

Mid-City Communities Plan Update Working Group Meeting Summary

MEETING DETAILS

December 11, 2024 • 6:00 – 8:00 P.M.

The meeting was conducted in a virtual format, allowing participation via Zoom only.

PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

During the first part of the Working Group meeting, the City presented the Draft Existing Conditions Mobility Assessment and Historic Preservation. The Working Group members were then encouraged to share their comments and provide feedback after each presentation. In addition, a portion of the meeting was dedicated for public comment. Community members discussed the aspects of the presentation that stood out to them and suggested ideas and provided feedback.

BACKGROUND

As a part of an inclusive engagement process, the City has convened a Working Group for the Mid-City Communities Plan Update. The primary role of the Working Group is to inform the Mid-City Communities Plan Update process. Additional details can be found by reviewing the *Mid-City Communities Plan Update Working Group Protocol and Membership* (April 16, 2024).

In addition, an orientation was held for Working Group members on April 24, 2024, to encourage members to make connections with other members and inform the Working Group on what to expect of their role and timeline of their involvement. The City published the *Mid-City Atlas* online on June 14, 2024. A Working Group meeting on June 26, 2024 included a presentation and discussion of the "Introduction," "History and Place," and "Sustainability, Climate, Equity, and Resilience" chapters of the *Mid-City Atlas*. The City released a *Draft Overview of Key Community Engagement Efforts* on September 4, 2024. The *Draft Overview of Key Community Engagement Efforts* includes key engagement efforts such as online surveys, in-person workshops, pop-up events, office hours, community interviews, emails, and youth engagement. Additionally, it features appendices with detailed information from the workshops, including attendance records, comments from community members, poll results, Zoom chat transcripts, and discussion group notes.

WORKING GROUP MEETING PARTICIPANTS

A total of 12 Working Group members attended the virtual meeting as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - List of Working Group Attendees

Working Group	Attendance	Community
Steve Aldana	Virtually/Zoom	City Heights
Marcellus Anderson	Absent	Designee - City Heights CPG
Thomas Aristide	Virtually/Zoom	Normal Heights
Madeleine Baudoin	Virtually/Zoom	Normal Heights
Emilie Colwell	Absent	Designee – Normal Heights CPG
Lynn Edwards	Virtually/Zoom	Designee - Eastern Area CPG
Brittany Gordon	Absent	City Heights
Eric Kelley	Virtually/Zoom	Eastern Area
David Moty	Virtually/Zoom	Designee - Kensington-Talmadge CPG
Nam Nguyen	Virtually/Zoom	City Heights
Victor Ponce	Virtually/Zoom	City Heights
Paul Smith	Virtually/Zoom	Eastern Area
Kristen Spittle	Virtually/Zoom	Kensington-Talmadge
Lisa Stone	Virtually/Zoom	Kensington-Talmadge
Randy Torres-Van Vleck	Virtually/Zoom	City Heights
Zach Young	Absent	Eastern Area

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

In addition to the Working Group members, there were 47 members of the public that attended the meeting virtually.

STAFF ATTENDANCE

The Working Group meeting was supported by City staff listed in Table 2.

Table 2 – Staff Attendance

Project Team	Attendance	Affiliation
Alexander Frost	Virtually/Zoom	City of San Diego
Apharna Padmakumar	Virtually/Zoom	City of San Diego
Selena Sanchez Bailon	Virtually/Zoom	City of San Diego
Shannon Corr	Virtually/Zoom	City of San Diego
Phil Trom	Virtually/Zoom	City of San Diego
Emanuel Alforja	Virtually/Zoom	City of San Diego
Kelly Stanco	Virtually/Zoom	City of San Diego
Kelsey Kaline	Virtually/Zoom	City of San Diego
Bernard Turgeon	Virtually/Zoom	City of San Diego

Coby Tomlins	Virtually/Zoom	City of San Diego
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MEETING SUMMARY AND ACTIVITIES

At the beginning of the meeting, staff welcomed Working Group members and the public to the meeting. Given it was a Zoom meeting, the Working Group members were encouraged to have their cameras switched on and “rename” Zoom to include their name and which community they represent. Introductions were also made for City staff and team members. The meeting started with an introduction, meeting logistics and agreement followed by presentations on the Draft Existing Conditions Mobility Assessment and Historic Preservation. Working Group members then shared their feedback through a facilitated discussion. The questions used to prompt discussion included:

- Anything that stands out to you?
- Are there any mobility needs not showcased or explored in this analysis?
- Any clarifications or questions?

The meeting continued with the City giving a presentation focusing on Historic Preservation which was intended to introduce the Historic and Cultural Resource Component of the Mid-City Communities Plan Update. After presenting these findings, the Working Group members provided their feedback based on the following questions:

- Sites and resources that are important to you?
- What’s important in social and cultural history of the Mid-City communities that we should be aware of?
- Any clarifications or questions?

Notes from the Working Group’s discussion related to the *Working Group Meeting* are included in Appendix A.

The meeting concluded with the City outlining upcoming events and engagement opportunities.

Records of the questions and answers during the public comment portion of the meeting are included in Appendix B; comments from the Zoom chat are compiled in Appendix C.

NEXT STEPS

- The next Working Group meeting is scheduled for March 19th 2024.
- Public Engagement Summary was released at the end of 2024.
- Historic Context Statement & Survey was released at the end of 2024.
- A Draft Framework Vision & Concepts is planned to be released in Spring/Summer 2025.

APPENDIX A – WORKING GROUP DISCUSSION NOTES

Feedback provided from Working Group members in response to *Draft Existing Conditions Mobility Assessment* and related to the historic preservation work program and process included the following:

MOBILITY

- Traffic congestion in and out of neighborhoods, especially Montezuma Road to Collwood Boulevard, causes delays and risks during emergencies (e.g., wildfires).
- 80% of residents drive, but bus prioritization, such as in El Cajon Boulevard (ECB), is causing longer commutes and negative environmental impacts due to idling.
- Disparity in infrastructure improvements, with tourist areas getting better streets and mobility improvements while others, like roads in Mid-City are in poor condition, are neglected.
- Eastern Area is the least walkable in Mid-City, with insufficient sidewalks along key transit routes, impacting transit use.
- Figure 2-1 is missing sidewalks from Streamview Dr and Billman St- longstanding requests for sidewalk improvements remains unmet, with only 20% completed.
- Euclid and Monroe are neighborhood streets that are super congested due to the limited exits from Talmadge.
- Aldine Dr is heavily used, and traffic is worsened by substandard road design.
- Need for shade trees at bus stops.
- The 15 multi-modal path between Normal Heights, Kensington, and Mission Valley should be recognized in planning maps for better connectivity.
- The elderly face significant mobility challenges as they are unable to drive, compounded by the existing issues within the transportation system, there is a need to explore driving services for the senior community.
- Need for traffic calming along Adams Ave due to high speeds from freeway 805 and 15 exits.
- Mid-City has high transit ridership as shown in presentation, but would like to see more analysis comparing Mid-City mobility conditions to citywide conditions, would help to put data into perspectives.
- Mid-City has significant traffic violence, especially on high-risk streets like ECB, University, and Euclid. There is a need for more equity lenses to the mobility data, as it relates to traffic violence.
- Call for more bus-only lanes and safer pedestrian spaces, particularly near high-speed traffic areas and poorly lit bus stops, specifically along Bus Route 13 in Poplar, Redwood, and Fairmount.

- Strong need for proactive traffic safety investments, not just reactive after incidents (e.g., 54th St. crash death).
- Mobility network should be able to get people in and out as efficiently as possible.
- Mobility is an equity issue because not everyone can take public transportation, for example the military, parents with many kids, blue collar workers with their vans.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- Concern over the deadline to submit comments on the Draft Historic Context Statement, ensure Vietnamese community members will have time to provide feedback on the boundaries of Little Saigon.
- Acknowledges the Talmadge Historical Society and Historic Kensington for their volunteer work in identifying potential historic districts in their neighborhoods as part of the 1998 Mid-City Communities Plan.
- Encourages neighborhoods to carefully examine what is historic in their area, emphasizing the importance of preserving historical and architectural heritage during redevelopment.
- Personal preference for older housing styles over modern designs, which Working Group member finds sterile and uninviting.
- Only 5% of the housing stock is pre-WWII and should be protected.
- Interested in learning more about the cultural designation of sites and properties.
- Concern over if the Draft Historic Context Statement from December 13 will be reviewed at the next working group meeting.
- Stress the importance of historic preservation in the plan.
- PANA aims to highlight City Heights as a historic refugee neighborhood, which has been a vital part of Mid-City's identity since the 1970s and would like this recognized in the plan.
- Points out that the 50th St and University Ave area has been home to one of the largest Somali enclaves in the U.S., now the third largest due to high housing costs, and is an important cultural and economic hub, often referred to as Little Mogadishu or Little East Africa.
- PANA seeks recognition for the historic refugee status of parts of Mid-City in the plan.
- Acknowledge other diverse communities in the area, diversity is one of the key strengths and hallmarks of the neighborhoods.

APPENDIX B – PUBLIC COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, AND ANSWERS FROM THE CITY

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following are comments, feedback, and concerns shared by the public attendees during the public comment period of the meeting.

1. Concern that cars have been prioritized over transit in recent decades.
2. Expressed support for bus-only lanes, as they improve bus ride speed (e.g., El Cajon express bus).
3. Mixed feelings about historic preservation; feels it's being used to prevent high-density housing.
4. Historic designations mainly benefit high-income, well-educated people, while others struggle to do necessary research.
5. Concern about the large portion of Talmadge seeking historic designation.
6. Supports preserving sidewalk design (trolley) in Normal Heights, as it adds charm.
7. Wants to preserve blocks of cement in Normal Heights showing original contractor stamps.
8. Concern about an old house on ECB and 37th Street and a brick façade exposed on the north side of the street, both potentially at risk of demolition.
9. Inquired about the status of historical trees in the Historic Preservation Survey and potential preservation.
10. Supports providing alternatives to driving, especially to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
11. Advocates for transit and bus-only lanes in ECB; highlights low transit ridership due to lack of alternatives.
12. Believes city streets should be repurposed to better support non-driving transportation modes.
13. Supports historic designation of individual properties but opposes large-scale neighborhood designations that prevent housing development.
14. Concerned about Kensington becoming a historic district, which could hinder needed density.
15. Requests city's written responses to comment cards provided during a working group meeting on the draft atlas.
16. Question about the absence of a bus line on College Grove Drive for city workers.
17. Emphasizes that historic preservation and building housing are not mutually exclusive, citing Manhattan as an example.
18. Advocates for decoupling the idea that historic districts block housing.
19. Concern about unpaved alleys being unsafe due to lack of lighting, urging both paving and lighting improvements.

20. Believes streetlights are more efficient than building lights, which can create shadows.
21. Inquired about when the final existing conditions report will be published.
22. Questioned the city's mobility prioritization graphic, which ranked walking/rolling at the top and electric vehicles at the bottom.
23. Inquired about the absence of parking considerations in the report, particularly regarding its impact on businesses and their customers.
24. Questioned the legitimacy of the mobility data, suggesting that cyclists commuting on newly improved routes (outside major thoroughfares) should be counted for more accurate representation.

APPENDIX C - RECORD OF COMMENTS PROVIDED THROUGH ZOOM CHAT

Person 1 testing

Person 2 Hello, this is a test to make sure everyone (panelists and public) can use the chat. Can someone from the public, please confirm they received this?

Person 3 Received

Person 2 thank you!

Person 4 Got it

Person 5 thank you, i will lower my hand now. d laman

Person 1 quarter mile for this figure

Person 6 And the transit needs write up (with the quarter mile description) is included on page 142 of the report (Section 6.3).

Person 5 aldine dr. is F also

Person 7 All the bus stops need seating and shade, or shade at a minimum.

Person 7 To get people in and out of Normal Heights, open up 40th Street south from the 15. Congestion is causing terrible backups getting into the community.

Person 7 Also, the map does not show unpaved alleys. There are 7 blocks worth of unpaved alleys in Normal Heights south of Adams.

Person 6 We are currently assessing the unpaved alleys, including their condition and location, based on prior comments.

Person 5 Why isn't there a bus line on College Grove Dr. for all the city workers who are now parking outside the Operations yard.

Person 8 We should not double down on our vehicular dependency - these equity, global warming, and natural disaster justifications are unfounded and in bad faith

Person 9 Eric's comments are factually incorrect and we can read his anti-transit and anti-bike bias

Person 4 That's a very rude comment Paul Jamason.

Person 9 Eric's comments were rude. Why is he allowed to make them but not me?

Person 9 The state is requiring San Diego to reduce Vehicle Miles Travelled. How would removing bus-only lanes to prioritize single-occupancy vehicles over transit users help reach this goal?

Person 9 Many middle and lower-income folks ride bikes to get to transit, jobs and school. Saying "don't focus so much on people who ride their bikes for fun" is factually incorrect and is a common attack from anti-bike motorists.

Person 9 "Upper class people riding their bikes for fun"

Person 10 Thank you Paul, I appreciate your thoughts and agree.

Person 9 If a motorist drives to the gym, why do they have an inherent right to a congestion-free drive, yet a recreational bicyclist has no right to a ride where their life isn't in danger?

Person 11 a traffic safety ambassador working for Euclid Elementary told me in 2012 or so that 90% of students walk, bike, or scoot to school. that's significantly higher than the national average.

Person 11 what's the historic property on University near 58th in Eastern Area?

Person 9 Transit users and bicyclists pay taxes for our public roads. Motorists don't own them. So providing a transit-only lane isn't "taking it away from motorists" as Erik said.

Person 11 what's a windshield survey again?

Person 12 Hi Randy. It's a cursory evaluation of an area where we note groupings of possible resources, but do not evaluate them in detail or confirm whether they are eligible for designation. It's the first phase of surveying and evaluating resources.

Person 1 Daniele the short answer is city doesn't have jurisdiction over federal property. A detailed answer is available in the meeting summary from the last WG meeting
https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2024-11/2024-09-11-mid-city-working-group-meeting-summary_final-1.pdf

Person 1 Randy, windshield survey is looking at buildings via driving and walking

Person 1 in this case to assess the historic significance of the built environment

Person 11 thanks, everyone.

Person 5 Jurisdiction is not the issue, it's still part of the neighborhood.

Person 7 Is the house on the southeast corner of the 37th and ECB an historic resource? I've heard it's the oldest house in the former City of East San Diego.

Person 7 There is what might be an architecturally significant property on the northeast corner of 37th and ECB. It has a gorgeous exposed brick facade on the upper story.

Person 1 Historic Context Statement will be released on Friday

Person 7 I meant southeast corner of 37th and ECB.

Person 9 Given our housing crisis, we shouldn't be making it harder to build new housing in existing neighborhoods by declaring them historic. The Talmadge Park Estates Historic District bypassed all city planning processes.

Person 3 Infill housing the most expensive to build.

Person 13 As everyone can see from the Mid-City Historic Preservation Survey slide, Kensington and western Talmadge were identified in 1996 as a potential historic district. It did follow city planning processes. The City then let it sit idle for 25 years.

Person 5 could we please exit the presentation, and put up the full screen?

Person 9 Proponents of the Historic District have always criticized the city for not involving the community in decisions. Yet the Historic District was done completely outside of city planning processes and the associated community outreach that occurs. Work done 28 years ago surely should have been revisited with today's residents.

Person 13 Significant community outreach has, was, and will be done - flyers, letters and meetings. This argument is grasping at straws.

Person 9 What outreach was performed outside of Talmadge? Why wasn't this a D9 discussion?

Person 12 The City's Heritage Tree program is with the Urban Forester in the City's Transportation Department

Person 14 Hi Marianne, the little house at 37th and El Cajon is designated already. The Hille-Schnug House. It was built in 1880. You can find more info on it here:

https://sandiego.cfwebtools.com/search.cfm?local=true&res_id=14888&local_id=1&display=resource&key_id=967

Person 7 Thank you.

Person 4 Can't hear Danielle

Person 9 Adding more general purpose lanes hasn't worked to reduce congestion in San Diego because of induced demand <https://www.wired.com/2014/06/wuwt-traffic-induced-demand/>

Person 1 Daniele, we responded here https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2024-12/draft-response-to-community-feedback_mid-city-atlas.pdf

Person 1 Eric, okay to submit additional comments until Jan. 15, 2025

Person 5 there are over 1,000 city workers working out of the operations yard. It's a un-mapped employment center, impacting the neighborhood.

Person 6 Unimproved Alleys – Council Policy 200-01:

https://docs.sandiego.gov/councilpolicies/cpd_200-01.pdf

City's Pavement Management Plan Report:

<https://www.sandiego.gov/transportation/programs/pavement-management-plan>

Person 14 one theory I have for the many crashes in City Heights is because every block on Uni Ave and ECB has an alley that connects perpendicularly to the major street. between each intersection we have an alley intersection. this creates additional traffic conflict opportunities for all users and creates more complicated turning movements throughout the corridors. we need a traffic safety solution for this.

Person 15 Council Policy 200-01: https://docs.sandiego.gov/councilpolicies/cpd_200-01.pdf

Person 9 Thank you Kelley

Person 15 City's Pavement Management Plan Report:

<https://www.sandiego.gov/transportation/programs/pavement-management-plan>

Person 7 Are apartments required to light their alley sides?

Person 4 There are some lights on telephone poles in alleys.

Person 12 www.sandiego.gov/preservationandprogress for anyone who is interested in learning more or participating in the update process

Person 9 Manhattan just made it illegal to build single floor ADU s in historic districts - not sure that's the model we want to follow <https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2024/11/22/city-of-yes-council-vote-parking>

Person 13 I wanted to make sure staff revisit the ADT count for Fairmount between Aldine & Montezuma

Person 6 The Modal Loading Priority Chart:

Person 12 ADUs are permitted within historic districts in the City of San Diego. They always have been and that won't be changing. We do, however, want to provide greater clarity for everyone on how that can be done.

Person 6 Sorry, trying to add the chart. Will get it here shortly.

Person 6 Alternatively, it is on Page 71 of the Mobility Master Plan here (with some context as well under the "Vision For Mobility" section): <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/draft-mmp-2024.pdf>

Person 9 Thanks Kelley and I appreciate this part of your link "The reactive nature of the Heritage Preservation Program also unnecessarily burdens projects on properties that do not have historical importance or value through added review requirements, processing times and uncertainties.

Additionally, adaptive reuse and expansion of historic properties can be hindered by requirements that lack clarity for developers. The City continues to suffer from a lack of supply of homes affordable to people of all incomes, and more certainty is needed to allow for the building of more homes to combat

this crisis. The Mayor’s Middle-Income Housing Working Group also identified these issues as a challenge for the development of new middle-income housing in San Diego.”

Person 16 Happy Holidays and thank you all.

Person 9 Thank you!

Person 17 Thank you!

Person 18 Thankyou!

Person 19 Thank you!

Person 11 thanks!

APPENDIX D – ZOOM ATTENDANCE

Zoom List of Public Attendees

- Bettina Rausa
- Delhia Allen
- Dike Anyiwo
- Marianne Greene
- Allan Harjala
- Edwin Lohr
- Fernando Moya
- Alysse Hogan
- Scott Kessler
- Cori Schumacher
- Tom Mullaney
- Paul Jamason
- Catherine Hanna Schrock
- María E Gonzalez
- Vito Spano
- Oswaldo Carranza
- Christine Young
- Byron Bunda
- Maria Cortez
- Martin Flores
- Matthew Gelbman
- Carrie Bitsko
- Michael May
- Daniele Iaman
- Alex Hemphill
- Benjamin Arcia
- Steven Thrush
- Christine Babla
- Gabby Simon
- Francisco Zapata
- Casey Schooner
- Alex Zukas
- Paul Coogan

- Lindsay Rodriguez
- Denise Padilla
- Jan Hintzman
- Mary Otero
- Laura Riebau
- Patricia Vaccariello
- Maurize Rios
- Eva Yakutis
- Nicholas Ratinaud
- Sharon Gehl
- Karen Kinney
- Christine Young
- Herbert Vogler
- Anar Salayev