



UPTOWN

Community Plan



February 2, 1988



CITY OF SAN DIEGO

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UPTOWN COMMUNITY PLAN

February 2, 1988

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Amendment	Date Approved by Planning Commission	Resolution Number	Date Adopted by City Council	Resolution Number
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Rezone amendment by City Council	February 16, 1989	0387-PC	May 2, 1989	R-273376
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INTRODUCTION

The Uptown Community
Scope and Purpose of Planning
Legislative Framework
Plan Format

INTRODUCTION

THE UPTOWN COMMUNITY

The Uptown community planning area is located just north of the Centre City area. It is bounded on the north by the steep hillsides of Mission Valley, on the east by Park Boulevard and Balboa Park, and on the west and south by Old San Diego and Interstate 5. The planning area comprises about 2,700 acres or approximately 4.2 square miles.

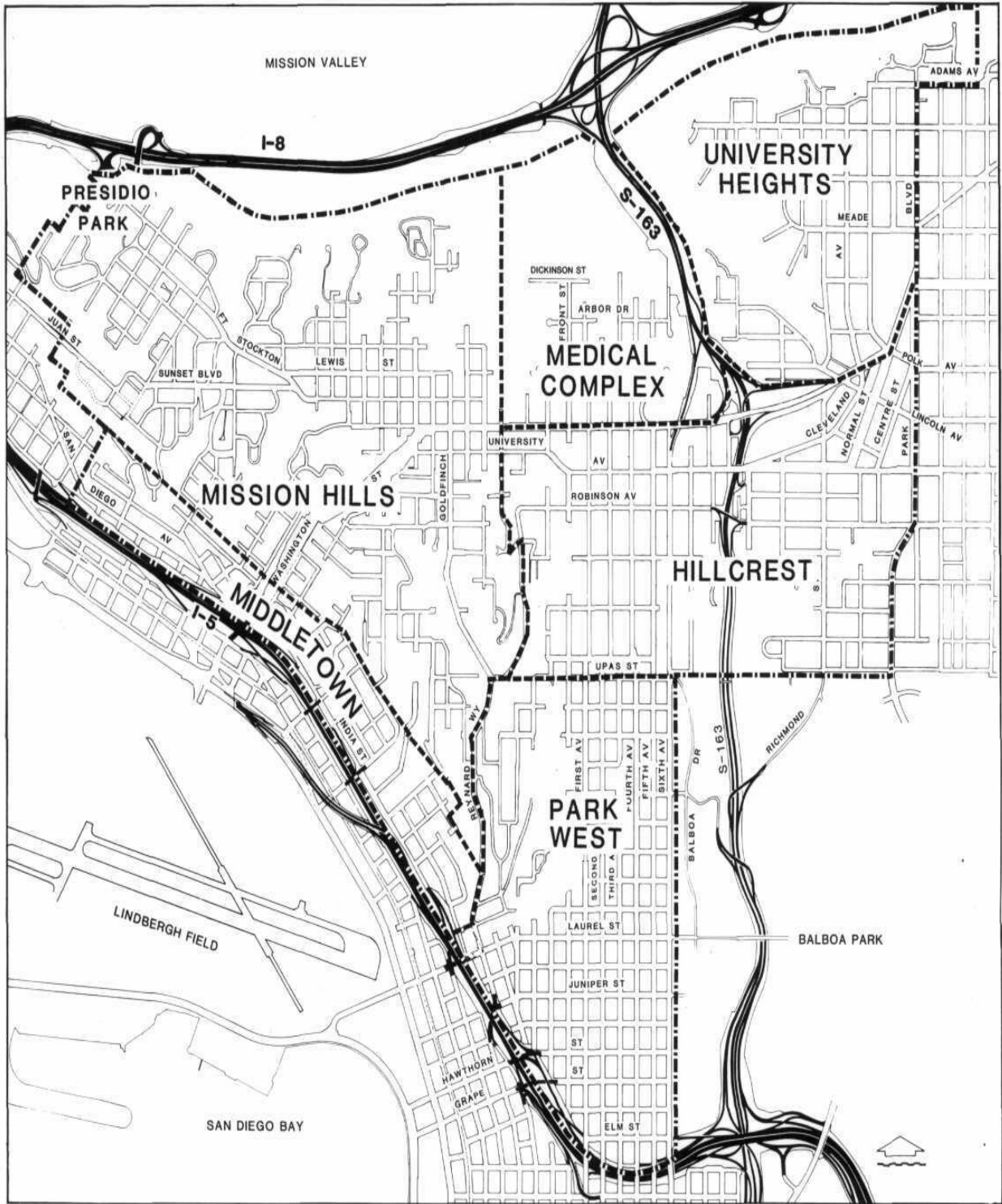
The Uptown community is located on a level mesa that is broken by heavily vegetated canyons and borders two major parks, Presidio and Balboa. This gives the area a sense of seclusion from Centre City and other surrounding communities, and provides a sense of openness within the community. It also affords scenic views of downtown, the ocean, the harbor, Coronado, and Point Loma. For the purpose of analysis, the plan area has been divided into six subareas. These subareas are the Mission Hills, Middletown, Hillcrest, the medical complex, University Heights, and the Park West neighborhoods (Figure 1). While the boundaries of these areas are shown for ease of analysis, in actuality the "neighborhood" boundaries are overlapping and not distinct.

The Uptown community contains some of the oldest neighborhoods in San Diego exhibiting a variety of historic architectural types and abundant landscaping. The area also features a wide range of residential opportunities and a diverse mixture of people within a distinctly urban setting. Most of the street system and building lot development was well established prior to the need to consider the automobile as a part of subdivision planning.

The following historical perspective of Uptown is an excerpt from The Historical Evolution of the San Diego Cityscape (Lawrence R. Ford, PhD; Associate Professor of Geography, San Diego State University; July, 1978).

Downtown was not the only area that experienced a building boom in Victorian times. Residential districts to the north and east thrived. Uptown, the area north of downtown, roughly bounded by Ash to the south, Balboa Park to the east, Walnut to the north, and Interstate 5 to the west is one. The greater portion of Uptown, called Horton's Addition, was legally recorded in 1867 and encompassed land that had previously been an Indian reservation. The twenty-one years later. Prior to that time, the only structure standing was the Florence Hotel, located at the corner of Third and Fir. The hotel was built in 1883, and, although considered to be "in the sticks" was still the showplace of San Diego during the eighties.

Fifth Avenue was graded as far north as Ivy in 1885, thus "paving the way" for development in the area. Date, Cedar, Elm, Third, and Fourth were also graded that year. The San Diego Street Car Company, offering horse or mule drawn cars on tracks, opened a line in 1886 and the route through Uptown went up Fifth to Fir to accommodate the Florence Hotel.



UPTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS

UPTOWN Community Plan

CITY OF SAN DIEGO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

FIGURE
1

By 1887, a route was constructed all the way to University (now Normal street) thus allowing low-density, linear development to occur as far as two miles from downtown during the boom of the late 1880s. In 1888, over one hundred new homes were built with many more people living in hotels and boarding houses.

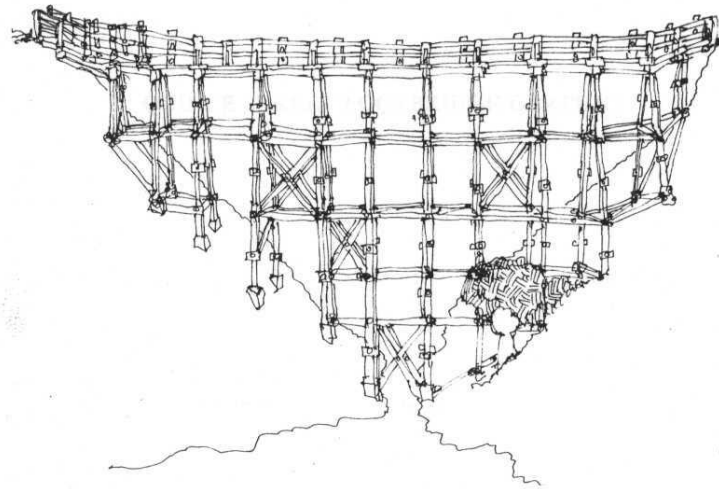
Land in Horton's Addition originally sold for \$125 per 50 feet x 100 inches lot and Morton would give, in addition, a free lot to anyone who would build a substantial house on the lot. During the boom of the eighties, however, land appreciated by the hour and reached fantastic prices before the inevitable bust followed. The boom ended long before all of Uptown could be developed. Development was fairly dense south of Laurel, but there was none north of Walnut until 1894. By 1904, only 23 percent of Uptown was developed, mostly single-family houses. Sixth Avenue was not graded until the 1890s, but it soon became a prestigious location.

Uptown was an ideal suburban; park side location during Victorian times and six San Diego mayors lived there between 1873 and 1915, along with a former governor of California. Many of the beautiful mansions of this period remain, although a great many have been torn down to make way for the new high rise office and condominium structures now going up. Most of the fancier Victorian mansions in Uptown were built in a new-Gothic type, complete with towers, ornate surface textures, stained glass windows, and a variety of delicate, lacy trim. Wood was by far the most common construction material and the style is often referred to as "Carpenter Gothic." Some of the houses were essentially townhouses since their owners also had ranches in the California tradition. Many historic sites are located in Uptown such as the Long-Waterman house, Britt Scripps House, Torrance House, and the Temple Beth Israel (one of the first synagogues in California). Most of the remaining significant houses are widely scattered, but several nice groupings still exist, especially between First, Fir, Front, and Grape where seven Victorian houses stand side by side. The pressure for higher intensity development, however, is great and so many of these old houses will have to be torn down or moved to the county's Heritage Park adjacent to Old Town. The Sherman-Gilbert house has been replaced by a parking lot at Second and Fir but it has been nicely restored at Heritage Park for use as an office building.

All in all, the landscape of Uptown makes for San Diego's best temporal collage as remnants and relics from all of San Diego's eras can be seen there from 1887 mansions, to 1920s bungalows, to 1970s condominiums.

The population of Uptown is approximately 36,500* or three percent of the City's total population. Residents represent all economic backgrounds and are diverse in their ethnic composition. The area consists of single-family residential uses, apartments and condominiums, commercial and office uses, and is also dominated by two large hospitals: University of California, San Diego (UCSD) Medical Center and Mercy Hospital. The Washington Street and Fifth Avenue corridors are significantly influenced by these two hospitals with many medically related uses. The Hillcrest business area south of the medical complex is linked to Centre City by a commercial, office and residential use corridor along Fourth and Fifth Avenues.

*January 1, 1987 estimate, City of San Diego Planning Department.



Quince Street Footbridge

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF PLAN

This community plan is a revision of the Uptown Community Plan adopted by the City Council on August 21, 1975 by Resolution No. 214062 and the Uptown Medical Complex Plan which was adopted by the City Council on December 13, 1977 by Resolution No. 219721.

Formal adoption of the revised plan requires that the Planning Commission and City Council follow the same procedure of holding public hearings that was followed in adopting the original community plan. Adoption of the revised Uptown Community Plan also requires an amendment of the Progress Guide and General Plan for the City, which will occur at the first regularly scheduled General Plan amendment hearing following adoption of this plan.

While the Uptown Community Plan sets forth many proposals for implementation, it does not establish new regulations or legislation, nor does it rezone property; subsequent or concurrent public hearings are required to undertake the recommended rezonings. However, it does provide specific guidelines for the review of all projects requiring discretionary action by the City, and for the rezoning of property to be in conformance with this plan.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Uptown Community Plan was developed within the context of a legislative framework existing on federal, state and local levels. Some of the more significant legislation is discussed below.

- Section 65450 of the Governmental Code of the State of California (State Planning and Zoning Act) gives authority for the preparation of community plans and specifies the elements which must appear in each plan. It also provides means for adopting and administering these plans.

- Government Code Chapter 4.3 requires that local governments and agencies provide incentives to developers to include affordable units in housing projects. The City has an ordinance which establishes an Affordable Housing Density Bonus providing a 25 percent increase in maximum permitted density in a given zone to be granted for projects in which at least 20 percent of the total housing units are for low or moderate-income persons.
- The California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) requires that environmental impact reports be prepared for all community plans. Separate, detailed environmental impact reports are also required for all significant projects, including those implementing this plan.
- The Regional Air Quality Strategy (RAQS) was developed in 1977 to achieve a level of air quality in the San Diego Air Basin that would meet federal air quality standards set forth in the National Clean Air Act. A major recommendation pertinent to this planning effort is to include air quality considerations in all land use and transportation plans.
- The citywide zoning and subdivision ordinances regulate the development of land and subdivision of land in the City.
- In addition to legislation, the City Council has adopted a number of policies to serve as guidelines in the decision making process. Many of the policies relate directly to planning issues and should be used in implementing plan recommendations.

PLAN FORMAT

The diversity of the Uptown community calls for a plan that will provide compatibility between the various neighborhoods within the overall plan area. Consequently, the community plan will emphasize urban design and the establishment of positive relationships between the neighborhoods as well as between the various land uses and densities. The overall goals of the plan provide a basis for the objectives and recommendations found within each plan element. Each plan element includes the existing conditions, objectives and recommendations for the particular subject area.

The Open Space and Recreation Element of this community plan was adopted by the City Council on November 26, 1985 (Resolution No. R-264570), and is printed within this document.