



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

**DATE ISSUED:** December 19, 2013 **REPORT NO.** PC-13-135

**ATTENTION:** Planning Commission  
Agenda of December 19, 2013

**SUBJECT:** **Uptown-North Park-Greater Golden Hill Community Plan Update Workshop**

### **SUMMARY:**

THIS IS AN INFORMATIONAL ITEM TO UPDATE THE PLANNING COMMISSION ON THE UPTOWN-NORTH PARK-GREATER GOLDEN HILL COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE (CPU) CLUSTER AND OBTAIN COMMENTS ON THE DISCUSSION DRAFTS FOR EACH RESPECTIVE COMMUNITY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION AT THIS TIME.

### **BACKGROUND**

Starting in the fall of 2009, the effort to simultaneously update the community plans for Uptown, Greater North Park, and Greater Golden Hill as one cluster was begun. The approach to cluster the update of these plans was made to take advantage of efficiencies of scale given that these communities share similar issues such as the preservation of historic resources, adjacency to Balboa Park, and common transportation network. Since the start of the plan update process, City staff has engaged each respective community in advisory committee meetings, workshops, open house events, and multi-day charrettes to engage stakeholders and garner public input.

During the past year, each of respective community planning committee within the update cluster has worked with City staff to review and provide recommendations on the proposed community land use maps for the plan update. These maps currently represent the community-recommended land use alternatives and are being analyzed by staff with the discussion of zoning taking place in the upcoming months. Calibration of the traffic model has been completed and modeling and analysis of the adopted community plan is in process.



On August 15, 2013, Planning Staff held an initial workshop with Planning Commission to seek input on key issues related to proposed reductions in residential density capacity, changes in the plan area boundary changes, and the challenge of providing public space within identified village areas to implement the City of Villages strategy. Following the initial Planning Commission workshop, discussion drafts of the three community plan updates were provided to each respective planning committee in September for review and comment (ATTACHMENTS 1-3). These discussion drafts are currently a work-in-progress and serve as a “preliminary draft” to allow the respective community planning groups as well as the Planning Commission to provide comment on the overall development of the draft plan updates prior to the release of the official public drafts in early spring 2014. The remainder of year will be devoted to preparing the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) which both the consultant and staff will jointly prepare. Staff anticipates completion of a final draft in the late fall of 2014 with public hearing and plan adoption in the spring of 2015.

## **DISCUSSION**

### *Vision*

The communities of Uptown, North Park, and Greater Golden Hill have embodied smart growth ideas since the adoption of their respective community plans in the late 1980’s by encouraging higher residential densities and mixed-use development along their commercial transportation corridors where new growth, revitalization, and infill development was accepted, and to preserve the character of residential neighborhoods and open space. Building upon the already established smart growth land use patterns and distribution in their respective adopted community plans, the plan update cluster’s overall vision is focused around an urban form framework that puts emphasis on urban design, preserving community character, and re-imagining park and recreational amenities. The communities are to be served by a multi-modal transportation network linking village centers, special districts and open space resources, as well as promoting sustainability as a focus for local businesses, community health, and resource preservation (ATTACHMENT 4 and 5).

### *Plan Issues and Objectives*

The Cluster Update will address a number of issues and objectives that affect all three of the communities as a whole, as well as issues that are community-specific which still require further discussion and analysis. Currently, these issues and objectives include:

- *Identification of village types per the General Plan and application of village land use and design policies. These include appropriate land use intensity and density, mobility improvements, provision of public space (including zoning incentives or bonuses), and building design criteria.*

Villages have been identified for each community primarily within areas that have been historically recognized as activity centers within each community, such as the two commercial cores of Hillcrest and the area centered around Goldfinch Street and Washington Street in Mission Hills in Uptown; at 30<sup>th</sup> Street where it intersects with Broadway and Grape Street in Greater Golden Hill, and at 30<sup>th</sup> Street and University Avenue in North Park. The discussion drafts also identify emerging commercial nodes and areas for additional village

emphasis such as Texas Street and University Avenue in North Park, and Washington Street and India Avenue in the Middletown neighborhood of the Uptown community.

As part of the plan update process, City staff is reconsidering the density bonus provisions in the adopted Uptown and Greater North Park Community Plans. Instead of providing a density bonus for lot consolidations and adherence to design guidelines, a more substantial public benefit in the form of pocket parks, plazas, community meeting rooms, amphitheaters, public facilities, services, etc. would be utilized as part of a voluntary program and would be applied to all three communities.

Residents of the communities of North Park and Uptown have expressed support for granting incentives in return for public space as a community benefit and staff is currently working with the community on designating areas within each respective community to apply incentive zoning. Additionally, City staff is in the process of hiring an economic consultant to develop a methodology to capture the value associated with density/intensity bonuses, examine its feasibility, and assist with related policy development to institute a program that would allow for additional residential density or building height in exchange for providing a public benefit.

- *Conversion of land use categories to those identified by the General Plan and the appropriate residential density and intensity of uses including community initiated land use changes to reduce density within portions of the communities as well as development of potential alternatives.*

As recommended by General Plan policy LU-B.1., the adopted land use designations of each community plan were converted to the recommended land use designations in the General Plan to create consistency between the General Plan and the community plans. Subsequently, each community provided input on their respective community plan land use maps. The land use maps included in each Discussion Draft currently represent the community's recommendations. Staff is currently reviewing each community plan map and will be including a refined version based on input the past Planning Commission Workshop and further staff analysis for the public draft.

- *Development of design guidelines within each urban design element addressing issues such as building height (including a reduction in height for Uptown), commercial storefronts in mixed-use development, context sensitive design, and appropriate scale transitions and buffers.*

Draft urban design elements have been included in each discussion draft and as they are further developed, staff anticipates working with the consultants and the community to identify shared content that can be mutually beneficial to the cluster. Building height is a primary concern for the Uptown Community with perspectives ranging from the a desire to utilize the height limitations contained in the existing Interim Height Ordinance to considering by-right height allowances along with building heights that would be subject to discretionary review and heights permitted through the provision of a public benefit. The discussion drafts also address issues in the community related to land use and scale

transitions between residential neighborhoods, and more intense land uses by considering buffers and the application of design guidelines and policies at specific “friction” areas located in the community.

- *Identifying improvements to existing mobility infrastructure with a focus toward those that increase bicycle, pedestrian and transit use, including a separate study for a streetcar line in Uptown and North Park.*

Emphasis on having a more balanced, multi-modal transportation network that expands accessibility and connectivity is a shared desire expressed by the communities in the cluster. Within the cluster, each community’s urban design framework emphasizes complete streets, bike lanes and bike boulevards as well as taking advantage of the cluster’s shared open space network through the use of open space trails. Together these aspects will serve in the development of policy for the Mobility Element which will be made available with the public draft. A streetcar feasibility study will be conducted with the goal of identifying potential alignments in Uptown and considering potential connections to Downtown San Diego, North Park, and Greater Golden Hill. The study will also build upon findings based on the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Streetcar Study along Park Boulevard.

- *Preservation of neighborhood character and historic resources including identification of new and expanded historic districts, and development of design guidelines for single-family and hillside neighborhoods.*

Historic surveys for each respective community have identified new and expanded historic districts which not only serve to protect historic resources but also indicate where strong and significant neighborhood character exists in the community. In the plan update, design guidelines would be developed for those residential areas that would not have the benefit of being identified in a potential historic district, to assist with ensuring future development compatibility.

- *Identify recreation opportunities and designate new park sites and park equivalencies per the General Plan.*

During the multi-day charrettes conducted for each community, City staff worked with the community to identify potential park and public space opportunities within each respective community. These ideas consisting of opportunistic land purchases of private property for mini/pocket parks, improved trail heads, linear parks related to excess rights-of-way, joint use proposals, improvements to existing open space trails have been discussed with each community in regards to prioritization and inclusion into each community’s respective Recreation Element as park and recreation equivalencies to satisfy community park needs.

- *Update open space mapping to exclude developed areas and identify areas for conservation (including a Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA)) boundary adjustment), incorporate General Plan open space values and strengthen policies restricting development within open space.*

An evaluation was conducted by staff to accurately define boundaries pertaining to designated opens space and adjust Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA) boundaries using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software so that they accurately correlate with open space that was generally free of development and the location of sensitive biological resources intended for conservation and protection. These corrections, along with policies related to the identification of public views and design criteria for developable areas adjacent to sensitive resources such as hillsides, canyons, vegetation, etc. will be further elaborated and developed for the subsequent public draft.

- *Sustainable Development*

Policies under the Conservation Element for the discussion drafts strive for enhancing sustainable development consistent with the General Plan especially as it relates to preserving neighborhoods and historic character, protecting local environmental resources, and promoting healthy environments through improved mobility and connectivity between activity centers and destinations within the community. During this update process, the North Park Community Planning Committee and other community stakeholders have placed an emphasis on establishing their community as a leader in sustainable development by shaping the development of their Conservation Element as a “Sustainability and Conservation Element.” This element would draw upon applicable ideas contained in the Sustainable North Park Main Street Guidelines (2011) that were developed to serve as a catalyst for sustainable development and the establishment of the North Park Eco District which a community based-initiative committed to cultivating and celebrating the North Park as a livable community thriving green economy.

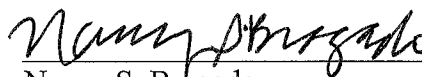
## CONCLUSION

At this time each respective planning group in the update cluster is in the process of reviewing the Discussion Drafts and providing initial comments to the Planning Staff. These comments along comments from the Planning Commission will be considered in furthering the development of the plan update drafts.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments: 1. Uptown Community Plan Update Discussion Draft

2. North Park Community Plan Update Discussion Draft
3. Greater Golden Hill Community Plan Update Discussion Draft
4. Cluster Urban Form Vision Map
5. Cluster Existing Conditions and Future Park & Recreation Ideas Map