase opportunities for homes near transit, and bring neighborhood benefits, including parks and public spaces, where needed most. Staff therefore recommends that the Parks and Recreation board recommend to the City Council approval of a resolution adopting the

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Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment to the Uptown Community Plan and amending the General Plan.

Respectfully submitted,



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SR/ks

Attachment(s): Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment ([Link](#))