



REPORT

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

DATE ISSUED: April 14, 2025

REPORT NO.: 202

ATTENTION: Parks and Recreation Board
Agenda of April 17, 2025

SUBJECT: College Area Community Plan Update - Recreation Element

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE BOARD.

BACKGROUND

The College Area Community Plan Area is approximately 1,970 acres. The community is bounded on the north by Interstate 8, east by the City of La Mesa and west by the Kensington-Talmadge Community and south by the Eastern Area Community. San Diego State University (SDSU) is in the center of the community, with a transit center served by an underground Trolley station. College Avenue is the primary north-to-south gateway connecting El Cajon Boulevard to SDSU and I-8. The community's neighborhoods are bisected by corridors that include El Cajon Boulevard, Collwood Boulevard, College Avenue, Montezuma Road, Reservoir Drive and 70th Street. Alvarado Road also includes the East Campus Medical Center at UC San Diego Health, adjacent to a Trolley station. A comprehensive overview of existing conditions in the College Area Community is provided in the [College Area Community Atlas](#). For additional background information, see the College Area Community Plan Update webpage, plancollegearea.org.

DISCUSSION

The first draft of the updated College Area Community Plan contains detailed goals, policies, regulations and maps. Its contents were developed with input from multiple meetings with the College Area Community Plan Update Subcommittee and key stakeholders, as well as additional input via workshops, surveys and technical analyses. The purpose of the first draft of the Community Plan is to provide the public with an opportunity for input, which will guide refinements to be integrated into the second draft.

The Parks and Recreation Element of the Community Plan is being presented to the Board as an information item only to seek feedback, which will be incorporated in addition to other public comments in a second draft community plan anticipated to be released this summer. The City will seek action from the Board to recommend approval of the draft community plan at a future meeting this year.

How does the Community Plan Update plan for additional park and recreational space?

The College Area Community Plan Update identifies opportunities for new parks and recreation spaces to be built when new homes are developed throughout the life of the plan. This can be achieved by providing new parks, trails, plazas and public spaces with recreational amenities as part of future development. The Community Plan Update encourages continued joint-use agreements with schools and the potential for work with SDSU to increase access to recreational spaces, explores the possibility of new recreation on land that the City owns, encourages excess right-of-way to be utilized for green space and supports land acquisition and the development of new parks.

Proposed Parks, Trails and Recreational Spaces

The proposed parks, trails and recreational spaces in the Community Plan Update are designed to maximize recreational opportunities for a growing community. The list below highlights some of the identified parks and facilities, which were developed through public/private partnerships, the repurposing of underutilized public land, recommended improvements to existing parks, and feedback from the Infrastructure Priorities Community Survey. Attachment B provides a comprehensive list of all proposed parks and recreational facilities included in the draft Community Plan Update's Recreation Element.

- The College Avenue Joint-Use Park is an innovative joint-use opportunity between the College Avenue Church and the City to develop a park on an overflow parking lot. This park could feature amenities such as playgrounds, basketball courts, an open lawn and a walking path.
- Another potential joint-use agreement exists with the State which could lead to the creation of a unique neighborhood park between Alvarado Road and the elevated trolley tracks. This park might include a network of multi-use paths, nature play areas, demonstration gardens and educational signage.
- The site of the former College Heights Water Tank presents an opportunity to create a pocket park on publicly owned land, which could include a small dog park, fitness circuit and basketball court.
- Through the Infrastructure Priorities community survey, led by the City Planning Department, a pocket park near the intersection of 54th Street and New Mills Road has been identified and included in the upcoming second draft of the plan. The pocket park could include bicycle repair stations, a shade structure, a fitness circuit and signage.
- The plan also recommends converting the old library, currently housing the San Diego Police Museum, into a 17,000-square-foot multi-story recreation center. The Recreation Center can include an indoor gym with multi-use courts, a community room and a public plaza.

Adjacent Parks and Recreation

The community plan also acknowledges the recreational opportunities and parks that exist just outside of the community boundary. Although these opportunities are outside of the community boundary, they provide opportunities for community members to recreate. For example, Clay Neighborhood Park within the Eastern Area is less than 600 feet from the southern College Area border. It is important to note that the recreational value associated with parks just outside the boundary is not counted toward the community recreational value total.

Development with Park Improvements

In addition to the specific park and recreational facilities opportunities in Attachment B, the Plan proposes supplemental development regulations as part of a Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone that will require developments to provide public space with recreational value on-site. Developments can construct on-site park improvements in accordance with Council Policy 600-33 in lieu of providing the public space requirement outlined in the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone.

Access to Parks

Park access is a major goal of the Parks Master Plan and is reflected in this Plan. The Community Plan Update proposes a transportation network that prioritizes safe, accessible and efficient mobility for all users. This vision is achieved through a ‘complete streets’ approach, integrating separated and well-connected bikeways, buffered sidewalks with shade trees and transit-priority measures that enhance connections to transit, parks, schools, homes and businesses.

Recreation Value Point Analysis

Consistent with the Parks Master Plan, future park needs are addressed using the Recreation Value Points system. The table below lists existing and proposed Recreation value points in relation to the current and forecasted population of the College Area community. The recreation value points goal represents the total community-wide points that would meet the standard adopted in the Parks Master Plan (100 points per 1,000 people).

Community Summary	
Existing and Planned Parks and Recreation Facilities Matrix	
Statistics - 2020 population	
Total Population:	20,300
Recreation Value Points Goal, 100 points per thousand:	2,030
Current Recreation Value Points:	171.5
2055 Population, Planned Facilities Built	
Projected 2055 population:	87,300
Recreation Value Points Goal, 100 points per thousand:	8,730
Current Recreation Value Points:	171.5
Planned Additional Recreation Value Points:	8558.5
Current + Planned Recreation Value Points Total:	8,730

Ongoing Opportunities

While new parks and recreation investments are not all explicitly identified in the draft Community Plan, it allows for and facilitates the continual process of identifying additional opportunities that may become available as the community develops. The community plan provides an opportunity for an additional 18,700 homes beyond the current adopted capacity along existing and planned bus rapid transit corridors such as El Cajon Boulevard, College Avenue and Montezuma Avenue as well as the two trolley stations.

The Community Plan Update accommodates a variety of housing types that meet the needs of a diverse range of people. Acknowledging the demand for housing allows for a comprehensive plan for orderly development to meet the needs of College Area community members. It is also important to note that the Community Plan does not require any new development to happen. New development will only happen when the demand materializes, and economic conditions allow. As more homes are built, the City will continuously assess development activity, location and community needs to identify, plan and deliver additional park and recreation facilities in alignment with housing growth over the 30-year planning horizon of the community plan.

Recreation value emphasizes the activities and experiences that people can enjoy rather than solely the acreage of parkland. It measures the inherent benefits of park spaces – the ability for park facilities to support active recreation and exercise, encourage socializing, link people to transit, bike facilities, trails and active public areas, and invite activity throughout the day. The proposed parks, trails and recreation spaces identified in the community plan's recreation element are planned to maximize the recreation opportunities that will serve the increasing number of community members.

As more homes become available, the City will continuously assess development activity, location and community needs to identify, plan and deliver additional park and recreation facilities to support the needs of the community. The implementation of 8,558.5 recreation value points through future residential development or other opportunities will only be necessary as full housing capacity outlined in the community plan update is built and occupied within the 30-year planning horizon of the community plan.

What type of Community Engagement has been conducted?

The College Area CPU Committee was formed in April 2020 and has hosted 20 public meetings (in-person and online) to discuss existing conditions and issues, overall goals and policies and concepts for land use, parks, mobility and urban design. Staff received additional input via workshops, surveys and technical analyses. In 2020, an online survey addressed mobility, homes, parks and public spaces, and the findings were summarized in a survey report. In 2020, an online survey provided feedback on locations for new homes and public spaces. Staff held office hours at the College-Rolando Library to allow stakeholders to learn more about the Community Plan Update for 38 total hours during June 2022. Staff held an open house event in June 2022 at the College Avenue Baptist Church to showcase the concepts developed for land use, urban design, parks and mobility.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Staff will consider input from the Parks & Recreation Board, Planning Commission, Mobility Board, Historical Resources Board, College Area Community Planning Group, community

members and other stakeholders before releasing the second draft of the updated College Area Community Plan. Staff anticipates releasing the second draft of the Community Plan and the supporting mobility report in the summer of 2025. Staff will seek a recommendation from the College Area Community Planning Group before beginning the public hearing process in Fall 2025. Documents relating to the College Area Community Plan Update process are available on the following website: plancollegearea.org.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment:

- A. College Area Draft Community Plan Recreation Element
- B. College Area Draft Parks and Recreation Inventory