

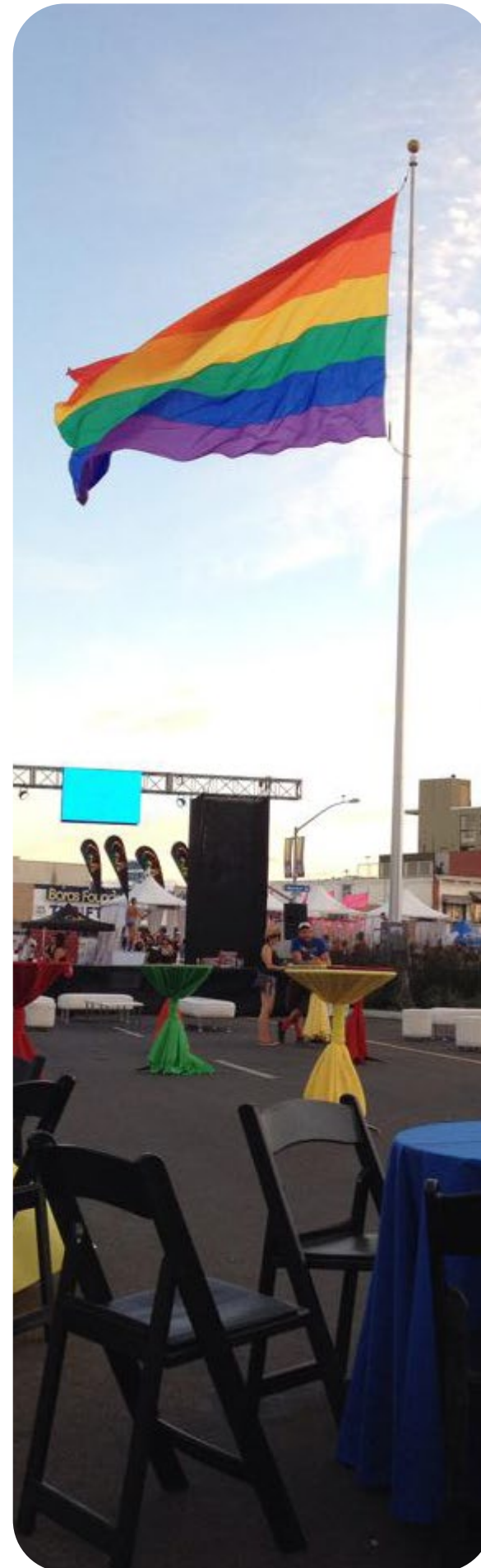
# PLAN HILLCREST

## EXISTING CONDITIONS Community Atlas

JULY 2020

Prepared for

The City of  
**SAN DIEGO**



# Acknowledgements

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**PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT | JULY 2020**

**Prepared for**



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# 1 Introduction and Demographic Setting

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Existing Conditions Atlas provides baseline information on existing conditions, opportunities, and challenges in the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment (FPA, Plan Hillcrest) planning area and sets the foundation for future prospects for the community. The focus of this Atlas is on mappable resources, trends, and information that will frame choices for the long-term physical development within Hillcrest. The Atlas includes information relating to demographics, land uses, mobility, and urban design. The Atlas will be used as a basis for:

- Facilitating community input on planning issues, priorities, and vision for the future;
- Evaluating policy issues and options and preparing land use and transportation concepts;
- Identifying potential community opportunities and constraints; and
- Formulating policies and approaches that will be addressed in Plan Hillcrest.

The Atlas provides information on current community conditions by using a variety of data resources accessed and analyzed in Spring 2020.



## 1.2 PLAN HILLCREST PURPOSE AND PROCESS

In 2016, a comprehensive update to the Uptown Community Plan was adopted by City Council that brought the Plan into conformance with the General Plan and Climate Action Plan. The Plan Update established a robust framework of urban design goals and policies, maintained higher density village areas along the community's transit corridors, and identified preservation strategies for the community's historic resources. However, the Community Plan did not increase housing capacity and, instead, maintained the residential densities established in the previous update of the Community Plan in 1988.

As part of the approval of the 2016 Community Plan Update, the City Council recommended staff consider including a Specific Plan for the Uptown Gateway in the Planning Department's Work Program. This Focused Plan effort is the department's approach in response to Council's recommendation during the adoption of the Uptown Plan.

### Vision

Plan Hillcrest envisions a complete neighborhood that celebrates its unique identity and honors the legacy of a place that welcomes everyone. Building on the Uptown Community Plan, Plan Hillcrest will focus on housing, mobility and public spaces that can strengthen the business district and bring neighborhood benefits where needed most. Plan Hillcrest will identify and preserve the historical resources important to the LGBTQ+ community and will identify new opportunities to honor and celebrate the community's culture.

With a growing housing crisis and a changing climate, more must be done to address housing needs, make it easier to walk, bike, take transit, and provide public spaces for everyone. Plan Hillcrest will organize efforts on place-making, connectivity, housing, and the neighborhood's unique identity to ensure Hillcrest thrives into the future.

### Purpose

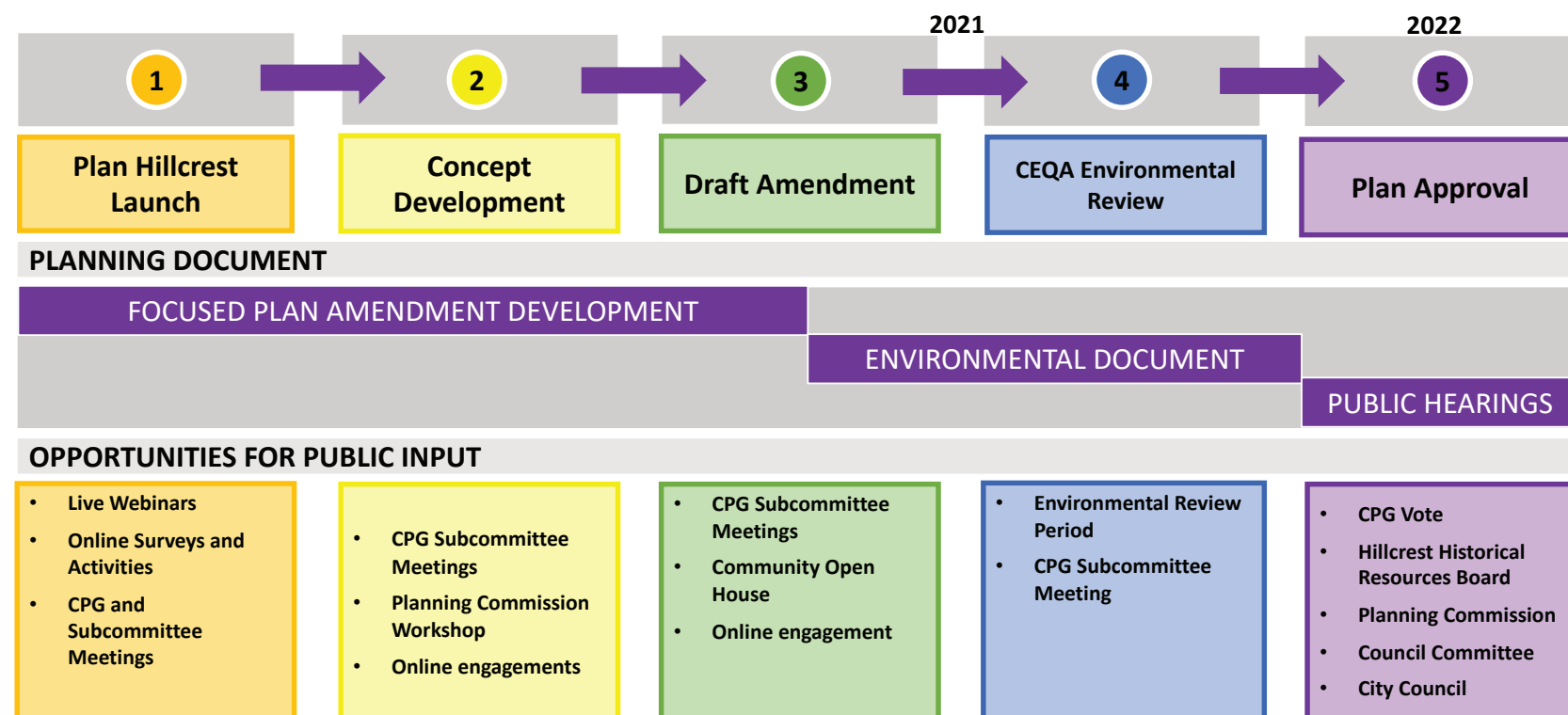
Plan Hillcrest will amend the Uptown Community Plan and focus directly on the issues, opportunities, and vision for the Hillcrest area. Plan Hillcrest will explore options to:

- Create public spaces that connect people to neighborhood businesses and services;
- Strengthen connections to make it easier to get to surrounding communities and places including Balboa Park, Downtown and North Park;
- Celebrate the legacy of the LGBTQ+ community by preserving historical resources and creating new places that honor and promote inclusivity; and
- Address housing needs by identifying areas near transit and services and increasing housing options that serve all community members.
- Support local businesses to ensure a thriving and sustainable business district.

## Process and Engagement

The Plan Hillcrest effort is a focused planning effort that will involve many opportunities for public input throughout the process, including surveys, webinars, meetings with Uptown Planners, the recognized Community Planning Group (CPG), and public workshops.

Process and Timeline of Plan Hillcrest.



## 1.3 REGIONAL LOCATION AND PLANNING BOUNDARIES

### REGIONAL LOCATION

The Plan Hillcrest Area (planning area) is located at the center of the Uptown Community Plan area, as shown in Figure 1.1. Uptown sits just north of Downtown, and is adjacent to Old Town, North Park, and Balboa Park. The planning area is within two miles of the San Diego International Airport. State Route 163 (SR-163) splits the planning area.

### PLANNING BOUNDARIES

The planning area, shown in Figure 1.2, encompasses central sections of the Hillcrest Medical Complex neighborhoods. It is bounded by a series of streets and canyons, including Park Boulevard to the west, Walnut Avenue to the south, Dove Street to the west, and hilltop bluffs along the northern edge of the Medical Complex neighborhood. The primary commercial core of Hillcrest is concentrated around the intersection of Fifth and University avenues and extends several blocks east, west, and south.



Figure 1.1 Regional Location and Community Plan Boundary

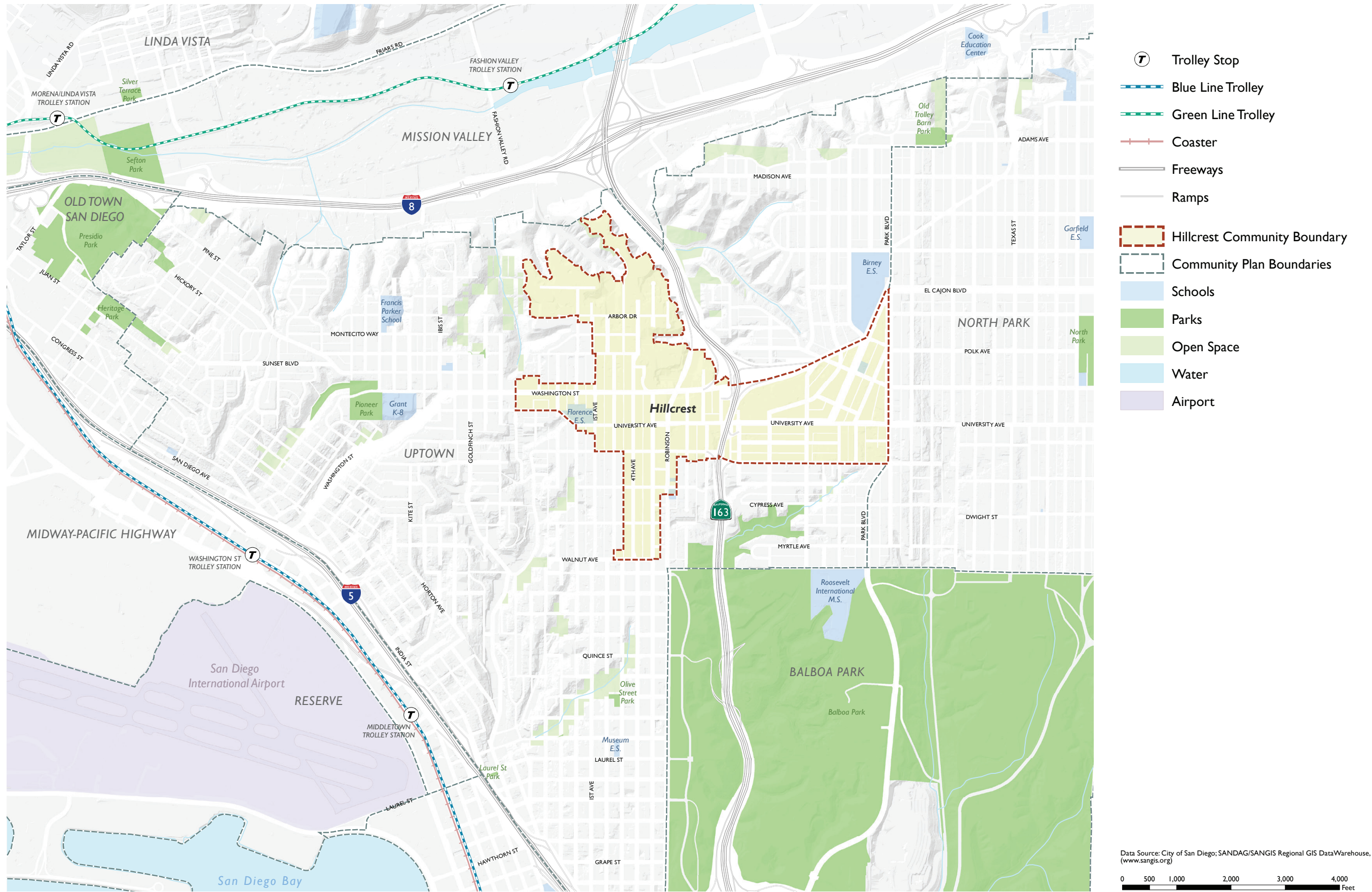
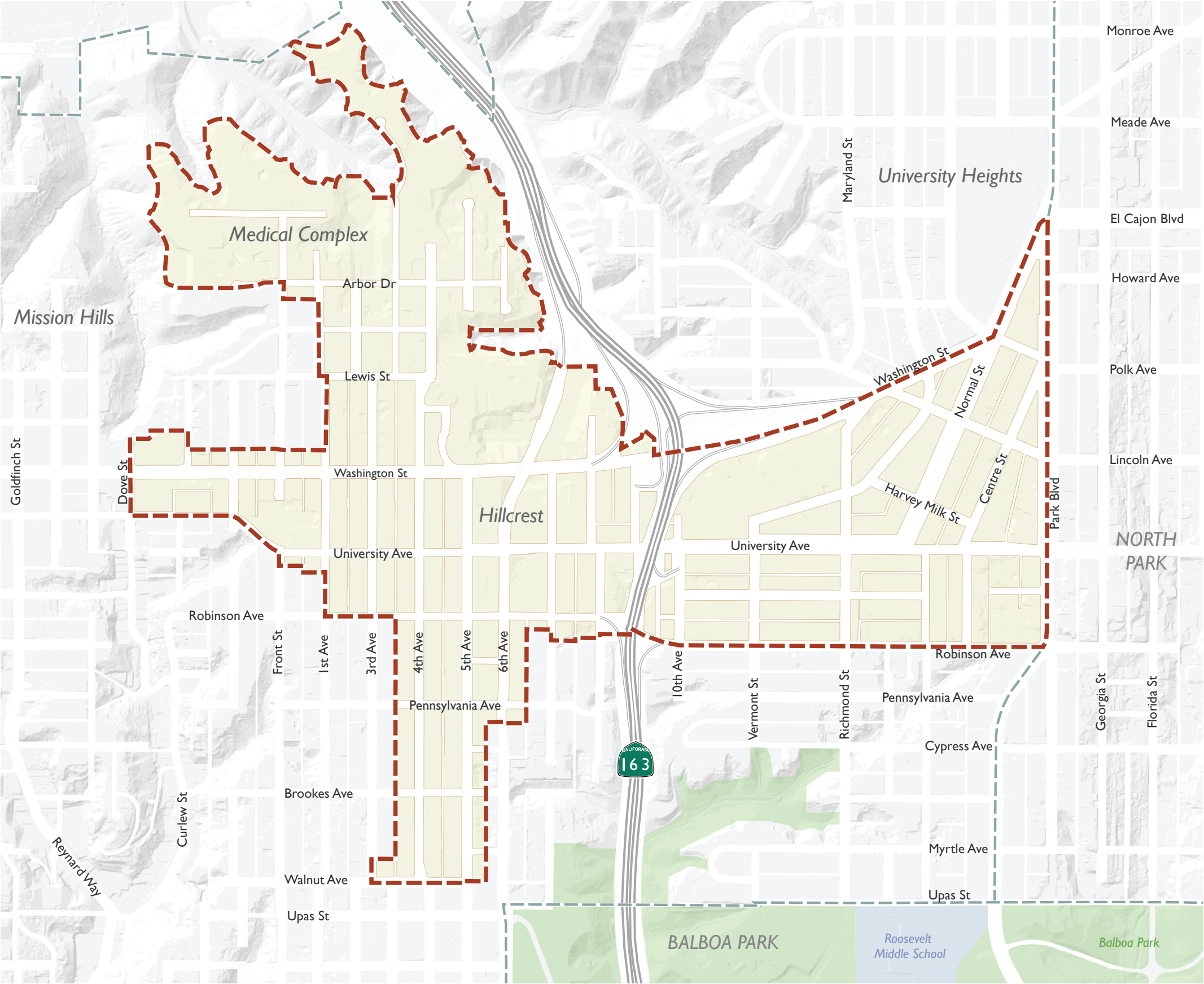


Figure 1.2 Focused Plan Amendment Boundary



- Hillcrest Community Boundary
- Community Plan Boundaries

Data Source: City of San Diego; SANDAG/SANGIS Regional GIS DataWarehouse, (www.sangis.org)

0 250 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 Feet

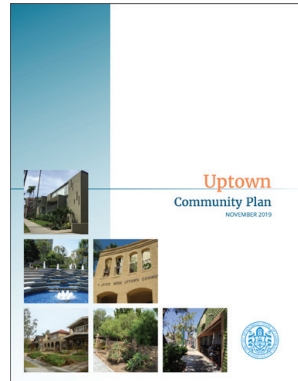


## 1.4 EXISTING PLANS

### UPTOWN COMMUNITY PLAN

The Uptown Community Plan, updated in 2016, provides the policy framework that guides the future physical development of the community. The Community Plan is a component of the General Plan and both provide land use planning direction for focused planning and implementation efforts.

The Community Plan is organized into nine elements (land use, mobility, urban design, economic prosperity, public facilities, services, and safety, recreation, conservation, noise, and historic preservation) plus an implementation section and appendices. Each element contains an introduction intended to establish overall vision, purpose and context as needed. The goals within each plan element or section are succinct statements of the community's vision. The policies and recommendations address specific topics or issues and guides Community Plan implementation. While the Uptown Community Plan includes policies for the Hillcrest neighborhood, Plan Hillcrest will build upon the Community Plan's policy framework to address and implement the Plan's objectives and those identified through the Plan Hillcrest effort.

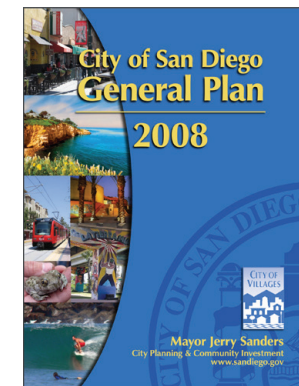


### GENERAL PLAN

The San Diego General Plan, comprehensively updated in 2008, sets out a long-range vision and policy framework to guide future development, provide public services, and maintain the qualities that define San Diego.

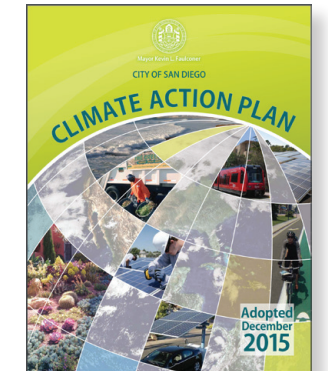
The General Plan's overarching vision is the City of Villages strategy which directs future growth into pedestrian-friendly mixed-use activity centers linked to an improved regional transit system. Regional and local investments that promote transit and bicycle use support this strategy. By increasing transportation choices, a reduction in overall vehicle miles traveled can be achieved which is a key contributor to broader sustainable development initiatives. These villages and activity centers are identified in the Community Plan. The mixed-use commercial districts and higher density neighborhoods along transit lines are candidate village locations within the community. Within these village areas the policies of the plan can be used to focus the implementation of needed investments in infrastructure, transit and other mobility improvements.

Uptown's location, street network, and land use pattern promote this vision of village growth and development. As part of the planning process, Plan Hillcrest will tie into the general themes and guiding components of the City's General Plan and the Community Plan, building upon these strategies.



### CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The San Diego Climate Action Plan, most recently updated in 2016, calls for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by half in the City and aims for all electricity to be from renewable sources by 2035. The Climate Action Plan provides a road map to achieve greenhouse gas reductions, conforms to California laws and regulations, implements the General Plan, provides CEQA tiering for new development's greenhouse gas emissions, and establishes strategies to accomplish each. Strategy 3 in particular, which covers transportation strategies to improve mobility, will help inform land use and mobility decisions for Plan Hillcrest.



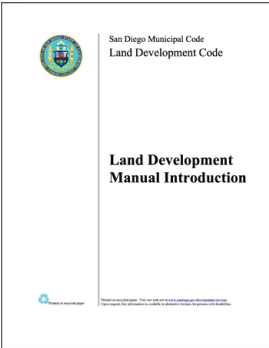
### THE HILLCREST CORRIDOR MOBILITY PLAN

The Hillcrest Corridor Mobility Plan, adopted in 2009, addressed street improvements between downtown San Diego to the Hillcrest area along the west side of Balboa Park on Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Avenues. The Mobility Plan looked at improving traffic flow, parking spaces, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements. The concept plan for the northern corridor spans from Washington Street to Walnut Avenue, which is within the Plan Hillcrest planning area.



LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE

The City of San Diego Land Development Code (LDC) is part of the Municipal Code and contains regulations and controls pertaining to land use, density and intensity, building massing, architectural design, landscaping, storm water management, street frontages, lighting, and other development characteristics. The LDC implements the policies and recommendations of the Community Plan, including application of the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone. All development within the community must comply with regulations set forth in the LDC.



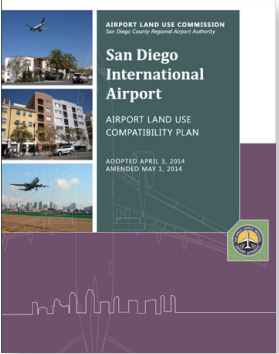
SAN DIEGO PARKS MASTER PLAN

The San Diego Parks Master, most recently updated in 2020, provides a citywide framework for park and recreation goals, policies, and needs. The plan sets a new standard for park space, called the Recreational Value-Based Park standard, sets a new recreational value of 12 points per 1,000 people and represents a range of recreation experiences comparable to the opportunities available to residents in communities that previously achieved the acreage-based standard.



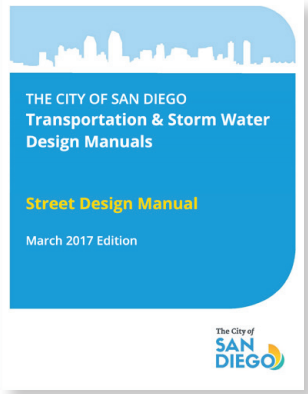
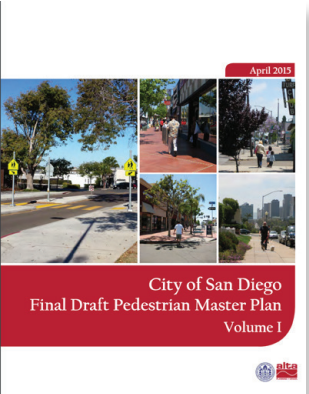
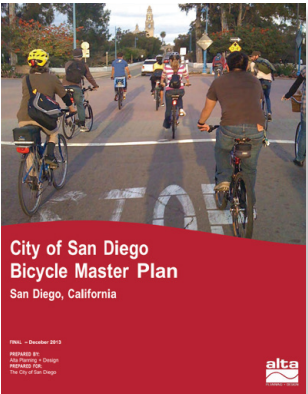
AIRPORT LAND USE COMPATIBILITY PLAN

The Airport Influence Area for San Diego International Airport (SDIA) affects the Uptown Community Plan and Hillcrest. The Airport Influence Area serves as the planning boundaries for the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and is divided into two review areas. Review Area 1 is composed of the noise contours, safety zones, airspace protection surfaces, and overflight areas. Review Area 2 is composed of the airspace protection surfaces and overflight areas. The Airport Land Use Commission for San Diego County adopted the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan to establish land use compatibility policies and development criteria for new development within the Airport Influence Area to protect the airport from incompatible land uses and provide the City with development criteria that will allow for the orderly growth of the area surrounding the airport. The policies and criteria contained in the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan are addressed in the General Plan (Land Use and Community Planning and Noise Elements) and implemented by the supplemental development regulations in the Airport Land Use Compatibility Overlay Zone of the San Diego Municipal Code.



OTHER CITYWIDE DOCUMENTS

Other citywide documents that inform the Hillcrest and Uptown area include the City of San Diego’s Pedestrian Master Plan, Bicycle Master Plan, Street Design Manual, and Urban Forestry Management Plan.



1.5 DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The Plan Hillcrest Area has a population of approximately 6,200 people. Chart I.1 shows the relationship between the percentage of population for the Plan Hillcrest area compared to the City of San Diego as a whole. Youth under the age of 17 years old account for 7% of the total population, which is much lower when compared to 19% of the City of San Diego as a whole. The population of college-aged students or those between the ages of 18 to 24 years old account for 6% of the Hillcrest population as compared to 11% of the City of San Diego. At 52%, the majority of the Hillcrest population is between the ages of 25 to 44 years old which is much higher than the rest of San Diego at 33%. People that are between the ages of 45 to 64 years old or older than 65 are similar to that of San Diego, at 23% and 12% respectively.

52% of the Hillcrest population is between 25-44 years old, compared to San Diego at 33%.

Housing characteristics, income, tenure, and growth are listed in Table I.1. There are approximately 4,300 households within Plan Hillcrest with an average of 1.76 persons per household, which is about a person less than the average for San Diego of 2.84 and below than the average household size of 2.07 for Uptown as a whole. At 81%, the majority of households are not married and nearly 50% of the population lives in households made up of a single person. Both of these numbers are significantly higher than the rest of San Diego, which has 54% of the population living in unmarried households and 26% living in single person households. Likewise, 26% of households within Hillcrest are filled with related family members compared to 64 percent of San Diego. The median household income in Hillcrest is \$70,914 which is slightly less to the overall San Diego median household income of \$79,032.

**Persons per Household**  
Hillcrest: 1.76  
San Diego: 2.84

**Median Income**  
Hillcrest: \$70,914  
San Diego: \$79,032

Chart I.1 Age Groups, Hillcrest and San Diego (2017 ACS)

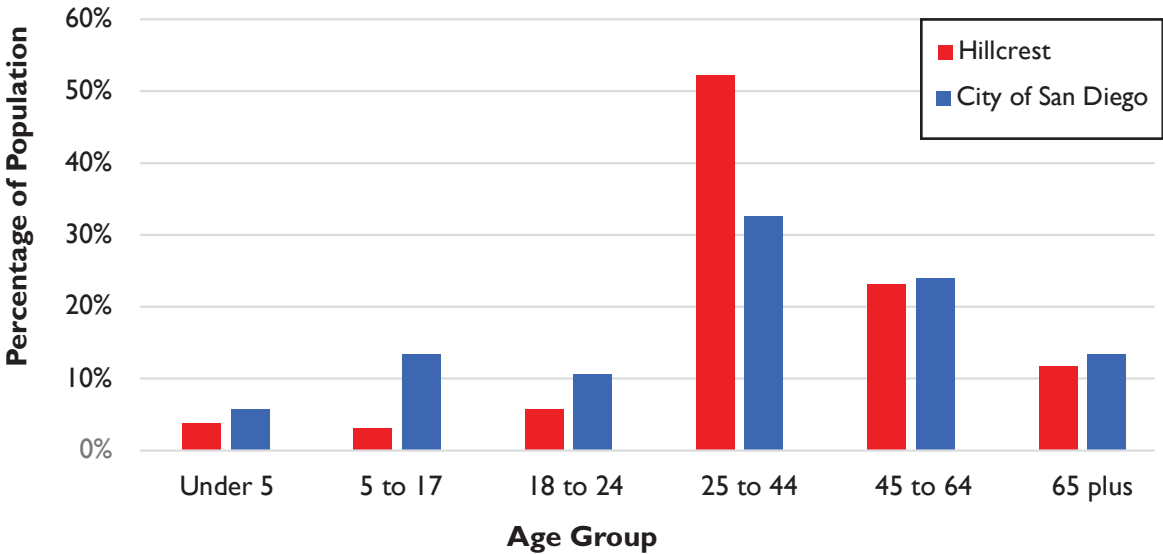


Table I.1 Housing Characteristics, Hillcrest and San Diego (2017 ACS)

Characteristic	Plan Hillcrest Area	City of San Diego
Total Number of Households	4,300	490,220
Average total number of persons per Household	1.76	2.84
Median Household Income	\$ 70,914	\$ 79,032
Average Household Income	\$ 94,972	\$ 97,033
Different Housing Unit 1 year ago*	24%	16.5%
Not Married Couple Households*	81%	54%
Single Person Households	49%	26%
Related Family Households*	26%	64%
Renter-Occupied Units	74%	54%
Owner-Occupied Units	26%	46%
Percentage of Total Vacant Units	13.5%	5%
Number of new units built between 2012-2020	225	42,385
Housing growth percentage change between 2012-2020	5.7%	8.2%

\*percent of total households  
Source: City of San Diego 2020;ACS 2013-2017; CoStar 2012-2020.  
Household numbers rounded.

At 74%, the majority of housing units within Hillcrest are renter occupied which is significantly greater than San Diego at 54%. In addition, out of the total number of occupied units, 13.5% of units are vacant, which is over double that of San Diego at 5%.

Also listed in Table I.1 is the number of new units built between 2012 to 2020 and the comparison of growth between the Plan Hillcrest area and San Diego as a whole. Overall, just 225 units have been built within Hillcrest over the last 8 years with a housing growth rate of 5.7% which is 2.5% less than the San Diego percentage of 8.2%.

**74%** of the units are occupied by renters with a vacancy rate of **13.5%**. **225** new units have been built over the last **8** years.

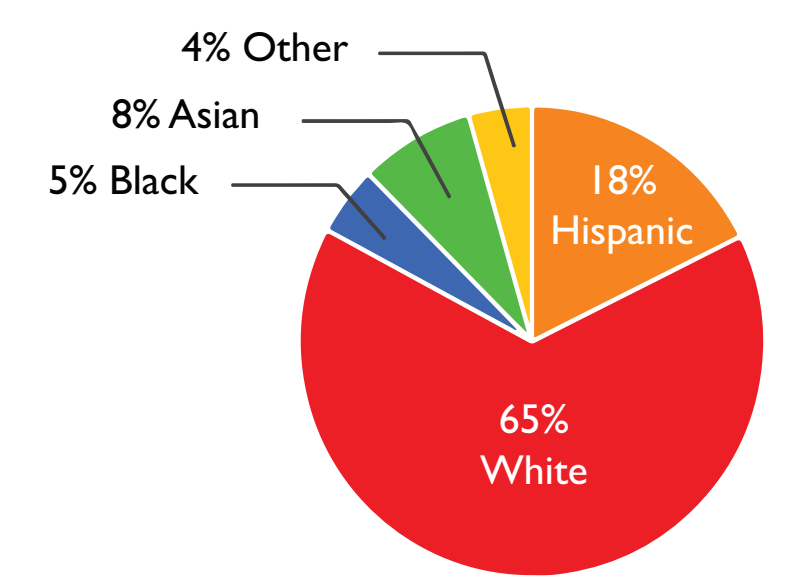


As shown in Chart I.2a, the racial makeup of Hillcrest is predominantly non-Hispanic white at 65% of the total population. Those who identified as Hispanic (of any race) are the next largest ethnic group in Uptown, constituting 18% of the population. People of Asian descent represent 8% of the population. Black or African Americans constitute 5% of the population, and residents who are two or more races or another race constitute 4% of the population.

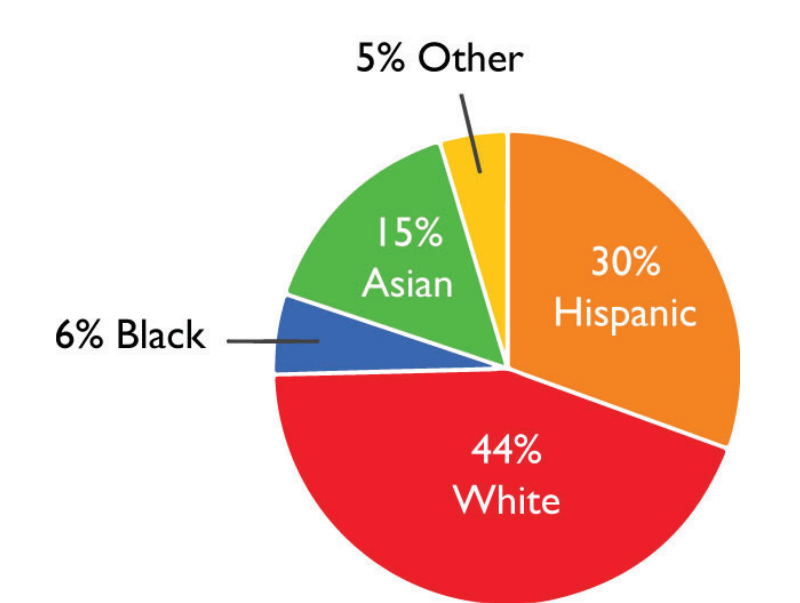
**65%** of the population is White, non-Hispanic and **18%** identifies as Hispanic of any race.



**Chart I.2a Ethnic Breakdown of Hillcrest (SANDAG)**



**Chart I.2b Ethnic Breakdown of San Diego (SANDAG)**



## 1.6 ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Despite being only 380 acres, Plan Hillcrest is a strong employment center with nearly 22,500 jobs within the planning boundary, representing roughly 2% of the total jobs in San Diego. Table 1.2 provides an employment profile with total job count. At 73%, the majority of jobs within Hillcrest are in healthcare and social assistance focused in the two hospitals and medical facilities located throughout the planning area. The next major industry at 10% of the total jobs is in accommodation, trade, and services which includes workers in retail and food industries. This reflects the many restaurants, bars, and stores within Hillcrest.

There are **22,500** jobs within Hillcrest, **73%** of which are in healthcare and social assistance.

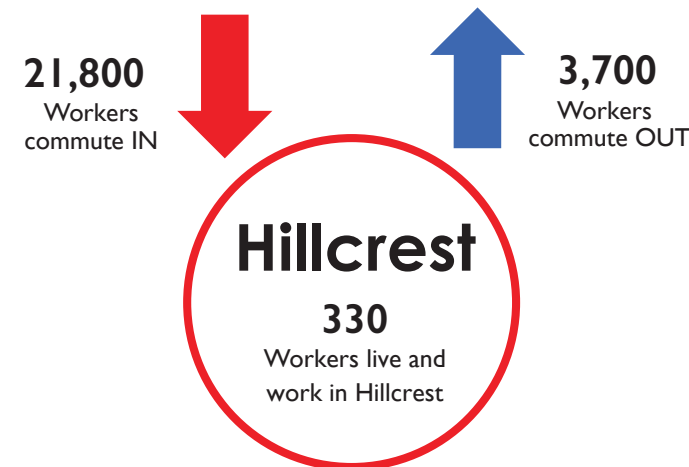
**Table 1.2 Employment Profile**

NAICS Industry Sector	Count	Share
Professional, Scientific, and Tech Services	690	2%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	16,200	73%
Finance, Insurance, and Information	210	1%
Accommodation, Trade, and Food Services	2,110	10%
All other	2,940	13%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>22,150</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: City of San Diego; 2017 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD); Dyett & Bhatia, 2020

Employment numbers have been rounded.

**Chart 1.3 Commuter Inflow/Outflow Analysis**

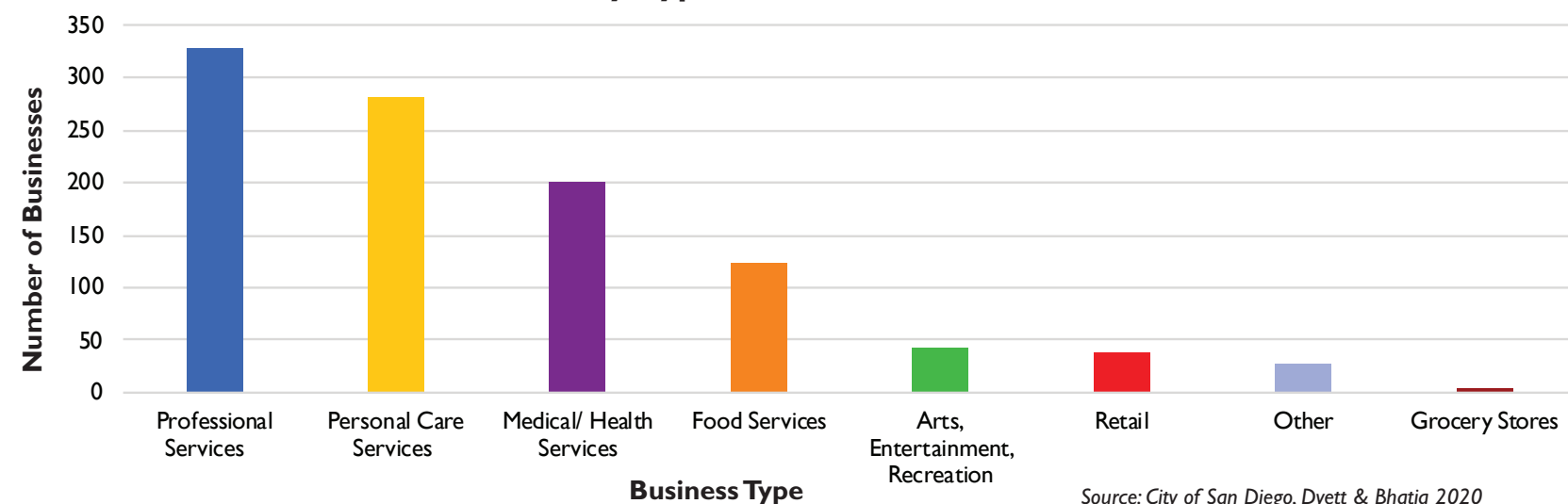


Source: LEHD on the Map, City of San Diego, Dyett & Bhatia 2020

When looking at commuter inflow/outflow shown in Chart 1.3, 99% of the total jobs are held by workers who commute into Hillcrest while 3,700 workers commute out of Hillcrest. Only 330 jobs are held by workers who both live and work within Hillcrest.

99% of workers commute into Hillcrest.

**Chart 1.4 Number of Businesses by Type**

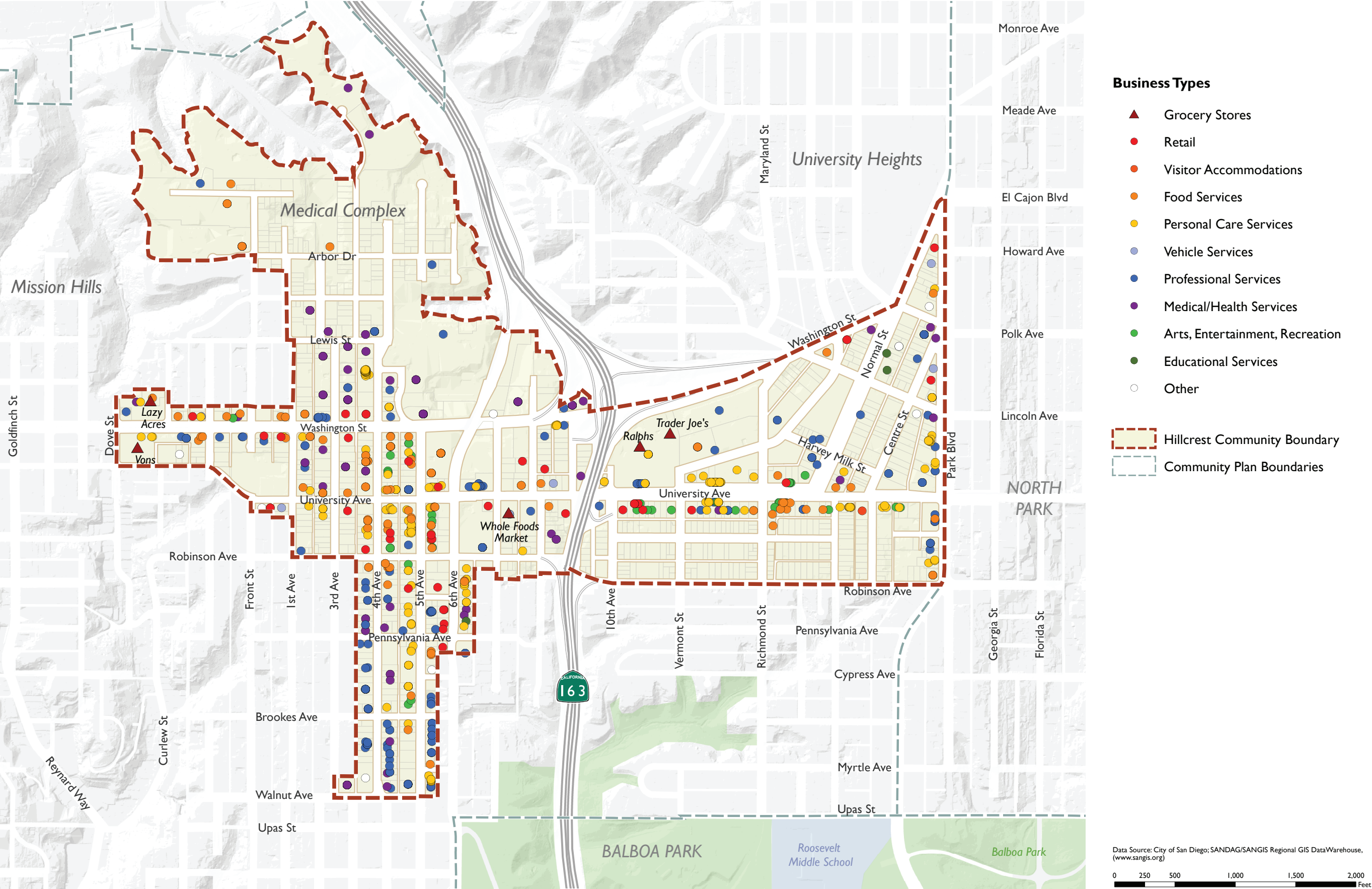


Source: City of San Diego, Dyett & Bhatia 2020

Figure 1.4 shows the variety of businesses that are found within Hillcrest. The distribution of businesses are largely concentrated within Hillcrest's core area between University Avenue, Washington Street, and along Fourth and Fifth avenues. Park Boulevard also has a concentration of businesses that run north/south along the street frontage. Chart 1.4 calculates the number of businesses by aggregated type and shows that professional services (including financial and legal services) account for the largest number of businesses at 325. Personal care services, which includes massage and beauty shops, has about 280 businesses. Medical and health services, including the hospitals and doctors' offices, have 200 businesses. There are about 200 direct customer-serving businesses, which include food services, retail, and arts, entertainment, and recreation. This data shows that even though 82% of the jobs are in healthcare and social assistance, Hillcrest has many smaller businesses that cater to a range of services.

Professional services account for the largest number of businesses within Hillcrest.

Figure 1.3 Business Sites



## 1.7 INTRODUCTION SUMMARY

This section summarizes key information related to the demographics and economics presented in this chapter.

- The majority of jobs (**73%**) are held by health workers or work in the service industry (**10%**).
- While the majority of jobs are held by health workers, the majority of businesses are not in medical or health services. There are around **200** medical/health service businesses compared to **325** professional services and **280** personal care service businesses.
- Nearly all of the jobs are held by people who **commute into** the community, with few people living and working within the planning area.
- **74%** of the housing units within Plan Hillcrest are **renter occupied** with a vacancy rate of **13.5%** for all occupied units.
- The average persons per household in Plan Hillcrest is **1.76** which is nearly a person smaller than the citywide average of **2.84**.
- The rate of housing growth within Plan Hillcrest is **5.7%** over the last **8** years, with **225** new units being built. This housing growth rate is less than the citywide average of **8.2%** over the same time period.



A photograph of a modern multi-story residential building with a mix of orange, grey, and yellow exterior walls. The building features several balconies with dark metal railings. Tall palm trees are planted along the sidewalk in front of the building. On the ground floor, there are commercial spaces, including one with a 'pure bar' sign. A street with parked cars and a cloudy sky are visible in the background.

# 2 Land Use and Development

## 2. Land Use and Development

This chapter documents existing land uses and the policy framework and regulatory context of the planning area, including land use patterns, zoning regulations, densities and intensities, community assets, all as it relates to land use and building development potential.

**Table 2.1 Existing Land Use Summary**

Existing Land Use Category	Acres	Percentage
Residential Total	100	39%
Single Family	25	10%
Multifamily	75	29%
Commercial Total	66	26%
Office Commercial	14	5%
Retail Commercial	50	20%
Visitor Commercial	2	1%
Public and Community Facilities	71	28%
Education	4	2%
Institutional	66	26%
Open Space	1	<1%
Recreational	0	0%
Other	17	7%
Parking	13	5%
Transportation/Utilities	3	1%
Vacant	1	<1%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: City of San Diego, Dyett & Bhatia 2020

### 2.1 EXISTING AND ADOPTED LAND USES

#### EXISTING LAND USES

The Plan amendment area is characterized by a commercial core, older mixed-use housing, and a large institutional employment center. The total developable area of land in the Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Area (planning area) is approximately 254 net acres out of a total area of 380 gross acres. The distribution of existing land uses within the planning area – i.e. how land is currently used today – is shown on Figure 2.1 and Table 2.1 provides a breakdown of existing land uses, based on data from the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).

##### Residential

Residential-only uses account for 100 acres or 39% of the land within the planning area, with multifamily housing comprising 29% and single-family at 10%. Residential uses are generally located along the perimeter of the planning area, away from major commercial streets like University, Washington, and Fifth Avenue. Three primarily residential neighborhoods exist within the planning area, including a largely multifamily residential area between the UC San Diego Medical Center and Scripps Mercy Hospital. A mixture of single family and multifamily units are located east of SR-163 along Essex Street and the Cleveland and Normal Street area. A mixture of single-family, multifamily, and commercial uses are located in the Hillcrest core west of SR-163 and south of Washington Street. Mixed use developments, are concentrated along major commercial corridors.

##### Commercial

Commercial land uses, including office, retail, and visitor uses, account for 66 acres or 26% of the land in the planning area. The Hillcrest core consists of a variety of restaurants, bars, shops, and offices. Primary east-west commercial corridors include

Washington Street and University Avenue. Primary north-south commercial corridors include Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth avenues. While most of the commercial land uses are small in scale, some larger commercial developments are present, including the Uptown Shopping Center and Village Hillcrest. Overall, Hillcrest is well-served with supermarkets, from Lazy Acres and Vons located on the west side of the planning area, to Whole Foods at the center of Plan Hillcrest, and Ralphs and Trader Joes in the eastern section of the area. In addition, the Hillcrest Farmer’s Market is held on Sundays along Normal Street.

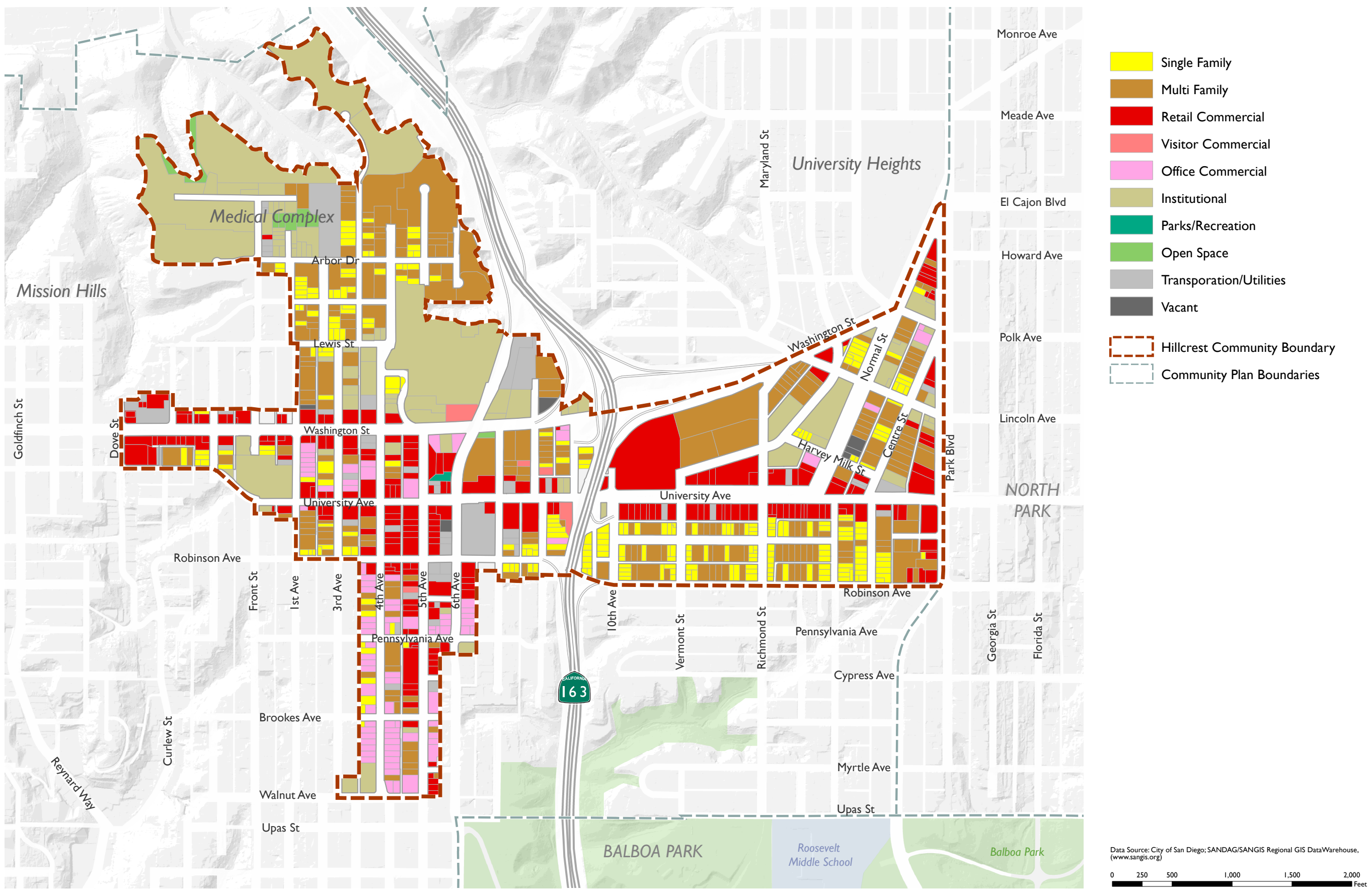
##### Public and Community Facilities

Public and community facilities, including education and institutional uses, account for 72 acres or 28% of the land in the planning area. The two major hospitals, UC San Diego Medical Center and Scripps Mercy Hospital, account for a significant portion of this acreage. Other smaller medical offices are clustered around the larger hospitals and scattered throughout the planning area. Florence Elementary School is the largest public school in the planning area, followed by the Aseltine charter school in the eastern portion of the planning area. Other institutional land uses include the United States Post Office and churches spread throughout the planning area. At 1.5 acres, open space and recreational uses accounts for a small portion of the land uses.

##### Other

Other land uses, such as parking, transportation and utilities, and vacant parcels, account for 17 acres or 7% of the total planning area. Transportation and utilities, like the AT&T telecommunications building, account for 3 acres or 1% of the total acreage. Parking lots account for 13 acres or 5% and vacant parcels account for about 1 acre which is less than one percent of the planning area.


Figure 2.1 Existing Land Use



## ADOPTED LAND USES

Land within the Plan Hillcrest Area is designated within one of the six land use categories listed in Table 2.2 and shown in Figure 2.2. The existing land uses within the area are mainly consistent with the adopted Community Plan land uses designations. The commercial corridors are designated for community commercial or office commercial use, allowing the highest residential densities and floor area ratio (FAR) allowances in Uptown. The portion of the planning area east of SR-163 retains a mixture of high-density housing and commercial uses that allow for residential mixed-use, with community commercial primarily located along University Street and Park Boulevard. The hospitals, medical-related offices, and high-density housing located in the Medical Complex north of Washington Street largely reflect the existing land uses and allow for intensification.

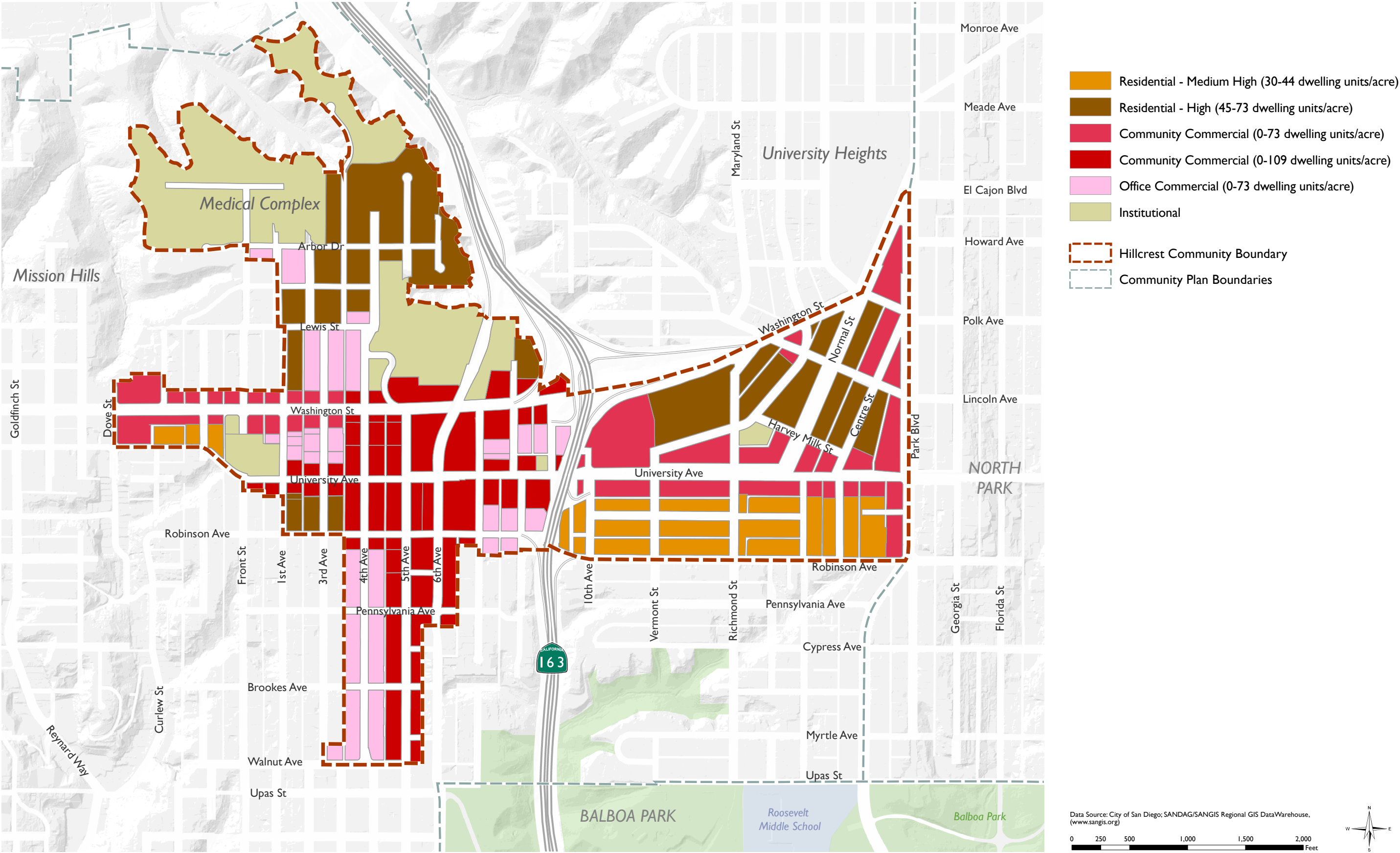
**Table 2.2 Adopted Uptown Community Plan Land Uses**

General Plan Land Use	Community Plan Designation	Specific Use Considerations	Description	Intensity	
				Residential Density (Dwelling Units/Acre)	Development Intensity (FAR) <sup>1</sup>
Residential	Residential-Medium High 	None	Provides for multifamily housing within a medium-high residential density range.	30-44	RM-3-7 zone 1.80 FAR
	Residential-High 	None	Provides for multifamily housing with a high density range.	45-73	RM-3-9 zone 2.70 FAR
Commercial Employment, Retail & Services	Community Commercial  	Residential Permitted	Provides for shopping areas with retail, service, civic, and office uses for the community at-large within three to six miles. Housing may be allowed up to a high residential density as part of a mixed-use development.	0-73	CC-3-8 zone 2.0/2.5 FAR (I)
			Provides for shopping areas with retail, service, civic, and office uses for the community at-large within three to six miles. Housing may be allowed up to a very high residential density as part of a mixed-use development.	0-109	CC-3-9 zone 2.0/3.0 FAR (I)
	Office-Commercial 	Residential Permitted	Provides local convenience shopping, civic uses, and services serving an approximate three mile radius. Permits office uses. Housing may be allowed up to a high residential density as part of a mixed-use development.	0-73	CC-3-8 zone 2.0/2.5 FAR (I)
Institutional, Public and Semi-Public Facilities	Institutional 	None	Provides a designation for uses that are identified as public or semi-public facilities in the community plan and which offer public and semi-public services to the community. Uses may include but are not limited to: military facilities, community colleges, communication and utilities, transit centers, schools, libraries, police and fire facilities, post offices, hospitals, park-and-ride lots, government offices and civic centers.	N/A	To be determined based on abutting zones

*1. Where residential is permitted a Floor Area Ratio bonus is provided per the zone to encourage residential mixed-use development.*

*Source: City of San Diego, Uptown Community Plan, 2016.*

Figure 2.2 Adopted Community Plan Land Use



2.2 ZONING

The Land Development Code, included in Chapters 13-15 of the Municipal Code, regulates the physical development of land and uses allowed on individual properties. The Land Development Code implements the Community Plan, providing specific requirements for lot size, building placement, density of development, and height in addition to regulating allowable uses. In all, there are five base zones that apply to land within the planning area. These zones prescribe the allowed uses, activities, and building dimension requirements.

In addition to the base zones, overlay zones apply to certain properties and prescribe additional conditions that apply to address specific concerns such as public safety or historic resource protection.

Commercial Zones  

All of the land within the Focused Amendment area is zoned for either commercial or residential use. Land zoned for Community Commercial (CC) use is intended to accommodate community-serving commercial services and retail uses of moderate intensity with allowances for multifamily residential units in a mixed-use development. The CC zones are intended to provide for a range of development patterns from pedestrian-friendly commercial streets to shopping centers and auto-oriented strip commercial streets. All of the CC zones within Plan Hillcrest allows for multifamily residential in a mixed-use development. Most of the land within the planning area is zoned for commercial use, and allows a mix of pedestrian-oriented, community-serving commercial uses and residential uses. The two CC zones, CC-3-8 and CC-3-9, are both intended to accommodate development with a high intensity, pedestrian orientation. CC-3-8 permits a maximum density of 1 housing unit per each 600 square feet of lot area (implementing the land use designation's density which allows up to 73 dwelling units per acre). CC-3-9 provides a higher density, permitting 1 housing unit per 400 square feet of lot area (implementing the land use designation's density which allows up to 73 dwelling units per acre).

Residential Zones   

The purpose of the Residential-Multiple Unit (RM) zones is to provide for multiple dwelling unit development at varying densities. The RM zones individually accommodate developments with similar densities and characteristics. Each of the RM zones is intended to establish development criteria that consolidates common development regulations, accommodates specific dwelling types, and responds to locational issues regarding adjacent land uses. The majority of the RM zones within the planning area permit medium density multiple dwelling units with limited commercial uses. The only parcels that have a RM zone for lower-density single dwelling units are located north of the Medical Complex along the edge of the planning area. The three RM designations, RM-1-1, RM-3-7, and RM-3-9, provide a range of densities and development characteristics. The RM-1-1 designation permits lower density multiple dwelling units, which have similar characteristics with single family housing, with a maximum density of 1 housing unit for each 3,000 square feet of lot area. The other two designations, RM-3-7 and RM-3-9, permit medium density multiple dwelling units with limited commercial use. The designation RM-3-7 permits a maximum density of 1 housing unit for each 1,000 square feet of lot area while RM-3-9 provides a higher density, permitting 1 housing unit for each 600 square feet of lot area.

Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPIOZ)






The Municipal Code (section §132.1402) includes the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPIOZ) which provides supplemental development regulations that are tailored to specific sites within communities. The intent of these regulations is to ensure that development proposals are reviewed for consistency with the use and development criteria that have been adopted for specific sites as part of the community plan process.

The 2016 Community Plan Update established a CPIOZ to regulate specific building heights in parts of Hillcrest, Bankers Hill, Mission Hills, and University Heights. Within Hillcrest, the

CPIOZ identifies areas where ministerial approval is granted for proposed development projects with buildings or structures that do not exceed 65 feet in Hillcrest. Projects that exceed the height limitations set forth in the CPIOZ may be approved to the maximum allowed height of the applicable base zone, or the maximum allowed floor area of the base zone for zones without a maximum height limit with a Site Development Permit (SDP) per Chapter 13, Article 2, Division 14 of the Municipal code if they comply with the applicable regulations of the Municipal code and are consistent with the applicable policies in the General Plan and Uptown Community Plan.

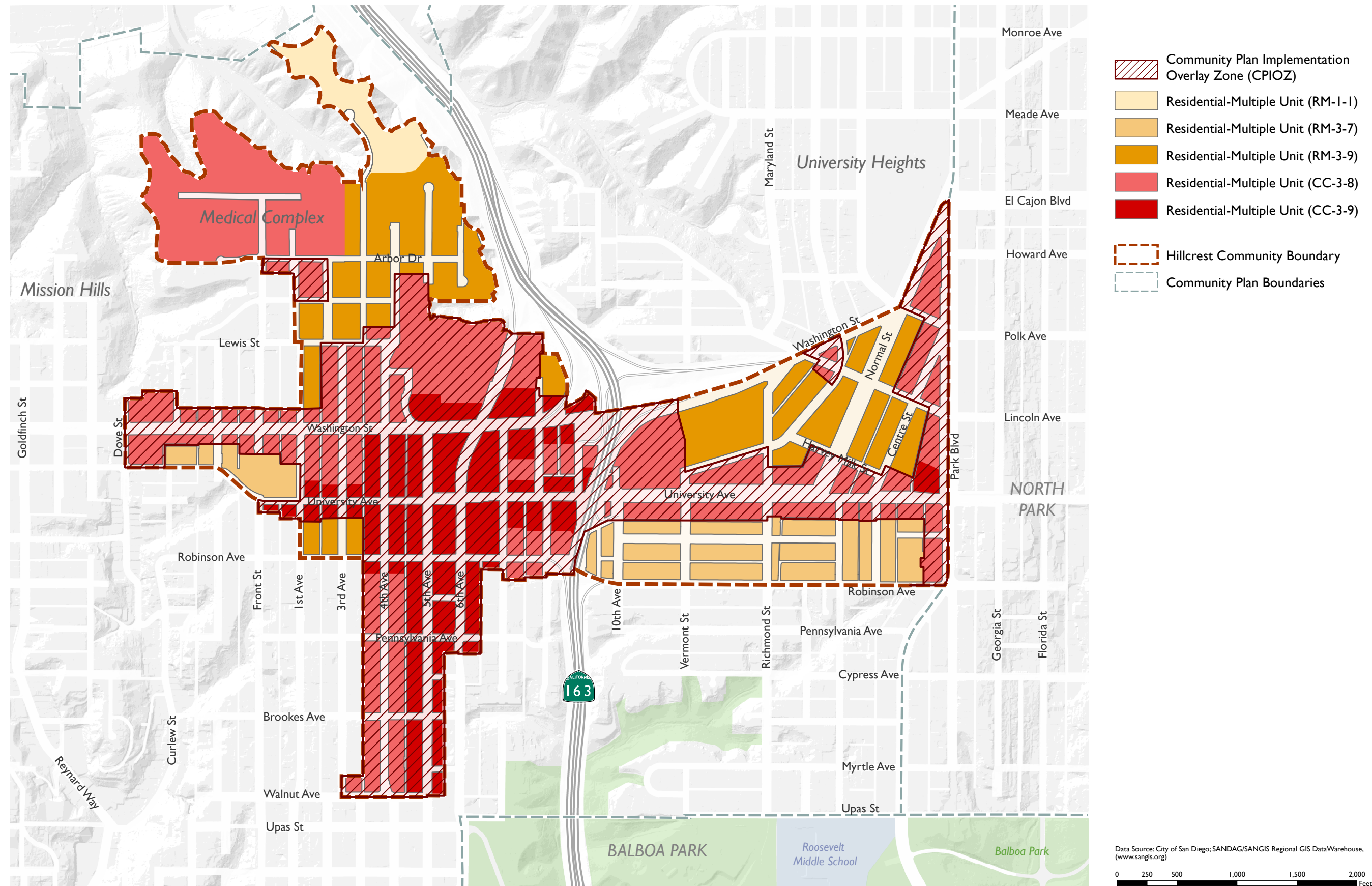
Table 2.3 describes the base zones that apply in the planning area and Figure 2.3 shows their spatial distribution and the CPIOZ.

Table 2.3 Existing Zoning Designations

Zone Name	Zoning Designation	Maximum Density	Maximum Intensity (FAR)	Maximum Structure height
Community Commercial	CC-3-8 	1 dwelling unit for each 600 square feet of lot area	2.0	100 feet
	CC-3-9 	1 dwelling unit for each 400 square feet of lot area	3.0	None specified
Residential-Multiple Unit	RM-1-1 	1 dwelling unit for each 3,000 square feet of lot area	0.75	30 feet
	RM-3-7 	1 dwelling unit for each 1,000 square feet of lot area	1.80	40 feet
	RM-3-9 	1 dwelling unit for each 600 square feet of lot area	2.70	60 feet

Source: San Diego Municipal Code, Chapter 13, Article 1, Divisions 04 and 05.

*Figure 2.3*     **Current Zoning**



## 2.3 EXISTING DENSITY AND INTENSITY

### RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

For residential uses, density is expressed as the number of housing units per net acre (units/acre). As reflected in this analysis, residential density is calculated for developed land, not including public rights-of-way. This may be considered the “net” residential density, as distinguished from “gross” residential density, which also accounts for streets and other public areas.

Figures 2.4 and Chart 2.1 shows the distribution and breakdown of existing residential density within Hillcrest. Half of the existing residential parcels have densities that range between 60 to 100 units per acre, with another 18% of parcels that have a density of over 100 units per acre. The average (net) existing residential density in the planning area is approximately 67 units per acre, demonstrating the relatively compact, multifamily building forms that exist throughout the community and reflect a variety of housing options exists in the community, from single-family dwelling units to multiplex apartment and condominium complexes, stacked flats, and housing built over parking.

68% of the residential density is above 60 units per acre.

Average net density: 67 units per acre.

Chart 2.1 Breakdown of Residential Densities

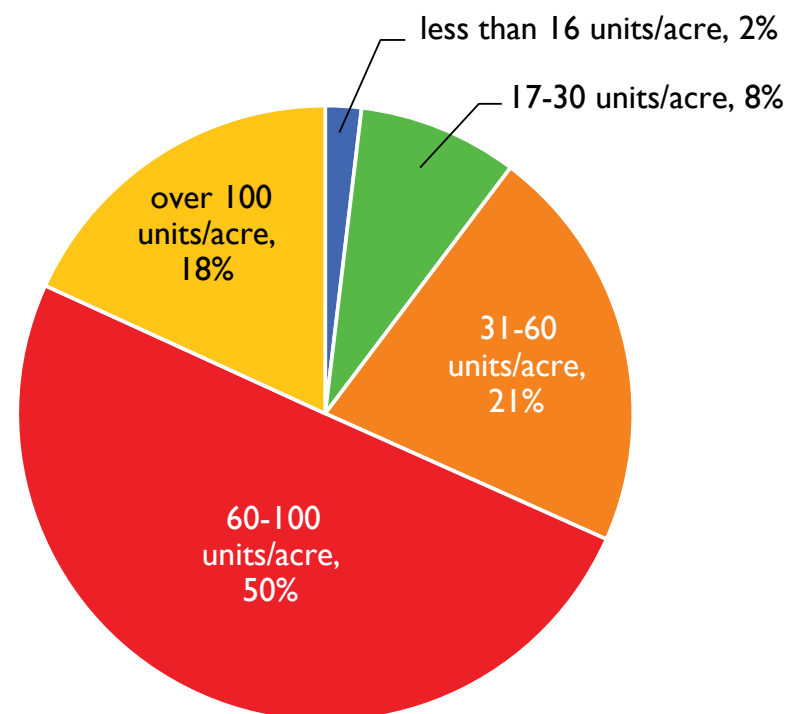
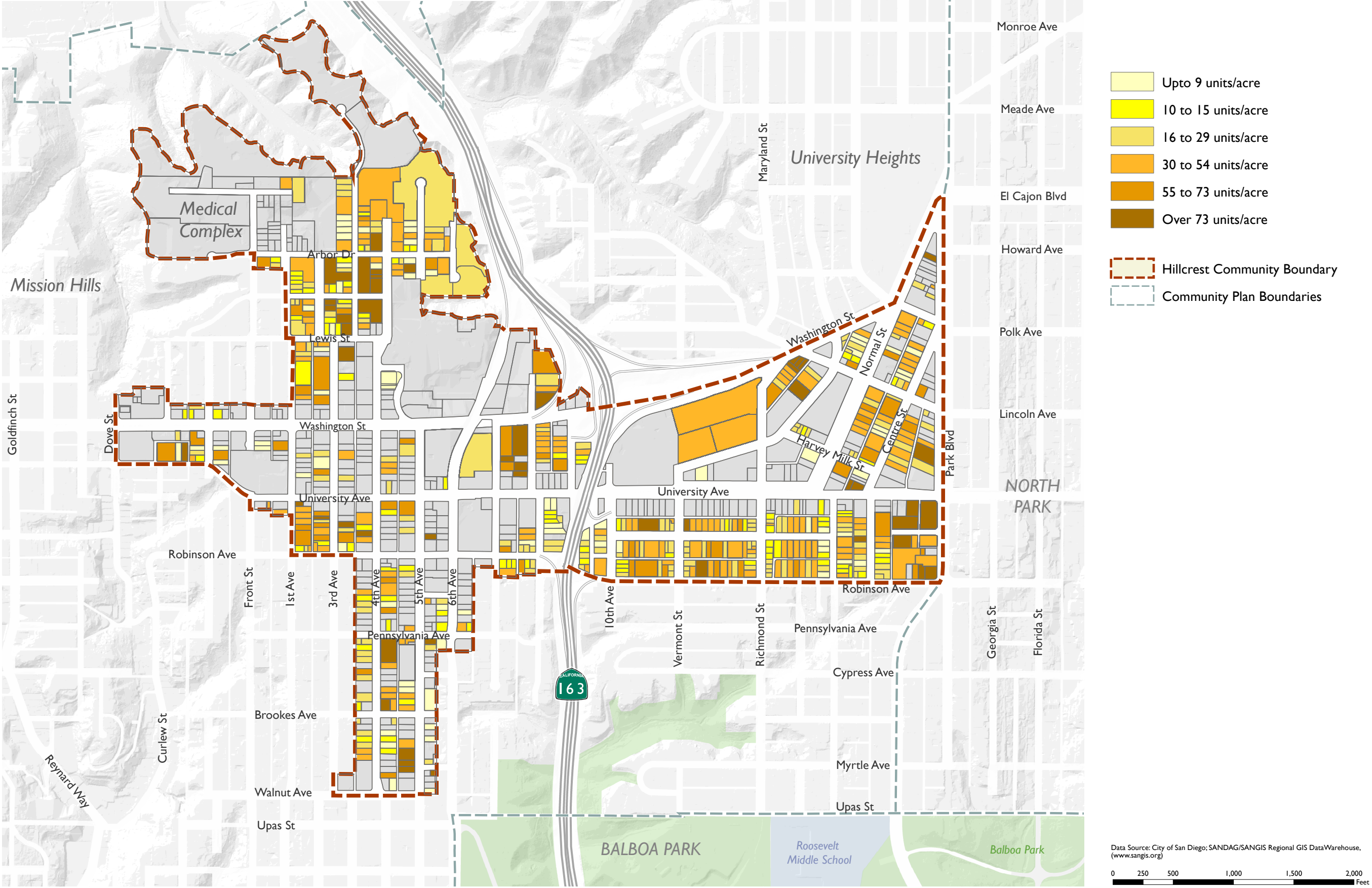


Figure 2.4 Residential Density - Existing



Data Source: City of San Diego; SANDAG/SANGIS Regional GIS DataWarehouse, (www.sangis.org)

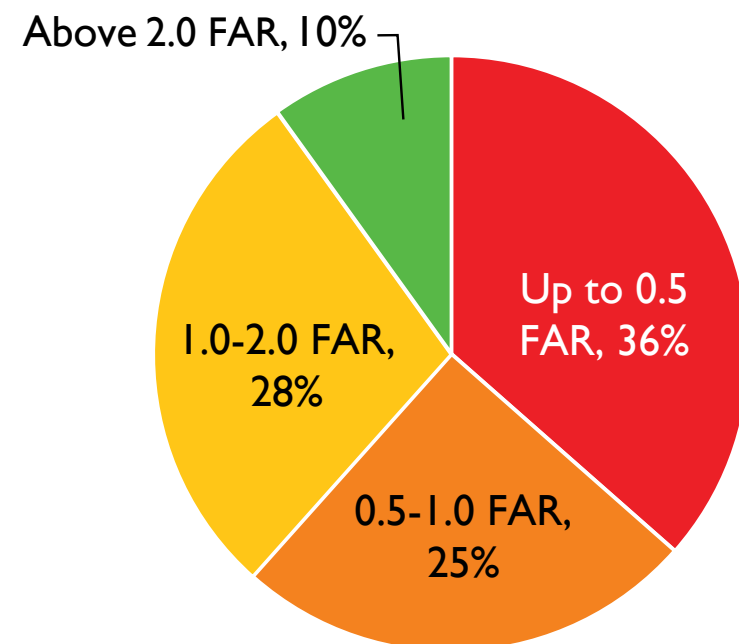
0 250 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 Feet



## DEVELOPMENT INTENSITY

Development intensity is expressed as Floor Area Ratio (FAR), which refers to the ratio between a building's total floor area and the total area (excluding any area devoted to structured parking) of the site. Figure 2.5 shows the difference between 3.0, 4.0, and 5.0 FAR; the greater the FAR, the more building square footage is permitted. Note that FAR only establishes total building area and does not directly affect the number of stories, building configuration, or building height.

**Chart 2.2 FAR Breakdown (only parcels with FAR values shown)**

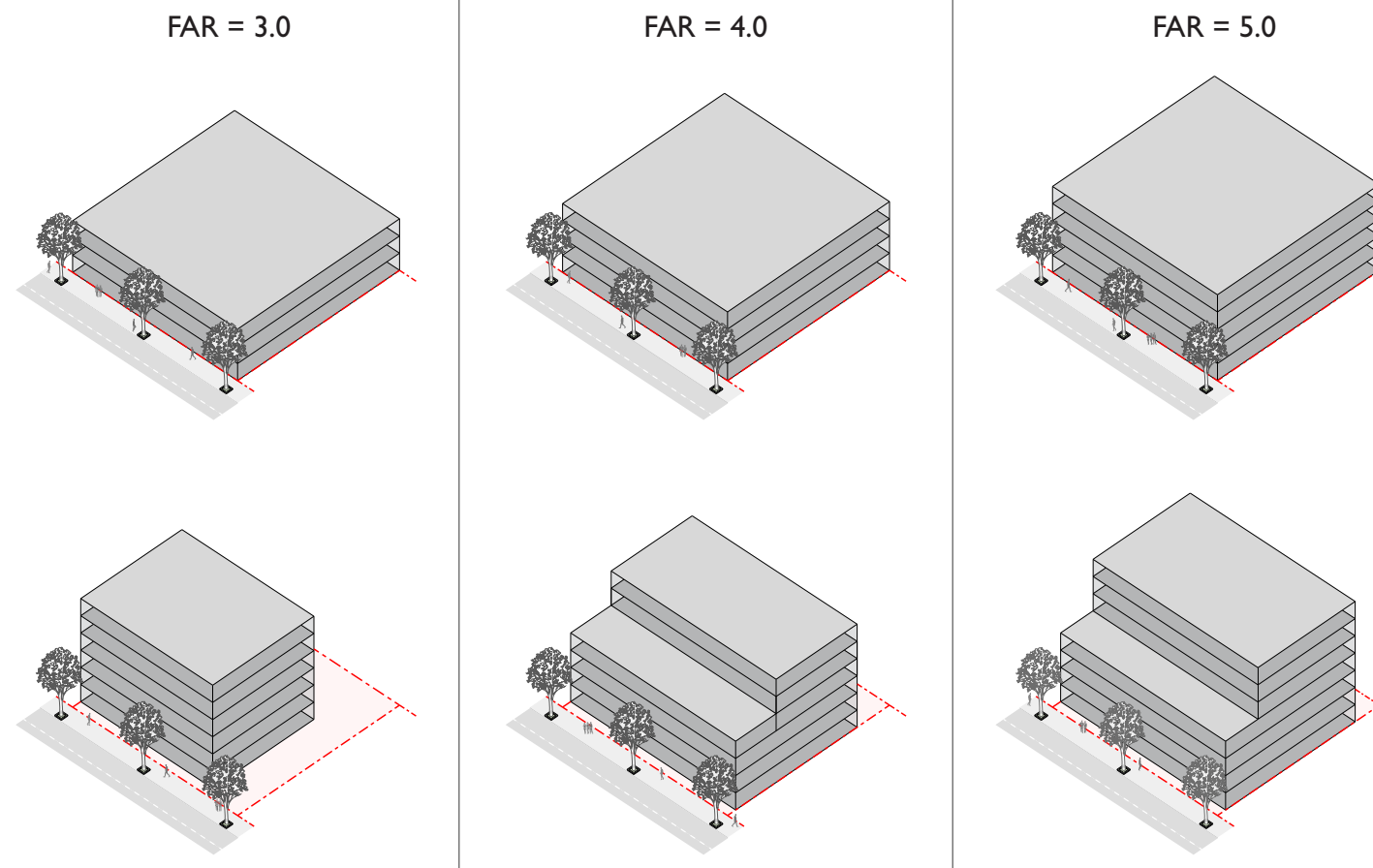


The intensity of existing development in the planning area is shown in Figures 2.6 with a breakdown of the existing FAR in Chart 2.2. Many of the non-residential buildings in Hillcrest are single-story storefronts that were built without parking, resulting in parcels with an FAR greater than 1.0. Buildings with parking lots, both alley-loaded and surface parking, typically have lower FAR values as more of the land is taken up with parking. Overall, non-residential buildings in Hillcrest have an average FAR of 1.1, with 36% of the existing parcels have an FAR below 0.5 and 38% have an FAR above 1.0.

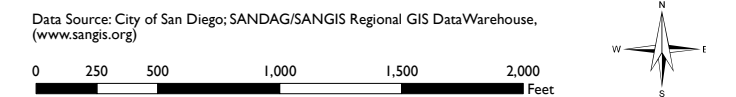
36% of parcels have an FAR of 0.5 or less.

Average FAR: 1.1

*Figure 2.5* **FAR Illustrated**



The map displays the University Heights neighborhood in San Diego, California. The area is bounded by a dashed orange line. Key streets shown include University Ave, Washington St, Robinson Ave, and Pennsylvania Ave. The map is overlaid with a grid of streets, including Front St, 1st Ave, 3rd Ave, 4th Ave, 5th Ave, 6th Ave, and 10th Ave. The University Heights area is characterized by a high density of small, colored polygons representing individual lots or parcels. These polygons are color-coded in shades of purple, pink, and light pink. The map also shows surrounding areas like Balboa Park to the south and North Park to the east. A highway shield for I-163 is visible near the center. The map is oriented with North at the top.



## 2.4 PUBLIC FACILITIES

Important to a community's health is access to public facilities and services that supports its residents and provide a better quality of life. Having these facilities near public transit makes them more readily accessible to those who do not drive or own cars. Public facilities for the purposes of this section include access to emergency services, libraries, schools, and other public facilities. Figure 2.6 depicts some of the community services and public facilities that support a healthy community in Hillcrest.

UC San Diego Medical Center and Scripps Mercy Hospital, provide emergency medical services within Hillcrest. There is one fire station located directly within the planning area, San Diego Fire Station No. 5, at University and Ninth Street and a second fire station, Station No. 8, is located just outside the planning area to the west along Washington. While there are no police stations located within Hillcrest, the central San Diego Police Headquarters is located in downtown San Diego about 2.5 miles away.

The Mission Hills-Hillcrest/Knox Library, built in 2019, is located within the planning area along West Washington Street, between Front and Albatross Streets. The University Heights Library is located to the east, just outside of the planning boundary. There are three schools within the planning area, Florence Elementary School on the west side of Hillcrest and the charter school Aseltine School and St. Johns School to the east, with access to other schools—Birney Elementary, Roosevelt Middle School, and Alba High School—are within close proximity to the planning area. In terms of parks, Roosevelt Middle School and Birney Elementary School offer joint use park facilities. While there are no other parks within the planning area, Balboa Park is located just south of Hillcrest.



*The recently completed Mission Hills-Hillcrest/Knox Library, built in 2019, is located along West Washington Street, between Front and Albatross. It replaced the Mission Hills Branch Library, which was located farther west along Washington outside of the planning area.*



*The United State Post Service Hillcrest Office is located in the eastern portion of Hillcrest at Richmond and Harvey Milk.*

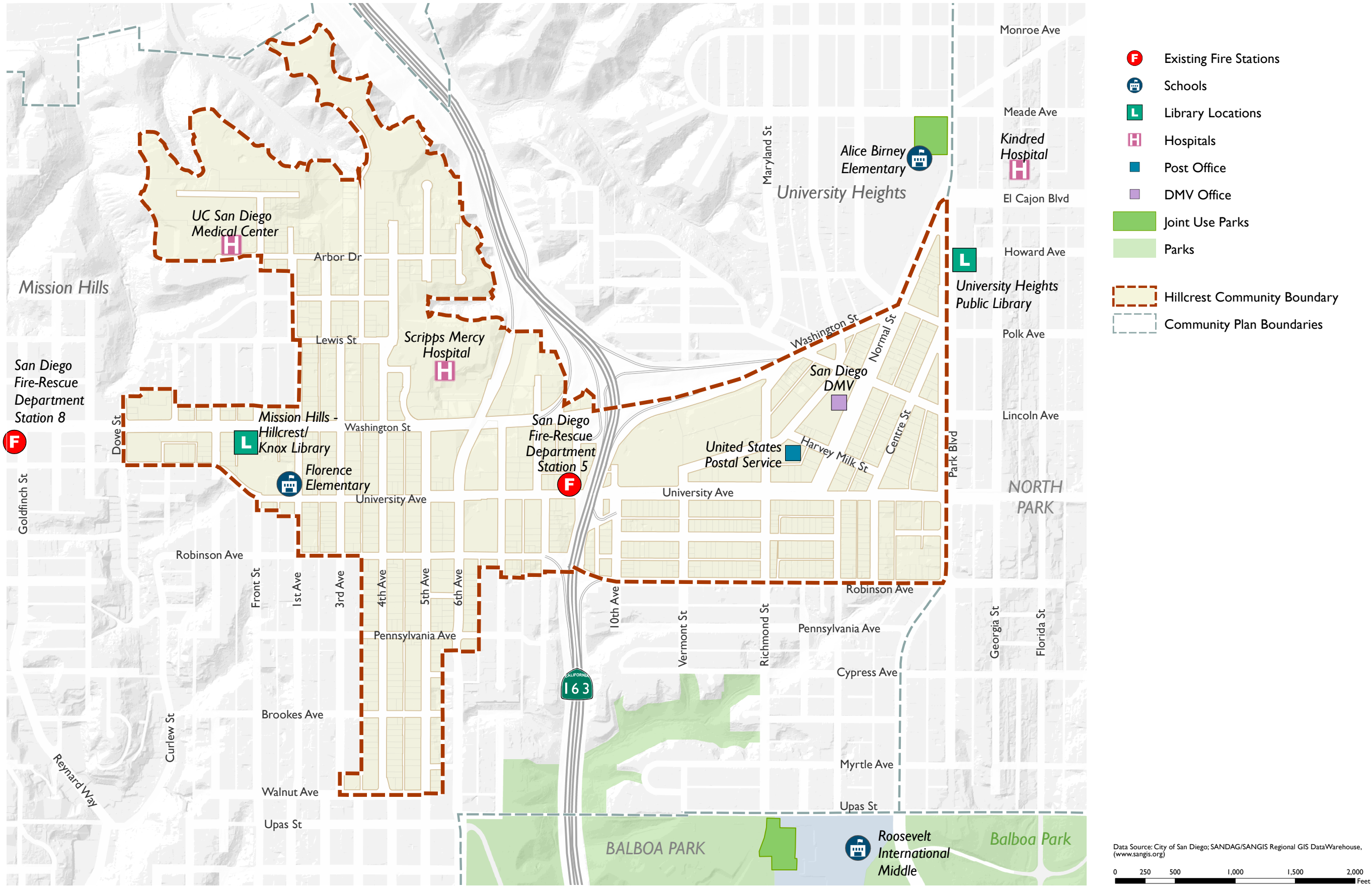


*View of the UC San Diego Medical Center. This hospital, along with Scripps Mercy Hospital, help makeup the Medical Complex and attract other health and medical facilities.*



*San Diego Fire Department Fire Station Number 5 was renovated in 2018 to replace the original structure built in 1951. The station is located along University at Ninth Avenue.*

Figure 2.6 Public Facilities



## 2.5 LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

### SAN DIEGO FORWARD: SANDAG SMART GROWTH AREAS

San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan was adopted by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Board of Directors on October 9, 2015. It combines the big-picture vision for how our region will grow by 2050 within an implementation program to help make that vision a reality. Smart Growth is a compact, efficient, and environmentally sensitive urban development pattern. It focuses future growth and infill development close to jobs, services, and public facilities to maximize the use of existing infrastructure and preserve open space and natural resources.

The Smart Growth Concept Map identifies locations in the region that can support additional development, transit, walking, and biking. The map serves as the foundation for prioritizing transportation investments and determining eligibility for local smart growth incentive funds. The Hillcrest Focused Plan Amendment Area is one of the ten areas designated as an Urban Center as shown in Figure 2.7. Urban Centers are defined as sub-regional business, civic, commercial, and cultural centers with the following characteristics:

- Mid- and high-rise residential, office, and commercial buildings
- Medium to high levels of employment
- Draws people from throughout the region, with many from the immediate area
- Served by transit lines and local bus services

### GENERAL PLAN

The City of San Diego General Plan, adopted in 2008, calls for a City of Village Strategy to redevelop, infill, and target new growth into compact, mixed-use, and walkable villages that are connected to the regional transit system. It is comprised of 10 elements that provide a comprehensive slate of citywide policies.

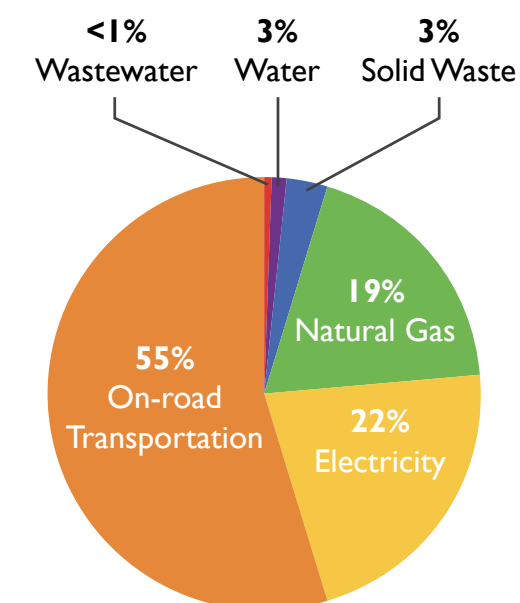
### CLIMATE ACTION PLAN: TRANSIT PRIORITY AREAS

The City of San Diego's Climate Action Plan (CAP), adopted in December 2015, is a roadmap towards a sustainable future that serves all citizens. Sustainability means making better use of resources, such as water, energy and waste; designing neighborhoods to be more pedestrian and bicycle friendly and livable; and investing in the future by supporting clean-energy technology, innovation, and jobs. The CAP calls for eliminating half of all greenhouse gas emissions in the City and aims for all electricity used in the city to be from renewable sources by 2035.

55 percent of City's emission came from transportation in 2018, as shown in Chart 2.3. The average Plan Hillcrest Household contribute to the release of 42 tons of CO2 equivalent (CO2e) annually, which is lower than City wide average of 50 tons CO2e shown in Chart 2.4.

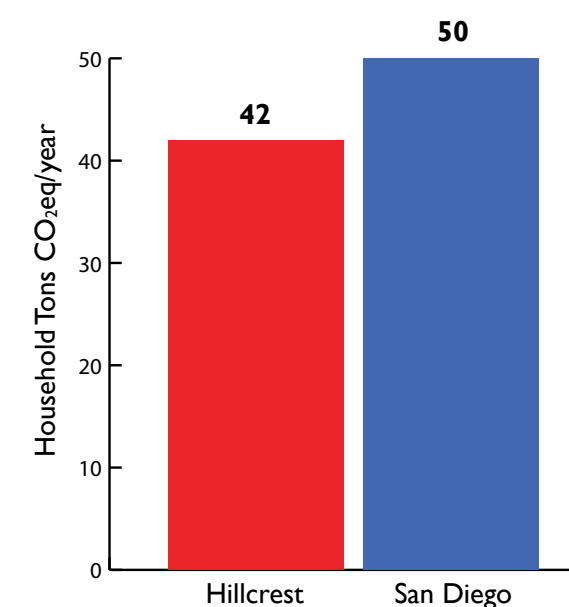
**55% of emissions are due to on-road transportation sources.**

**Chart 2.3 Breakdown of GHG Emissions in San Diego (2018)**



Source: City of San Diego Climate Action Plan, 2019 Annual Report

**Chart 2.4 Household CO2e Comparison**



Source: CoolClimate Calculator, UC Berkeley.

The tailpipe emissions from car fuel is the highest source of household emission. The CAP prioritizes the implementation of the General Plan’s Mobility Element and the City Villages Strategy in Transit Priority Areas (TPAs) to increase housing, jobs, and the use of transit. The TPAs means “an area within one-half mile of a major transit stop that is existing or planned, if the planned stop is scheduled to be completed within the planning horizon included in a Transportation Improvement Program adopted pursuant to Section 450.216 of Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations.”

In addition to being designated as an Urban Center, most of Hillcrest and the Uptown Community area is designated as TPAs. Senate Bill 743 established TPAs for the San Diego region and is based on the adopted SANDAG San Diego Forward Regional Plan. Areas that are designated as TPAs are intended to promote housing development in areas that are served by major transit stops. Figure 2.8 shows TPAs boundaries for Uptown.

**OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT URBAN CENTER AND TRANSIT PRIORITY AREAS**

There is an opportunity to connect the San Diego Climate Action Plan with the Transportation Priority Areas and Urban Center designation to implement the “City of Villages” strategy established in the General Plan. The City of Villages strategy focuses growth in pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use areas linked to an improved transit system. As such, Plan Hillcrest can build upon these initiatives by incorporating a variety of mobility strategies with changes in land uses, new perspectives on community design, promotion of active transportation, and changes in parking rules and standards in order to meet this vision.

**AIRPORT INFLUENCE AREAS**

Plan Hillcrest is located near the San Diego International Airport and is within the Airport Influence Area. New developments that propose taller buildings within the Airport Influence Area are required to notify the Federal Aviation and Administration based on their location and proximity to the Airport.



*A dedicated bus lane on Park Boulevard, near high-density housing.*



*High-density housing along a transit route.*

Figure 2.7 SANDAG Smart Growth Areas

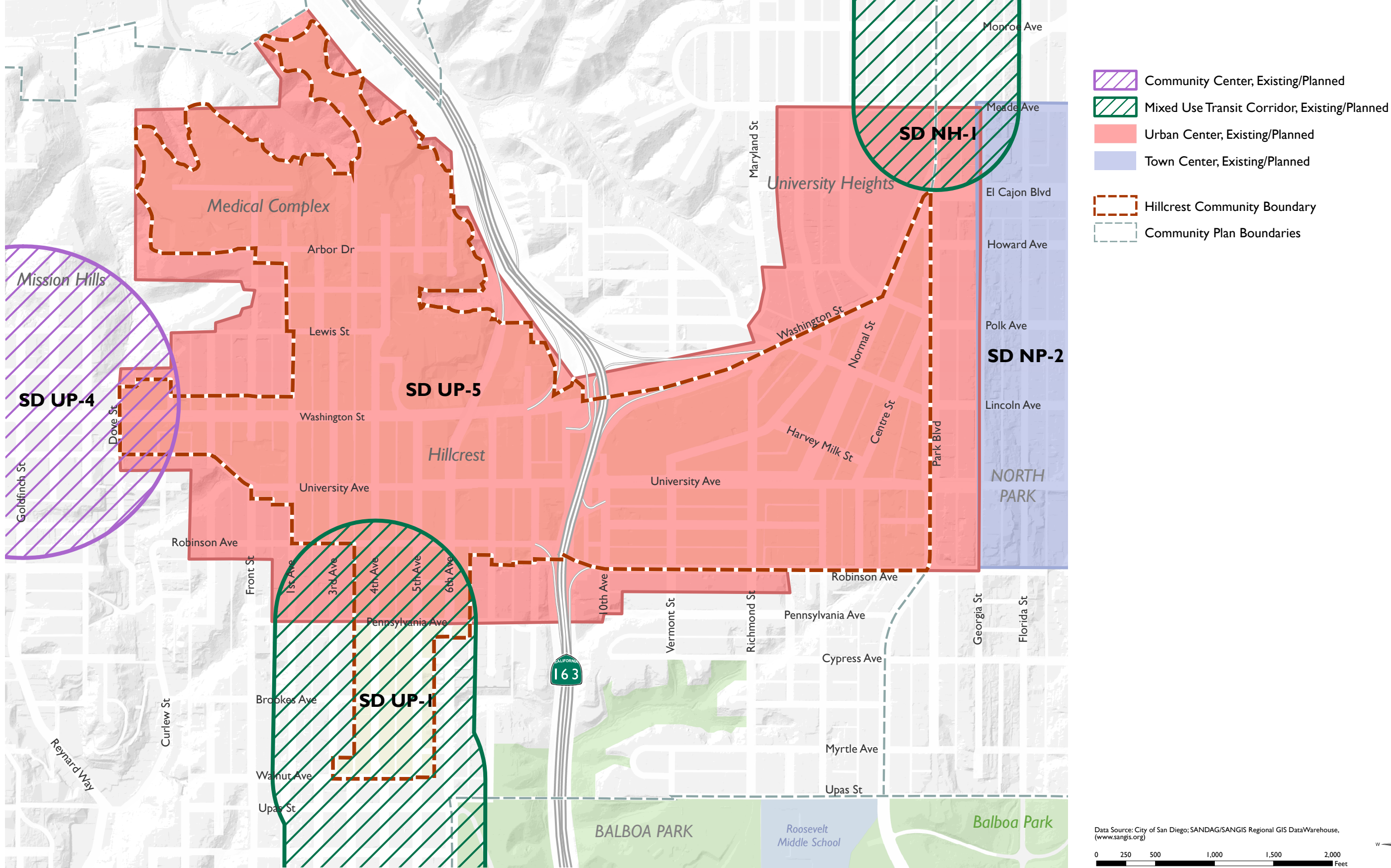


Figure 2.8 Transit Priority Areas



- Trolley Stop
- Light Rail
- Freeways
- Ramps
- Transit Priority Areas (TPA)
- Hillcrest Community Boundary
- Uptown Community Boundary
- Community Plan Boundaries

Data Source: City of San Diego; SANDAG/SANGIS Regional GIS DataWarehouse, (www.sangis.org)

0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 Feet



## 2.6 LAND USE SUMMARY

This section sums up the findings uncovered throughout this chapter as it relates to land use.

- There are currently **100** acres of land used for housing which makes up **39%** of the total acreage of Plan Hillcrest. Commercial land use consists of **26%** of the total land while public and community facilities at **28%** and all others are **7%**.
- With a combined total of **14** acres of vacant or land largely dedicated to surface parking, there are relatively few opportunities to build on empty lots. Most new development will need to come through **urban infill** by replacing existing structures with new development.
- **36%** of parcels have an FAR of **0.5** or less. The average FAR is **1.1**.
- **68%** of the residential density is above **60** units per acre. The average net density is **67** units per acre.
- The entire Plan Hillcrest area lies within a Transit Priority Area and is designated as an **Urban Center**, presenting an opportunity for additional housing and employment that can connect to high quality transit.





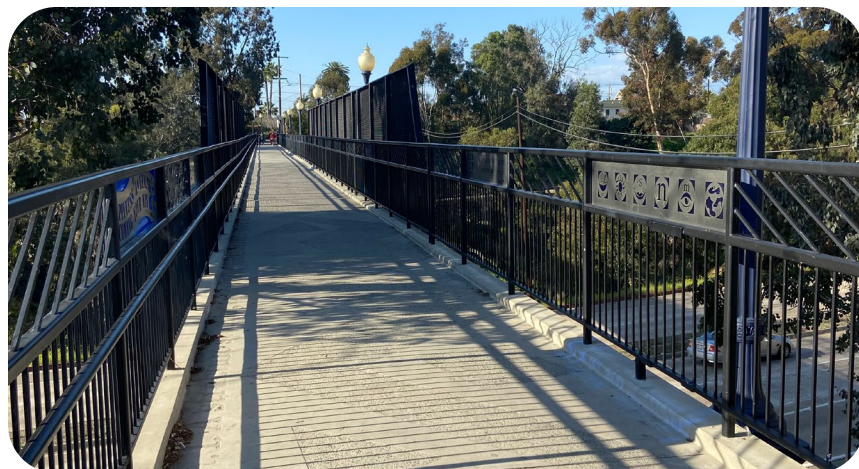
# 3 Urban Design

## 3. Urban Design

### 3.1 LANDFORM AND NATURAL FEATURES

The Plan Hillcrest area sits on a high mesa; its landform and topography is relatively flat, except for the steep topography of the canyons to the north which extend into the planning area around the Medical Complex. State Route 163 (SR-163) runs in a ravine that splits the planning area into two sides, east and west Hillcrest, with three connecting streets: Washington Street and University and Robinson avenues. The neighborhood is surrounded by natural features as shown in Figure 3.1. The relatively flat area makes it suitable for walking and biking. The edge areas are adjacent to canyons and development would need to address interface with canyons and open space.

The flat topography of Hillcrest makes it easy to bike and walk around the community.



### 3.2 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

In addition to topography and natural features, Figure 3.1 shows land that is designated as parks and open space. While Plan Hillcrest is surrounded by canyons and some open space, there are no designated parks with minimum open space areas or trails within the planning area. Balboa Park, which is located south outside of the planning area, has a trail system that extends near the planning boundary.

Table 2.1 Existing Land Use shows that there are approximately 1.5 acres dedicated to parks or recreation which means there is very little open space or recreational land uses within Hillcrest.

There are no designated parks with open space within the Plan Hillcrest area and there is only **1.5 acres** dedicated to parks or recreation.

Landmarks and gateways increases the sense of place and arrival for Hillcrest



### 3.3 LANDMARKS AND GATEWAYS

Hillcrest has a thriving commercial core which draws people from all over the region. There are several major gateways into the community, including SR-163 which runs north to south and is the major freeway connector, Washington Street and University Avenue which run east to west, and Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth streets which connect directly into downtown San Diego to the south.

The major gateway element is the historic Hillcrest neon sign located at the intersection of University and Fifth Avenue. There are several other notable landmarks, including: Mercy Plaza, which includes a fountain and a landscaped memorial to Mercy staff; Vermont Street Bridge, which is a pedestrian/bicycle bridge that connects the Uptown Center along Vermont Street to University Heights; and Pride Square, located at University Avenue and Normal Street, which includes the San Diego Pride Monument and the Hillcrest Pride Flag. Another landmark to the east is the Georgia Street Bridge which is a gateway from North Park that rises above University Avenue. Although not technically a landmark, an important feature of the community is the Hillcrest outdoor farmer's market which runs along Normal Street on Sundays. Additional landmarks or signage at major gateways can help improve the sense of place and character of downtown Hillcrest. Figure 3.2 shows landmarks and gateways for Hillcrest as well as the Uptown community as a whole.



Figure 3.1 Topography and Natural Features

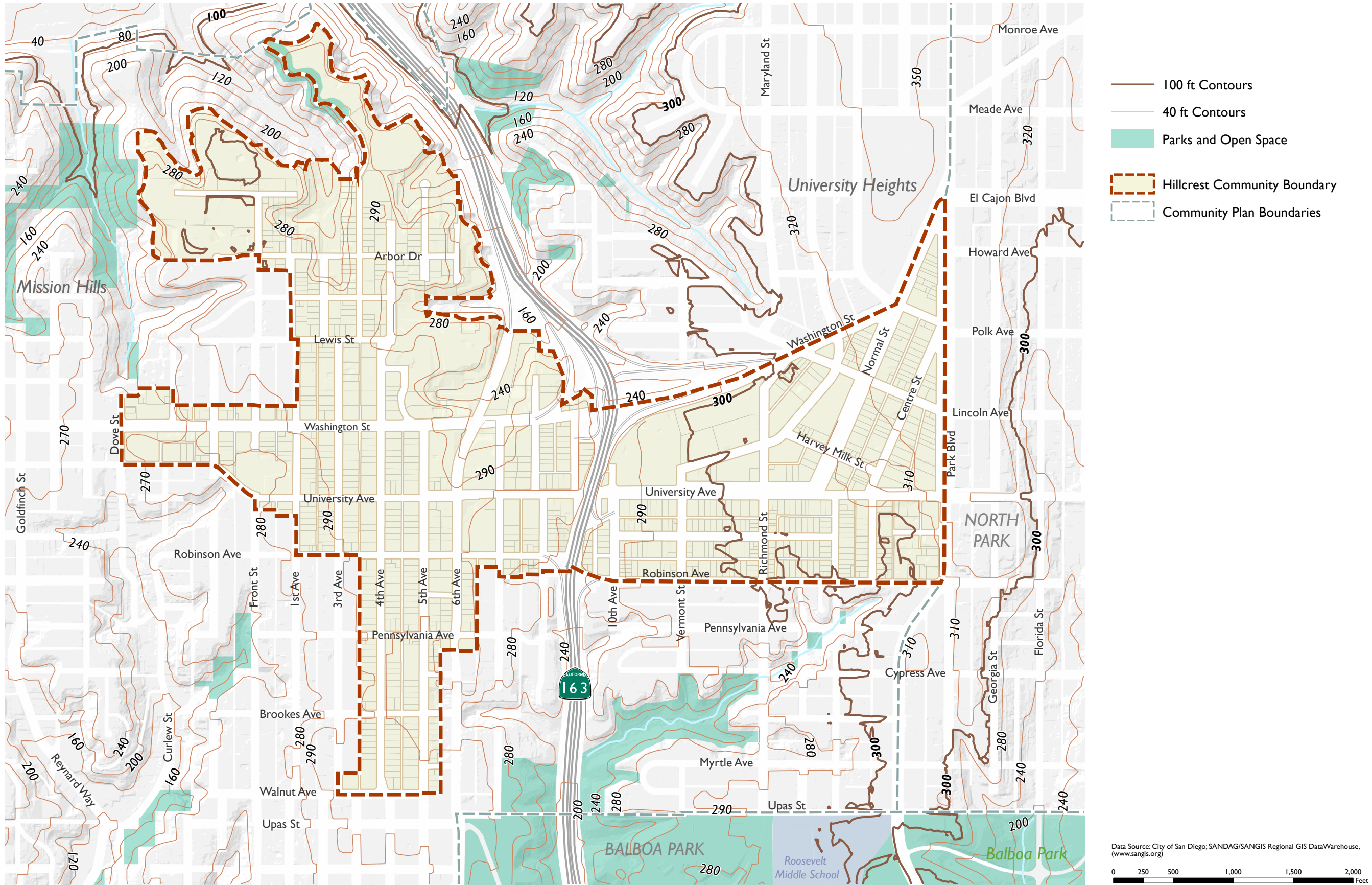
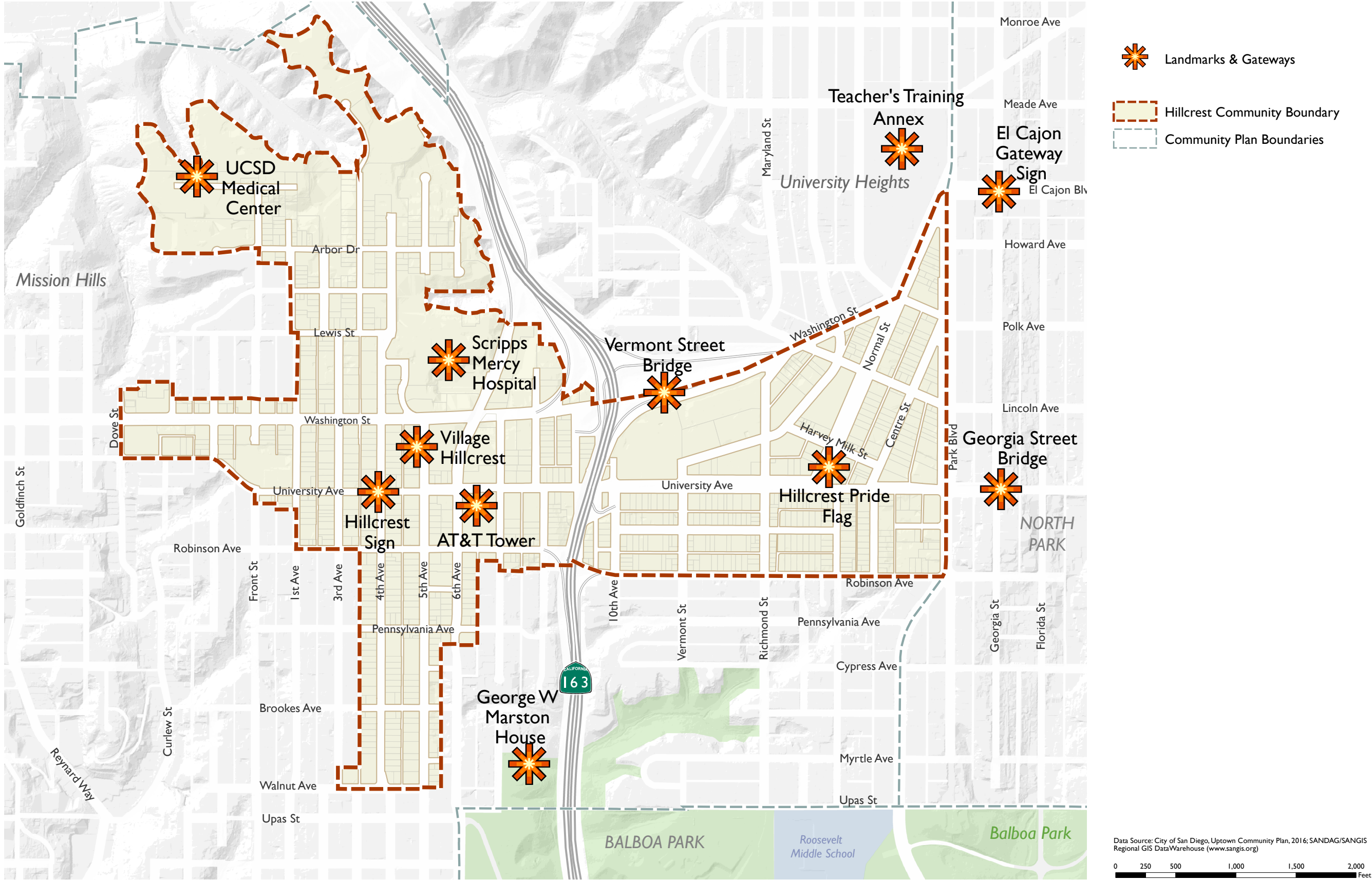


Figure 3.2 Landmarks and Gateways



## 3.4 DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

### LOT AND BLOCK PATTERN

Generally, Hillcrest has a very walkable street and block pattern due to small block sizes and a well-connected street grid. Figure 3.3 shows the parcel layout and building footprints of the planning area. The overall block pattern is made up small parcels and is accompanied by similar-sized building footprints which gives the area a fine-grain character. Institutional buildings, like at UC San Diego Medical Campus, Scripps Mercy Hospital, and the California DMV office, and retail centers or grocery stores have larger building footprints and parcel sizes.

Hillcrest has a very walkable street and block pattern.

Figure 3.4 provides a detailed look at three distinct areas within Plan Hillcrest, referred to by their geography as the north, west, and east sides. The SR-163 highway disconnects the street grid between the east and west sides of Hillcrest while Washington Street is the distinctive edge between the north and east sides, with varying street layouts and block sizes for each.

#### Block Pattern Summary

##### North Side:

Pedestrian oriented | Block size: 200'/230' x 300'  
| Lot size: 25' x 100'

##### East Side:

Pedestrian oriented | Block size: 285' x 600'  
Lot size: 50' x 135'

##### West Side:

Auto oriented | Block size varies, some 285' x 600'  
| Lot size: 50' x 100'/140'

### NORTH SIDE

The north side consists of the Medical Complex and is formed by compact, pedestrian-oriented blocks that are 200' to 230' by 300' in size and orientated in a north to south direction. The block pattern is a mixture of fine-grain and small lots and large campus development. Most blocks have no alley access and the canyons around the edges tend to break up the blocks. The typical lot size is 25' by 100' and vary depending on use.

### WEST SIDE

The west side, which is west of SR-163, is formed by long, pedestrian-oriented blocks that are 285' by 600' in size and orientated in a north to south direction. The block pattern mostly consists of fine-grain and small lots, some of which have been assembled to allow large buildings. Most blocks do have alley access with a mixture of one-way and two-way streets. The typical lot size is 50' by 135' which support a diversity of building types and sizes.

### EAST SIDE

The east side, which is east of SR-163, is characterized by a mixture of long and irregular shaped blocks with a north/south split along University Avenue. The southern blocks are similar to the west side in that they are 285' by 600' in size, with the exception the orientation which is switched to an east to west direction. These blocks have alley access and are more walkable than the blocks north of University. The north blocks are larger and irregular in shape with no alley access and are oriented towards car travel.

East side lots range in size, with the typical being 50' by 100' or 140' with many variations. It has a mixture of small and large lots, with the smaller lots having more of a fine-grain character while the larger lots are typically more auto-oriented.



The north side development patterns are defined by a diversity of large and small building types, as well as 1-story walk-up storefronts concentrated along Washington St. There is an opportunity to improve the walking experience by minimizing curb cuts and driveways.



The west side is also defined by a diversity of building types, and long pedestrian-oriented blocks. With future development, there is an opportunity to build upon a great walking experience and support more mixed-use.



The east side is divided by a north/south split along University, with walk-up storefronts to the south and drive-up "strip commercial" to the north. Above: north of University, where there is opportunity for more street activation and development.

Figure 3.3 Block Pattern Details

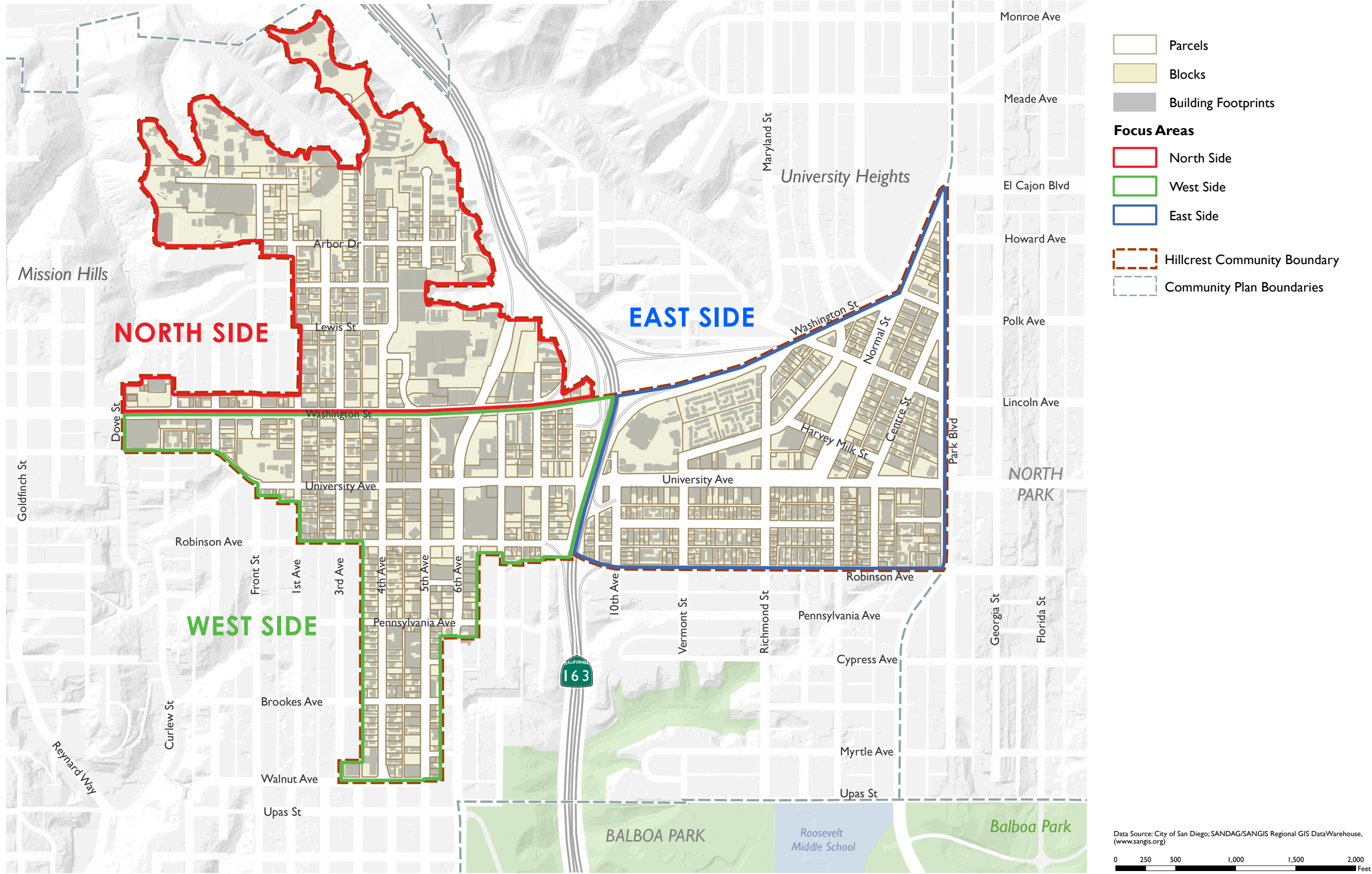


Figure 3.4 Block and Lot Patterns

BLOCK PATTERN

NORTH SIDE



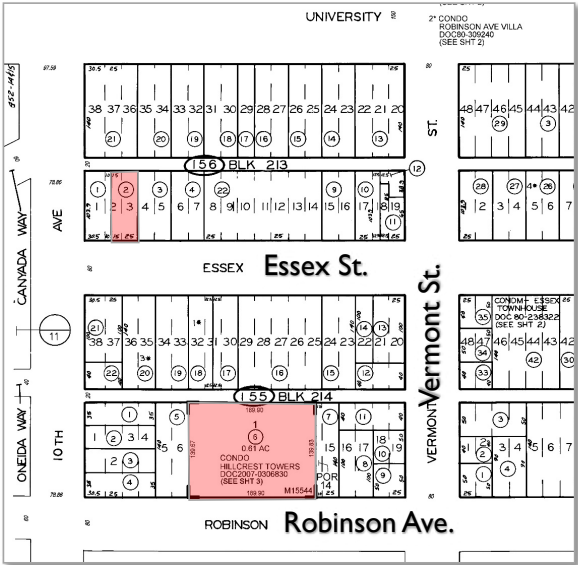
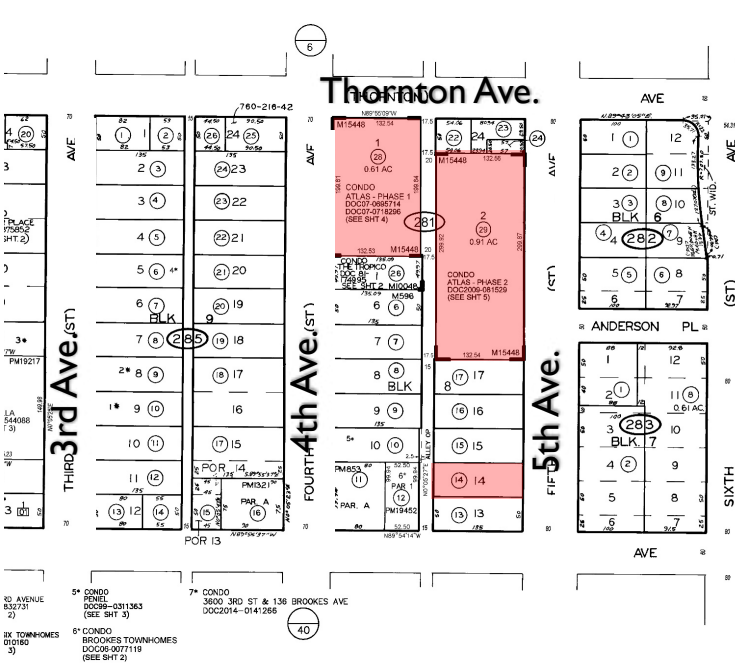
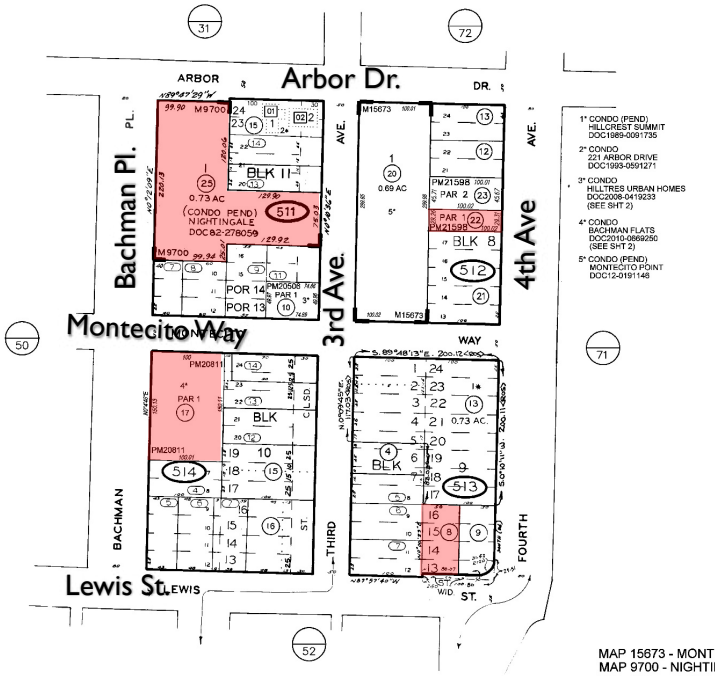
WEST SIDE



EAST SIDE



LOT PATTERN



Lots typical south of the University Ave. split

## PARCEL SIZE

Parcel size influences the scale, experience, and development potential of the area. In urban places, calculating the lot coverage percentage is used to see how much physical room development takes on a lot. The current average lot coverage for all parcels within Hillcrest is 43%, which means that less than half of a typical lot is covered with development.

The average lot coverage is **43%** which means that less than half of a lot is used for development.

Generally, larger parcels are easier to develop with larger building masses while smaller parcels are more expensive to develop and provide a fine-grain building form. In order for substantial new development to happen, many of these smaller parcels need to be consolidated into a single, larger parcel with a single owner entity. As larger lots are assembled, care should be taken to design new buildings to retain the fine-grain building form in order to match with the surrounding context.

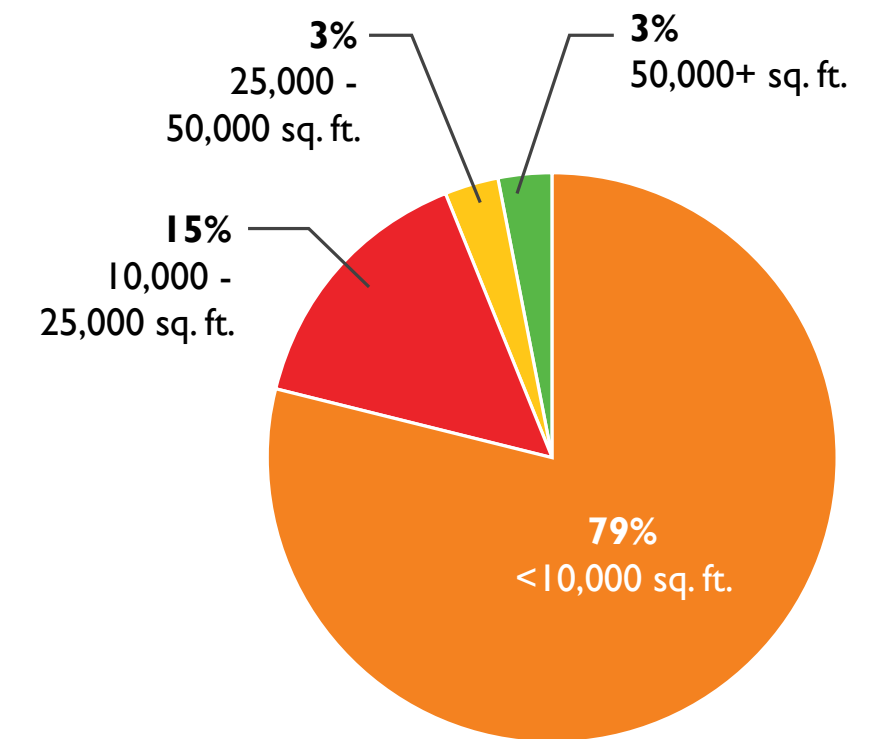
Figure 3.5 categorizes each parcel based on its approximate square footage. Parcels that are over 25,000 square feet have greater potential for new development without the need to combine individual lots; lots over 50,000 square feet having the largest development potential. Smaller lots, like those that are under 10,000 square feet, are less likely to develop unless combined to make larger lots.

As shown in Figure 3.5, a large number of lots are less than 10,000 square feet along major corridors like Fourth and Fifth avenues. Lots between 10,000 to 25,000 square feet in size have a greater potential to be redeveloped (as compared to lots less than 10,000 square feet) without needing significant lot consolidation, such as the parcels located along University Avenue and those directly north of Washington Street.

Chart 3.1 illustrates the breakdown of the number of each parcel size. Out of the 971 total parcels, 79% are less than 10,000 square feet in size followed by 15% of parcels which are between 10,000 to 25,000 square feet. The parcels that have the most potential to develop, those that are more than 25,000 square feet, only account for 6% of the available parcels (3% of lots between 25,000 to 50,000 square feet plus 3% of lots over 50,000 square feet).

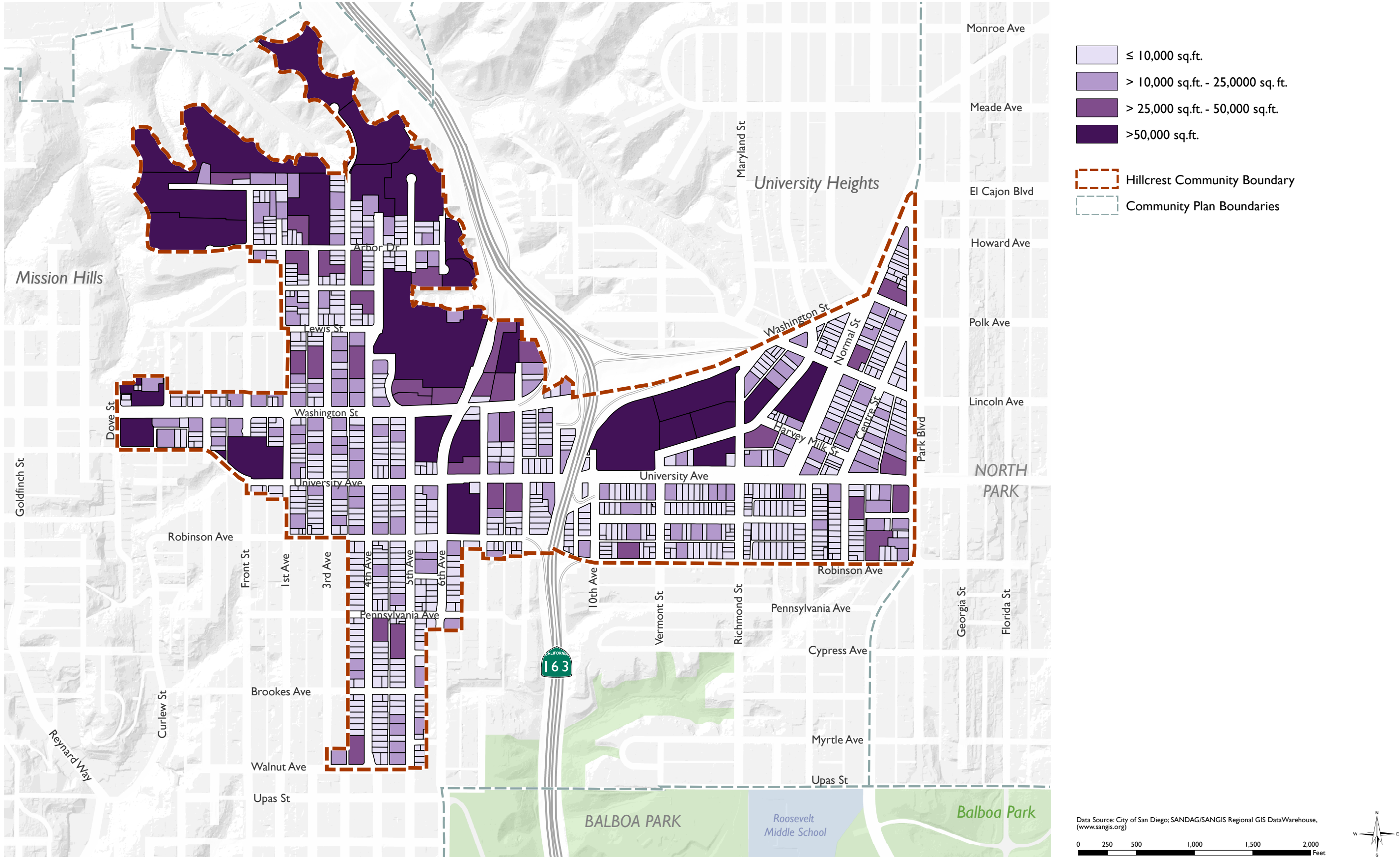
The majority (**79%**) of parcels are less than **10,000** square feet in size. The parcels that have the most potential to develop, those that are more than **25,000** square feet, only account for **6%** of the available parcels.

Chart 3.1 Parcel Size Breakdown



Source: City of San Diego; SANDAG GIS; Dyett and Bhatia 2020.

Figure 3.5 Parcel Size



## 3.5 BUILDINGS

### RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Residential buildings in Hillcrest are diverse in their design and layout and the area offers a range of building types, including single family homes, townhomes, stacked flats, garden apartments, podium and mixed-use buildings.

1. **Single Family** are stand-alone buildings designed for a single household. Some single-family buildings have been converted to allow multiple households living together in the same space.



2. **Townhomes** are typically two stories high and dwelling units share demising walls. They typically provide parking in the rear. Parking may be accessed from an alley, and/or arranged in a motor court.



3. **Stacked Flats** often take the form of townhomes, but with single-story dwelling units that are stacked.



4. **Garden Apartments** are two- or three-story walk-up buildings with a combination of surface and tuck-under garage parking. Dwelling units are stacked with shared stairs, elevators and walkways.



5. **Podium buildings** include structured parking either below or above grade with residential units above. These are larger multifamily complexes and may range in height from three to five stories.



6. **Mixed-use buildings** typically include an office or commercial usage on the ground floor and multiple stories of residential units above, creating vertical mixed-use buildings. Most mixed-use buildings are at least two stories tall with newer mixed-use buildings ranging between five to seven stories.



As listed in Chart 3.2 and shown in Figure 3.5, only 37 percent of residential units were built after 1950, while a majority of them (48 percent) were built between 1900-1929. Most blocks have a mixture of old and new buildings, which contribute to a healthy urban fabric. Most residential buildings range in height from two to five stories. Smaller multifamily complexes typically do not provide common open space or amenities, although a few of the bigger complexes do provide such

amenities such as a pool, community lounge, or workout space. The healthy mixture of building ages gives the community a diverse range of visually-interesting architectural styles and character. Many residential buildings in Hillcrest use cement plaster (stucco) as the building finish, while recent developments offer a contemporary aesthetic with a greater mix of materials and colors on the facades of buildings.

Nearly **half** of residential buildings in Hillcrest were built between **1900-1929**.

Only **7%** of residential buildings were built after **2000**.

Chart 3.2 Residential and Non-residential Building Age

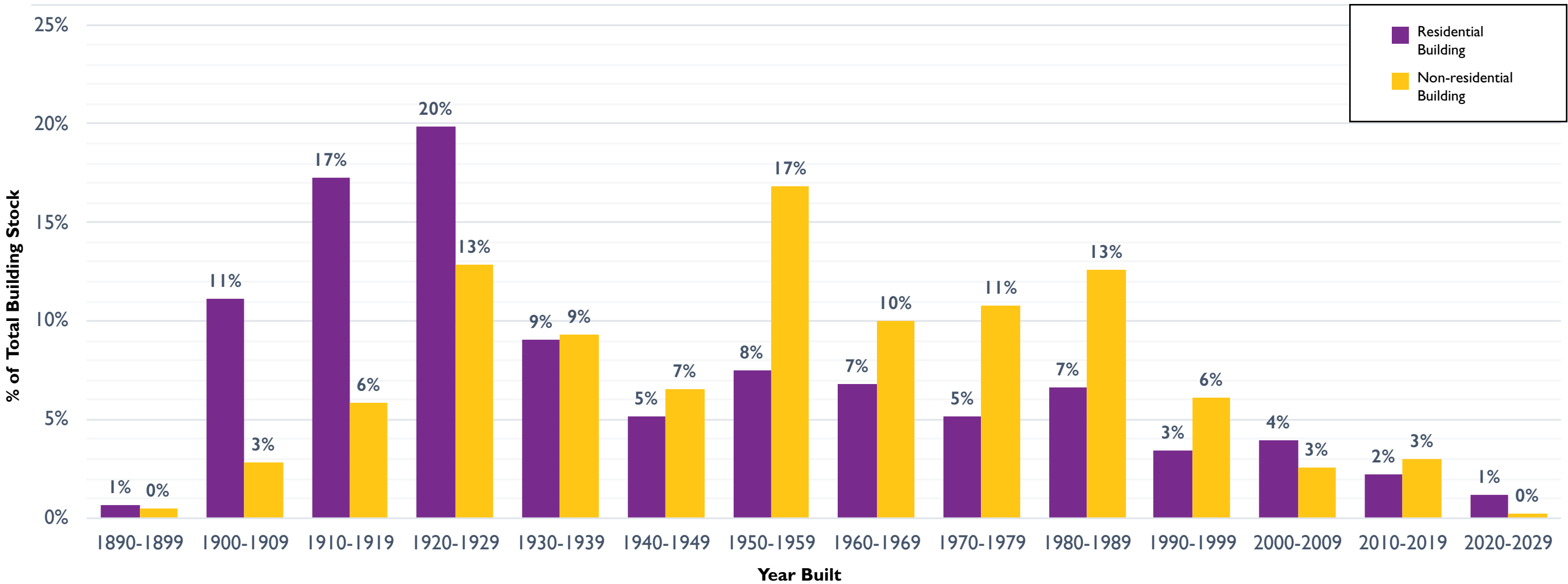
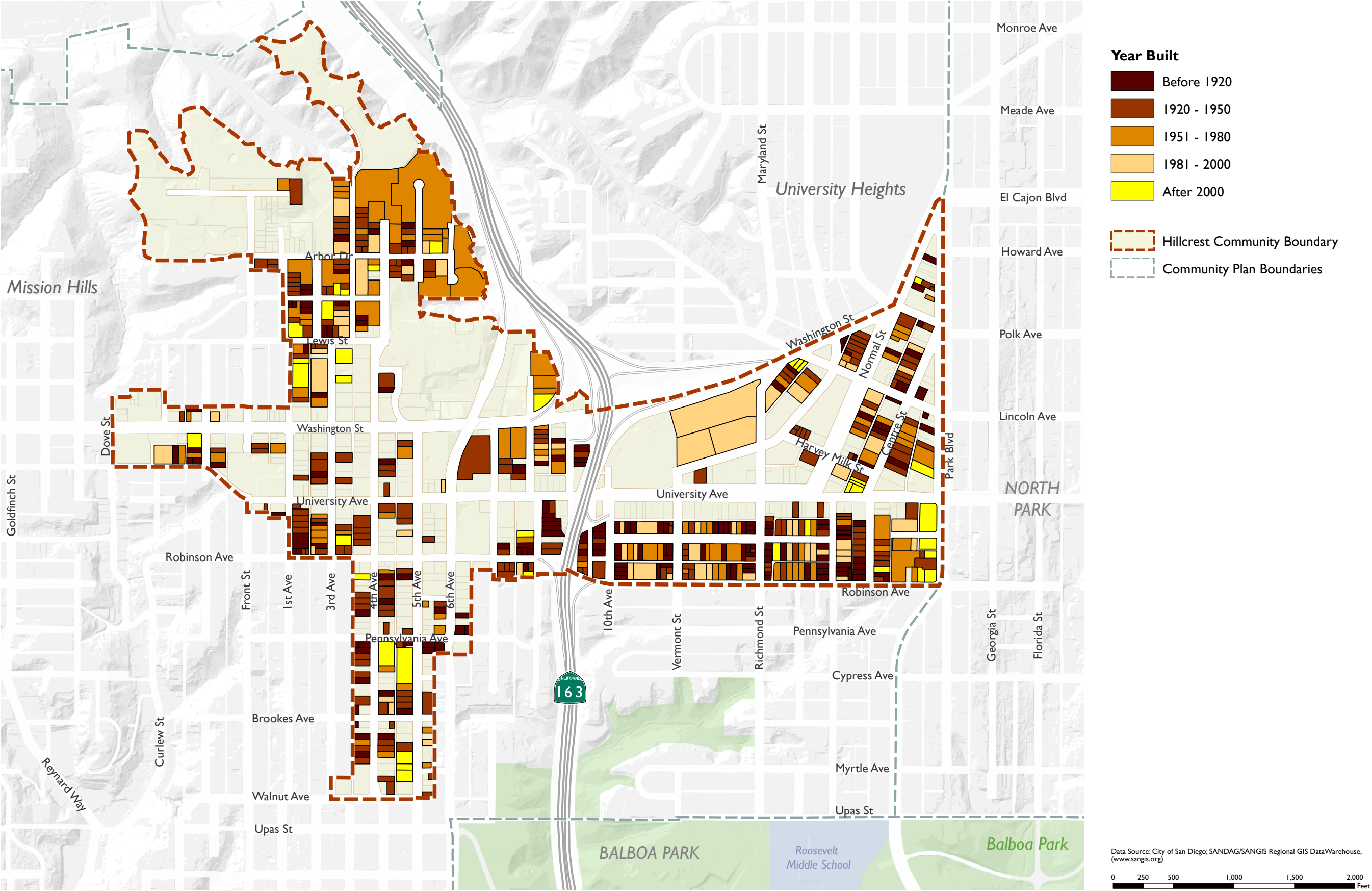


Figure 3.6 Residential Building Age



## COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

Hillcrest is a popular destination for shopping, eating, and nightlife which allows for a wide variety of commercial businesses to thrive. Many of the commercial buildings, with uses like restaurants, bars, cafes, and small retail shops, are built up to the street with no setback, are either single or two story tall, and take up most of the lot which creates a very pedestrian-friendly environment. The east side of Hillcrest north of University is more auto-oriented from the west with strip malls and larger lot buildings, like the US Postal Service and Department of Motor Vehicles. Similar to residential buildings, commercial buildings have a wide range of building ages. Buildings built in the 1980's typically have larger surface parking lots compared to those that were built prior or before this time. Typical design features for commercial buildings in Hillcrest include flat roofs with parapets, large storefront windows, and colorful facades. There are a variety of buildings materials and architectural styles which bring a diverse urban experience.



## MEDICAL COMPLEX

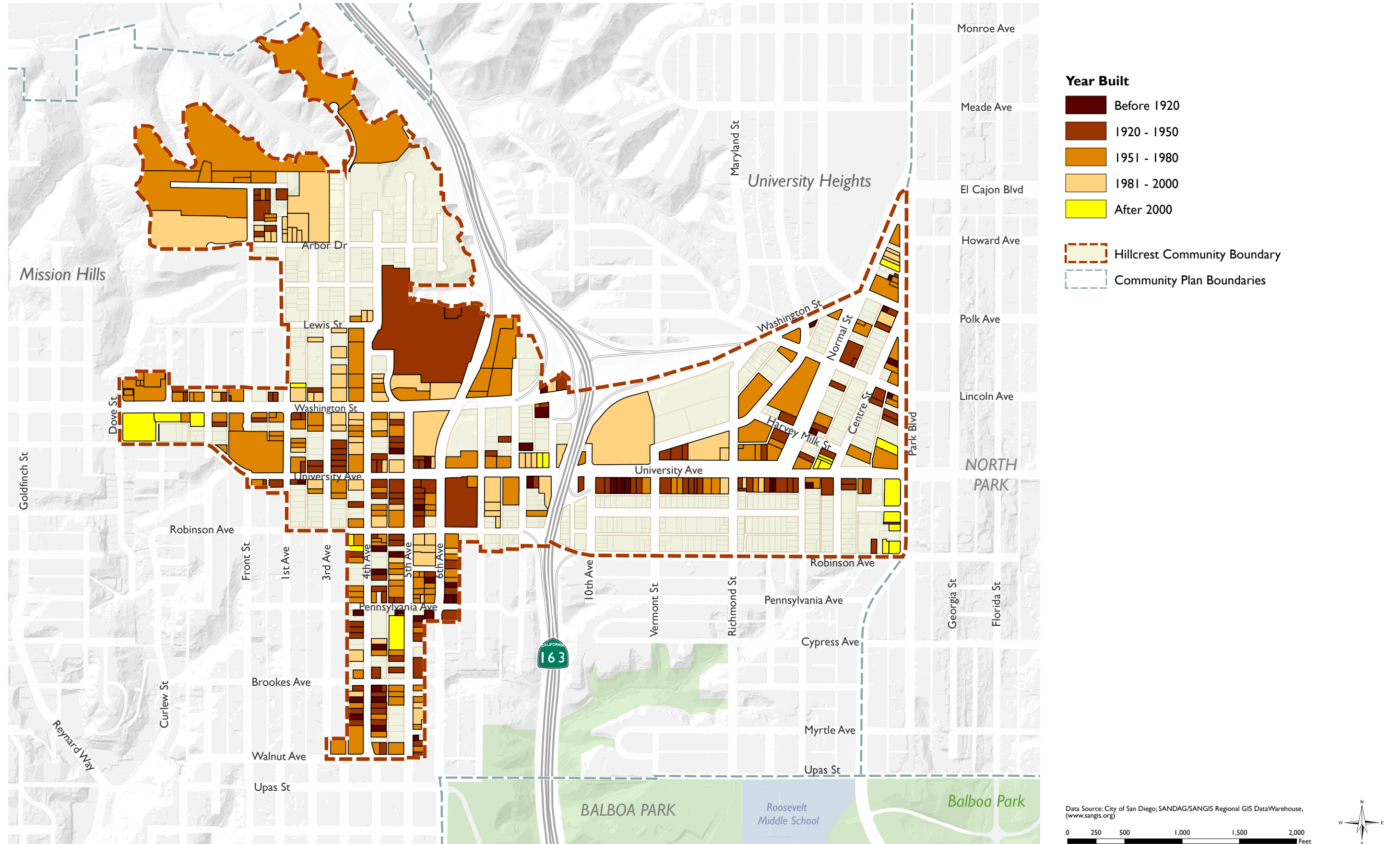
Located north of Washington Street, the Medical Complex is a major employment center within Hillcrest. In addition to the two major medical centers Scripps Mercy Hospital and UC San Diego Medical Center, there are a wide range of medical offices, facilities, and treatment centers that make up the Medical Complex. These buildings range in age depending on when new buildings were added or old building were renovated, but the Scripps Mercy Hospital was first established in Hillcrest in the early 1890's followed by the UC San Diego Medical Center in the early 1900's. The rest of the medical offices vary in age but were mostly built between the 1960's through the 1980's. The architectural style largely reflects the period in which it was built; many buildings in this area are characterized by large building masses, big blocks and oriented towards automobile access, and simple use of steel, metal, and concrete for the façade.

The UC San Diego Medical Center is envisioned to replace 90% of the campus's aging and outdated buildings as outlined in the 2019 Long Range Development Plan (LRDP). The LRDP proposes an increase of approximately 488,000 gross square feet of non-residential development, bringing the total amount of non-residential development from 1.1 million to 1.6 million gross square feet by the year 2035 for the medical campus. The 21-acre Scripps Mercy Hospital complex, primarily located between Washington Street, 4th Avenue, and SR-163 is proposing the demolition of existing structures and construction of new medical offices and hospital buildings that would add more than 1.5 million square feet of hospital and medical office uses to the complex.

UC San Diego Medical Center and Scripps Mercy Hospital is expected to replace a significant portion of their facilities, with potential new development ranging from **1.6** million and **1.5** million square feet respectfully.



Figure 3.7 Non-residential Building Age



### 3.6 PUBLIC REALM

The public realm encompasses all publicly visible and accessible areas within the planning area. This includes the space between buildings and streets, sidewalks, transit stops, and public spaces—all of which contribute to the community’s identity as a vibrant and welcoming part of Hillcrest. Communities that have buildings with active ground floor uses contribute to a walkable environment and an active public realm, in which people enjoy being outdoors and supporting local businesses. This section describes various elements that make up the public realm and streetscape characteristics related to active frontage and ground floor uses, sidewalks, and public art.

#### ACTIVE FRONTAGE

An active frontage provides visual engagement between people walking on the sidewalk and the ground floors of buildings, in which the front facade of buildings faces and open towards the street. Ground floor uses include storefronts, entryways, business types, and other features that impact the streetscape. Multiple factors contribute to an active frontage, including businesses that have individual entrances right along the sidewalk in which people are coming and going often, a transparent storefront having merchandise available to look at, or visible eating and dining areas including street-side outdoor dining. For example, Fifth Street has store entries that are close together that come to the property line and have active frontage uses along the sidewalk, creating a walkable and engaging neighborhood.

When commercial areas have spaced-out entries with parking in the front, such as parts along University Avenue, it results in a less active street frontage. Overall, the Hillcrest core has an active street frontage which creates a vibrant public realm. Some areas, particularly in east Hillcrest north of University and within the Medical Complex, are designed primarily for automobile access which results in a less pedestrian-friendly frontage.

#### SIDEWALKS

While Hillcrest is generally well-served with a cohesive network of sidewalks, SR-163 creates a barrier between east and west Hillcrest. While there are two sidewalk connections across SR-163, located along University and Robinson avenues, these connections do have challenges. At these crossings, University has wider sidewalk widths of about 10 feet wide on both sides of the street while Robinson has very narrow sidewalk widths (as little as 3 feet) on a single side of the street. Although Washington is a connecting street, it is primarily for automobile travel and does not have connecting sidewalks.

Sidewalk design varies depending on the street type and land uses. Sidewalks in residential areas tend to be at a minimum 5 feet wide with a 4-foot strip of landscaping in between the sidewalk and street. The continuity of these sidewalks is often broken up by front-loaded curb cuts for parking in front of multifamily buildings. This results in more conflicts between pedestrians and motorists and breaks up a continuous pedestrian pathway. Many of the residential streets, such as along Richmond Street and Bachman Place, have exposed, above-grade utility poles and wires which impacts the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood. Sidewalks within the Medical Complex typically range between 5 to 8 feet and, generally do not have a planting strip which results in the sidewalk being directly adjacent to the street. Non-residential areas, like along Fifth Street and University Avenue, typically have sidewalks at least 10 feet wide with street trees in below-grade planter boxes directly along the street. Commercial sidewalks commonly include a variety of pedestrian amenities, including trash cans, benches at bus stops, bike racks, and seating for outdoor dining.

Hillcrest is generally well-served with a cohesive network of sidewalks, however the SR-163 highway creates a barrier between east and west Hillcrest.



Active street frontage.



Less active street frontage.



Above: examples of sidewalk design and features in the Plan Area.

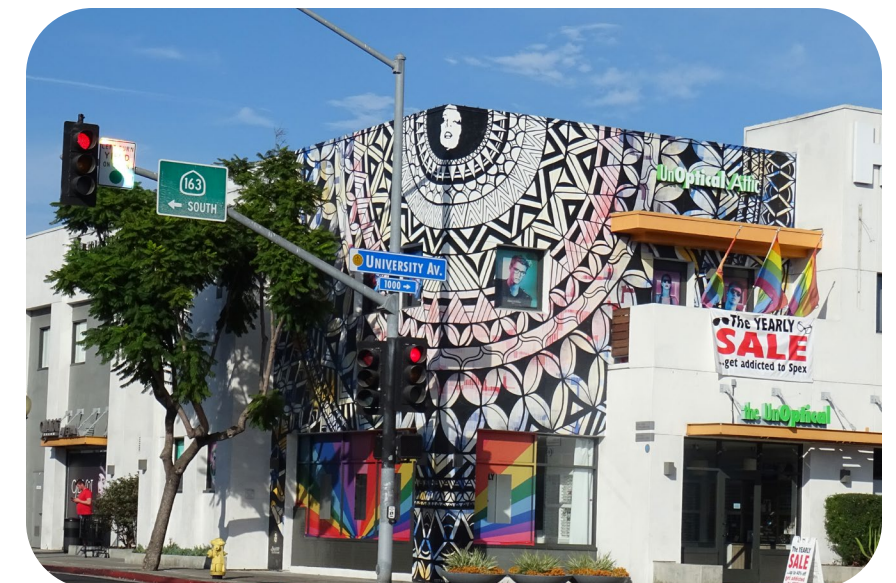
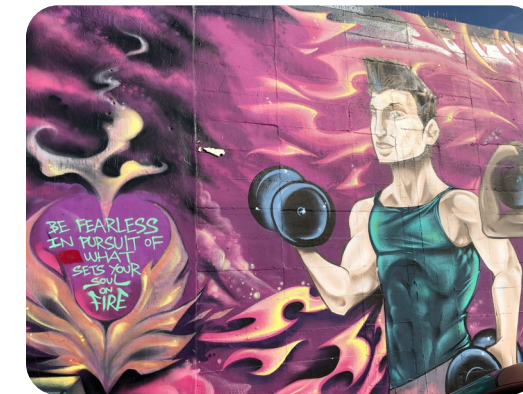
## STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS

There are very few street lights in residential areas, instead the sidewalks are lit up by lights from private property. There are a few decorative street lamps spread throughout certain streets in Hillcrest, including parts of University and Fifth avenues, but most of the lighting within commercial areas are typically lined with simple mast-arm lights that range between 20 to 25 feet tall. Most commercial streets within the planning area have adequate pedestrian crossings at intersections with either zebra stripes or solid line markings at signalized intersections. The recent painting of a rainbow colored “Pride Crosswalk” at the crossing of Normal Street along University Avenue demonstrates how simple streetscape elements can contribute to a sense of community identify and pride.

Streetscape elements and public art help contribute to a sense of community identify and pride.

## PUBLIC ART

Public art refers to any artistic expression of the community, whether it’s sculptures, murals, or installations, found within the public realm to reflect the neighborhood character. Decorative lamp posts, benches, trash receptacles, murals, banners, crosswalks, and other street furnishings help contribute to a sense of place and reinforce community identity while the inclusion of commissioned works of art help bring interest and intrigue into the city. There are a variety of art projects that reflect the LGBTQ+ community and help identify and celebrate Hillcrest. The City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture identifies a number of sites within Hillcrest in its Civic Art Collection, including pieces of art exhibited in municipal buildings. These art pieces include panels along the Vermont Street Pedestrian Bridge, Fossils Exposed by Doron Rosenthal along the sidewalk on University between First Avenue to Park Boulevard, Flight/Alight/Onward by Ellen Phillips in the street median along West Washington Street between Albatross and Dove Streets, and pieces of art located within the Mission Hills-Hillcrest/Knox Library.



Above: examples of public art in the Plan Area.

### 3.7 URBAN FOREST

Urban forest and the presence of trees is important to a community's wellbeing. Access to trees can help improve resident's health by enhancing the sense of community, supporting pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, passive cooling, and improving air quality, all while providing habitat for birds and other animals that have adjusted to living in urban environments. Trees provide shade and beauty, support neighborhood identity, and help balance the density of development with greenery. The City's General Plan establishes the importance of urban forestry and calls for development of a sustainable urban forest. The City's Climate Action Plan establishes a specific goal to increase urban tree canopy cover with targets of 15 percent by 2020 and 35 percent by 2035. In 2017, the City Council approved the Urban Forest Management Plan, a document to coordinate the work of multiple City departments and bring together existing policies, guidelines, and actions necessary to preserve, protect, maintain, and plant trees.

Many of the benefits trees provide are correlated with the size and structure of the tree canopy, or the layers of branches, stems, and leaves that cover the ground when viewed from above. An analysis of Hillcrest based on land cover data derived from high-resolution aerial imagery and LiDAR found that approximately 14 percent of the community is covered by tree canopy. Figure 3.6 shows the tree coverage distribution in Hillcrest.

**14%** of Hillcrest is covered with tree canopy, which is near the citywide goal of 15 percent.

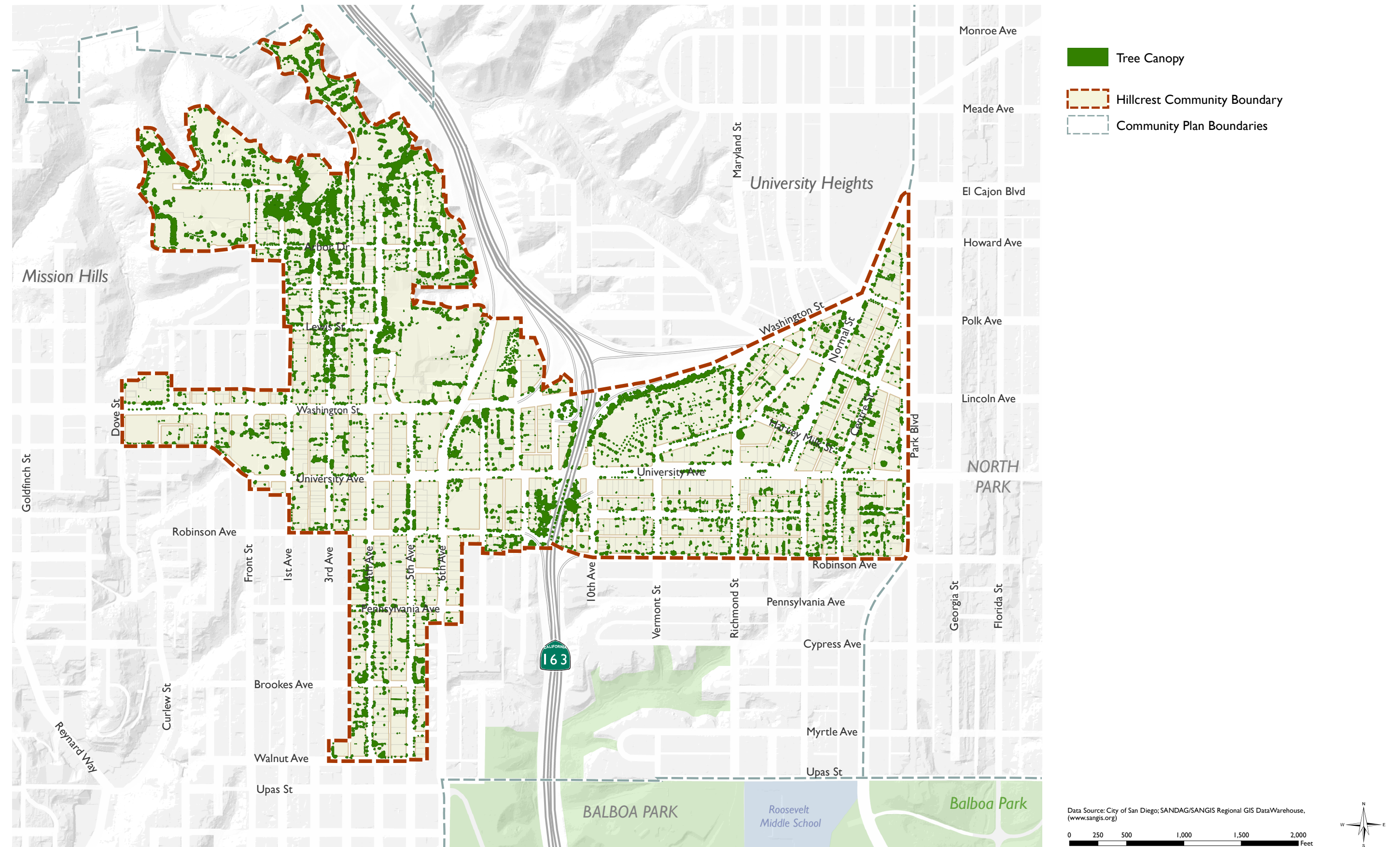
As an urban area, Hillcrest does not have many natural areas and most of the canopy coverage comes from street trees. The Medical Complex, located in the northern portion of Hillcrest, is surrounded by woodland forest and scrub outside of the planning area with a small inlet of woodland forest that extends into the planning area. The Medical Complex area is one of the few areas that has a significant concentration of tree canopy coverage while the rest of the planning area is sparse. Generally, most of the streets within Hillcrest do not have a consistent tree canopy coverage, which varies for each block. There is a concentration of tree coverage along the SR-163 freeway and along Washington Street which acts a buffer between these high-volume streets and populated areas. The cluster of Ficus trees that line both sides of Fifth Avenue from Robinson to University Avenue create a unique sense of place and an anchor to what is one of the commercial cores and gateways of the neighborhood.

In the Urban Design Chapter of the Uptown Community Plan, policies UD-3.62 through UD-3.70 address urban forestry. These policies establish primary and secondary tree types for various commercial and residential streets as well as planting, spacing, and canopy guidelines. Within the Hillcrest Area, street tree types have been established for most of the main commercial streets, including Washington and Albatross streets, Park Boulevard, and University, Robinson, Pennsylvania, First, Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth avenues.

As an urban area, Hillcrest does not have many natural areas and most of the canopy coverage comes from street trees. Street tree plantings are inconsistent across Hillcrest.



Figure 3.8 Open Space and Tree Canopy Coverage



### 3.8 URBAN DESIGN SUMMARY

This section sums up the findings uncovered throughout this chapter as it relates to urban design.

#### BUILDINGS AND DEVELOPMENT

- Parcels **east of SR-163** are typically larger parcels currently occupied with auto-oriented uses. They present opportunities for intensification of use.
- **83%** of residential buildings and **76%** of commercial buildings were built before **1980**.
- Only **5%** of the residential buildings and **6%** of commercial buildings have been built since **2000**.
- Parking lots account for **5%** of the total land usage, or **13** acres, and are typically part of large commercial centers.
- Many of the retail and commercial buildings throughout Hillcrest are one or two stories tall. There is an opportunity to intensify these sites with mixed-use, **ground floor** commercial on the first floor and housing above, which will increase housing and a local customer base.
- The small parcel sizes and lack of vacant land presents a potential constraint to new development, as existing buildings would need to be demolished and parcels agglomerated into larger developable lots.
- **79%** of lots are under **10,000** square feet while larger lots that have a greater chance to be developed (over **25,000** square feet) only make up **6%** of total lots.
- The average lot coverage is **43%** which means that less than half of a lot is used for development.

#### PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

- There is an opportunity to create more **neighborhood parks** and plazas as new development occurs. This could take the form of privately-owned public spaces or enhancements to the right-of-way (like parklets or small bulb-out parks).
- Enhance existing east/west pedestrian connections over the freeway by improving existing connections over **University** and **Robinson Avenues**.
- Incorporate pedestrian-scaled decorative **lighting** in main commercial areas to increase aesthetics, add to the placemaking, and create a safer street at night.
- Additional landmarks or signage at major **gateways** can help improve the sense of place and character of Hillcrest.
- Improve availability of **pedestrian amenities**, such as publicly-accessible restrooms, benches, trash cans and water fountains. Improving the pedestrian environment to be more comfortable encourages people to walk to destinations and spend more time in commercial areas.
- There's an opportunity to include additional **public art** as part of private development.

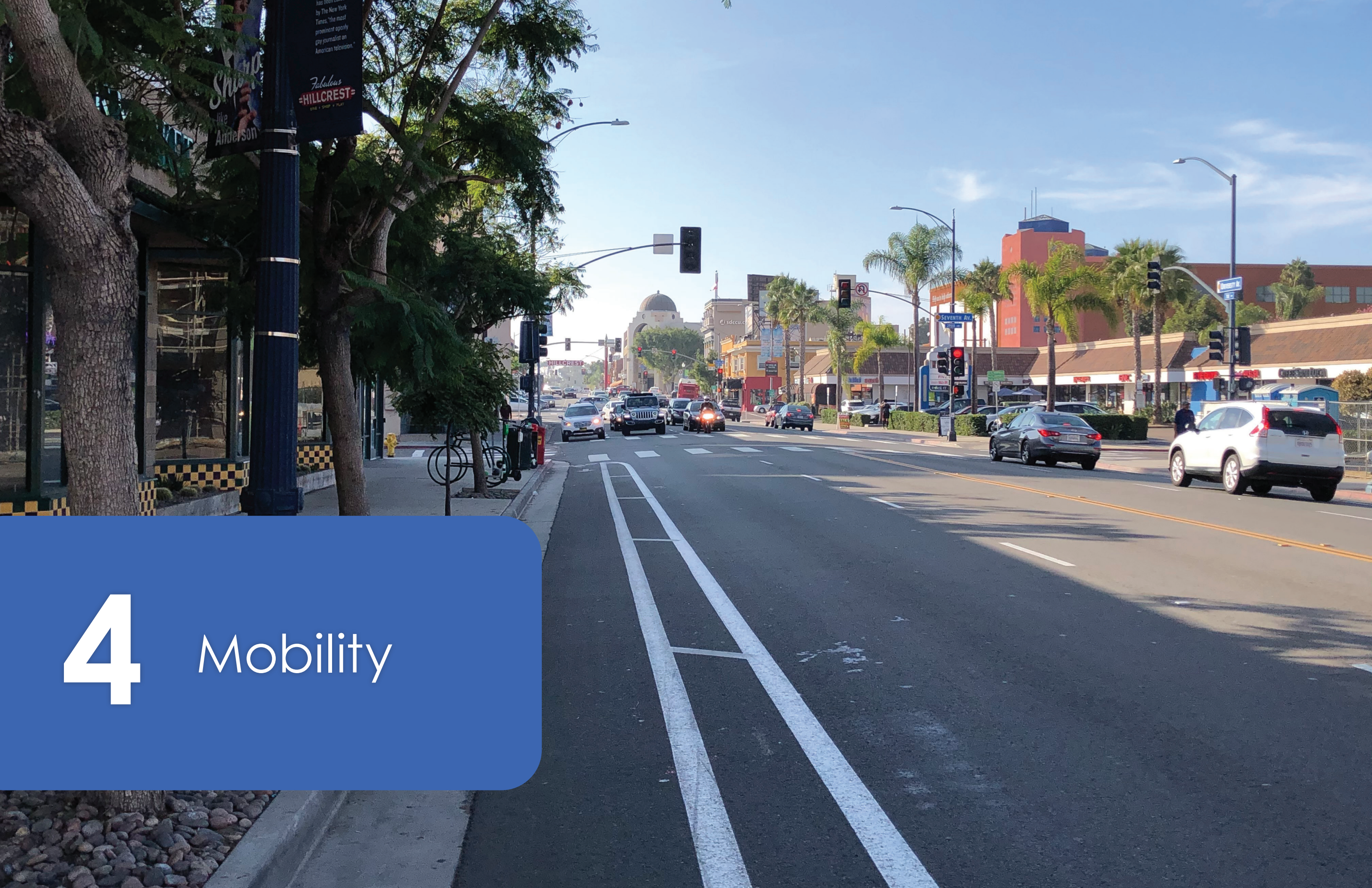
#### URBAN FOREST

- As the Medical Campus is surrounded to the north by open space, there's an opportunity to bring more **trails** from these areas and extend throughout the rest of Hillcrest.
- Areas of Hillcrest that do not have adequate **tree canopy** coverage and are high-pedestrian routes, like the east side of **Sixth Street**, south side of **University**, and west side of **Seventh Street**, should be prioritized for additional canopy coverage.

- Currently at **14%**, Hillcrest is near to the city-wide goal of achieving **15%** tree canopy coverage by **2020**. Further efforts should look at measures to increase this tree canopy coverage to **35%** by **2035**.



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4

Mobility

## 4.1 STREET AND FREEWAY NEEDS

Streets and freeways comprise the framework of our transportation system and play a major role in shaping the form of and quality of life within the community. When the street system has poor traffic safety and congestion, it can impede mobility options and have an impact on economic activity and community quality of life. The roadways affected by congestion during peak periods (measured by vehicular travel speeds observed at less than half of the posted speed limit) and intersections with the most traffic collisions between 2014 and 2018 are shown in Figure 4.1.

### FREEWAYS

The Hillcrest neighborhood is bisected by the State Route (SR) 163 freeway. This portion of SR-163, between Mission Valley and Downtown, is the oldest freeway in San Diego County. Southbound SR-163 within Hillcrest is notable for having three off-ramps spaced a quarter mile apart between the Sixth Avenue ramps serving University Avenue and Washington Street. Where this occurs, the freeway transitions from 6-Lanes to 4-Lanes. Several other on-ramps and off-ramps connecting with Hillcrest are located on less prominent side streets (Ninth and Tenth Avenues) and have designs that are not up to Interstate highway standards. The Tenth Avenue on-ramp to SR-163 northbound is situated only about 400 feet after the Washington Street northbound off-ramp. The two ramps share an auxiliary lane, which is a common source of weaving congestion along this stretch of freeway. This section of freeway is historically designated, which may limit improvement options.

### TRAFFIC VOLUMES AND VEHICULAR SPEEDS

The Washington Street/Normal Street and University Avenue corridors are the major east-west thoroughfares of the Hillcrest neighborhood. Washington Street between Fourth Avenue and Lincoln Avenue has no on-street parking or access to fronting land uses. This portion carries the highest traffic volumes in Hillcrest, with daily traffic volumes reaching more than 40,000 near the SR-

163 ramps. This same stretch of Washington Street also reaches the highest average speeds of any roadway within the study area during the peak periods (greater than 35 mph in some locations). The other major east-west roadway, University Avenue, operates at slower speeds because it facilitates a variety of functions in addition to vehicular throughput which generate traffic friction, including more intersections, destination access, on-street parking, bus services and bicycle travel. West of Fifth Avenue, University Avenue narrows from four to two-lanes and operates at an average speed of below 15 mph during peak periods.

Washington Street between Fourth Avenue and Lincoln Avenue carries the highest traffic volumes in Hillcrest, with daily volumes reaching more than 40,000 vehicles.

The major north-south corridors through Hillcrest include Sixth Avenue, the Fourth and Fifth Avenue one-way couplet, and Park Boulevard. Sixth Avenue connects directly into the on and off ramps for SR-163, attracting nearly 35,000 daily trips north of University Avenue to and from the freeway. Fourth and Fifth Avenues form a one-way couplet originating in Downtown and terminating just past Washington Street. These two roadways are lined with many destinations and form part of Hillcrest's commercial core. Park Boulevard, traversing the eastern edge of the community, is a four-lane major roadway with a center-running busway used by MTS Rapid Bus 215. Despite its large capacity, Park Boulevard between El Cajon Boulevard and University does not attract more than 11,000 daily trips.

Congestion areas in Hillcrest are most concentrated west of SR-163 in the village, where during peak periods, heavy traffic volumes, short blocks, high pedestrian crossing volumes, and other sources of friction contribute to average travel speeds

less than half of the posted speed limit. These conditions occur along University Avenue between First Avenue and Tenth Avenue; Robinson Avenue between First Avenue and Richmond Street; and Washington Street, between Dove Street and Ninth Avenue.

Hillcrest is most congested west of SR-163 in the village, where average travel speeds are less than half of the posted speed limits during the peak periods.

### SAFETY

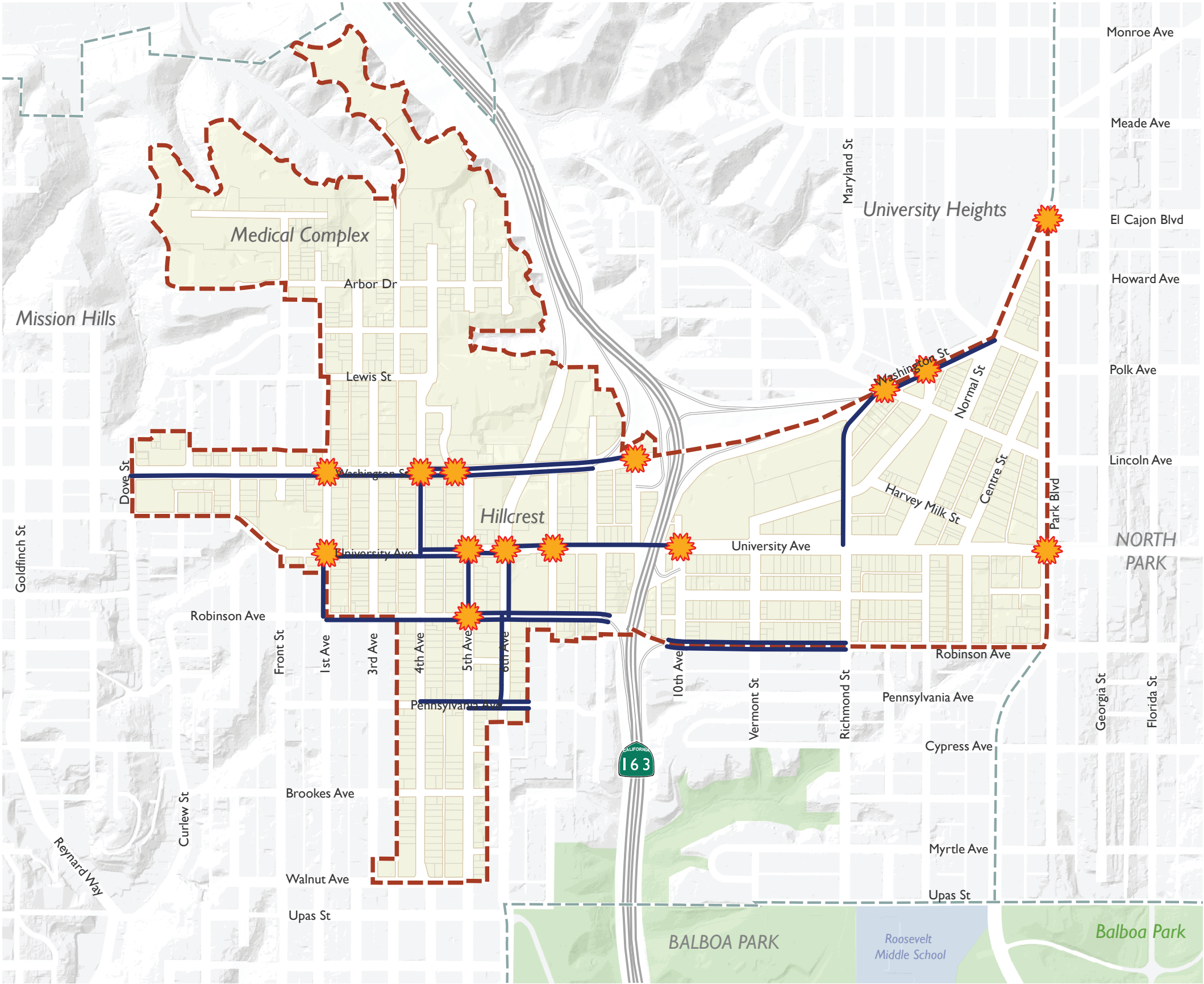
The City of San Diego is implementing a Safe Systems approach to help achieve the Vision Zero initiative. The Safe Systems approach is to evaluate, plan, and design a transportation system which eliminates fatalities and severe injuries despite human mistakes. This approach applies to each of the core transportation modes.

Within Hillcrest there were an estimated 263 vehicular-only collisions resulting in injury occurring over a five-year period between 2014 and 2018. There were six intersection locations with eight or more vehicular collision resulting in injury during that period:

- Fourth Avenue and Washington Street (13)
- First Avenue and Washington Street (12)
- Cleveland Avenue and Washington Street (10)
- Park Boulevard and Normal Street / El Cajon Boulevard (10)
- Tenth Avenue and University Avenue (9)
- Lincoln Avenue and Washington Street (8)

Five of the six intersections with the most collisions were located along the Washington Street/Normal Street corridor.

Figure 4.1 Vehicular Needs



- High Vehicle Collisions (5 or more in a 5-Year Period)
- Low Average Speed to Posted Speed Ratio (<50%) during One or More Peak Period
- Hillcrest Community Boundary
- Community Plan Boundaries

Data Source: Chen Ryan Associates (2020); City of San Diego; SANDAG/SANGIS Regional GIS DataWarehouse ([www.sangis.org](http://www.sangis.org))

0 250 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 Feet

## 4.2 TRANSIT NEEDS

The City of Villages growth strategy supports better utilization of the region's transit system by directing the development of urban villages, employment centers, and other higher intensity land uses in areas that can be well served by transit. This will allow more people to live and work within walking distance of transit.

Within Hillcrest there are seven bus routes, including one Rapid bus route (215) and two limited stop routes (Routes 10 and 120). All seven bus routes serving Hillcrest operate at headways of fifteen minutes or better. Park Boulevard between El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue features center-running transit only lanes which are utilized by the Rapid 215. Most of the community is within a quarter mile of a bus stop. Destinations and places reached by the Hillcrest-serving bus routes include Downtown, Fashion Valley, and San Diego State University, East San Diego, Southeastern San Diego/Encanto and La Mesa. The business community also operates a free circulator shuttle during the lunch peak period called the Hillcrest Lunch Loop.

Several existing transit routes which run along University Avenue within Hillcrest are planned for upgrade to Rapid service in the future. The adequate performance of these routes would be ensured if protected from the slow traffic speeds which congest University Avenue during the peak periods, making bus operations through the neighborhood susceptible to delay. Pedestrian safety is another major issue which impacts transit users. Many of the highest pedestrian-injury collision locations occur along University Avenue, where many persons begin or end their transit trip in Hillcrest. These transit needs are illustrated in Figure 4.2.

All seven bus routes serving Hillcrest operate at headways of 15 minutes or better.

### ON-TIME PERFORMANCE

University Avenue is the heaviest transit corridor in the community, with four bus routes (Routes 1, 10, 11 and 120) utilizing a portion of University Avenue as part of their alignment through Hillcrest. This corridor experiences traffic congestion and slower travel speeds during the peak periods which can negatively impact the reliability of bus services. With no dedicated transit priority treatments along the corridor, buses along University Avenue are frequently stuck in the same congestion as private vehicles. Implementation of transit priority measures may be desired along some portions of roadway within Hillcrest.

With no dedicated transit priority treatments along University Avenue, buses along the corridor are frequently stuck in the same congestion as private vehicles.

### SAFETY

Nearly all transit users access transit stops by walking and some users access transit by bicycling. Frequent occurrences of pedestrian and bicycle collisions near a transit stop may indicate potential safety risk for transit users. University Avenue is the corridor with the most pedestrian and bicyclist injury collisions in the study area. Within Hillcrest, there are bus stops along University Avenue, Washington Street and Fourth and Fifth Avenues that are within 500 feet of ten or more pedestrian and bicycle injury collision locations.

### PLANNED TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS

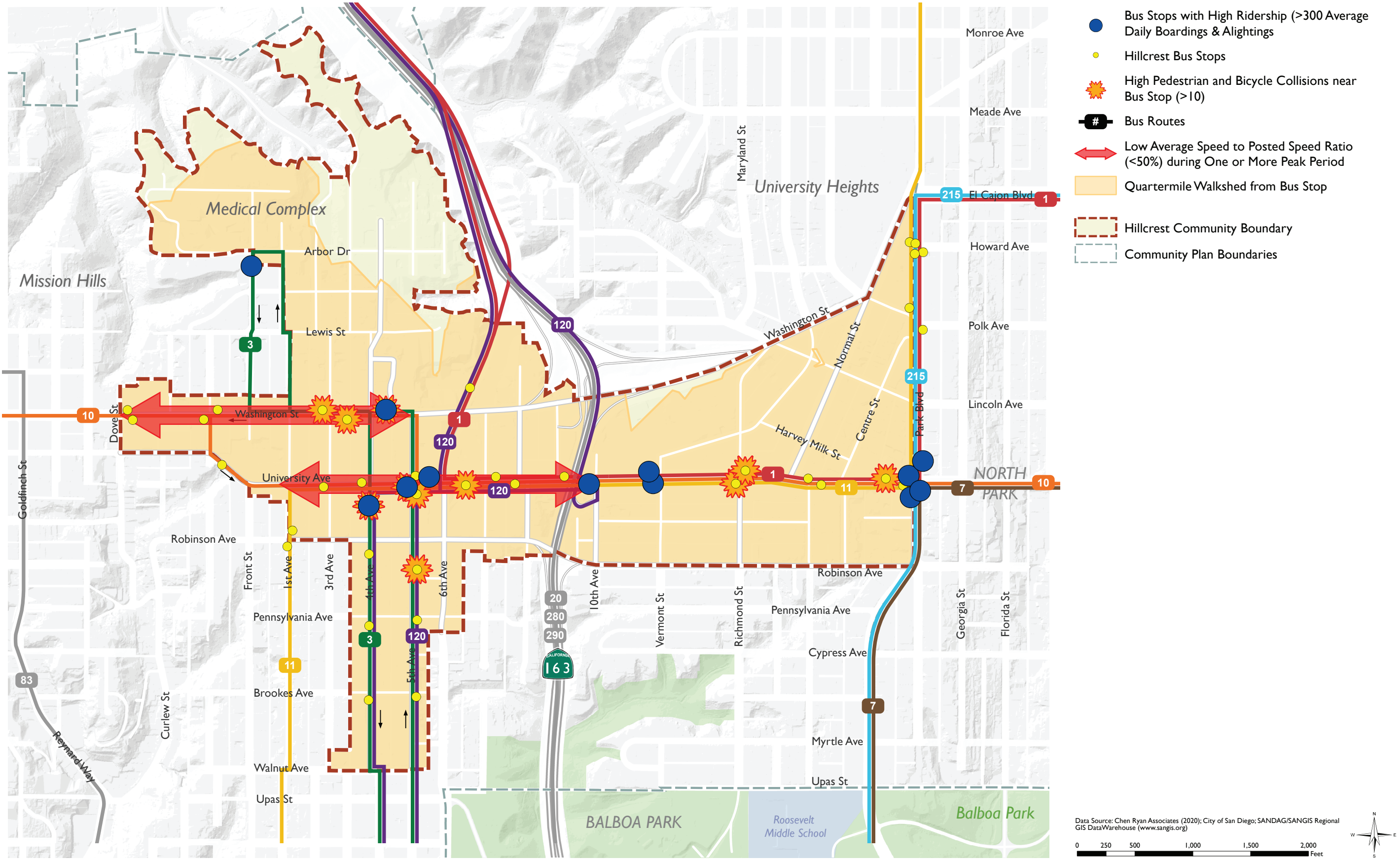
SANDAG's San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan and 2019 Federal Regional Transportation Plan Update includes upgrades of several existing Hillcrest-serving local bus routes (Routes 10, 11 and 120) to Rapid-branded service by 2035. Rapid service may entail wider (consolidated) stop spacing – allowing for faster,

longer distance service; improved all-day frequencies, potential transit priority along portions of alignments, and other potential measures which may reduce dwell time.

The Regional Plan also plans for the existing Rapid 215 alignment to be converted to light rail, with the first phase to Mid-City opening in 2050. A streetcar loop along University Avenue, Fourth and Fifth Avenues, B Street, serving Hillcrest, Bankers Hill, Downtown and Balboa Park is also among the transit projects planned for completion in 2025. SANDAG is in the process of developing the Regional Plan 2021, which will feature the agency's 5 Big Moves transportation strategy. The strategy aims to design the region's future transportation system around high-speed transit, multimodal corridors, mobility hubs, first and last mile mobility options, and transportation systems technology.



Figure 4.2 Transit Needs



## 4.3 BICYCLE NEEDS

Bicycle infrastructure should provide for the safety and comfort of its users, and the bicycle network should be very well connected across a community. Safety and comfort are paramount considerations, since by nature, active travelers are more exposed than those inside a vehicle. Unsafe or uncomfortable conditions discourage the decision to make a trip by bike. Network connectivity is also paramount, since safe, comfortable infrastructure will not be useful if destinations cannot be reached.

Bicycle needs are found throughout Hillcrest. Needs are identified by locations with a high number of bicycle collisions, the amount of stress likely to be experienced by a bicyclist, lack of existing bicycle facilities, and high cycling demand.

### EXISTING BICYCLE FACILITIES

Figure 4.3 shows existing and planned facilities in Hillcrest. There are three general classifications of bicycle facilities within Hillcrest totaling 4.1 miles, including:

**Class I – Bike Path** (also termed shared-use or multi-use paths): Bike paths are paved right-of-way for exclusive use by bicyclists, pedestrians, and those using non-motorized modes of travel. They are physically separated from vehicular traffic and can be constructed in roadway right-of-way or exclusive right-of-way.

There is one Class I multi-use path within Hillcrest, a bridge overpass which connects the portions of Vermont Street separated by Washington Street and its SR-163 on-ramps.



The only Class I bike path in Plan Hillcrest Area is the SR-163 overpass.

**Class II – Bike Lane:** Bike lanes are defined by pavement striping and signage used to allocate a portion of a roadway for exclusive or preferential bicycle travel. Bike lanes are one-way facilities on either side of a roadway.

The following sections of bike lanes traverse the study area (with their origin or destination area noted, if it is not Hillcrest), including:

- University Avenue from Fifth Avenue to Normal Street
- Northbound Fifth Avenue from Elm Street (in South Bankers Hill) to Washington Street
- Cleveland Avenue from Madison Avenue (in University Heights) to Richmond Street
- Richmond Street from University Avenue to Brookes Terrace (near Balboa Park)
- Park Boulevard from University Avenue to Zoo Drive (in Balboa Park)



A Class II bike lane defined by pavement striping.

**Class III - Bike Route:** Bike routes provide shared use with motor vehicle traffic within the same travel lane and are frequently marked with a shared-lane marking. Designated by signs, bike routes provide continuity to other bike facilities or designate preferred routes through corridors with high demand.

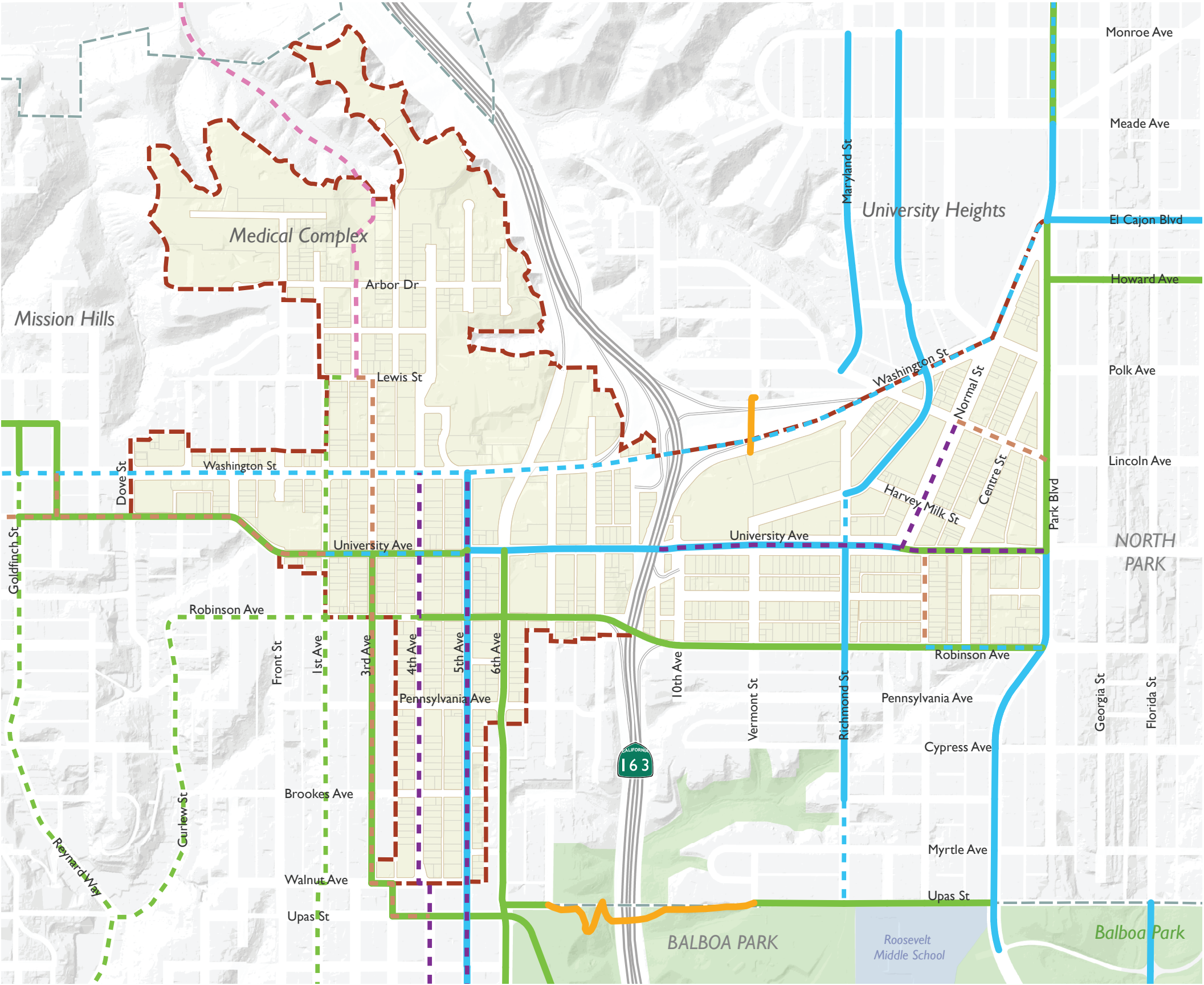
There are a few sections of bike routes within Hillcrest, which include:

- University Avenue from Goldfinch Street (in Mission Hills) to Fifth Avenue
- University Avenue from Normal Street to Park Boulevard
- Robinson Avenue from Fourth Avenue to Park Boulevard
- Park Boulevard from El Cajon Boulevard to University Avenue
- Third Avenue from University Avenue to Walnut Avenue
- Sixth Avenue from University Avenue to Laurel Street (in Bankers Hill)



A Class III bike route denoted by a painted “sharrow” sign.

Figure 4.3 Existing Bicycle Facilities



- Existing Bicycle Facilities**
- Class I - Bike Path
  - Class II - Bike Lane
  - Class III - Bike Route
- Planned Bicycle Facilities**
- Class IV - Cycle Track
  - Class II - Bike Lane
  - Class III - Bike Route
  - Bike Blvd (Enhanced Class III)
  - Class II (Uphill) / Class III (Downhill)
- Hillcrest Community Boundary
- Community Plan Boundaries

Data Source: Chen Ryan Associates (2020); City of San Diego; SANDAG/SANGIS Regional GIS Data Warehouse ([www.sangis.org](http://www.sangis.org))

0 250 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 Feet

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## BICYCLE SAFETY

Within Hillcrest there were an estimated 50 bicycle-involved collisions resulting in injury occurring over a five-year period between 2014 and 2018. There were nine intersection locations with two or more vehicular collision resulting in injury:

- Park Boulevard and University Avenue (3)
- Centre Street and University Avenue (3)
- Fifth Avenue and Washington Street (2)
- Sixth Avenue and University Avenue (2)
- Eighth Avenue and University Avenue (2)
- Normal Street and University Avenue (2)
- Fifth Avenue and Robinson Avenue (2)
- Seventh Avenue and Robinson Avenue (2)
- Richmond Street and Robinson Avenue (2)

Planned facilities, identified in the recently adopted Uptown Community Plan (2019) include additional types of facilities not currently present in the community, including Class IV cycle tracks, bicycle boulevards (enhanced bike routes) and hybrid Class II/Class III facilities.

## BICYCLE LEVEL OF TRAFFIC STRESS

Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) classifies the street network according to the estimated level of stress it causes cyclists. The measure takes into consideration a cyclist's physical separation from vehicular traffic, posted speed limits and number of travel lanes along a roadway, in addition to factors which may be present at intersection approaches such as right-turn only lanes and uncontrolled crossings. LTS scores range from 1 (lowest stress) to 4 (highest stress) and correspond to roadway conditions that

different cycling demographics would find suitable for riding based on stress tolerance. LTS 2 or lower is considered suitable for most user groups.

Several major corridors are LTS 4 in their entirety through Hillcrest, including Washington Street, Park Boulevard and Sixth Avenue. University Avenue is LTS 2 west of Fifth Avenue where it is two lanes wide and LTS 3 east of Fifth Avenue where it is four lanes wide (and LTS 4 across SR-163, where its bike lanes temporarily drop). The Fourth and Fifth Avenue couplet are LTS 3. Robinson Avenue is LTS 2 west of Tenth Avenue and LTS 3 to the east, due to the change in posted speed limit.

## BICYCLE DEMAND/PRIORITY

Bicycle Priority Areas are determined using the City of San Diego's Bicycle Priority Model. The model considers demand-based factors: inter-community demand, explained by the presence of or proximity and centrality to major activity centers such as smart growth areas and employment centers; and intra-community demand, based on concentrations of land uses and varieties of population. High detractors, based on collision history, traffic volumes, posted speeds, travel lanes, and slope, are combined with demand to determine priority.

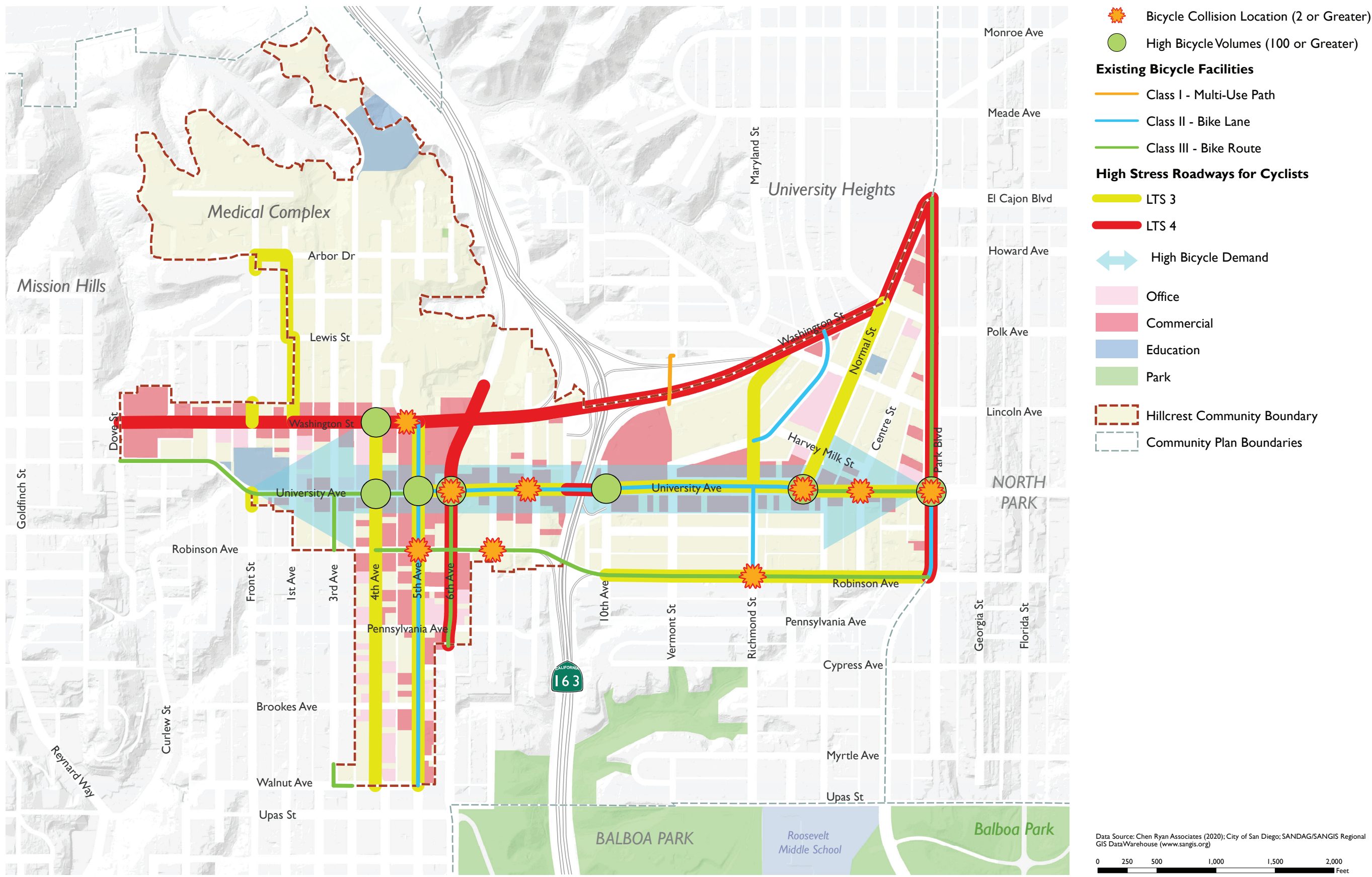
Nearly all of Hillcrest has high bicycle demand and priority characteristics based on the Bicycle Priority Model. Peak period count data reveals that much of Hillcrest's bicycling demand is carried by University Avenue, where as many as 50 cyclists pass through the corridor during each commute peak period.

The bicycle needs described previously are shown in Figure 4.4.

Several major corridors are LTS 4 in their entirety through Hillcrest, including Washington Street, Park Boulevard and Sixth Avenue.



Figure 4.4 **Bicycle Needs**



## 4.4 PEDESTRIAN NEEDS

The pedestrian environment affects us all whether we are walking to transit, a store, school, or simply walking from a parked car to a building. Most people prefer walking in places where there are sidewalks shaded with trees, lighting, interesting buildings, or scenery to look at, other people outside, neighborhood destinations, and a feeling of safety. Pedestrian improvements in areas with land uses that promote pedestrian activities can help to increase walking as a means of transportation and recreation. Land use and street design recommendations that benefit pedestrians also contribute to the overall quality, vitality, and sense of community of neighborhoods.

Pedestrian needs identified in the study area include locations with high pedestrian injury collisions, sidewalk connectivity issues, high existing pedestrian activity, and high pedestrian priority as reported by the update City of San Diego's Pedestrian Priority Model. These needs are depicted in Figure 4.5.

### PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Within Hillcrest there were an estimated 90 pedestrian-involved collisions resulting in injury occurring over a five-year period between 2014 and 2018. There were nine intersection locations with three or more vehicular collision resulting in injury:

- Third Avenue and Washington Street (5)
- Fifth Avenue and Washington Street (5)
- Fourth Avenue and Robinson Street (5)
- Fourth Avenue and University Avenue (4)
- Richmond Street and University Avenue (4)
- Park Boulevard and University Avenue (4)
- Front Street and Washington Street (3)

- Sixth Avenue and Pennsylvania Street (3)
- Tenth Avenue and University Avenue (3)

### SIDEWALK CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity is an important feature to consider for increasing walking activity levels across a community. A disconnected pedestrian network discourages active trip-making. Furthermore, a discontinuous network with low-quality or unsafe segments may cause a potential active traveler to choose driving instead of walking. Understanding barriers to connectivity, such as low-quality or missing sidewalk, is important for guiding long range planning recommendations.

The most notable gap in pedestrian connectivity within Hillcrest occurs along Washington Street, where between SR-163 and Lincoln Avenue there are no sidewalks on either side of the roadway and no direct alternatives. On the north side of Washington Street at Lincoln Avenue, signage prohibits pedestrians from continuing westward. Instead they are directed to Pascoe Street where they can access the Vermont Street bridge. The remaining locations with no sidewalk occurring in the study area are along local access cul-de-sac streets: Oneida Place, Oneida Way and Brookes Avenue east of Fifth Avenue.

### PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY MODEL

Pedestrian Priority Areas are determined using the City of San Diego's Pedestrian Priority Model. The model considers pedestrian-attracting land uses, population and demographic concentrations, and roadway environment characteristics. The model uses these factors to determine the areas where pedestrian demand is likely to be high and improvements may be most beneficial. Hillcrest is one of the highest pedestrian priority areas of the City. The entire community except for outskirt areas in the Medical Complex subarea score in the highest categories of the model.

### PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY

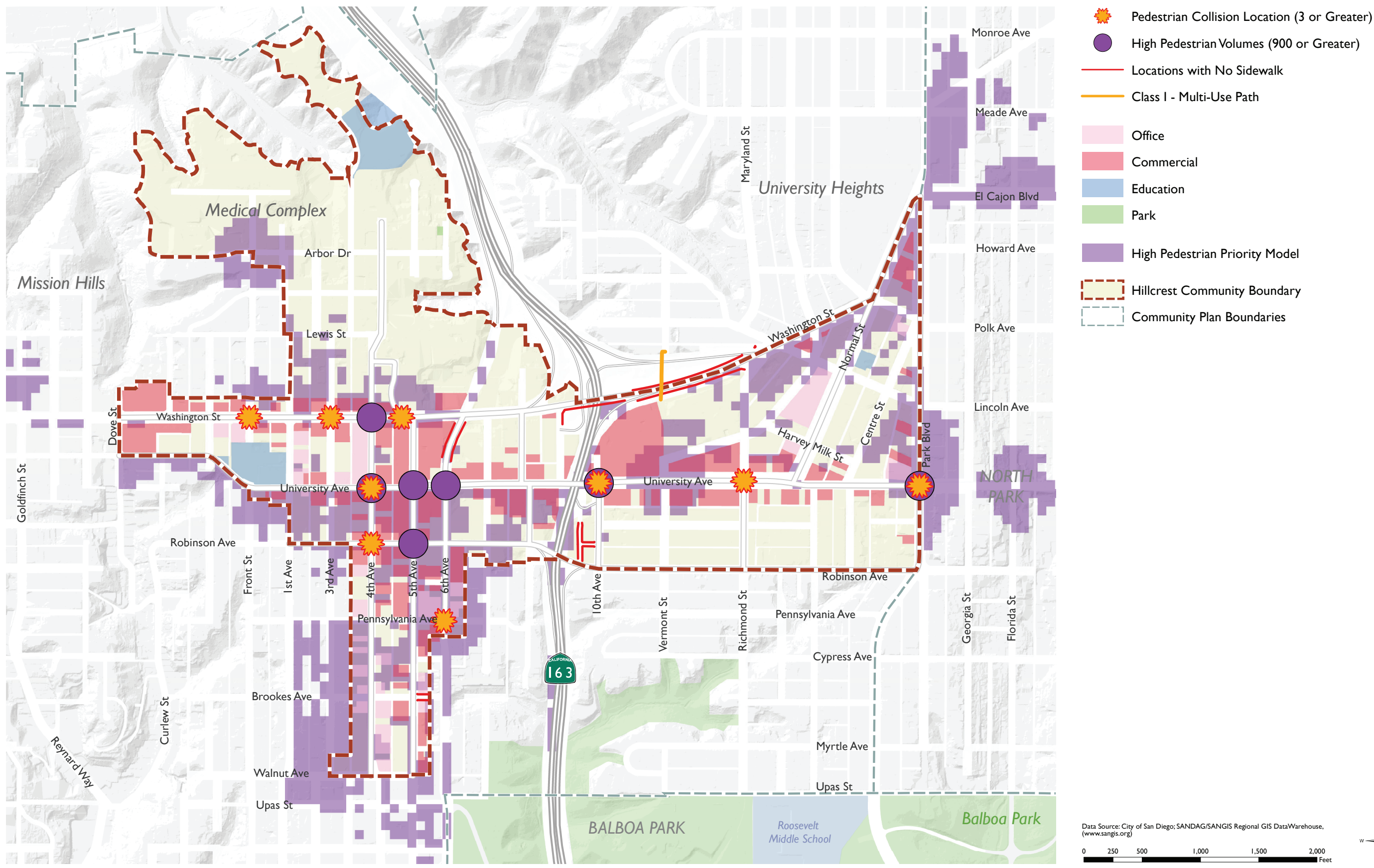
While pedestrian activity is high throughout much of Hillcrest, the highest pedestrian activity during the peak periods was observed within the commercial core area bounded by University Avenue, Robinson Avenue, Fourth Avenue and Sixth Avenue. These blocks have a walkable environment and the largest concentration of dining, drinking and retail establishments in the community.

More than 500 pedestrians were observed crossing intersections during the PM peak period at:

- Fourth Avenue and University Avenue
- Fifth Avenue and University Avenue
- Fifth Avenue and Robinson Avenue
- Tenth Avenue and University Avenue



Figure 4.5 Pedestrian Needs



## 4.5 PARKING NEEDS

The costs of building a large parking structure and land constraints within Hillcrest make significantly increasing the neighborhood’s supply of parking very challenging. Effective parking management practices can be used to maximize further use of a fixed supply of parking when increasing supply is not a feasible option. Within commercial areas of Hillcrest time restrictions are imposed in order facilitate turnover, enabling more unique visitors to make trips. When parking is priced accurately it allows a scarce supply of parking to be rationed efficiently, freeing up just enough supply to make parking easy to find no matter which location and filters users by their preferred medium of payment, in time or money. It also removes a hidden subsidy in most vehicular trips, which often leads transportation decisions to favor driving.

The peak weekday conditions for on-street parking observed during a 2016 Hillcrest parking study occurred between 6 PM and 8 PM. Between those hours, most residential streets (where parking is not metered and time restricted) had parking utilization exceeding 85%. On metered blocks, utilization during that period varied by location with some metered blocks in the village also exceeding 85%. During data collection, metered parking enforcement ended at 6 PM. After the study, an adjustment to the enforcement hours (to the current 10A M to 8 PM window) skew was implemented to help manage demand during the peak period. On-street parking on primarily residential-fronted blocks are heavily occupied during many off-peak periods as well. This is attributed to lower parking turnover activity generated by residents and the absence of parking time and cost restrictions. Often, visitors and commuters are incentivized to search for parking for parking on residential streets because of there are no cost or time restrictions.

Peak on-street parking utilization on weekends occurs between 12 PM and 3 PM, which is earlier in the day compared to weekday. This is because residents are more likely to be at home during the day on weekends, compared to weekday, while the activity peaks of the destinations are constant throughout the week (mid-

day to early evening). Meters are also not enforced on Sundays, which contributes to higher utilization and lower turnover. During the weekend peaks, most blocks of on-street parking throughout Hillcrest are utilized at 85% or more.

Peak weekday parking occurs between 6 PM and 8 PM, while peak weekend parking occurs between 12 PM and 3 PM.

### TRANSPORTATION TO WORK

Based on the US Census 2018 American Community Survey five-year estimates, 73% of the nearly 4,400 workers living in Hillcrest commute to work by vehicle, while 7% took public transportation, 6.5% percent walked and 3.7% bicycled. As shown in Figure 4.6, a typical household in Hillcrest spends between \$8,000 and \$10,000 annually on transportation expenses. Average household transportation spending citywide is \$10,495 annually. The average commute length in minutes for a worker residing in Hillcrest is about 26 minutes. Approximately 10% of Hillcrest residents have a commute of 10 minutes or less. The average vehicles per household within Hillcrest is 1.39, a substantially lower rate than the citywide 1.80 average vehicles per household. The average household size in Hillcrest is 1.78 persons, almost one person per household fewer than the City (2.77 persons). 6.2% of households in Hillcrest do not own a vehicle, which is comparable to the citywide percentage of households with no vehicles (6.5%).

A combined 17% of working Hillcrest residents either commute by walking, bicycling or transit.

The average vehicles per household within Hillcrest is 1.39, a substantially lower rate than the citywide 1.80 average vehicles per household.

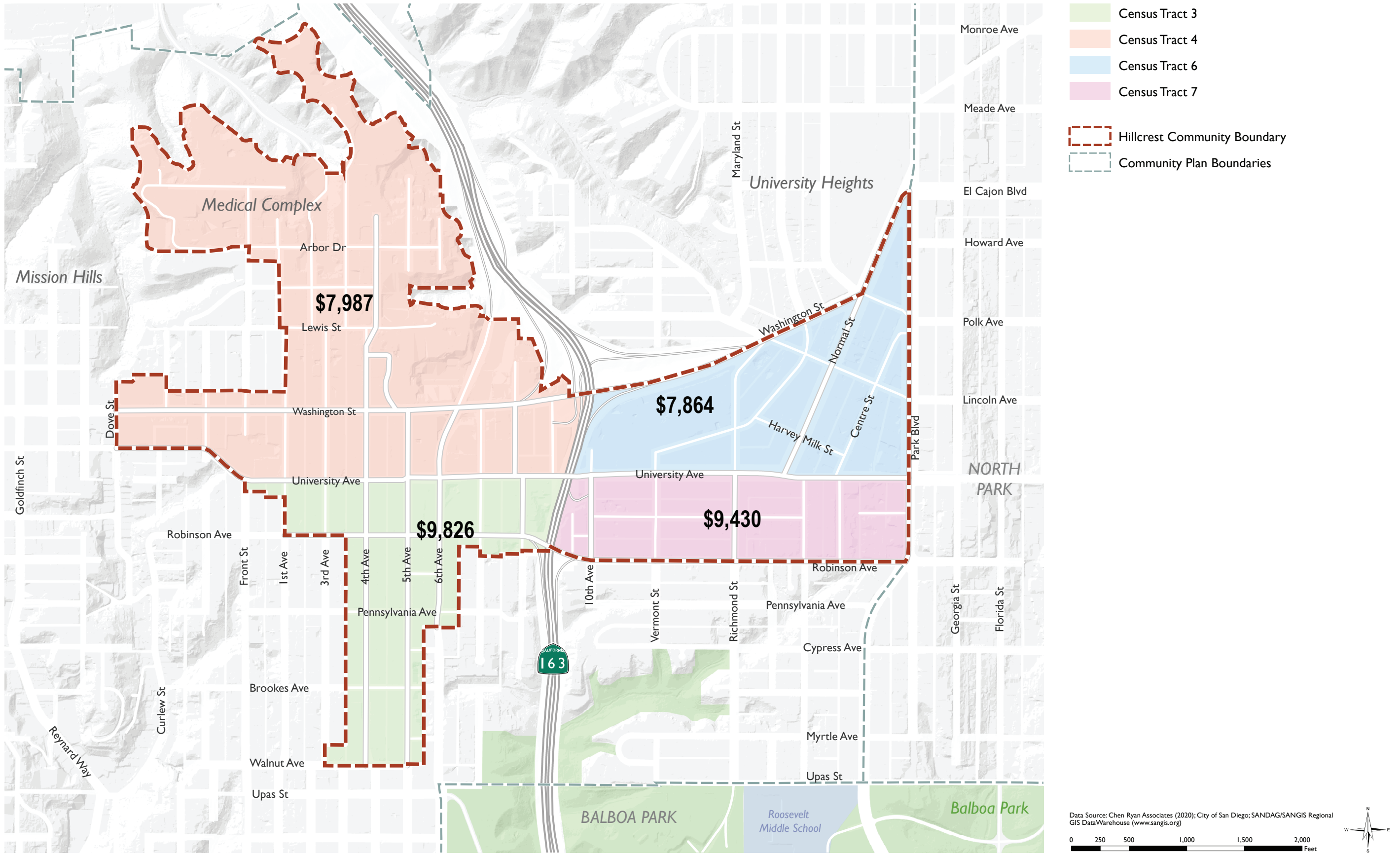
Table 4.1: Commute Mode Share Comparison

Commute Mode Share	Hillcrest	City of San Diego	San Diego County
Pedestrian	6.5%	3.0%	2.9%
Bicycle	3.7%	0.9%	0.7%
Public Transportation	7.1%	3.8%	2.9%
Vehicular	73.4%	83.5%	84.9%

Source: US Census, 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Figure 4.6 Transportation Spending



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# Appendix: Sources

## CHAPTER 1:

Chart 1.1, Chart 1.2a, Chart 1.2b, Table 1.2, Chart 1.3  
2017 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), 2017 Census Data

Table 1.1  
City of San Diego 2020; ACS 2013-2017; CoStar 2012-2020.

Figure 1.1-1.3  
City of San Diego, SANDAG/SANGIS The San Diego Association of Governments.  
[www.sandag.org](http://www.sandag.org) Regional GIS Data Warehouse. [www.sangis.org](http://www.sangis.org)

## CHAPTER 2:

Figure 2.1- Figure 2.8, Table 2.1, Chart 2.1, Chart 2.2  
City of San Diego, SANDAG/SANGIS The San Diego Association of Governments.  
[www.sandag.org](http://www.sandag.org) Regional GIS Data Warehouse. [www.sangis.org](http://www.sangis.org)

Table 2.2  
City of San Diego, Uptown Community Plan, 2016.  
[www.sandiego.gov/planning/community/profiles/uptown](http://www.sandiego.gov/planning/community/profiles/uptown)

Table 2.3  
San Diego Municipal Code, Chapter 13, Article 1, Divisions 04 and 05.  
[www.sandiego.gov/city-clerk/officialdocs/municipal-code](http://www.sandiego.gov/city-clerk/officialdocs/municipal-code)

Chart 2.3  
City of San Diego Climate Action Plan, 2019 Annual Report  
[www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2019\\_cap\\_digital\\_version.pdf](http://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2019_cap_digital_version.pdf)

Chart 2.4  
CoolClimate Calculator, UC Berkeley.  
<https://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/calculator>

## CHAPTER 3:

Figure 3.1, Figure 3.3, Figure 3.5-3.8, Chart 3.1-3.2  
City of San Diego, SANDAG/SANGIS The San Diego Association of Governments.  
[www.sandag.org](http://www.sandag.org) Regional GIS Data Warehouse. [www.sangis.org](http://www.sangis.org)  
  
Figure 3.2  
City of San Diego, SANDAG/SANGIS The San Diego Association of Governments.  
[www.sandag.org](http://www.sandag.org) Regional GIS Data Warehouse. [www.sangis.org](http://www.sangis.org)  
City of San Diego, Uptown Community Plan, 2016. [www.sandiego.gov/planning/community/profiles/uptown](http://www.sandiego.gov/planning/community/profiles/uptown)

Figure 3.4  
Parcel Quest [assr.parcelquest.com/Home](http://assr.parcelquest.com/Home)  
City of San Diego, SANDAG/SANGIS The San Diego Association of Governments.  
[www.sandag.org](http://www.sandag.org) Regional GIS Data Warehouse. [www.sangis.org](http://www.sangis.org)

## CHAPTER 4:

Figure 4.1- Figure 4.6  
City of San Diego, SANDAG/SANGIS The San Diego Association of Governments.  
[www.sandag.org](http://www.sandag.org) Regional GIS Data Warehouse. [www.sangis.org](http://www.sangis.org)  
  
Table 4-1  
US Census, 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates  
<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2019/acs-5-year.html>

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