

# College Area Community Plan Update Frequently Asked Questions

*January 2025*

## **What is a Community Plan?**

While the General Plan's Land Use Element provides broad land use policies that apply to the City as a whole, community plans provide more detailed guidance for how each of the City's 49 planning areas should grow over the next 30 years. Each document is a unique reflection of the issues and trends facing the community and corresponding strategies to implement community goals. Community plans include policies on land use, mobility, urban design, public facilities and services, natural resources, historic and cultural resources, and economic development. Community plan updates, in coordination with the General Plan and its Land Use Element, achieve both citywide and community-level goals.

## **What is a Draft Community Plan?**

As part of the community plan update process, the City Planning Department prepares three drafts of a community plan: a first, second, and final draft plan. As released, each draft provides an opportunity for community feedback that will be used to inform subsequent drafts. The following describes each draft that will be prepared as part of the College Area Community Plan Update process and its purpose:

- **First Draft:** This is the first draft of the updated College Area Community Plan. The City welcomes all feedback on this draft by February 14, 2025. Comments can be submitted using [this form](#), sending us an [email](#), or [mailing](#) your comments. The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive draft for the community to review and provide comments on. No final recommendations or decisions are made at this stage, and feedback at this stage is valued and will inform the second draft.
- **Second Draft:** The second draft includes revisions based on community input received on the first draft. Although the second draft is more developed, no final decisions are made, and feedback continues to be welcomed and valued throughout the public hearing process. The second draft's potential environmental impacts have also been analyzed in a supporting Environmental Document.

- **Public Hearings Draft:** After incorporating feedback received on the first and second draft plans, a final draft plan is prepared for review by City Council. For the final draft, opportunities for feedback will occur through comments provided through the public hearing process.

### **Why is the College Area Community Plan being updated?**

The College Area Community Plan is being updated as part of the City Planning Department's program to update community plans in locations served by high-frequency public transit consistent with the City of Villages strategy in the General Plan. The College Area Community Plan was last updated in 1989. Since that time, San Diego State University has evolved from primarily a commuter university into a major University attracting students from beyond San Diego, and the area has emerged as a major transit corridor . However, the existing community plan does not have plans for sufficient housing for the community's needs. To meet demand, and to affirmatively further fair housing, more homes, particularly affordable homes, should be provided within the College Area community near transit. Increasing opportunities for homes near transit will assist in reducing vehicular travel and further the City's climate goals. .

### **How is the College Area Community Plan implemented?**

The City cannot mandate development to occur, but through a community plan update, it can rezone areas and identify policies to encourage particular types of development in certain areas. Since it takes time for growth to occur, a community plan update provides a vision and guidance for how any potential development may occur for the next several decades. It is important to note that added home and job capacity in the community plan does not always equate to the number of new homes or jobs that will actually be constructed because it is up to individual landowners to decide whether or not to develop their land. The plan sets the long-term framework for land use and policy decisions. Implementation depends on zoning changes, city investment in infrastructure, and private development to guide future growth and redevelopment.

### **How does a Community Plan Update relate to the Climate Action Plan?**

The City's Climate Action Plan was adopted in 2015 and calls for a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. Community plan updates play a role in implementing Climate Action Plan strategies related to walking/rolling, bicycling and transit and land use. The College Area Community Plan is consistent with the Climate Action Plan community plan-related actions by: planning for growth within Transit Priority Areas and Sustainable

Development Areas; applying land use designations, residential densities, and implementing zoning to support transit-oriented development; providing policies and planned improvements to support transit operations and access; and designing a planned multimodal mobility network with robust pedestrian and bicycle facilities that connect people to transit. The College Area Community Plan Update serves as one of the ways that the City is working to achieve citywide and community sustainability goals such as smart growth, mode shift, and transit-oriented development. All adopted community plans are consistent with the goals and policies in the Climate Action Plan.

### **What are the next steps for the College Area Community Plan Update?**

The City Planning Department has released the first draft of the College Area Community Plan for public review. The first draft provides a comprehensive document for the public to review and provide feedback. It is not final. Comments will be accepted on the first draft until midnight on Friday, February 14, 2024.

The first draft will then be updated based upon feedback received. After feedback on the first draft has been reviewed and incorporated, we anticipate a second draft plan, along with a draft environmental document, will be made available for further review and feedback in summer 2025. The City Planning Department aims provide a final draft College Area Community plan for public hearings in the fall of 2025.

### **What are the guiding principles of the College Area Community Plan Update?**

A summary of the [College Area Community Plan Update Guiding Principles](#) include:

- Encouraging building and public space design for sustainability and livability
- Increasing opportunities for housing near SDSU, transit, community amenities and jobs
- Encouraging safe and convenient transit and active mobility
- Supporting a vibrant and sustainable business district
- Sustaining SDSU as anchor community institution
- Encouraging active mobility improvements for public health and business vitality
- Preserving and expanding opportunities for parks and open space
- Encouraging the use of an emissions-free transportation system
- Encouraging public spaces that support cultural exchange with community agencies, local businesses, public schools, the university, and other local arts organizations

### **How does the College Area Community Plan Update address opportunities for new homes?**

The College Area Community Plan Update provides capacity for approximately 18,000 new homes. While the plan would increase the area's capacity for up to 18,000 homes, that does not mean that there will be 18,000 new homes as the City cannot mandate development. The decision to develop a property ultimately rests with individual property owners. The City is undergoing an unprecedented housing crisis and needs to provide more capacity for new homes to meet population growth and provide for a range of housing options that meet the needs of our diverse population.

Creating capacity for homes is achieved through policies, rezoning, and other measures in the updated community plan. The College Area Plan Update will help address the San Diego housing crisis in a way that will also meet Citywide goals in the General Plan and Climate Action Plan. The College Area Plan Update allows us to comprehensively plan for appropriate housing and supportive infrastructure, jobs and services and avoid many of the negative consequences of unplanned growth. It also furthers the City's state-mandated commitment to affirmatively further fair housing.

The College Area Community Plan timeframe extends up to 30 years or beyond. As such, the City updates and amends community plans to help address both our current and future housing goals.

### **How will the opportunity for new homes affect the College Area community?**

Although the City cannot mandate development, additional opportunities for new homes can promote development that supports new community investments, including new public spaces, new neighborhood commercial amenities, and enhanced places for people to enjoyably and safely walk, bike, and interact with their neighbors. Comprehensively updating the College Area Community Plan and creating capacity for new homes close to transit allows for greater opportunities for new and improved community investment.

### **How will the College Area Community Plan Update address affordable housing?**

One of the goals for the College Area Community Plan Update is to increase opportunities for homes for people of all incomes. Citywide regulations require developments to provide a portion of the new homes to be rented or sold at affordable levels or pay a fee to support the construction of future affordable homes.

### **Where will capacity be added for new homes and what types of homes will there be?**

The Community Plan Update envisions growth along corridors and near SDSU, with new mixed-use development occurring on pedestrian-oriented streetscapes and connections to the neighborhoods; the maximum densities will range between 109 du/acre along the corridors, 145 du/acre at major activity centers, and 218 du/acre near SDSU. The College Area Community Plan Update also provides an opportunity to plan for many different types of housing adjacent to the corridors to allow seniors to downsize and new homes for families; density located next to corridors will typically range from 29 du/acre to 54 du/acre or 73 du/acre. The overall intent is to provide opportunities for homes for people of all incomes, including families, that they will enjoy living in to ensure a thriving community.

### **What is dwelling unit per acre (du/acre)?**

Dwellings units per acre (du/ac) is the relationship between the number of homes on a property and the area of the property. Dwellings units per acre is used to permit how many individual homes can be located on any one property. For example, a single-family home on a 1-acre property would have a density of 1 du/ac. A typically single-family lot is 5,000 square feet or 0.11 acres which has the density of 9 du/ac. The physical size of the property determines how many dwellings can fit on a site; a 0.25-acre lot with a density maximum of 20 du/acre would only be permitted for up to 5 homes. Whereas, as 0.11-acre property with a density maximum of 20 du/acre would only be permitted for up to 2 homes. Du/ac does not dictate unit size or unit type. Other bulk controls such as setbacks and height limits apply to the building form.

### **How will the Community Plan address infrastructure and public facilities in the long-term?**

As part of the community plan update process, public facilities, including fire stations, libraries, parks and mobility improvements needed to serve the community, are identified and included in the community plan. Projects identified within the Community Plan Update are further prioritized through Capital Improvement Program engagement in accordance with Council\_Policy 800-14. Specific infrastructure accommodations in the plan are addressed in the questions below. Ongoing community input is critical in identifying these needs.

### **How will the College Area Community Plan address additional recreational and public space needs?**

The first draft of the College Area Community Plan identifies opportunities for new recreation public spaces to be built when new homes are developed throughout the life of the plan. This can be achieved through the provision of new parks, plazas, and public

spaces as part of new developments, which are addressed in the first draft. In addition, more public space can be achieved through building setbacks, wider sidewalks, landscaping, street trees and other pedestrian amenities as individual development sites come forward in the future. The first draft includes strategies for developing linear parks along major streets and encourages continued joint-use agreements with schools to increase access to recreational spaces.

### **How will canyons and open spaces be protected?**

The City has existing regulations that require new development to minimize encroaching on open space, steep slopes, and canyons. The College Area Community Plan Update has also proposed conservation policies that would recommend new development maintain natural features and facilitate natural stormwater runoff.

### **How will the Community Plan Update address future public school needs?**

The City of San Diego works with San Diego Unified School District during the Community Plan Update process to help the district manage resources and plan for new or expanded facilities in places that may have student-population increases. New development is required to pay fees that may offset a portion of the cost for new school facilities.

### **How will the Community Plan address additional mobility needs?**

The first draft of the College Area Community Plan proposes a range of improvements to help residents move safely and easily throughout the community. These include pedestrian, bicycle, and transit enhancements designed to maximize future SANDAG transit investments, such as increased trolley frequency and Next-Generation Bus Rapid Transit along El Cajon Boulevard, College Avenue, and Montezuma Road. These transit improvements will better connect the College Area to Downtown and other key destinations across the region.

By planning for new housing and amenities near these mobility and transit improvements, the plan supports the creation of a community where people can live closer to work, shopping, and other daily needs. This also supports the City's Climate Action Plan by reducing reliance on cars and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

### **How will College Area become a more walkable community?**

The College Area Community Plan Update will accommodate new infill developments that include varied types and sizes of public gathering spaces (parks, playgrounds, plazas, etc.), streetscapes that give people a more comfortable environment to walk, bike, roll or take

transit, as well as varied types of housing that meet a diverse range of people and needs. This mixed land use pattern ensures stores and necessities can be located near housing and allow for needs and services to be provided within walking distance.

### **What bicycle and pedestrian transportation improvements are proposed in the College Area Community Plan Update?**

The first draft Plan includes proposals for expanding bike lane, improving pedestrian pathways, and creating safer streets. It emphasizes the development of Complete Streets that prioritize the safety of all users while integrating pedestrian amenities such as green infrastructure (e.g. bioswales, landscaping and street trees), wider sidewalks, and space to gather. It aligns with the city's climate goals by encouraging alternatives to driving to important destinations within the community like SDSU and strong active-mobility connections to daily amenities like retail, services and public spaces within and near to the College Area.

Several pedestrian infrastructure treatments such as curb extensions, wider sidewalks, more street trees and safer walking opportunities will improve the existing pedestrian network and encourage more trips to be made by foot.

The first draft of the College Area Community Plan describes the type of pedestrian and bicycle facilities that can be included, along with more information on specific areas for these facilities.

### **How has the Core Sub-Area Design Manual Been Incorporated into the Updated College Area Community Plan?**

The 1997 Core Sub-Area Design Manual is a specific plan within the College Area near SDSU. The specific plan area boundaries are 55th Street to the west, College Avenue to the east, Montezuma Road to the south, and the SDSU campus to the north. In short, the Core Sub-Area Design Manual is a specific plan that seeks to increase the availability of housing and soften the boundaries between SDSU and the College Area Community.

The updated College Area Community Plan encourages a 'campus town' with more homes and neighborhood commercial amenities near SDSU, with a complementary mobility system that encourages multiple modes of transportation and improves connections to SDSU. Additional concepts and policies of the Core Sub-Area Design Manual have been incorporated into the updated College Area Community Plan where appropriate.

### **How can I learn more about the College Area Community Plan Update?**



Visit the Community Plan Update webpage at [www.PlanCollegeArea.org](http://www.PlanCollegeArea.org) where you can learn more about the plan update and sign up for email updates to stay informed.

**How can I make comments on the First Draft of the College Area Community Plan Update?**

Comments will be accepted on the first draft of the College Area Community Plan until midnight on Friday, February 14, 2025. You may submit comments on the first draft of the College Area Community Plan [here](#).

