

CITY OF SAN DIEGO
M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: June 17, 2005

TO: Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Robert J. Manis, Program Manager, Planning Department

SUBJECT: May 19, 2005, PC Workshop – University City Urban Node

REFERENCE: Report No. PC-05-057

On May 19, 2005, a Workshop on the University City Urban Node Amendment was presented by Planning Department staff and public testimony taken before the Planning Commission. Due to time constraints, a discussion between the commission, staff, and the public was unable to occur and the workshop was continued to June 23, 2005. In anticipation of the follow-up discussion, the Commission directed staff to return with additional information and answers to several questions regarding traffic/transit, public facilities/services, urban/pedestrian design, and CEQA process. This memo is intended to provide additional information, in brief, and answers to some of the specific questions. Staff will provide a more detailed discussion of these issues at the June 23, 2005, workshop.

Transit

- *Transit Station Location* – Proposed expansion of the Westfield UTC shopping center will require relocation of the existing transit center on the property. The future Mid-Coast Light Rail Transit station location would tie into the new transit center. Several potential locations for the transit center/LRT station have been identified by both SANDAG and Westfield. Westfield’s current plans for expansion place the transit center/LRT station at the northeast corner of Nobel Drive and Genesee Drive. As described in Report No. PC-05-057 (attachment 1), SANDAG has analyzed several locations including the above. The goals for siting and designing the transit center/LRT station include:
 - Integrating the facility into the surrounding development (Westfield Shoppingtown), including developing retail and/or residential uses directly adjacent to the station platforms
 - Designing the facility and adjacent development to create a pedestrian-friendly environment
 - Linking the facility to surrounding developments through a series of pedestrian access paths and bridges
 - Including public space (i.e., plazas) into the facility design

- Providing efficient and effective bus access to the facility (i.e., avoiding long, circuitous routings and traffic signal delays) to attract riders and control transit operating costs

SANDAG will provide more detailed exhibits at the workshop to illustrate the transit station options and how they might integrate with the proposed development.

- *Performance of Transit* - SANDAG has a history of reliably projecting future transit ridership on planned facilities, and its transportation model (used to project transit ridership) is respected nationally. Ridership projections are a function many factors, including the projection year, the adopted land use plans and assumptions for the projection year, travel time for various modes, and proposed frequency and cost of transit service. Changes in any of these factors in the model will result in adjustments to the projections.
- *At-grade Crossings for Proposed LRT Extension* – There are no at-grade crossings south of University City. Within University City, there could be up to four at-grade street crossings and several driveway crossings, all along Voigt Drive and Regents Road.
- *S Curve in the Amtrak/Coaster Rail Line* – The Regional Transportation Plan includes a proposal to place the Amtrak/Coaster rail lines underground though University City to eliminate the curve. It is an approximately \$1 billion project that is not included in the *TransNet* extension.

Traffic

- *Status of Transportation projects* – The current traffic/circulation problems within the University Community are due in part to several transportation projects identified in the community plan that have not been built. Two of the more significant projects (Genesee Avenue widening and Regents Road Bridge) are funded and are awaiting a decision by City Council as to their need and/or alternatives. (The North University City Public Facilities Financing Plan provides a list of transportation projects for the community, their funding source and schedule) Other causes for an increase in traffic are insufficient freeway capacity creating back up on City streets and delays in planned projects due to environmental and land acquisition issues.
- *ADT's for La Jolla Village Drive and Genesee* – The following are the highest existing volumes as counted between 2001 and 2004 and published either in Monte Verde, UC North/South Study or City's count index:

Genesee Avenue:

-North of LJ Village Dr.	36,000
-LJ Village to Nobel	31,000
-Nobel to Governor	36,000

La Jolla Village Drive:

-West of Regents Rd.	49,000
-Regents to Genesee	36,000
-Genesee to Towne Centre	49,000
-Towne Centre to I-805	63,000

Public Facilities Financing Plan (PFFP) and Facilities Benefit Assessment (FBA)

- *PFFP Project Status and Project Schedule* – The current project status and schedule are included in the FY 2005 North University City PFFP and FBA which were provided to the Commission for the May 19, 2005 workshop. Attachments 10 and 11 of Report No. PC-05-057 provide a summary of the schedule and status of current projects. Projects can be added to the FBA as required by new development. Projects can be reprioritized in the FBA's phasing plan, but a traffic study and/or an amendment to the PFFP may be required, especially if the projects are part of the Transportation Phasing Plan. It is important to note that amendments to the PFFP & FBA will be processed concurrently with a Community Plan Amendment (CPA) if needed to ensure the adequate provision of public facilities.
- *Current Proposals' Impacts on Facilities* – Currently, there is a need for two, possibly three additional fire stations in the University community, regardless of the CPA's in process. An amendment to the University Community Plan will be forthcoming to address this need in the community plan as well as in the PFFP. The current community plan amendment proposals would facilitate the construction of at least one station.

In University Community there is an existing population based parkland deficit which the community plan acknowledges and states is partially mitigated by the area's resource based parks and private recreation within residential developments. The community plan amendment proposals that include residential development above what the community plan anticipated would generate additional park and recreation needs, adding to the existing deficit. Planning and Park and Recreation Departments are working together with the applicants to address those additional needs within the community and analyze options for meeting those needs.

A new, 15,811 square-foot library is currently under construction to serve the University community. The proposed additional residential development would not generate the need for an additional library. However, the new residential development will increase the demand for Library services and programs. The community plan amendment proposals in the University community which include residential development will pay FBA fees that go towards the Library facilities.

- *Transit Funding in PFFP & FBA* – Currently, there is no funding for transit projects within the North University City PFFP & FBA. The PFFP did identify a transit project for University community for the Mid-Coast Line – LRT Preliminary Engineering (NUC-49, p112-113 of the PFFP) but was deleted due to minimal funding and inactivity. However, there is nothing that would preclude the future identification of needed transit facilities within this document and assessing fees to contribute to their funding as transit projects are identified within the University Community Plan. Historically, the City has not included transit projects in PFFP's in anticipation of Transnet funding for these projects. If transit projects are included in any future FBA, 100% funding for the proposed transit projects would not be possible due to the existing population and the ability to only charge a development impact fee incrementally on the new development in the community.

Emergency Services Response Times

- *Fire Response Times* – Fire Station 35 opened in 1971 to serve the University City area and is located at Eastgate Mall and Genesee. This station currently houses one engine company, one truck company and a battalion chief to provide emergency response coverage. Adjacent emergency response unit coverage responds from north Clairemont, La Jolla, Sorrento Valley and Kearny Mesa.

Response Times: The national standard for emergency response coverage is to have a first responder arrive on scene within 5 minutes (1 minute turnout, 4 minutes of travel) 90% of the time, for both fire and medical emergencies. Currently Engine 35 (E35) meets this requirement only 34 % of the time (see attachment).

Engine District: There are difficult to serve areas within University City. E35 covers 14 square miles, where as the national standard for an engine company district is a maximum of 9 square miles, and 4 square miles or less in densely populated areas. In comparison, Fire-Rescue's downtown Fire Station 1 covers only .81 square miles and Fire Station 4 covers .62 square miles. Fire-Rescue currently recommends at least two additional fire stations be considered for the University City area.

Workload Capacity: Since 1994 there has been a 57% increase in call volume in Engine 35's district. Engine 35 currently exceeds the capacity to respond to additional emergency calls for University City residents. An engine company is considered at capacity when responding to more than 1500 incidents per year. In 1994, 2,065 incidents occurred in E35's district, of those incidents E35 was unavailable to respond to 481 incidents. In FY 2004, 3,239 incidents occurred in E35's district and E35 was unavailable to handle 937 of those incidents. When E35 is unavailable, units respond in from surrounding areas to cover, thus depleting those communities of their limited resource.

Effective Fire Force: The other significant consideration in densely populated areas, especially with significant high rise buildings, is to have an effective fire force at the scene early enough in the incident to quickly mitigate the situation. For a high rise incident in San Diego, Fire-Rescue dispatches four engines and two trucks to arrive on scene within nine minutes. Currently the second truck for University City is responding in from the Kearny Mesa area. Additional engine companies respond in from Sorrento Valley, La Jolla and north Clairemont, but they are challenged to arrive on scene in a timely manner due to the heavy traffic congestion encountered on both the surface streets and freeways.

The University of California at San Diego (UCSD) also adds to the emergency response situation in University City currently generating over 500 incidents per year. This is a 31% increase in call volume since 1994 and is projected to further increase due to planned growth for the campus.

Additional discussion of Fire response times will be discussed at the workshop. Staff will provide visuals of current response times within University City.

- *Police Response Times* – The University community is inside the boundaries of the San Diego Police Department's Northern Division. The specific area of Genesee Avenue and Nobel Drive is on Beat 115. It is the goal of the Department to be on site at a Priority 1 call within 12 minutes of receiving the call in communications. The 2004 City wide average was 13.41 minutes for all priority 1 calls. The 2004 average response time for beat 115 was 17.63 minutes.

The Department currently utilizes a five level priority dispatch system, which includes priority E (Emergency), One, Two, Three and Four. The calls are prioritized by the phone dispatcher and routed to the radio operator for dispatch to the field units. The priority system is designed as a guide, allowing the phone dispatcher and the radio dispatcher discretion to raise or lower the call priority as necessary based on the information received.

Priority E includes Emergency responses where there is threat to life. Examples of E calls include serious crimes in progress, missing children, disturbances involving weapons and bomb threats. Priority one calls involve serious crimes in progress or those with a potential for injury. Priority two calls include crimes where there is no threat to life but require dispatching as quickly as possible. Priority three calls involve minor crimes such as non-urgent requests for service such as a cold crime investigation, loud party call or non-violent drunk person in public. Priority four calls are calls such as found property and parking violations, which are dispatched when no higher priority calls are waiting.

The current method of prioritizing calls is necessary to provide a high level of service for those most in need. Placing the protection of life as the highest priority validates this system.

Urban Node Amendment / Urban Design

- *Existing Urban Design Policies* – Development and design within University City is guided by several documents. These include: The Progress Guide & General Plan, the University Community Plan, MCAS Miramar CLUP, Transit Oriented Development Design Guidelines, and San Diego Street Design Manual. Within these documents are numerous policies on pedestrian oriented design and making the pedestrian the priority. Staff utilizes all of the above documents for review of the proposed CPA's and future CPA's and development proposals within the community.
- *Urban Node Amendment* – The Urban Node Amendment would augment and strengthen existing design policies within the University Community Plan and add criteria for proposed and future CPA's. Although exiting policies address issues such as pedestrian circulation, transit, and facilities, they are more general in nature. The Urban Node Amendment would apply specificity to those policies as they apply to the Urban Node. It is possible that the criteria could be used to determine the cost vs. benefits to the University Community for any proposal which seeks to change land use and/or increase intensity. This amendment would be processed prior to and separate from the community plan amendment proposals in process. A more detailed discussion of the proposed Urban Node Amendment can be found on pages 7-8 of Report No. PC-05-057.

- *Boundaries of Urban Node* – Attachment 2 of PC-05-057 outlines the boundaries of the current Urban Node. Slides 5, 6, and 33 of staff's PowerPoint presentation, distributed at the workshop, depict the boundaries of the Urban Node. An aerial view of the boundaries of the existing Urban Node is provided as attachment 2 of this memo. Analysis of the proposed CPA's may lead to an expansion of the current Urban Node boundaries.
- *List of Discretionary Projects in University City* – A current listing of all discretionary projects within the University Community is provide in attachment 3 of this memo. A summary of recently approved CPA's or those currently in process were provided as attachments 5 and 6 of PC-05-057.

Pedestrian Bridges

- *Existing Pedestrian Bridge Policies* – Currently, there are three pedestrian overpasses in the community. The La Jolla Village Drive overpass which connects UTC and the Plaza is the only bridge which effectively connects two destinations. The Urban Design Element of the UCP provides clear objectives for pedestrian overpasses within the community (p76-77). Both the southern and northern Genesee overpasses have not adequately implemented the policies found in the UCP. Where the policies seek to connect pedestrian overpasses to buildings, plazas, major entrances and the most active areas on both sides of the street, the Genesee overpasses connect parking lots or 'dead' spaces and require pedestrians to use long ramps to access sidewalks rather than making the connections on the second level. The Urban Node amendment would seek to strengthen those policies to ensure that new or infill development can provide the integration of efficient, attractive pedestrian overpasses which work at the second level. Strict implementation of these policies in new or redevelopment proposals during project review is crucial.
- *New/Redesigned Pedestrian Bridges* – The southern Genesee pedestrian overpass (connecting UTC & Costa Verde) has been integrated into the proposals by Westfield UTC and Monte Verde in an attempt to provide increased pedestrian circulation in the area. However, due to the absence of an exact location and design for the LRT station, the Genesee pedestrian bridge may require redesign or relocation. Difficulties lie within height variations between the pedestrian bridge and the LRT platform. The proposed LRT platform will be elevated along Genesee at UTC's western border. Location of the transit station will play an important role in where and how the southern Genesee pedestrian overpass will be integrated and/or redesigned.

The community plan identifies a total of five pedestrian bridges within the Urban Node, two of which have not been constructed. One to cross La Jolla Village Drive west of Genesee, the other to cross La Jolla Village Drive east of the existing pedestrian bridge in the vicinity of Executive Way. The La Jolla Village drive pedestrian bridge west of Genesee was a requirement of the Costa Verde Specific plan and would be constructed concurrent with development of the Monte Verde proposal site. Currently there is no proposal or plans to construct the pedestrian bridge over La Jolla Village drive in the vicinity of Executive Way.

CEQA

- *Environmental Documents for Proposed CPA's* – All of the proposed CPA's in process require an appropriate environmental document. Of the three proposals located within the current boundaries of the Urban Node, two are preparing Draft EIR's (Westfield UTC and Monte Verde). The third proposal, Regency Retail has yet to submit their project proposal. The fourth proposal, just outside the Urban Node boundary (Equity Office), is preparing a Draft EIR as well. Although each individual proposal is preparing an environmental document, analysis of the cumulative impacts of proposals would be considered in each individual document.
- *Environmental Review for Proposed Urban Node Amendment* – The proposed Urban Node Amendment would consist of additional design related policies and criteria for considering CPA's. No land use changes or changes in intensity or density would be included with this amendment. As such, staff anticipates that the Urban Node Amendment would be exempt from CEQA review.

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- Attachment: 1. Report to the Planning Commission, PC-05-057, May 13, 2005
2. Urban Node Boundary (Aerial View)
3. List of Discretionary Projects in University Community