



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Planning Commission

DATE ISSUED: May 23, 2024 REPORT NO. PC-24-024

HEARING DATE: May 30, 2024

SUBJECT: Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment

REFERENCES: [July 16, 2020 Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Workshop, Report No. PC-20-021](#)

[October 13, 2022 Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Workshop, Report No. PC-22-035](#)

[November 30, 2023 Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Workshop, Report No. PC-23-046](#)

[June 29, 2023 Blueprint SD Workshop, Report No. PC-23-015](#)

SUMMARY

Issue: Should the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council approval of the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment to the Uptown Community Plan?

Staff Recommendations:

1. RECOMMEND to the City Council APPROVAL of a resolution adopting the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment to the Uptown Community Plan and amending the General Plan (Attachment 2).
2. RECOMMEND to City Council APPROVAL of an ordinance amending the Land Development Code Chapter 13, Article 1, Division 5 by adding two new community commercial zones, use and development regulations, and Chapter 13, Article 2, Division 14 amending the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPIOZ) for the Uptown Community Plan area (Attachment 3).
3. RECOMMEND to the City Council APPROVAL of an ordinance rezoning land within the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment area consistent with the Uptown Community Plan (Attachment 4).
4. RECOMMEND to the City Council APPROVAL of a resolution designating the LGBTQ+ Cultural District in the Uptown Community Plan area (Attachment 5).

Mobility Board Recommendation: On May 1, 2024, the Mobility Board voted unanimously (5-1-0) to recommend the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment.

Community Planning Group Recommendation: On May 7, 2024, the Uptown Community Planning Group (UCPG) voted (10-1-3) to provide recommendations (Attachment 6) to the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment. The stated purpose of the proposed recommendations is to make the Planning Commission and City Council aware of Community Plan Update deficiencies and to encourage the City to address the issues raised by the Community Planning Group.

Parks & Recreation Board Recommendation: On May 16, 2024, the Parks & Recreation Board voted (6-0-0) to reject the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment and to recommend the City Planning Department come back to the Parks & Recreation Board after calculating the park and recreation value points for just the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment area.

Historical Resources Board Recommendation: The Historical Resources Board will review and provide a recommendation on the amendments to the Historic Preservation Element, the Supplemental Development Regulations for the Hillcrest Historic District, and the historic and cultural resources component of the Program Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2021070359) at their meeting of May 23, 2024. Staff will provide the Historical Resources Board recommendation at the Planning Commission hearing.

Environmental Review: The City of San Diego, as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), prepared a Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) SCH No. 2021070359 covering this activity (Attachment 7). The public review period to comment on the Draft PEIR ended on April 29, 2024. A Final PEIR with responses to comments is being prepared. The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment is evaluated in a single draft Program Environmental Impact Report for the Blueprint SD Initiative, Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment, and the University Community Plan Update. The Planning Commission's consideration and recommendation on adoption of the PEIR will occur in conjunction with consideration of the Blueprint SD Initiative. City Planning Department will conduct a consistency evaluation pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15162 for the Hillcrest Focus Plan Amendment to determine its consistency with Final PEIR SCH No. 2021070359. The evaluation will be provided to City Council.

Fiscal Impact Statement: N/A

Code Enforcement Impact: N/A

Housing Impact Statement: The Uptown Community Plan has approximately 24,800 existing homes which includes approximately 4,900 homes in the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment area. Approximately 10,300 additional homes could be developed based on the adopted Uptown Community Plan. Under the proposed Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment a maximum of up to 17,200 additional homes could be developed above the adopted Uptown Community Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment (FPA) area (Attachment 8) encompasses approximately 380 acres of the Hillcrest and Medical Complex neighborhoods within the Uptown community. Hillcrest is

a vibrant pedestrian-oriented commercial and entertainment center, and contains a diverse mix of retail, office, and mixed-use buildings as well as a varied residential character. Hillcrest serves as the primary commercial core for Uptown, which is concentrated around the intersection of Fifth Avenue and University Avenue, and extends several blocks east, west, and south. University Avenue is the primary spine of Hillcrest, with commercial development extending along University Avenue east of State Route (SR) 163, and west until it converges with Mission Hills.

The Medical Complex neighborhood is dominated by the Scripps Mercy Hospital and Medical Center and the University of California San Diego (UCSD) Hillcrest Medical Campus, which occupy over forty percent of the Medical Complex neighborhood. The remaining portion of the Medical Complex area is occupied primarily by multifamily residential uses. Commercial development, which is generally automobile-oriented, is located on the north side of Washington Street adjacent to the medical centers.

Housing & Demographics of Uptown

As of 2022, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) estimated that 39,400 people were living in a household within the Uptown Community. The Uptown Community had approximately 23,800 homes with a persons per household size of 1.72. In 2022, the median household income adjusted for inflation was approximately \$98,840.

<i>Table 1: Uptown Housing and Population for 2022</i>			
Households Population	Homes	Persons per Household	Income
39,400	24,800	1.72	\$98,840

Affordable Housing

The Uptown Community has 849 affordable homes that have entered a deed restriction with the San Diego Housing Commission.

DISCUSSION

A. Why is the Uptown Community Plan being amended?

The Uptown Community Plan (Community Plan) was last updated comprehensively in 2016 to reflect local needs and in accordance with the General Plan and Climate Action Plan. However, the Community Plan Update (CPU) did not increase housing capacity, but rather maintained the residential densities established in the previous update of the Community Plan in 1988, as reflected in the existing planned land uses. Since then, with a growing housing crisis and a changing climate, more action is needed to address housing costs, enhance access, use of transit, and provide public spaces for all to use. The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment (Attachment 1) will address these needs and increase housing capacity, identify opportunities for public spaces, strengthen mobility connections, support local business, and celebrate the LGBTQ+ culture and history of the community focusing within the Hillcrest and Medical Complex areas of the community plan.

The objectives of the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment are:

- ***Celebrate the Legacy of the LGBTQ+ Community*** to preserve historical resources and create inclusive spaces;
- ***Create Public Spaces*** to connect people to businesses and services;
- ***Strengthen Connections*** to make it easier to move around and access businesses, services, housing, and surrounding communities;
- ***Support Local Business*** to ensure a thriving neighborhood and sustainable business district; and
- ***Address Housing Needs*** to increase housing opportunities near transit.

B. What are the main concerns raised during the comment period for the draft Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment (Attachment 17 – All Public Comments)?

1. Land Use

Overall Density: Staff received mixed feedback related to increased density. Staff has received feedback in support of the proposed maximum density ranges of 218 du/acre and 290 du/acre and the benefit of bringing more homes near jobs, destinations, shopping, and transit. Staff has also received feedback expressing a desire for the density to be maintained at a maximum of 109 du/acre which is the maximum density in the current Community Plan. The concern with the density proposed generally pertains to the impact on public facilities, infrastructure, traffic, and the height of buildings.

2. Mobility

Pedestrian & Bicycling Safety: Staff received comments regarding concerns for pedestrian and bicycling safety and the need for physical design elements that lower traffic speeds and protect pedestrians and bicyclists through narrowed vehicle lanes, raised crosswalks, and separated bicycle facilities. There were also some concerns with the one way couplet proposed along portions of Robinson Avenue and University Avenue.

3. Business Support

Commercial and Entertainment Activity Area: Staff received support for expanding the Commercial and Entertainment Activity Area and the applicability of the noise disclosure requirements to support businesses.

4. LGBTQ+ Cultural District

LGBTQ+ Sites: Staff received comments for adding policy support for the adaptive reuse of historically designated LGBTQ+ sites within the LGBTQ+ Cultural District to link the past to the future.

5. Public Spaces

Parks, Promenades, and Recreation Amenities: Staff received feedback about the need for additional parks, pocket parks, and recreational amenities. Comments expressed concern that promenades built by developers may not be contiguous. Support was also received for rooftop activation, dog-friendly open spaces, public restrooms, and water fountains.

C. What are the main updates to the draft Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment since the Planning Commission Workshop on November 30, 2023?

The main updates made to the draft Hillcrest FPA since the Discussion Draft was presented to Planning Commission on November 30, 2023 include a reduction in density from the additional capacity of 19,000 homes to 17,200 homes, use of 2020 census data, updated bicycle, transit, and street network figures, strengthened policies regarding bicycling and transit, additional key locations for the LGBTQ+ walking corridor, additional support for legacy business, expanded noise regulations, revision to the Commercial Activity and Entertainment Area, and clarifying updates to Supplemental Development Regulations. These updates are discussed in further detail throughout this report. A Summary of Changes for the Draft Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment is also available for review (Attachment 9).

D. What are the main changes being proposed by the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment?

1. Land Use

The Uptown Community Plan has approximately 24,800 existing homes which include approximately 4,900 homes in the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment area. Approximately 10,300 additional homes could be developed based on the adopted 2016 Uptown Community Plan. This also includes 1,000 homes proposed by the UCSD Hillcrest Campus 2019 Long Range Development Plan. Based on the proposed land use scenario, the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment could have a maximum of up to 17,200 additional homes above the adopted Uptown Community Plan over the next 30 years and beyond (Table 2). This is a reduction in proposed additional homes from 19,000 in the Discussion Draft Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment as a result of feedback from the Planning Commission Workshop on November 30, 2023.

*Table 2: Focused Plan Amendment Proposed Land Uses - Total Potential Buildout for the Uptown Community Plan**

	Homes
Existing Built Development (Uptown Community Plan Area)	24,800
Remaining Capacity (Adopted Uptown Community Plan)	+10,300
Proposed Additional Capacity (Focused Plan Amendment)	+17,200
Total Uptown Community Plan Area Build out	52,300

**Rounded to the nearest hundred.*

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment proposes amendments to land uses (Attachment 10) that enhance housing opportunities, further enriching the vibrancy of the Hillcrest neighborhood, which already enjoys lively, walkable streets, mixed-use buildings, and a diverse array of retail, office, and entertainment options. The proposed amendments align with existing land uses while seeking to increase allowable density and intensity. The highest density is proposed in two key areas within the Hillcrest core and the Normal Street area. By introducing more housing options, the plan promotes the use of bicycling, walking and transit and the creation of activation spaces. Allowing additional capacity for homes, near major employers

such as the Medical Complex neighborhood within the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment boundaries, alongside proposed mobility enhancements, aims to facilitate increased transit, bicycling, and pedestrian trips, thereby reducing overall vehicle miles traveled.

Land use designations are proposed as follows:

- *Community Commercial designations* provide for retail, service, civic, and office uses and allow for housing as part of mixed-use development.
 - Community Commercial (up to 218 du/ac) is proposed for Washington Street, along Third Avenue, between Lewis Street and University Avenue, along Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Avenues, south of Robinson Avenue, along Eighth Avenue, between Washington Street and Robinson Avenue, along University Avenue, between the SR 163, and Richmond Street, and along the south side of University Avenue, between Richmond Street and Park Boulevard (Attachment 10).
 - Community Commercial (up to 290 du/ac) is proposed for two key node areas. The first key node is focused near the Hillcrest core, surrounding the intersections of University Avenue and Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Avenues. The second key node is focused near the intersections of University Avenue, and Normal Street and Park Boulevard (Attachment 10).
- *Residential designations:*
 - Residential Very High (110 to 218 du/ac) is proposed for the multifamily and mixed-use area surrounding Normal Street.
 - Residential Very High (75 to 109 du/ac) is proposed for the multi-family residential areas within the Medical Complex neighborhood.
 - Residential High (45 to 74 du/ac) is proposed for the multi-family residential area surrounding Essex Street and Robinson Avenue, east of State Route 163 (Attachment 10).

2. Urban Design, Parks, and Public Space Strategy

Hillcrest is an urban neighborhood. As a result, the Focus Plan Amendment identified opportunities for creative and innovative ways to create public spaces to improve and create spaces for people to enjoy. One of the ways to improve the existing and future public spaces in the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment is to require public spaces when new development is proposed over 25,000 square feet. The Focused Plan Amendment proposes the following framework to implement public spaces, promenades, and LGBTQ+ interpretive trail paving consistent with the Parks Master Plan. This framework for parks and public space would be implemented by the supplemental development regulations, as part of the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone – Type A.

a. *Public Spaces*

Public space within the development site will be required for all new development on a property equal to or greater than 25,000 square feet and with a total gross floor area equal

to or greater than 75,000 square feet. Development on a property that does not meet this threshold but chooses to comply with the public space supplemental development regulations will be granted a floor area ratio (FAR) bonus of 1.0. Developments will be required to provide maintenance, public access to the public space and include public space amenities that can be chosen from a menu of options including, but not limited to patio seating, community gardens, interactive and/or placemaking elements, recreation areas, off-leash dog areas, fitness circuits, and performance/event spaces.

b. Park Improvements

Developments that construct on-site park improvements in accordance with SDMC Section 142.0640 and City Council Policy 600-33 can be provided as an alternative to the public space requirement. City Council Policy 600-33 outlines requirements for on-site park improvements that go beyond what is required by the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone public space requirements and therefore they are provided as an alternative. City Council Policy 600-33 outlines notification requirements and a public participation process. Park Improvements that count toward recreational value points may be eligible for a development impact fee waiver.

c. Promenades

Development along the north side of University Avenue, between Sixth Avenue and Park Boulevard, and along the north side of Robinson Avenue, between First Avenue and Seventh Avenue, will be required to provide a promenade area outside of the public right-of-way that is open to the public. Promenades are to be built within a development site and do not include the public right-of-way area known as the parkway, which is from the curb to the property line. The University Avenue Promenade will have an average width of 10 feet measured perpendicular from the edge of the parkway to the street wall, with a minimum width of 10 feet at any point. The Robinson Avenue Promenade will have an average width of 5 feet measured from the edge of the parkway to the street wall.

d. LGBTQ+ Interpretive Trail Paving

To support the LGBTQ+ Cultural District, Promenades are also required to provide a 12-inch-wide band of multi-colored paving in a meandering pattern parallel to the parkway which conforms to the design guidelines in Appendix F of the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment.

3. Mobility Improvements

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment builds on the existing pedestrian-oriented grid network of Hillcrest and emphasizes concepts that further promote a shift in commuter and personal trips to pedestrian, bicycle and transit use. The goal is to create a better walking, bicycle, and transit environment that achieves the Climate Action Plan goals and creates a more sustainable community. A Final Draft Mobility Technical Report that describes the quality of the environment for each of the four major travel modes is available for review (Attachment 11).

a. Bicycle

The proposed bicycle improvements include several separated bicycle facilities including one-way cycle tracks along 4th and 5th Avenue as well as the majority of University Avenue

and Park Boulevard. There are also Class II bike lanes proposed along residential streets such as Robinson Avenue, Cleveland Avenue, Third Avenue, and Bachman Place. Many of these roadways are residential streets with low speeds, multiple driveways, and low traffic volumes where Class II facilities are suitable.

Class III bicycle routes are also proposed for connections between higher-level facilities. These bike routes are located along roadways with limited right-of-way space, including narrow roadways. A Class I facility is identified along the future location of the Normal Street promenade from University Avenue to Polk Avenue.

b. Pedestrians

Promenades along University Avenue and Robinson Avenue provide the opportunity for larger walking areas with street trees for shade and other pedestrian amenities.

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment identifies “District” pedestrian routes along University Avenue, and portions of Washington Street, 4th, 5th, 6th Avenues, and along the future location of the Normal Street Promenade. These roadways identified as “Districts” currently experience higher volumes of pedestrians or are anticipated to have higher volumes of foot traffic in the future. They will be improved with wider sidewalks, street trees, sidewalk cafes or pedestrian plazas, and other amenities to enhance the pedestrian environment.

“Corridor” pedestrian routes are identified along a portion of Washington Street, a portion of 4th, 5th, and 6th Avenues, Robinson Avenue, and Park Boulevard. “Corridors” currently have or are anticipated to have moderate volumes of pedestrians and occur where foot traffic between land uses is less prevalent.

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment also proposes pedestrian enhancements and intersection improvements like lead pedestrian intervals, continental crosswalks, and locations for shortening pedestrian crossing distances through curb extensions (or bulb outs) and pedestrian refuge islands.

c. Couplet System and Dedicated Transit Lanes

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment is proposing to convert University Avenue between First Avenue and Ninth Avenue and Robinson Avenue between First Avenue and 10th Avenue to a one-way couplet to accommodate transit and bike facilities while continuing to provide access for vehicles. The portion of University Avenue would operate in the westbound direction and the portion of Robinson Avenue would operate in the eastbound direction.

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment also proposes dedicated transit lanes along University Avenue and along Washington Street, west of Fifth Avenue. The portion of University Avenue between SR-163 and Park Boulevard will maintain two-way operation and provides dedicated transit lanes and separated bicycle facilities along the roadway.

d. Transit

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment will revise the recommended transit network to be consistent with planned transit proposed in the SANDAG 2021 Regional Plan which includes regional commuter rail and transfer points within the community as well as light-rail/streetcar along University Avenue and Park Boulevard. Although the transit investments identified in the 2021 Regional Plan rely on funding sources identified by SANDAG in the 2021 Regional Plan, the amendment will revise the Uptown Community Plan recommended street network to identify dedicated roadway space to facilitate the implementation of transit lanes. Dedicated transit lanes will help improve schedule reliability for existing and future transit, increase rider confidence, and create a better user experience for transit riders making transit a competitive mode for travel. In addition to more reliable transit service improvements, the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment also identifies potential mobility hubs for first mile/last mile access to transit.

4. Historic Preservation and Cultural Heritage Strategy

The Historic Preservation and Cultural Heritage Strategy for the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment is comprised of several components that build on past historic preservation efforts, including the historic survey conducted as part of the 2016 Uptown Community Plan Update and the establishment of the Citywide LGBTQ+ Historic Context Statement that same year. The four components of the Historic Preservation and Cultural Heritage Strategy are:

- The Hillcrest LGBTQ+ Historic Context Statement, which builds on the 2016 Citywide LGBTQ+ Historic Context Statement and will guide the current and future evaluation and historic designation of buildings, structures, and sites important to Hillcrest's LGBTQ+ community.
- The Hillcrest Historic District, which implements the 2016 Uptown CPU by evaluating the potential Hillcrest Historic District and assessing its eligibility for historic district designation. The Hillcrest Historic District survey concluded that a smaller district boundary focused primarily along Fifth Avenue between University and Robinson Avenues (as shown in Attachment 12) appears significant for its architecture and association with the LGBTQ+ community. The Hillcrest Historic District will be processed in accordance with the City's policies and regulations related to historic district designation, which includes property owner engagement, review by the Policy Subcommittee of the Historical Resources Board (HRB), and two hearings by the HRB to consider designation of the historic district. If designated, the designation may be appealed to the City Council within 10 days of the HRB's action. The Historic District designation follows a separate but parallel process from the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment. It requires its own recommendation and adoption, independent of the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment. Engagement is expected to occur in the Spring of this year. The proposed historic district is anticipated to go to the HRB for designation in late Summer 2024.

The public was invited to assist in the identification of buildings, structures, and sites associated with the LGBTQ+ community through our online engagement efforts, and the draft of the Hillcrest LGBTQ+ Historic Context Statement provided for public review and comment as well.

The Hillcrest Historic Preservation and Cultural Heritage Strategy complements the LGBTQ+ Cultural District. While cultural districts can co-exist with historic districts, they are not one and the same and serve different purposes. A historic district acknowledges and protects a specified

area with a concentration of buildings and sites that collectively embody a significant aspect of the City's history. A cultural district is not defined by historic significance, but rather is a tool for place-making and place-keeping that honors the presence and contributions of cultural groups while providing support to legacy businesses, nonprofits, community arts, and traditions.

5. LGBTQ+ Cultural Strategy

The draft plan includes an LGBTQ+ Culture element which outlines an LGBTQ+ Cultural District to formally recognize the Hillcrest area for its history, people, events, and culture. Through a thoughtful blend of cultural elements, public spaces, and community initiatives, the LGBTQ+ Cultural District will pay homage to the struggles that have shaped its community and embrace a dynamic present and future. The LGBTQ+ Cultural District objectives include:

- Commemorate, recognize, and highlight the people, spaces, buildings, events, and physical elements that contribute to the history and culture of the LGBTQ+ community in Hillcrest.
- Elevate the voices of under-represented and under-valued populations and organizations.
- Foster a spirit of pride and solidarity in our community in the face of new opportunities and challenges.
- Continue to offer welcoming safe spaces for the members of the LGBTQ+ community to gather and express themselves freely.
- Recognize Hillcrest as a center for community organization and LGBTQ+ activism in the past and currently as a place that continues to foster racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural diversity.
- Acknowledge the importance of entertainment and commercial business establishments and organizations in Hillcrest that welcome, serve, and represent the LGBTQ+ community and form a significant part of the LGBTQ+ culture and history.
- Present a collection of interpretive elements that communicate the intangible values associated with Hillcrest's history and culture.
- Feature a walking corridor consisting of conceptually connected "parklets" or other interpretive elements at key locations that are themed to recognize the locations' significance in LGBTQ+ life in Hillcrest.
- Feature personal quotes and stories from individuals in the LGBTQ+ and/or Hillcrest community.
- Provide policy guidance for the future implementation of public spaces and programming.

6. Local Business Support

The LGBTQ+ Cultural District acknowledges the importance of entertainment and commercial business establishments and organizations in Hillcrest that welcome, serve, and represent the LGBTQ+ community. The Focused Plan Amendment also includes policies to support future programming to formally recognize anchor institutions and legacy businesses and help combat

the displacement of small and local businesses and policies.

Supplemental Development Regulations, implemented through a Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPOIZ) propose new regulations to support the importance of entertainment and commercial business establishments and organizations in Hillcrest. These regulations apply to areas within a Commercial & Entertainment Activity Area (Attachment 13)

Supplemental Development Regulations will allow for extended hours of operation for eating and drinking establishments by one hour. Noise regulations are also proposed to require activity noise noticing within the Commercial & Entertainment Activity Area and within 100 feet of the boundary to help reduce potential conflicts between new residents and existing commercial establishments. Supplemental Development Regulations also provide protections for Legacy Commercial Retail Sales Establishments by specifying that when a development project proposes the demolition of a building with tenant space occupied by a Legacy Commercial Retail Sales Establishment, the applicant must provide the establishment with notice of intent to demolish, ability to occupy the space prior to demolition, and a right of first refusal to lease a comparable tenant space in a development. Legacy Commercial Retail Sales Establishments are retail sales and eating and drinking establishments that have been in operation for 30 years or more.

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment introduces a key policy aimed at fostering a certification program to bolster the LGBTQ+ business community. This policy is outlined below:

- EP-2-4 - Support a certification or recognition program for places and events within the city to include the LGBTQ+ Cultural District that are tied to protections and incentives to strengthen establishments and minimize the potential loss of valued institutions. This policy lays the groundwork for a potential future program.

This initiative would be a collaborative effort involving various City Departments. The commencement of this concept could occur following the plan's adoption. However further refinement, research, and determination of program parameters would be required prior to commencement of this concept.

E. How will the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment be Implemented?

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment guides decisionmakers, staff, property owners, and citizens engaged in community development. Key implementation actions include private investment through development consistent with the zoning program; public facilities included in the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that are funded in part through impact fees; and other sources of public, private, and non-profit investment and initiatives such as regional transportation improvements, districts, grants, and programs for enhanced facilities and maintenance.

1. Base Zones

The proposed Zoning Map (Attachment 14) shows the base zones being proposed (Attachment 15) for the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Area that will implement the land uses proposed in the Focused Plan Amendment. The CC-3-8 Community Commercial is being proposed for the Medical Complex area. For the core of Hillcrest near Fifth Avenue and University Avenue and the

primary commercial corridors, new CC-3-10 and CC-3-11 Community Commercial Base Zones are proposed:

- CC-3-8 (Community Commercial) – intended to accommodate development with a high intensity, pedestrian orientation and permits a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit for each 600 square feet of lot area.
- CC-3-10 (Community Commercial) – NEW ZONE – intended to accommodate development with a high intensity, pedestrian orientation and permits a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit for each 200 square feet of lot area.
- CC-3-11 (Community Commercial) – NEW ZONE – intended to accommodate development with a high intensity, pedestrian orientation and permits a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit for each 150 square feet of lot area.

For the residential areas throughout the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Area, three Residential Multiple Unit Base Zones are proposed:

- RM-3-9 (Residential Multiple Unit) – permits medium density multiple dwelling units, with a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit for each 600 square feet of lot area, with limited commercial uses.
- RM-4-10 (Residential Multiple Unit) – permits urbanized, high density multiple dwelling units, with a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit for each 400 square feet of lot area, with limited commercial uses.
- RM-4-11 (Residential Multiple Unit) – permits urbanized, high density multiple dwelling units, with a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit for each 200 square feet of lot area, with limited commercial uses.

2. Supplemental Development Regulations

The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Draft includes supplemental development regulations, implemented through a Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPIOZ), covering the area depicted in Attachment 3, which addresses:

- Implementation of public spaces, promenades, building façade design features, and LGBTQ+ interpretive trail paving for new development depending on the location and size of the proposed development.
- Provision of commercial activity noise disclosure to help reduce future conflicts between new residents and existing commercial establishments for areas within, and within 100 feet of, the commercial and entertainment activity area.
- Provision of legacy commercial retail sales establishment protection to help retain the commercial business establishments and organizations in Hillcrest.
- Provision of extended hours of operation for eating and drinking establishments by one

hour within the commercial and entertainment activity area hours of operation.

- Preservation of important features and historic characteristics within the boundary of the proposed Hillcrest Historic District through the protection of historic street frontages, maintenance of the streetwall, step-backs for new construction, including towers, and height provisions to provide certainty and a more streamlined process for new development activity to occur in the Hillcrest Historic District. The Hillcrest Historic District CPIOZ boundary aligns with the proposed Hillcrest Historic District, which has been fully evaluated in the Hillcrest Historic District Nomination and found to be significant as the historic commercial core of Hillcrest and for its important association with San Diego's LGBTQ+ community. This is discussed further in section 4 of this report. The Hillcrest Historic District CPIOZ and associated SDRs will retain important historic features and characteristics of the Hillcrest Historic District while encouraging the continued use and adaptive reuse of these buildings as well as increased development of homes within the Hillcrest core.

F. How does the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment implement the Climate Action Plan?

Community plan updates and amendments play a role in implementing greenhouse gas reduction strategies of the Climate Action Plan related to Bicycling, Walking, Transit & Land Use. The proposed Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment complies with the Climate Action Plan community plan-related actions by: directing growth into Transit Priority Areas (TPAs); 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 (Attachment 11).

G. How does the Draft General Plan Amendment (Blueprint SD) help to inform the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment land use strategy?

The overarching strategy of the General Plan is based on the City of Villages strategy, which focuses growth into walkable mixed-use activity centers that are connected through a regional transit system. Blueprint SD includes an update to the Climate Smart Village Areas Map (General Plan Village Propensity Map) which identifies areas with the greatest transit competitiveness (also known as transit propensity) and areas where new home opportunities will have the greatest benefits to implement the City of Villages Strategy. This map guides and aligns future community planning efforts, including the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment, with Climate Action Plan mode share goals. The updated map is intended to identify areas where additional homes and jobs across the City could have the best opportunities to increase transit, bicycle, and walk mode share. The analysis conducted as part of Blueprint SD shows that the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment area contains some of the highest propensities in the City for residential and commercial mixed-use (Attachment 16). This is due to existing and planned transit facilities for Uptown which will allow density increases to reduce vehicle miles traveled and help meet Climate Action Plan mode share goals.

H. Community Engagement and Analysis

1. Community Meetings

Since April 2020, there have been 26 public meetings regarding the Focused Plan Amendment. These meetings have included one Live Webinar, three Uptown Planners meetings, 20 Uptown Planners Plan Hillcrest Subcommittee meetings, and two Vibrant Uptown meetings. Discussions have included the following:

- Existing conditions, community issues and priorities, Plan Hillcrest objectives, mobility network scenarios, land use scenarios, public space and park opportunities, urban design concepts, historic preservation considerations, and concepts for the LGBTQ+ Cultural District.
- Goals and policies related to Land Use, Mobility, Public Spaces and Parks, Historic Preservation, Urban Design, and LGBTQ+ culture.
- Initial staff recommended mobility network maps, planned land use map, and zoning map.
- An overview of the FPA Community Discussion Draft and the Draft Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment.

2. Existing Conditions Report Engagement

- In the spring of 2020, work began on the existing conditions phase and an [Existing Conditions Community Atlas](#) was completed in July 2020. The Community Atlas is an informational document that focuses on mapped resources relating to community demographics, land uses, urban form, and mobility infrastructure. It was prepared to develop an understanding of the existing land uses and frame the discussion about potential opportunities within the plan area.

3. Online Engagement

- A non-scientific [online community survey](#) was undertaken from April 28 to May 18, 2020. The survey focused on identifying community priorities and recommendations for mobility, housing, public spaces, and opportunities to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community within the plan area. The survey included a mix of questions that prompted respondents to prioritize and rank conceptual elements. It also included several interactive mapping questions to allow respondents to identify site-specific recommendations within the community. The survey received 719 responses.
- The [Choose Your Future Hillcrest! Online Engagement Platform](#) was created to provide an innovative approach to public engagement that reached a broader audience. The questionnaire was available from March 10 to April 11, 2022, where participants could review proposed options for public spaces, mobility, and housing. Overall, the platform received 931 responses, with an average of 457 responses per questions, and generated 1,652 unique map responses. Respondents represented a broad cross-section of the community. Feedback received helped inform the development of parks/public space, mobility, and land use concepts.

4. Key Stakeholder Interviews for the LGBTQ+ Cultural District

- In Summer 2023, the City Planning Department completed a series of key stakeholder interviews with individuals and organizations in the Hillcrest/LGBTQ+ community to inform how the LGBTQ+ Cultural District would be implemented.
- Key stakeholder interviews and/or meetings were conducted with the following organizations:
 - Hillcrest Business Associations LGBTQ+ Cultural Committee
 - Hillcrest Town Council
 - Lambda Archives
 - Pride San Diego
 - SOHO
 - San Diego LGBTQ Community Center
 - Uptown Planners Plan Hillcrest Subcommittee
- Key stakeholder interviews and/or meetings were conducted with the following individuals:
 - Nicole Murray Ramirez, LGBTQ+ activist and frequent San Diego City committee appointee
 - Charles Kaminski, architect and LGBTQ+ historic preservation activist
 - Moe Girton, Hillcrest business owner

5. Community Discussion Draft Feedback

- The Community Discussion draft of the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment was released for feedback for a period of six weeks between October 6 and November 17, 2023.
- During this time, two office hour sessions were hosted at the Mission Hills/Hillcrest Knox Library and one online Q&A Session was hosted to collect feedback and answer questions regarding the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Community Discussion Draft.
- Staff also received further comments via online submissions, and in person during a range of participant meetings with the community and Community Planning Group. Feedback received primarily focused on affordable housing, support for reduced density, potential building height, bicyclist safety, parking, the need for additional mobility analysis, space for children's play areas, infrastructure needs, support for noise disclosures and the need for legacy business protections. A summary of engagement will be compiled to summarize all feedback received on the Community Discussion Draft.

6. Draft Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Feedback

- The Draft Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment was released for feedback for a period of six weeks between March 15 and April 29, 2024. Staff received feedback via online submissions, and in person during a range of participant meetings. Feedback received to date has primarily focused on proposed density, recreational needs, infrastructure needs, traffic concerns, additional bike facilities on Sixth Avenue and support for noise disclosures.

CONCLUSION

Through the extensive public engagement process, the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment recommends a land use plan and zoning to strengthen the business district of Uptown, increase opportunities for homes near transit and bring neighborhood benefits where needed most. The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment also supports significant historical and cultural LGBTQ+ resources to honor the legacy of a place that welcomes everyone and celebrates the community's rich culture. The Focused Plan Amendment also supports the vibrant pedestrian-oriented commercial and entertainment center of Hillcrest and fosters active neighborhoods for all ages and abilities along with a supportive mobility network, urban design and public spaces framework. The Focused Plan Amendment aims to improve mobility options for a greater number of people and provide infrastructure that can influence travel mode choice toward active transportation modes and transit use. The policies in the amendment highlight the importance of a connected, walkable community with more transit-oriented development, all of which help put the community on a positive trajectory to meet the goals outlined in the Uptown Community Plan, the General Plan, and the Climate Action Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments:

1. [Draft Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment \(digital link to the on-screen version\)](#)
2. Draft Resolution adopting the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment to the Uptown Community Plan and amending the General Plan
3. Draft Ordinance amending the Land Development Code Chapter 13, Article 1, Division 5 and Chapter 13, Article 2, Division 14
4. Draft Ordinance rezoning land within the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment area consistent with the Uptown Community Plan
5. Draft Resolution designating the LGBTQ+ Cultural District in the Uptown Community
6. Community Planning Group Comment Letter
7. [Draft Environmental Impact Report \(digital link to on-screen version\)](#)
8. Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Planning Area
9. [Draft Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Summary of Changes \(digital link to the on-screen version\)](#)
10. Proposed Land Use Map
11. [Mobility Technical Report \(digital link to on-screen version\)](#)
12. Proposed Hillcrest Historic District
13. Proposed Commercial & Entertainment Activity Area
14. Proposed Zoning Map
15. [Proposed Zones](#)
16. Initial Blueprint SD Analysis Results for the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Area
17. [Draft Community Plan Public Comments](#)