

Mid-City Communities Plan Update

Draft Public Engagement Summary December 2024



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City Planning



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Introduction

The Draft **Public Engagement Summary** for the Mid-City Communities Plan Update (CPU) provides a summary of what we heard from the community during the first year of the plan update process. This report is organized into four chapters:

- 1. Background
- 2. What Did We Do?
- 3. What Did We Hear?
- 4. What's Next?

Chapter 1 briefly explains why the City is updating the Mid-City Communities Plan, the plan area boundary, timeline and working group. Chapter 2 highlights all the engagement activities conducted during 2024. Chapter 3 provides a high-level summary of community vision, strategy, and priorities by key themes. Chapter 4 explains how community feedback will guide the initial formation of the framework and concepts for the Mid-City CPU and what's coming up next. More detailed information for each activity is available in the report attachments.



Why Is the Community Plan Being Updated?

The City is updating the Community Plan to help shape the future of Mid-City area for the next 20 to 30 years. The current plan was last adopted in 1998.



The update to the plan will serve as the 30-year vision for land use, mobility, urban design, public facilities and services, natural resources, historic and cultural resources and economic development.



Address Regional Growth & Housing Needs



Understand Community Needs & Enhance Quality of Life



Evaluate Infrastructure Demand



Reduce Environmental Impact

Planning Area & Neighborhoods

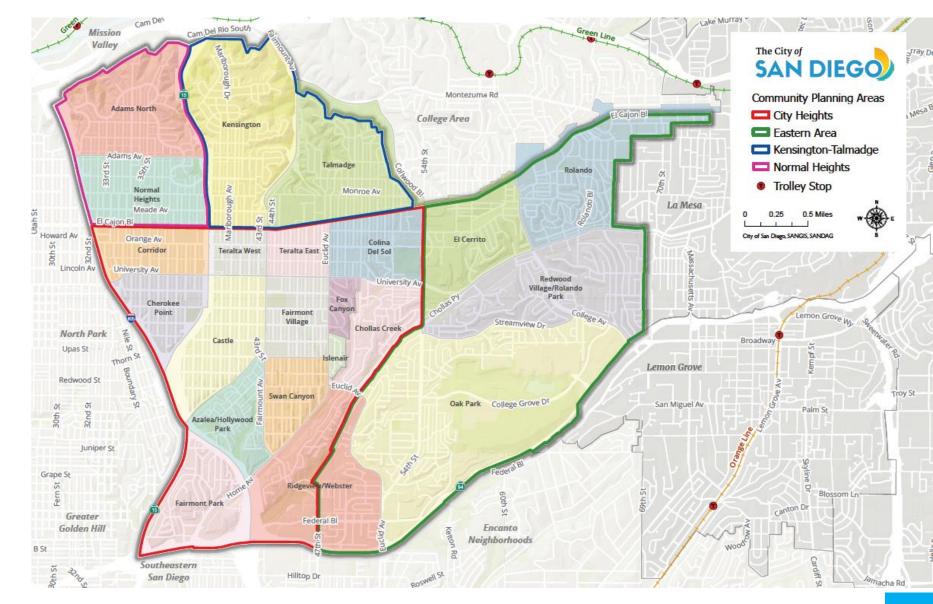
Mid-City Communities

- City Heights
- Eastern Area
- Kensington-Talmadge
- Normal Heights

Mid-City Snapshot*

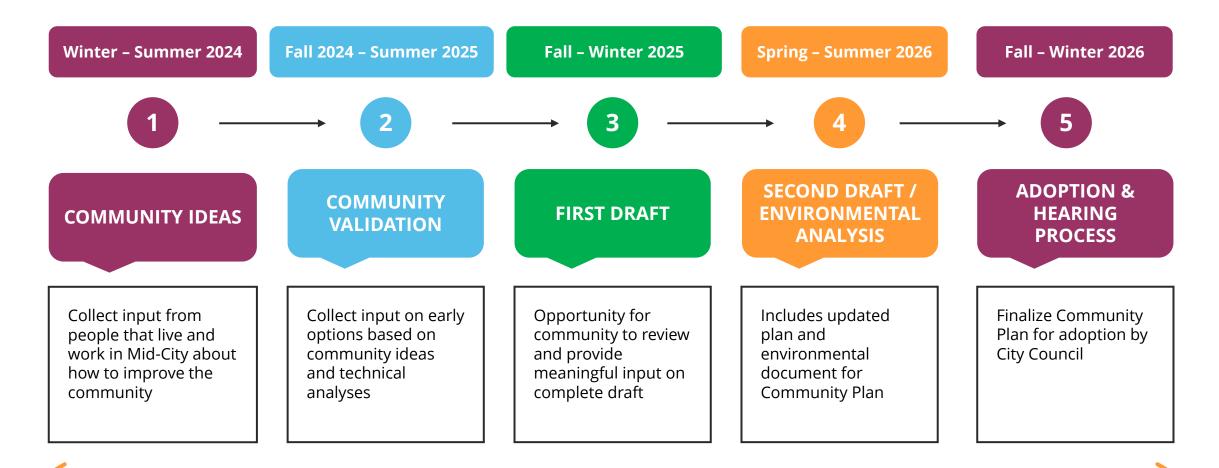
- 8,052 acres
- 133,267 people
- 52,300 homes
- 20,000 jobs
- 24,500 parcels
- 10% of the city population resides in Mid-City

*SANDAG Estimate 2022; LEHD 2019; City of San Diego



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Process & Timeline



CONTINUED AND ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Mid-City Communities Plan Update Working Group

As part of an inclusive engagement process, the City conducted an open application process to form the Working Group (WG) representing Mid-City communities of City Heights, Easter Area, Kensington-Talmadge and Normal Heights. The primary role of the WG is to inform the Mid-City Plan Update process by convening approximately every three months. In order to satisfy this role, the group will:

- Be involved in the plan update from start to finish.
- Review project materials related to public engagement, research and technical studies.
- Suggest ideas that could be included in the plan update.
- Provide feedback on proposals related to the plan update.

During 2024, the WG members attended four meetings (in-person and virtually) to discuss the plan update approach, the history of Mid-City, existing conditions and community engagement summary:

- Apr. 24 WG Orientation
- June. 26 1st Meeting
- Sept. 11 2nd Meeting
- Dec. 11 3rd Meeting





Introduction

The Draft **Public Engagement Summary** for the Mid-City Communities Plan Update (CPU) provides a summary of what we heard from the community during the first year of the plan update process. A broad cross-section of community members participated in various activities such as:

- Online surveys,
- Workshops,
- Office hours,
- Community interviews,
- Pop-ups,
- Community forums, and
- Youth engagement sessions.

This community feedback will serve as a valuable reference to guide the initial formation of the framework and concepts for the Mid-City CPU. There will be more community engagement opportunities as the plan update process continues.



Engagement Partners

The City of San Diego partnered with five organizations to ensure community engagement was inclusive and meaningful to people of all ages and abilities.



Ascent is an interdisciplinary collaborative, dedicated to advancing community vitality, and inclusive, equitable outcomes. Ascent led the in-person & virtual workshops.



Chen Ryan is committed to planning and designing transportation systems and mobility improvements that create and support vibrant and sustainable communities. CR supported the pop-ups & workshops.



IMAGINE leverages the tools of storytelling, theatre, and creative multimedia to transform community culture and enhance opportunities for learning, connection, and development. IMAGINE created the promo video and led the youth engagement activities with Hoover and Crawford High Schools.



City Heights Community Development Corporation is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to partner with community members to enhance the quality of life in City Heights. CHCDC led the pop-ups & mini-workshops in City Heights & Eastern Area.

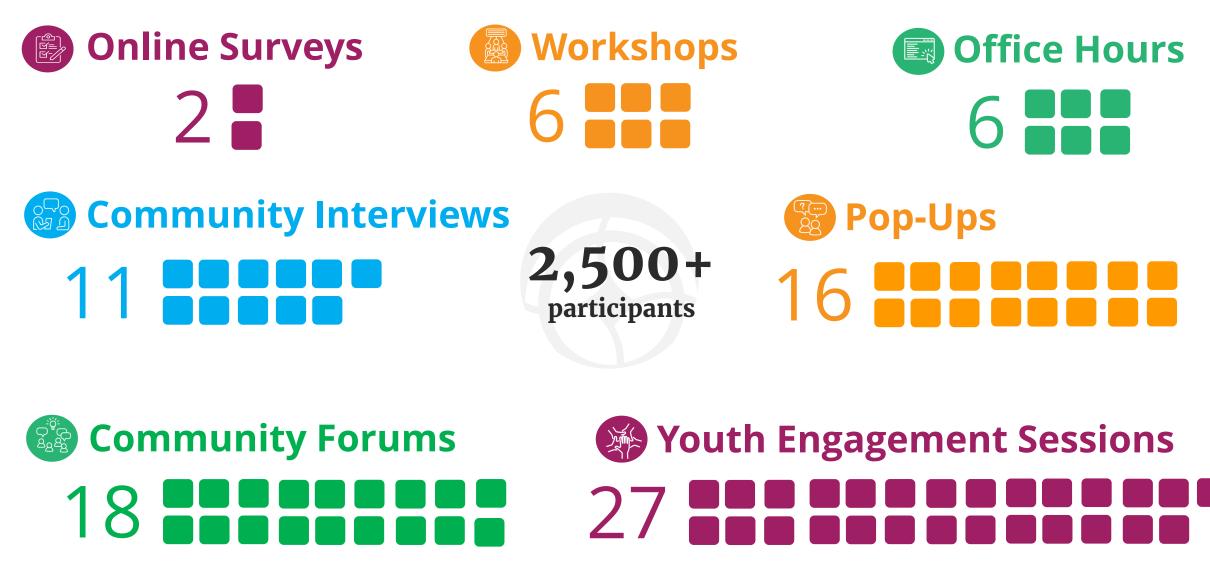


The City of San Diego partnered with **Cal Poly San Lui Obispo Community Planning Studio** and conducted pop-ups & middle school outreach.



Key Engagement Activities

Over **2,500 people** provided **8,300+ comments** through **84 events** and two online surveys.



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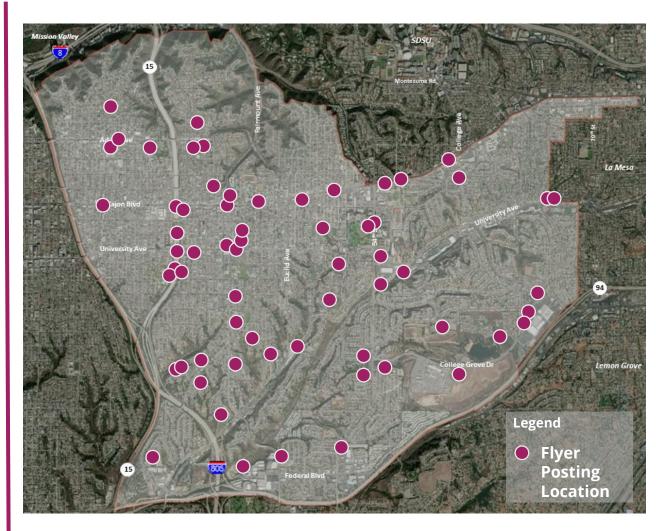


Overview

The first online survey¹ asked people to describe their community today and their ideal future vision. The second survey² engaged users through interactive web and text message to gather input on key community themes. The survey was promoted via press release, local news, social media posts, eblasts, and flyers posted around Mid-City gathering spots.

- Total participants 821
- Total comments 1,880







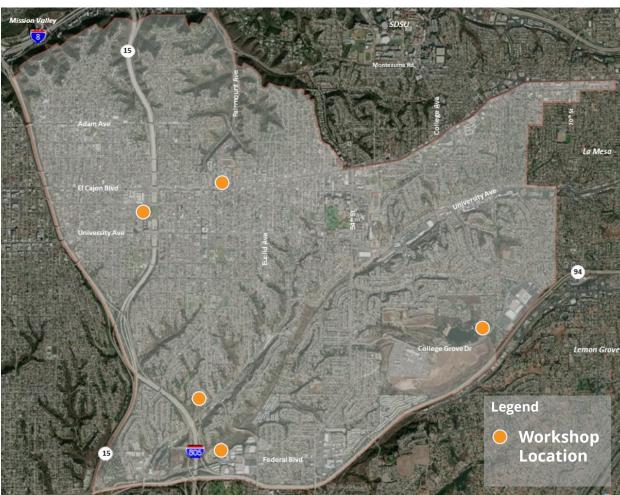
Workshops

Overview

Community members came together to learn about the Mid-City plan update and discussed ideas, vision, and priorities at six public workshops (one virtual and five in-person). The interpretation services were available at in-person workshops and virtual workshop was conducted in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

- Total participants 121
- Total comments 1,100







Office Hours

Overview

The City held six public in-person office hours to allow community members to come together to share ideas and provide input on vision, priorities, and other topics. The in-person office hours were organized as an open house meeting that occurred for two hours at different times in February and March 2024.

- Total participants 9
- Total comments 117





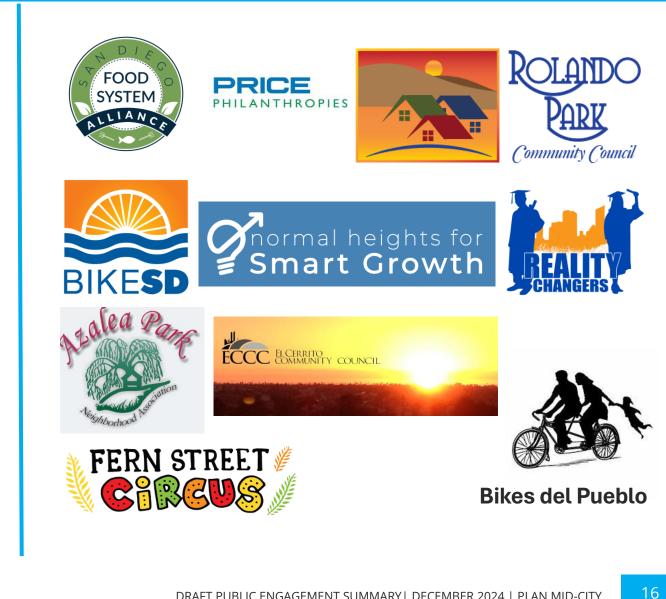


Community Interviews

Overview

The City staff sent invitations to forty-two community-based organizations (CBOs) and heard back from eleven CBOs. Eleven interviews allowed CBOs to share ideas and provide input on vision, priorities, and other topics to help inform the Mid-City Communities Plan Update. The community interviews were organized as virtual 30-minute sessions that was scheduled in April and May 2024.

- Total participants 23
- Total comments 231



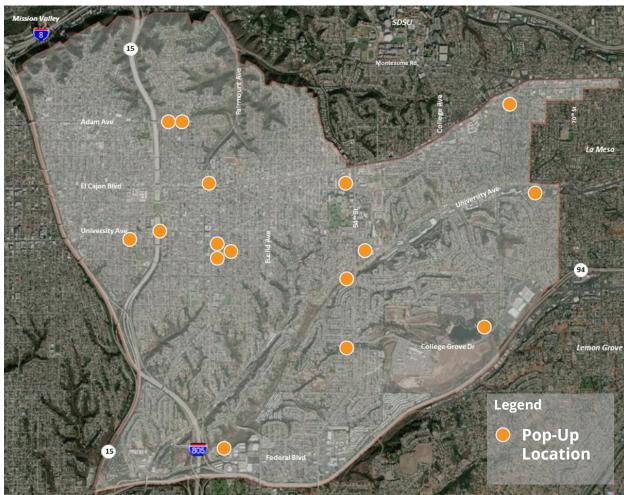


Overview

Pop-up station hosted by City staff, Ascent, Chen Ryan, Cal Poly SLO students and City Heights CDC created an opportunity for Mid-City community members to provide input - typically as part of larger community events and festivals - to ensure the broadest community participation and representation.

- Total participants 641
- Total comments –1,966







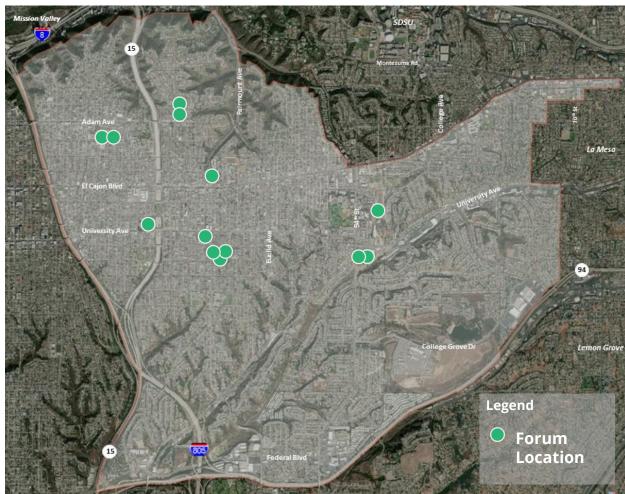
Community Forums

Overview

The City staff attended various community forums, such as City Heights, Eastern Area, Kensington-Talmadge, and Normal Heights planning groups, to share information and answer any questions about the Mid-City Communities Plan Update. The primary focus of this activity was to build awareness about the plan update process, encourage participation in engagement activities, present the latest information, and receive feedback.

- Total participants 455
- Total comments 199





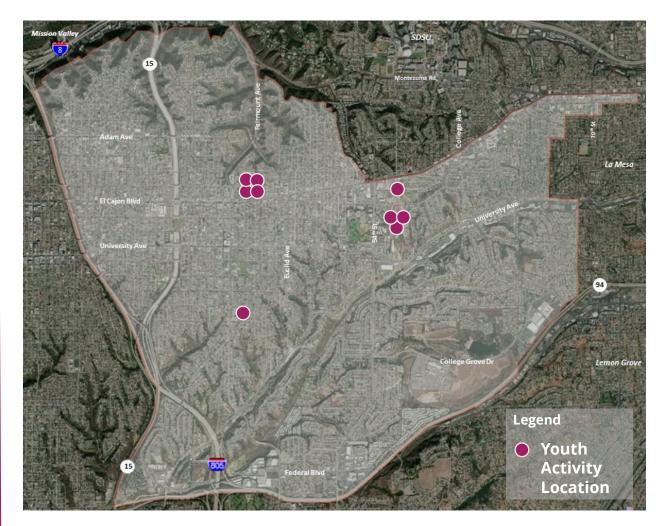
Youth Engagement Activities

Overview

City and Imagine worked with students from Hoover and Crawford High Schools by hosting twenty-one classroom sessions to gather their feedback on the community plan update. Students were encouraged to participate in a creative writing assignment, community interviews, photography, and a student survey. Cal Poly SLO engaged with students from Clark and Mann Middle Schools by hosting six sessions of fun mapping activities.

- Total participants 700
- Total comments 2,840





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Describe Your Ideal Vision of Mid-City

1. Clean, Safe & Thriving	Thriving Walkable, Mixed- Infrastructure -		4. More Green Spaces, Trees, Parks & Recreation (8%)
Neighborhoods		5. Build Affordable Homes for All People (8%)	
6. Accessible, Diverse, Equitable & Inclusive	7. Beautiful, Charming, Dynamic & Innovative Neighborhoods (7%)	8. Community- Oriented, Friendly & Neighborly (7%)	9. Preserve Neighborhood Character (5%)
Community (8%)	10. Peaceful, Quite & Serene Neighborhoods (3%)		11. Crowded, Declining (2%) 12. More Parking (2%)
Question: What word(s) would you use to describe your	ideal vision of Mid-City?		N = 1,578

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Describe Your Ideal Vision of Mid-City

"I want my community to look beautiful in the future."

"I would like it to be safer for our woman and children, Somewhere were we won't have to worry about any shootings, robberies and attacks due to gang violence."

"I want a community where people of different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds can live, work and play together."

"A fun place to walk around."

"In the future I would like my community to be more affordable for families."

"Vibrant, welcoming and eclectic. Laid-back vibe with a strong sense of community."

"The rent is something that someone on disability come pay on their own without assistance and still be able to cover their other bills."

"More vibrant commercial corridors with businesses that serve the needs of the neighborhood."

"I hope to see better public transportation options, affordable housing, necessary small business for living day to day. Families and people of insecurity getting assistance and guidance to resources. Just much more diversity and care for each other."

"A place where we can create our own families."

"I want there to be more space in the sidewalks so that way people could walk and since its always crowded it would be better."

"A community where kids who love to go outside along with older people feel safe to walk around without the fear someone might hurt them."

"I want other outsiders to look at what he have built here in mid city and inspire better for their community."

"A place that is accessible to people with different needs like a wheelchair."

"A quaint and convenient neighborhood where all needs are met."

"Vibrant localized community with plenty of variety in business and services offered so families can thrive without leaving the neighborhood."

Question: What word(s) would you use to describe your ideal vision of Mid-City?

Describe Your Ideal Vision of Mid-City – Youth Feedback

more trees, no trash, more safe | i'd like to see community renovations - they've been fixing the streets and replacing stop signs, which I find really useful | less homeless, less trash, better looking trees, and cheaper rent | i would like my community to look more open with nature | a little more green, more trees, better and cleaner roads, public workout gyms for people | in the future i hope it doesn't change because i like the way it looks like right now | more houses, more playgrounds, places for kids to hang out, and a place to explore the history of City Heights | i would like more places to hang out | quicker buses | peaceful and clean, with more greenery (no more palm trees though) and maybe a community garden and less light pollution | to have more stores near me | fields to play sports like soccer | i want other outsiders to look at what we have built here in mid-city and inspire better for their community peaceful, clean, filled with youth | plants, trees, and grass in the places that don't have much of them | clean sidewalks and roads that are good | more trees, many hangout spots like parks and stores, good transportation, less pollution | more trash-cans and more police protection | i would like my community to be more safe at night, have better sidewalks, and more public transportation.

Youth Photos: Things They Want to Enhance



Summary of What We Heard by Major Themes



History and Place



Mobility



Sustainability, Equity & Climate Change



Urban Design



Land Use & Development



Parks, Public Facilities & Open Space



Celebrate Mid-City's Cultural Diversity and Heritage:

- Encourage **new cultural districts** and **gateway signs** to celebrate distinct **neighborhood identities**.
- **Preserve cultural diversity** and the inclusive atmosphere of Mid-City, by protecting and enhancing key cultural sites including:
 - o community centers,
 - local family-owned businesses,
 - o the Little Saigon district, and
 - o murals.
- Continue to **emphasizing local culture** through **murals, events and signage** to honor community history.
- Foster a strong, connected community through **events** that encourage **social interactions** and mutual support.
- Create new and improved social hearts and **commercial hubs** that provide new opportunities for community.
- Expand **cultural services** to support higher residential density.







Balance Historic Preservation with Housing Development

- Balance historic preservation with new housing development, ensuring that historic neighborhoods retain their character while contributing to housing needs.
- **Minimize** the impact of **increased density** on older neighborhoods' character, existing and planned infrastructure, and privacy.
- Implement the proposed historic districts to preserve architecturally significant buildings and neighborhoods.







Sustainability, Equity & Climate Resilience

Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategies:

- Implement green infrastructure (trees, bioswales, rainwater harvesting) to enhance environmental resilience.
- **Plant trees and develop community gardens**; convert impervious • surfaces to permeable areas **to reduce runoff** and conserve water.
- **Improve stormwater management**, enhance drainage systems, • and address flooding issues along Chollas Creek.
- Balance **environmental preservation** with sustainable • development, protecting green spaces, trees and wildlife habitats.

Community Engagement, Equity and Education:

- Support equitable outreach and **engagement with youth** and **local** businesses.
- Foster an **inclusive** and **collaborative planning approach** ensuring • equitable resources across neighborhoods and to address historical inequalities.
- Enhance **community education** on **sustainability, water** . conservation and disaster preparedness.
- Promote community ownership of spaces.









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Sustainability, Equity & Climate Resilience

Clean Energy and Sustainable Transportation:

- Reduce vehicle emissions (e.g., idling reduction) and invest in sustainable transportation for better mobility.
- Promote zero-emission electric buses.
- Expand **public EV charging** stations.
- Develop a **microgrid** for local **energy independence** and resilience.
- Plan, design and **build** the **Purple Line**.

Green Building, Sustainable Design and Local Food :

- Tackle air quality, pollution, and climate impacts (e.g., heatwaves, flooding) to foster a healthier living environment.
- Build sustainable housing using green materials and energy-efficient solutions by providing solar incentives and supporting walkable neighborhoods.
- Focus on **sustainability and resilience** through innovative, **advanced technology**.
- Ensure new developments protect existing **green spaces** and **wildlife habitats** while promoting the creation of new ones.
- Enhance community health through access to **affordable and healthy food**.





Land Use & Development

Affordable Housing and Diverse Housing Types:

- Strong support for **affordable housing.**
- Promote **diverse housing opportunities** for younger generations and mixed-income communities.
- Prioritize **family-oriented housing** (1-3 bedroom units) near transit.
- Supporting lower rental prices and expand the stock of affordable forsale homes.
- Explore **city-owned housing units** and single-room occupancy structures.
- Address concerns about cost increases, short-term rentals, displacement and homelessness.

Homelessness and Supportive Services:

- Address concerns about increased homelessness and its impact on community safety.
- Expand supportive services and resources, including improved **homeless facilities**, **shelters** and **housing programs**.
- Invest in **transitional and permanent housing** for unhoused populations.
- Develop youth-oriented housing solutions to ensure community wellbeing and reduce homelessness.



How can people of all backgrounds & incomes live & work in Mid-City?

Priority	Votes	Percent
Affordable Housing	59	50%
Missing Middle Housing	14	12%
Multi-Family Housing	13	11%
Neighborhood Serving Business & Other	12	10%
Commercial		
Mixed-Use Development	10	9%
Prevent Displacement & Protect	7	6%
Tenants		
Other Ideas	2	2%
TOTAL	117	100%

Source: Attachment 5 - City Heights CDC Led Activity - Pop-Up Polling Result



Land Use & Development

Land Use and Housing Strategies:

- Prioritize high-density housing and neighborhood-serving businesses along major corridors while ensuring thoughtful design and mobility considerations.
- Encourage **mixed-use developments** (e.g., ground-floor retail) in cultural hubs and along main streets.
- Increase **multi-family housing** in areas not currently zoned for it.
- Ensure **new capacity for homes are shared** equally across all Mid-City communities.
- **Redevelop underutilized properties**, including vacant parking lots, abandoned commercial spaces and big box retail.
- Explore **public-private partnerships** for **mixed-use** development and **affordable housing**.
- Promote homeownership programs, community land trusts and housing near transit hubs for sustainable living.
- Create flexible zoning regulations and reassess ADU bonus programs.
- Redevelop areas with a focus on **minimizing displacement and gentrification**, while prioritizing the relocation of displaced residents.
- Implement a **city loan program for ADUs** to increase affordable rental options.
- Simplify permitting processes.
- Ensure proper **infrastructure** supports new housing developments.









Land Use & Development

Economic Development and Local Businesses:

- Encourage development that **creates jobs** to enable residents to continue living in Mid-City.
- Foster a supportive business environment, including establishing or expanding Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).
- **Revitalize declining areas** to stimulate economic growth.
- Support land use changes for **small corner stores**.
- Address displacement and uncertainty faced by small businesses.
- Provide small business loans and create spaces for mini-markets and local businesses.
- Strengthen the **local food economy** by supporting small farmers, food businesses, and improving access to land for food production.
- Address economic disparities by improving infrastructure and resources in poorer neighborhoods.
- Increase resource allocation and community support to address concerns of overcrowding and economic hardship.





Pedestrian and Bike Infrastructure:

- Address **gaps in pedestrian infrastructure**, including crossings, sidewalks, traffic signals, and effective wayfinding and signage.
- **Improve pedestrian crosswalks**, especially near schools and busy streets.
- Add and maintain wide, tree-shaded sidewalks incorporating green spaces to increase safety and improve the walking and biking experience.
- Implement traffic calming measures like speed humps and roundabouts to enhance safety for people walking and biking.
- Enhance bike and pedestrian **connections to trolley** and **rapid bus stations**.
- **Strengthen bike connections** within the community by addressing bike safety concerns at dangerous intersections and prioritizing protected bike lanes.
- Provide **feasibility studies and timelines** for planned bike facilities.







Enhancing Transit Network :

- **Re-envision transit** for greater efficiency and equity, offering a viable **alternative to car** use.
- **Increase transit** lines, stops, and frequency across Mid-City.
- Strengthen transit connections between SDSU, Mid-City, and Uptown, using **dedicated transit-only lanes**.
- Provide late-night transit options for workers.
- Upgrading bus stops with **seating**, **lighting**, **trash bins**, and **shading**, ensuring they are inclusive and not designed to deter homeless individuals.
- Support no-cost transit passes and improved trolley connections.

Safety and Street Lighting:

- Address sidewalk and road maintenance issues by focusing on unpaved alleys, poor road conditions, potholes, and outdated facilities.
- Increase street lighting for better visibility and safety.
- Tackle **safety concerns like crime, violence and homelessness** to make streets safer and more welcoming, especially for students.







Connectivity:

- Improve transit connectivity within and beyond Mid-City to enhance accessibility and reduce reliance on cars.
- Build **bridges** to connect communities across major roads and **challenging topography** (e.g., Teralta Park).
- **Strengthen connections** to nearby neighborhoods like Mission Valley.
- Establish neighborhood hubs (e.g., Normal Heights, City Heights) and shuttle routes to boost community identity.
- Promote **ride-share services** for wider accessibility.

Parking Management:

- Enforce **red zone parking** regulations and **address visibility issues** at intersections.
- Address **residential parking shortages** and the parking impacts of garage conversions.
- Consider neighborhood lots, **parking permits**, **parking structure** and **metered parking options**.
- Explore reducing street parking and adding underground parking along corridors to improve pedestrian flow.
- Increase parking availability near key locations (e.g., Rolando Library) and in new developments to meet community needs.

How can we make it easier for people to walk/roll, bike & use transit?

Priority	Votes	Percent
Sidewalks, Trees, & Landscaping	34	27%
Pedestrian Safety & Connectivity	32	25%
Bike Safety & Connectivity	25	20%
Trails/Paths	18	14%
Transit Options	15	12%
Other Ideas	4	3%
TOTAL	128	100%

Source: Attachment 5 - City Heights CDC Led Activity - Pop-Up Polling Result





Clean, Green and Safe Neighborhoods:

- Create clean, safe and thriving neighborhoods that are beautiful, authentic and artistic.
- Ensure proper **street lighting** to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- Implement **smart lighting solutions** including dark sky-friendly and solar-powered lighting to **reduce light pollution** and promote a healthier, more sustainable urban environment.
- Require high-density developments to include adequate lighting, wider sidewalks and infrastructure improvements.
- Add public trashcans to promote a **cleaner environment**.
- Increase greenery and street trees to reduce heat, improve air quality, provide shade and improve neighborhood aesthetics, especially along main corridors.
- Conduct a **shade equity study** to assess and address shade distribution across neighborhoods.
- Maintain and enhance a peaceful, serene environment with minimal noise and disturbances to foster a calm, relaxing atmosphere.







Public Realm and Walkability:

- Support community revitalization through dense, mixed-use development and improved amenities.
- **Develop community gathering spaces**, pedestrian-only plazas and cultural programming tailored to neighborhood identities.
- Consider **regular banner rotations.**
- **Enhance walkability** with local markets, grocery stores, restaurants and gyms within walking distance.
- **Encourage** more cafes, diverse restaurants, small shops, and a nearby mall to boost **the social scene**.
- Enhance **accessibility** and **inclusivity** in community design to celebrate and preserve cultural diversity.
- Invest in **family-friendly hangout spots** including public spaces, shopping centers, arcades, bowling alleys and movie theaters.
- Consider a **cohesive urban design aesthetic** along major corridors.



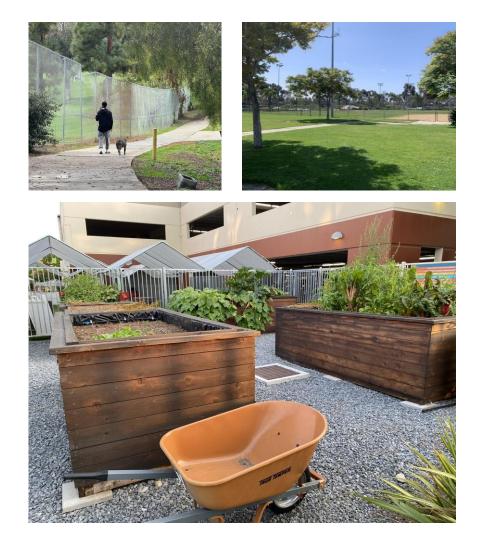




Parks, Public Facilities & Open Space

New and Existing Parks and Greenspaces:

- Develop a **connected network** of **small/medium parks**.
- Complete **open space projects** and enhance/expand jointuse agreements with schools for better utilization of open spaces.
- Develop North/South **linear parks** to **link neighborhoods** and canyons.
- **Re-evaluate recreational value-based standard** to support parks that cater to diverse community needs (dog parks, playgrounds, disc golf, sports facilities).
- Develop more community gardens, dog parks and gathering spaces especially in densely populated areas.
- Focus on **adding parks and open spaces** in disadvantaged areas and Kensington-Talmadge.
- Activate Chollas Creek and improve Colina del Sol Park.
- Support additional green spaces with drought-tolerant plants to enhance the environment and support local wildlife.





Parks, Public Facilities & Open Space

Community Spaces and Recreational Facilities:

- Support **recreation facilities** for **all ages**.
- Invest in **family-friendly hangout spots** including skateparks, playgrounds, badminton courts and soccer fields.
- Expand **recreational options for children and youth** through community centers, sports fields, and engaging programs like yoga, rap studios and family fun centers.
- **Support diverse park activities**, such as concerts and movie nights, to cater to a wide range of interests.
- Explore new **community anchors**, such as a library or pool, to enhance neighborhood engagement.
- Enhance libraries, recreation centers and culturally diverse services to **address the inadequacy of existing facilities**.
- Simplify access to park permits and boost recreational programming to activate community spaces.







Parks, Public Facilities & Open Space

Safety, Maintenance of Park & Recreation Facilities:

- Improve park and school safety and accessibility through improved maintenance and better lighting, seating, security and cleanliness of facilities.
- **Upgrade park amenities**: restrooms, play structures, shade, hydration stations and dog parks.
- Allocate **funds for park staff** to ensure safety and upkeep of public facilities.
- Address **illegal dumping** to maintain clean public and recreational spaces.

Infrastructure & Emergency Preparedness:

- **Upgrade infrastructure** to support higher residential density.
- **Relocate the proposed fire station** project to avoid ecological impact on canyon areas.
- Enhance **emergency preparedness** with better access, defensible spaces and new fire **safety measures**.



How can we make Mid-City more adaptable, equitable, & resilient?

Priority	Votes	Percent
Parks and Recreation Areas	57	50%
Civic, Cultural, and Other	23	20%
Community Spaces		
Public Art, Community Signs,	16	14%
Banners		
Open Spaces, Canyons, and Creeks	12	10%
Other Ideas	7	6%
TOTAL	115	100

Source: Attachment 5 - City Heights CDC Led Activity - Pop-Up Polling Result



Canyons and Trails:

- Preserve canyons and develop urban trails and pathways with culturally significant features like signage and sculptures to enhance connectivity between neighborhoods
- Focus on **urban trails** that link the canyons in Normal Heights and Kensington/Talmage to Chollas Creek and the canyons City Heights and Eastern Area.
- Expand walking and biking trails in underserved neighborhoods to promote outdoor activities and community well-being.
- Prioritize the maintenance of trails, including Rolando's "cat walks," with added security and regular litter cleanup for safety and enjoyment.







How Community Ideas Inform the Plan Update

The community feedback gathered during 2024 and existing conditions analyses will guide the initial formation of the plan update framework, vision and concepts for the Mid-City CPU. Specifically, it will inform:

- The focus areas to further study concepts and opportunities related to land use, urban design, mobility and public spaces,
- The development of high-level vision, goals and policies, and
- The more refined summaries for Mid-City communities of City Heights, Eastern Area, Kensington-Talmadge and Normal Heights.

As the plan update process moves into 2025, there will be more community engagement opportunities, with the next phase focusing on collecting feedback on early options and alternatives.

The Mid-City CPU Working Group will continue to meet approximately every quarter. For more detailed information on each engagement activity, please refer to the attachments accompanying the engagement summary.



Please See Attachments for More Detailed Information



Mid-City Communities Plan Update

Draft Public Engagement Summary

December 2024

