

March 10, 2025

Nathen Causman

Senior Planner

City of San Diego

City Planning Department

[NCausman@sandiego.gov](mailto:NCausman@sandiego.gov)

**RE: Draft College Area Community Plan Update**

Dear Mr. Causman:

The College Area Community Planning Board (“CACPB”) has the following comments on the first draft of the College Area Community Plan Update:

The update is generally aligned with the 7 Visions Plan, but there are some significant differences and issues the CACPB is asking to be addressed.

1. Revise the plan to reduce changes to no more than a 11,250 increase over the maximum build out as proposed by the 7 Visions Plan. This proposed increase is in alignment with percentage increases in dwelling unit counts in recently adopted community plan updates for University, Mira Mesa and Hillcrest.
2. Revise the plan to eliminate all areas designated as Residential Low 4; to be clear, the CACPB does not support any land designated Residential Low 4 in the College Area.
3. Eliminate all density increases on Dorothy Way and Campanile Drive south of Dorothy Drive.
4. Eliminate all density increases in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone except property that fronts on Montezuma Road between 55<sup>th</sup> Street and El Cajon Blvd; along El Cajon Boulevard and on College Avenue.
5. Designate all existing institutional uses such as religious, educational, City owned facilities, etc as institutional land use zoning; preserving these areas for future community-serving uses.

6. The community plan needs to include a public safety section that establishes specific plans to ensure emergency preparedness for response, commensurate infrastructure (firefighting access and suppression), determined and maintained evacuation routes for both the SDSU campus and neighborhoods and other relevant land use provisions.
7. Revise the plan to include a promenade on both sides of Montezuma Rd. from College Ave. to El Cajon Blvd, including two traffic circles on Montezuma (at 63<sup>rd</sup> and at Catoctin).
8. The Campus Town must require mixed use/commercial at the corridors and nodes between College and Montezuma, College and El Cajon and Montezuma and El Cajon.
9. Complete Communities should not apply in the College Area after the approval of the Plan.
10. The Community Priority Implementation Overlay Zone should only be applied to high density or mixed use land use designations along the major corridors and nodes.
11. The Community Plan needs to have an Economic Development Element.
12. The plan should require phasing of zone changes tied to completed infrastructure triggers.
13. The Community Plan Update does not qualify for an Addendum to the Master Blueprint San Diego EIR. A Supplemental EIR is required, that includes the CACPB's 7- Visions Plan as one of the alternatives per the May 25, 2022, key takeaways.
14. Transportation data used to inform the Mobility element (January 13, 2025, presentation, College Area Travel Patterns, U.S. Census Bureau 2020) needs to be updated to reflect more accurate post-pandemic traffic and mobility uses.
15. In the Recreation element: (Pg 35) – Change the projected population of 87,300 people for the College Area to reflect the correct number for the Plan.
16. The proposed size of the College Avenue Recreation Center and parks is not sufficient for the community; alternate (additional) locations for future recreation center(s) and parks need to be identified and committed to.
17. San Diego State University facilities should not be counted as fulfilling the needs of residents of the area, there are not enough for on campus students to be able to also contribute to the community for general recreation/parks.

18. Joint Use Facilities, do not allow access to facilities during the day. They fill a need for sports facilities but not for passive recreation space. Table 10-8 Park and Recreation Inventory page 70-72: #7 – Confirm with Park and Recreation Planning regarding JUA for Hardy Elementary School is currently in the middle of school site redevelopment and will be removing the black top and play structure from the public area and reducing the size of the field, thereby reducing the value of the “park” and eliminating the option for expanding the agreement.
19. Though all the surrounding canyons around the College Area are zoned “park/open space”, they are privately owned and not accessible for recreation purposes. Recommend/encourage partnerships with private landowners in the MSCP (such as south/west end of Montezuma Road) to designate trails for public access that comply with the Multiple Species Conservation Program guidelines and that will discourage encampments.
20. The Plan needs to include a Public Facility element (current conditions assessment and recommendations) that specify the need for and provision of fire stations, police stations, wastewater, library and other facilities.
21. The existing library facility needs 52 additional dedicated parking spaces, and an increase as the population grows.

Although the CACPB appreciates the effort of the staff to accommodate the 7 Visions Plan, the Community Plan Update still needs significant changes to provide an acceptable guidance document for the next 30 years. The College Area has and will continue to accept a fair share of increased density, but there must be some ability to accommodate this density with the infrastructure and community services necessary to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the issues raised in this letter. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions or need further clarification.

Regards,

Robert Montana  
Chair, College Area Community Plan  
Update Sub-committee

Tom Silva  
Chair, College Area Community Planning Board

Sent to Nathen Causman

Comments on the Draft College Area Community Plan Update  
Friends of the College-Rolando Library  
February 13, 2025

**The future of the College-Rolando library has been critically compromised. This situation, in tandem with the serious lack of other public amenities, requires that this issue be identified and discussed in the Community Plan being currently fashioned for the College Area.**

Parks. In all of D9 there are only 2 Recreation Centers. Compare the availability of recreation centers with other council districts.

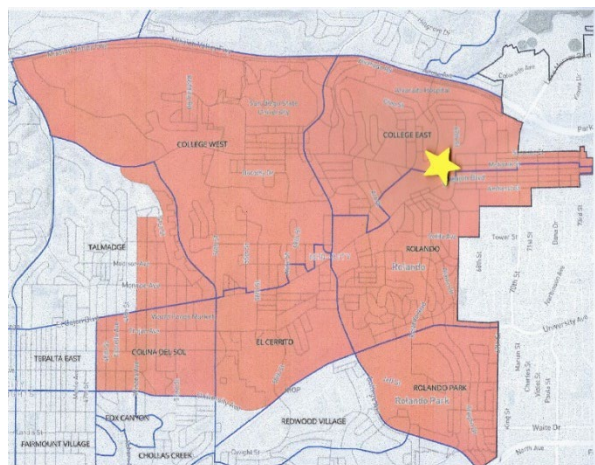
The College Area is a recreation / public-space desert. It lacks public green gathering spaces of all kinds, but for a pocket park and several turfed elementary fields. The College Area Park and Rec score relative to the park standard for communities is something like 0.6% of what is needed. And the plan increases the allowable density, providing for a much higher population.



Libraries. The College-Rolando Library is the only library serving the College Area and the surrounding areas of Rolando, El Cerrito, Rolando Park, Colina, and part of Talmadge.

The population of this service area is 55,450, or 36% of D9's total population (158,320). The area is 5.3 square miles.

This map was created by Roy MacPhail, former City of San Diego Redistricting Commissioner, for the Friends of the College-Rolando Library using the city files developed for the last city redistricting. The Library Department provided the boundary description.



Among the 36 city branch libraries, this library has the 5<sup>th</sup> largest service area. It has the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest Median Family Income. It serves a diverse population with 67% of the population identified as non-white. (demographics provided by the Library Department),

This 15,000 sq.ft. library opened in 2005 at a cost of \$6.2M. Today, its replacement cost would be upwards of \$45M. It has a community room that accommodates 80 people. It is the only public gathering space for College Area residents.

The College-Rolando Library exists now as an uncompleted facility. The following aerial was taken prior to 2017. It identifies the CR Library and The Property (6650 Montezuma Rd), outlined in Red. All of the parking on the two properties identified in this photo (131 spaces) was constructed at city expense.

The city secured a joint use agreement for shared parking at the time of construction.

The parking originally constructed by the city has been decimated by the pressures of city policy to build more housing.

At this date (February 2025) the property (6650 Montezuma Rd)



has changed ownership from the church (pictured in the aerial). The buildings on “The Property” have been cleared. All parking areas remain but a significant number of parking spaces are fenced off. The 6650 property has an approved development permit to construct a 300,000 sq.ft. building, designated as hotel/residential, containing 500 plus bedrooms. There is an existing 20-year Joint Use Agreement (2019-2039) that allows city-use of its Montezuma driveway and the parking area that can be identified by the cars on either side of a straight line drawn between the two yellow arrowheads (31 spaces of the 103 total spaces constructed on the private property).

There will be no city access to any of the areas within the red boundaries during construction of the project at The Property. Library access and parking will be restricted to city property at the dead-end of Mohawk Street (top right).

Once construction is completed, the terms of the 2019 joint-use agreement (JUA) will be reinstated. However, the 31 JUA parking spaces are reduced to 25. In the JUA, these 25 spaces are identified to be shared with the library on an as-available basis. The city will



resume its 2019 obligation to make a \$12,000 annual payment to the 6650 owner for this space-available use.

The other dramatic change is that these 25 spaces are the only surface parking spaces remaining on the property, with approximately 160 interior gated-spaces for exclusive use of The Property.

The 25 spaces are expected to be in high demand for the use of the residents and visitors of The Property. The library will no longer be able to rely on the availability of that parking. Further, the 28 spaces remaining on city property are accessible and will be in high demand by private use. We conclude that the City approval of the 6650 project has effectively blocked accessibility to the College-Rolando Library. This city asset can no longer fulfill its intended function.

There are no alternatives existing on surrounding streets. The area has high commercial and residential use. There is no street parking on this section of Montezuma Road, a major thoroughfare to SDSU. Reservoir Drive, as the aerial shows, is in high parking demand by surrounding apartments. It's a one-mile through-route to I-8 on a steep incline and not a practical option for library parking.

The 16 parking spaces directly behind the library can be chained off for exclusive library use, but are readily accessible to 6650 use when the library is open. The city library access driveway from Mohawk Street, directly behind the 6650 property, contains 12 parking spaces, however this access driveway has been preserved as accessible to the new development, without an easement or joint-use agreement. As the aerial illustrates, the remaining 28 parking spaces on city property will be very hard to defend from private use.

City policies have incrementally decimated library parking. Looking to the future, it is likely that the City's push to build more housing will result in redevelopment of the single-family properties along Mohawk into multifamily units. This will intensify the private demand for parking on city property, to the further detriment of library operation. The library has only 16 spaces that it can potentially secure from neighborhood use.

If the opportunity to purchase any of the adjacent property along Mohawk arises, city planning policies must be in place to make that critical purchase. There are no other options to retain the function of this asset.

What good is an 80-person meeting room without parking for potential attendees? Of what value is the library, if it is inaccessible to its community? In 2017, when all of the parking on The Property was blocked for one year, groups did not schedule meetings at the library (no parking, no use). Further, all other measured library uses declined by 50%: circulation, people walking through the door, attendance at all library programming, etc.

This is proof that a library, in the specific circumstances of this library, is not viable without parking. This existing deficiency, in conjunction with the lack of alternate amenities like a recreation center, must be identified as a unique deficiency and receive highest priority for

amelioration in all city planning documents. It must be identified as an incomplete library, or a critically damaged asset.

The 2024 Library Master Plan identifies the problem. The recommendation for the College-Rolando library is on page 141.

[SDPL Library Master Plan- FINAL high res.pdf \(sandiego.gov\)](#)

*“RECOMMENDATIONS*

*Over the 2040 planning horizon covered by this plan the College-Rolando branch will need proactive **Capital Maintenance** to Keep it welcoming and well-functioning. As new development happens in the vicinity vehicular access to the library site and parking from Montezuma Road should be preserved as much as possible.”*

There is one final consideration. In recent years, the city has created strong equity policies. It identifies equity as foundational to all city actions. Community planning documents should henceforth recognize this city commitment when appropriate.

It can be documented, in so many ways, that the city has been unable to fulfill its commitment to provide equitable infrastructure in older neighborhoods. And the city does not have foreseeable funding sources to redress the existing situation. Thus the importance of maintaining existing scarce resources must be recognized in city planning documents.

Continued application of the city’s policies to create more housing, without consideration of the city’s equity objectives, will incrementally destroy this important city asset which has a replacement value of over \$45M.

The past seven years reveal that to-date, the city lacks the planning directive to protect this valuable asset, and potentially other assets as well. Asset protection and equity considerations must be incorporated into planning documents.

Finally, I note that the CPIOZ that currently applies to The Property has been eliminated from the Community Plan. This CPIOZ does not allow residential development on The Property and was a necessary mitigation measure to reduce the impact of the Community Plan Amendment and Zone Change approved in 2019 on public services. This CPIOZ should be included in the current community plan update.

The parking deficiency at the College-Rolando library destroys the library’s ability to function and this situation requires attention in the new College Area Community Plan.

Submitted by  
Jan Hintzman, president  
for the Friends of the College-Rolando Library



1420 Kettner Blvd, Suite 100  
San Diego, CA 92101

michael@cityforwardfirm.com  
619 929 0033  
www.cityforwardfirm.com

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**Planning Commission**

City of San Diego  
202 C St  
San Diego, CA 92101  
planningcommission@sandiego.gov

March 12, 2025

**Re: Landmark Properties Comments (3/13 PC Item 1: College Area CPU Workshop)**

Dear Planning Commissioners:

On behalf of Landmark Properties, please accept this letter of support for the College Area Community Plan Update. Landmark is in the initial planning stages of a potential housing development in the College Area. Adoption of the CPU in a timely manner is necessary for this project, and many others, to move forward.

We respectfully request that the City consider modifications to the plan's land use and public spaces framework in the next draft CPU.

1. The plan's increased residential capacity is a step in the right direction. We encourage the City to consider even higher levels of density along the community's major transportation corridors. These areas are the most transit-oriented and pedestrian-oriented in the community. New development along these corridors would advance the City's housing, mobility, and climate goals.
2. For the plan's public spaces strategy to be successful, the open space and promenade requirements should be flexible enough to accommodate different building types and development scenarios. Infill development often faces unique and challenging site constraints. If the CPU requirements are too rigid, even if well-intentioned, it may end up deterring the very things the CPU seeks to encourage. If a residential project becomes infeasible, no homes are built and no public spaces are provided on that site.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Hansen", written in a cursive style.

**MICHAEL HANSEN**

City Forward LLC