

An aerial photograph of a park. In the foreground, there is a large playground with blue safety surfacing, wooden play structures, and slides. To the right of the playground is a picnic area with several green picnic tables and benches. Further back, there is a paved path that winds through the park. In the background, a body of water is visible, surrounded by a dense forest of trees. The overall scene is a lush, green park space.

6 Parks, Public Facilities & Open Space

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6.1. Introduction

OVERVIEW

This section describes the existing community facilities and open space for the Mid-City communities. Safe and convenient access to schools, fire and police stations, parks, recreational facilities, and open space is vital to a healthy community environment. For example, parks and natural spaces improve air and water quality, provide wildlife habitat, add natural buffers to urban landscapes, increase property values, spur local economies and improve general quality of life.

6.2. Parks and Recreation

PARKS, PRESERVATION, AND ACCESS

Mid-City’s system of parks and recreational facilities is diverse, ranging from community and neighborhood parks to mini parks, sports fields, and aquatic centers, some of which are shared with neighboring communities (Figure 6-1). There are three use categories of parks and recreation for residents and visitors, including:

- **Population-based parks** (commonly known as Neighborhood, Community, and Mini Parks), facilities, and services are located in close proximity to residential development and are intended to serve the daily needs of the neighborhood and community. Joint use parks/facilities are intended to provide active and passive recreational opportunities for school children when school is in session and the general public when school is not in session. Each joint use site is governed by a joint use agreement between the City of San Diego and the participating agency or school. Other park typologies, such as linear parks, plazas, trailhead pocket parks, trails, or privately-owned public open spaces (POPOS), may be appropriate for satisfying some of the community’s population-based park needs.
- **Resource-based parks** are located at, or centered on, notable natural or manufactured features (beaches, canyons, river parks, habitat systems, lakes, historic sites, and cultural facilities) and are intended to serve the City wide population, as well as visitors.
- **Open space lands** are generally City-owned lands located throughout the City, consisting of canyons, mesas, and other landforms. This open space is intended to preserve and protect native plants and animals, while providing public access and enjoyment by the use of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails.

PARK MASTER PLAN RECREATON VALUE-BASED PARK STANDARD

In the past, the City relied on a standard of 2.8 acres per 1,000 residents for parks. The Parks Master Plan (adopted in 2021) transitions the City from a land-based standard to a recreational value-based standard. The Recreational Value-Based Park Standard determines the value of parks in points based on features related to park size, recreational opportunities, access, amenities, activations, and overall value delivered.

As an outcome-based measure, the standard recognizes the value of parks appropriate for diverse communities, from ball fields to pocket parks to trails. Refer to the Parks Master Plan for further information on recreational value scoring. For Mid-City, points have been calculated for existing parks and then compared to the Citywide standard of 100 points per 1,000 residents (Table 6-1).

The Parks Master Plan also affirmed the need for facility-based metrics to measure how many recreation centers and aquatic complexes are available relative to a community’s population. This standard defines the number of people ideally served by a recreation center or aquatic complex. The Citywide standard for recreation centers is 17,000 square feet of recreation center space per 25,000 people, and the standard for aquatic complexes is 1 complex per 50,000 people (Table 6-1).

Table 6-1 Existing Park Standard

| Mid-City Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities Summary | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Total Population (2023) | 133,559 |
| Recreation Value Points Goal, 100 points per thousand | 13,559 |
| Current Recreation Value Points | 7,083 |
| Recreation Center | |
| Recreation Center Requirement - 17,000 SF per 25,000 people | 90,820 |
| Current Recreation Center square footage | 81,767 |
| Aquatic Complex | |
| Aquatic Complex Requirement - 1 complex per 50,000 people | 2.7 |
| Current number of Aquatic Complex | 2 |

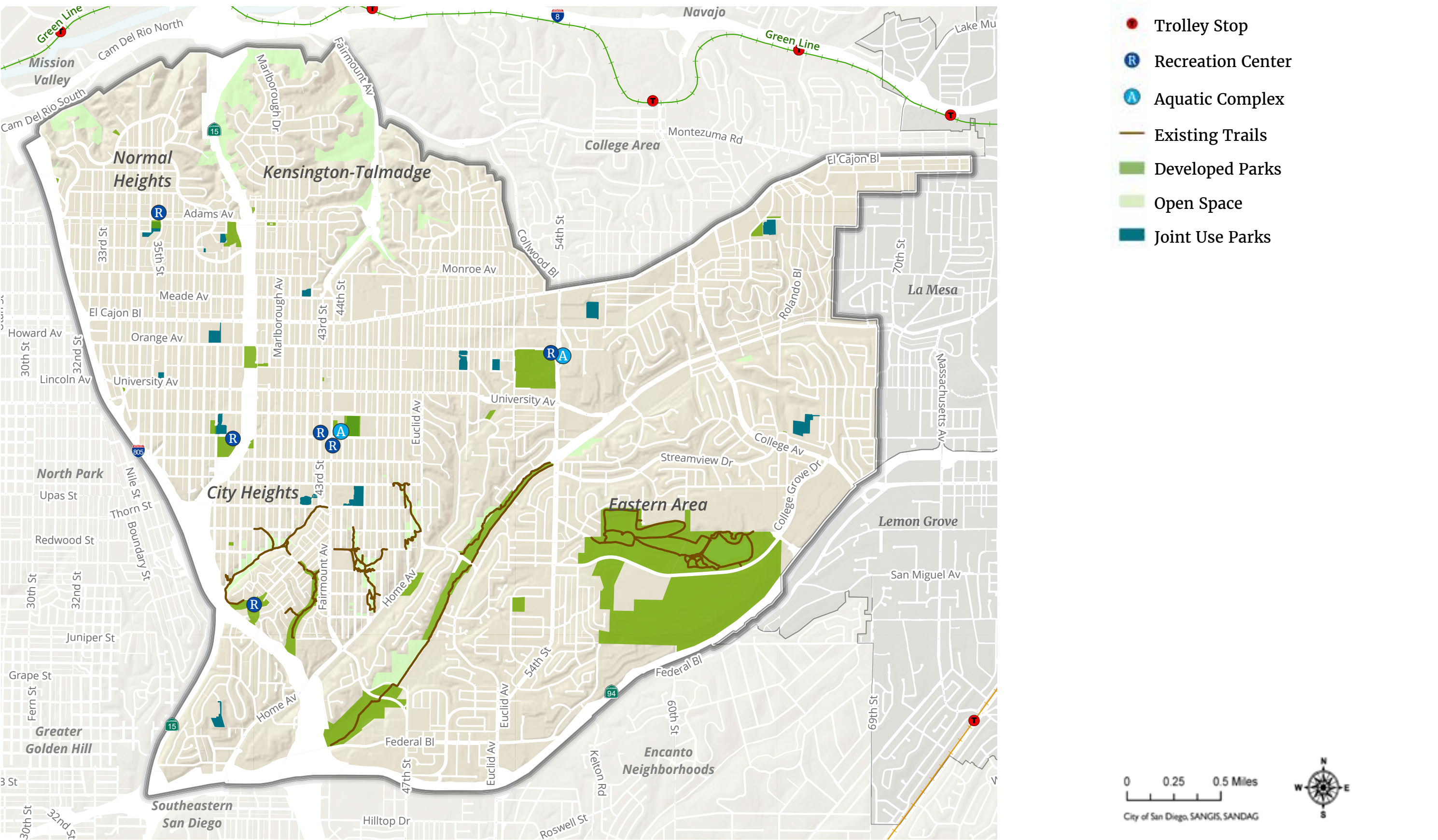


Youth playing futsal at Colina Del Sol



Hollywood Canyon

Figure 6-1 Existing Parks, Recreation, and Open Space



CHOLLAS CREEK WATERSHED PARK MASTER PLAN

In 2002, the City Council adopted the Chollas Creek Enhancement Program, laying out a visionary path for the Chollas Creek Watershed guided by the community's vision. On Aug. 3, 2021, the San Diego City Council designated the Chollas Creek Watershed as a Regional Park.

To realize the vision set by the community and to implement the policies of the recently adopted Parks Master Plan, the City Planning Department is engaging with community members to develop the Chollas Creek Watershed Regional Park Master Plan.

The Chollas Creek Watershed Park Master Plan will help unite diverse neighborhoods through a watershed-wide system of trails and parks where people can gather, play, interact and enjoy nature. The Chollas Creek Master Plan will deliver on the broader vision of more outdoor recreation opportunities and preserving natural qualities and habitats within the watershed.



Children playing at Chollas Lake Park playground



Azalea Recreation Center



Boundary of Chollas Creek Watershed Park Master Plan Area



Youth learning golf at Colina Park Golf Course



People playing tennis at Colina Del Sol

6.3. Public Services, Facilities, and Safety

OVERVIEW

Figure 6-2 identifies existing public facilities such as libraries, public and private schools, and police and fire stations. Mid-City Plan Area has three libraries, four fire stations, thirty public schools, four private schools, and the San Diego Police Department Mid-City Division and Community Relations Storefront.

FIRE AND RESCUE

The City of San Diego Fire Stations 10, 17, 18 and 26 provide fire and rescue services. In addition, there is one proposed fire station at Fairmount Avenue and 47th Street in City Heights. This project (1.28-acre site) provides for the design and construction of a new permanent fire station of approximately 14,273 square feet. The facility will accommodate an apparatus bay and a crew of ten fire personnel, onsite surface parking, dorm rooms, kitchen, watch room, ready room, station alerting system, IT data network, wet and dry utilities, electrical, mechanical and all other necessary infrastructure associated with this project. The project is estimated to cost over \$25 million.

POLICE

The City provides police services through geographic service areas and the police department has defined neighborhood names corresponding to each police beat. Twenty neighborhoods are served within the Mid-City Division, while the neighborhoods of Ridgeview/Webster and Oak Park are within the Southeastern Division. The names and boundaries of the police department neighborhoods are subject to change at the discretion of the police department.

LIBRARIES

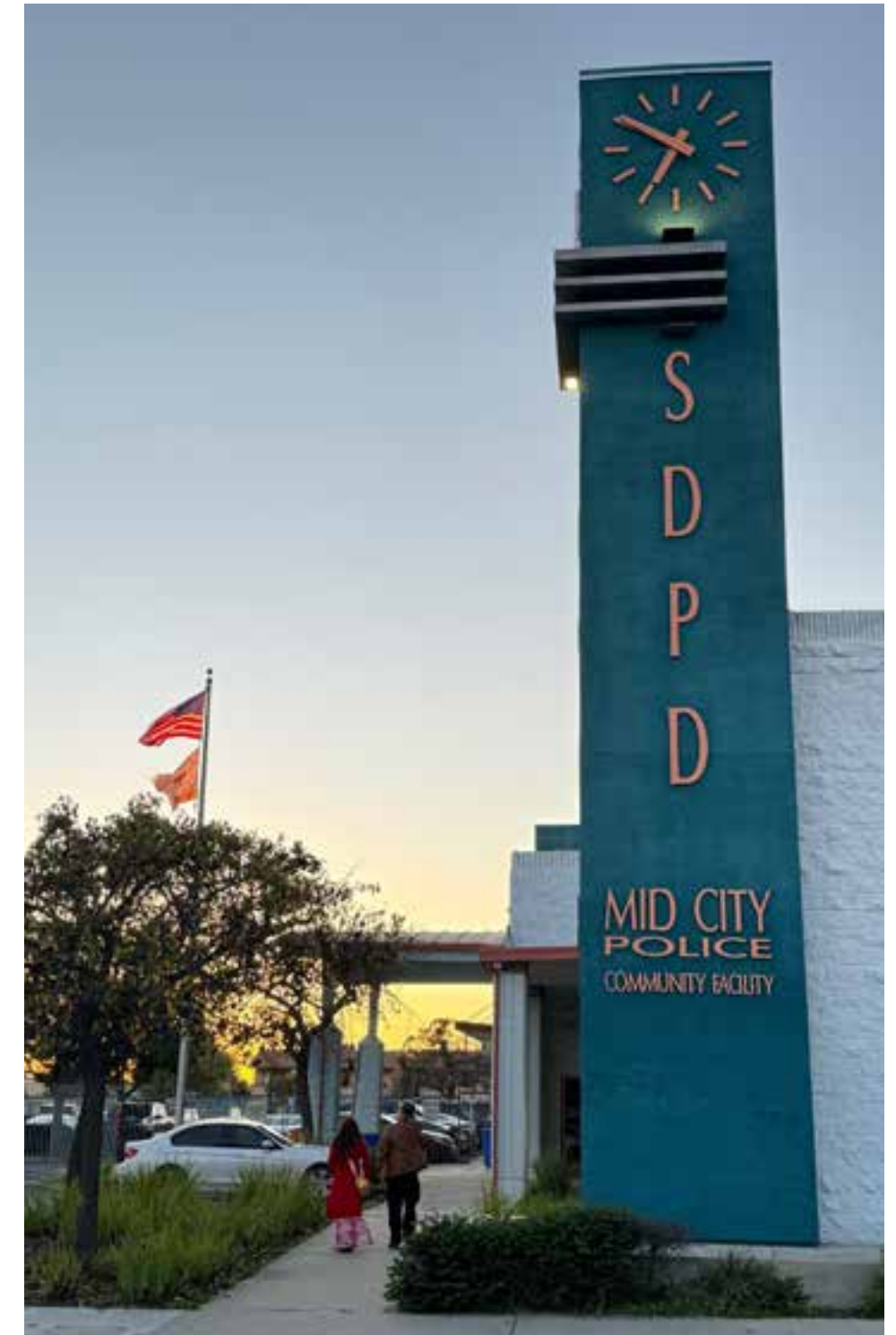
There are three libraries within the Mid-City planning area. The City Heights/Weingart Library is 17,100 square feet and envisioned as part of the City Heights Initiative, a public/private partnership between the City and Price Charities. The two-story library building and neighborhood park opened in November 1998. Dating back to the 1930s, the Kensington-Normal-Heights Library is 2,300 square feet, the smallest of all city libraries, while the 5,200 square feet Oak Park Library was dedicated in 1969.



Oak Park Library

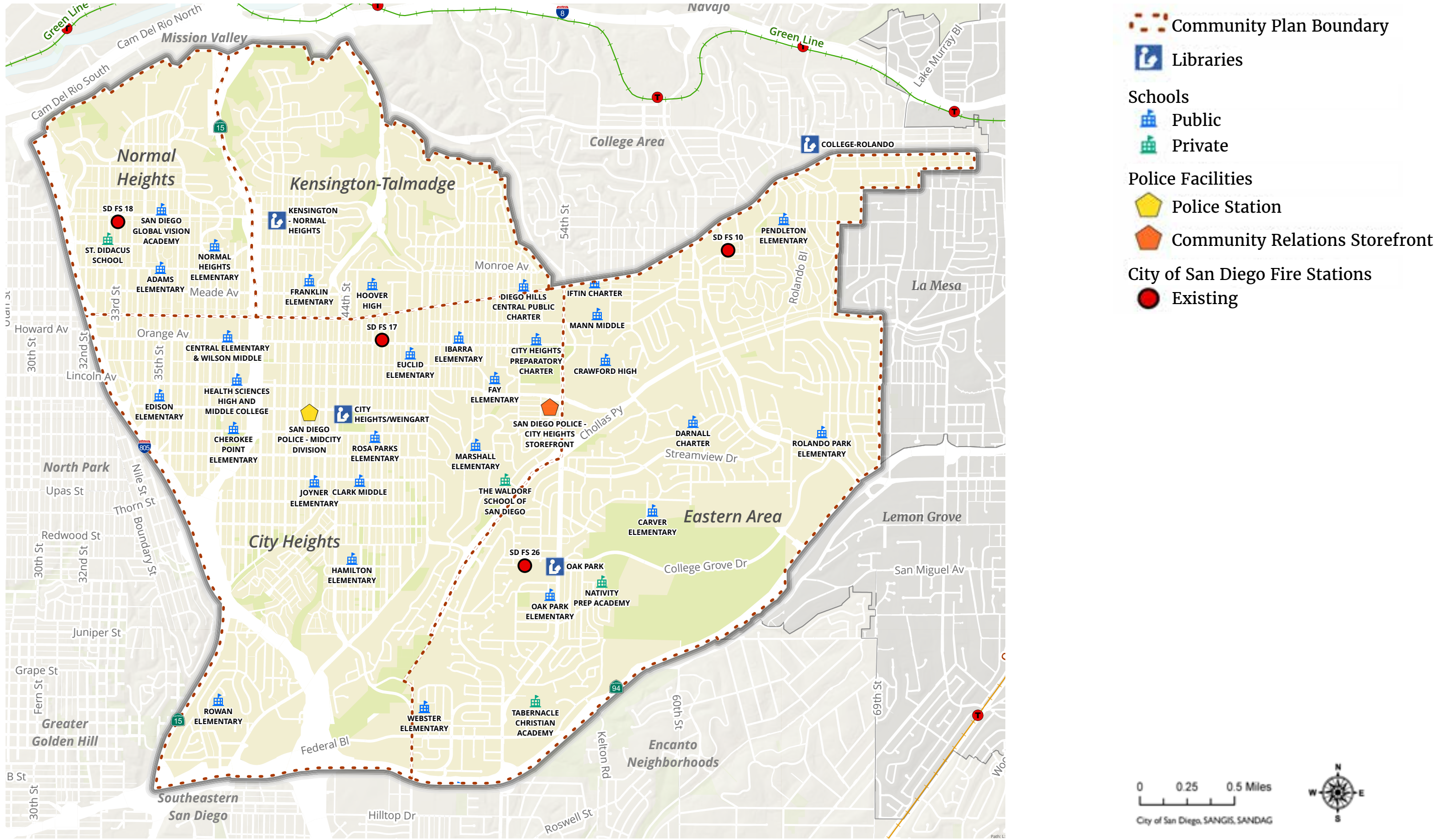


Fire and Rescue responding to a 911 call in City Heights



Mid-City Police Station

Figure 6-2 Existing Public Services & Facilities



SAN DIEGO PUBLIC LIBRARY MASTER PLAN

In 2023, a new library master plan was adopted by the San Diego City Council. The plan presents an aspirational vision for the San Diego Public Library where the library and its services are equitable, engaging and experiential, geographically accessible everywhere, and empowered with the necessary resources to thrive. The plan also provides a detailed plan to modernize branches, meet growing community needs, and become more geographically available across San Diego. Here are the major recommendations for Mid-City planning area libraries:

- City Heights/Weingart - Makeover
- Kensington-Normal Heights - Replace on existing or new site at 25,000 SF
- Oak Park - Replacement on new site at Chollas Lake Community Park (20,000 SF) in progress

SCHOOLS

Schools that serve Mid-City are dispersed throughout the communities and within walking distance of most homes. The San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) operates nineteen elementary schools, three middle schools, two high schools and six charter schools.

The last update to the Mid-City Communities Plan (1998) significantly downzoned the plan area due to a concern over lack of community facilities and school overcrowding. Figure 6-3 provides historical student enrollment trends in Mid-City for those attending San Diego Unified School Districts’ (SDUSD) Elementary, Middle and High Schools.

The total student enrollment has declined by 37% from its peak in the year 2000 to 2024. That’s around 7,600 fewer students enrolled in the SDUSD schools today. Meanwhile, between 2005 and 2008, four new elementary schools were built in Mid-City due to the Prop MM funding:

- Cherokee Point Elementary (2005)
- Fay Elementary (2008)
- Ibarra Elementary (2005)
- Joyner Elementary (2007)

In addition, during the last 15 years, over \$614 million (non-inflation adjusted) has been invested in Mid-City to modernize school facilities funded by voter-approved bond measures (Appendix E).

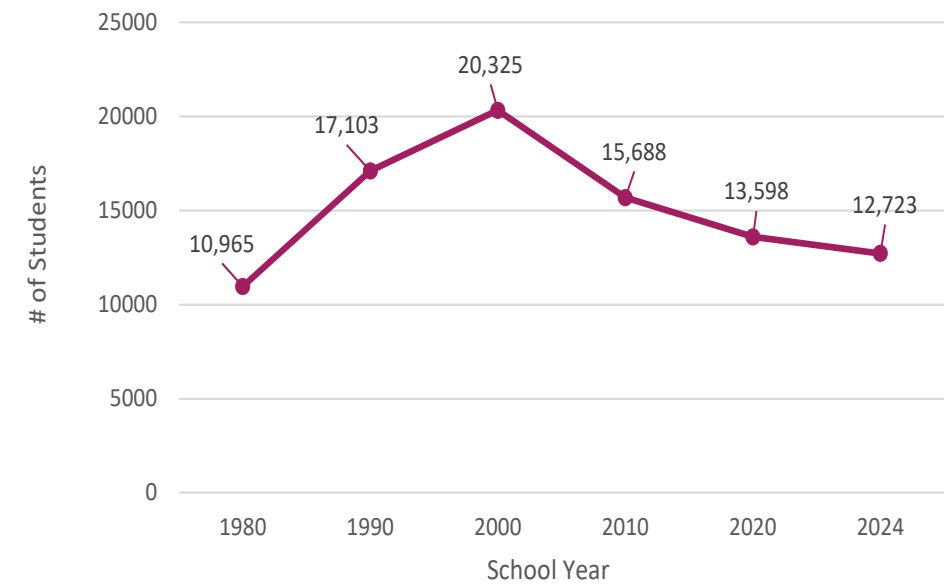


Crawford High School



Wilson Middle School

Figure 6-3 Enrollment at Mid-City Schools (SDUSD)



Rosa Parks Elementary School

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6.4. Open Space

OVERVIEW

Mid-City planning area has been extensively developed. Most of the planning area consists of disturbed or developed areas (see Figure 6-4). Still, undisturbed areas of vegetation are present, particularly along the major canyons in northern Normal Heights and Kensington-Talmadge. Mid-City's undisturbed vegetation is located in San Diego's Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA), the City's planned habitat preserve. Within the MHPA, development is limited to protect and ensure the viability of “covered” species and preserve a network of open space and habitat in San Diego.



Spring Bloom at Chollas Lake



Trail at Hollywood Canyon

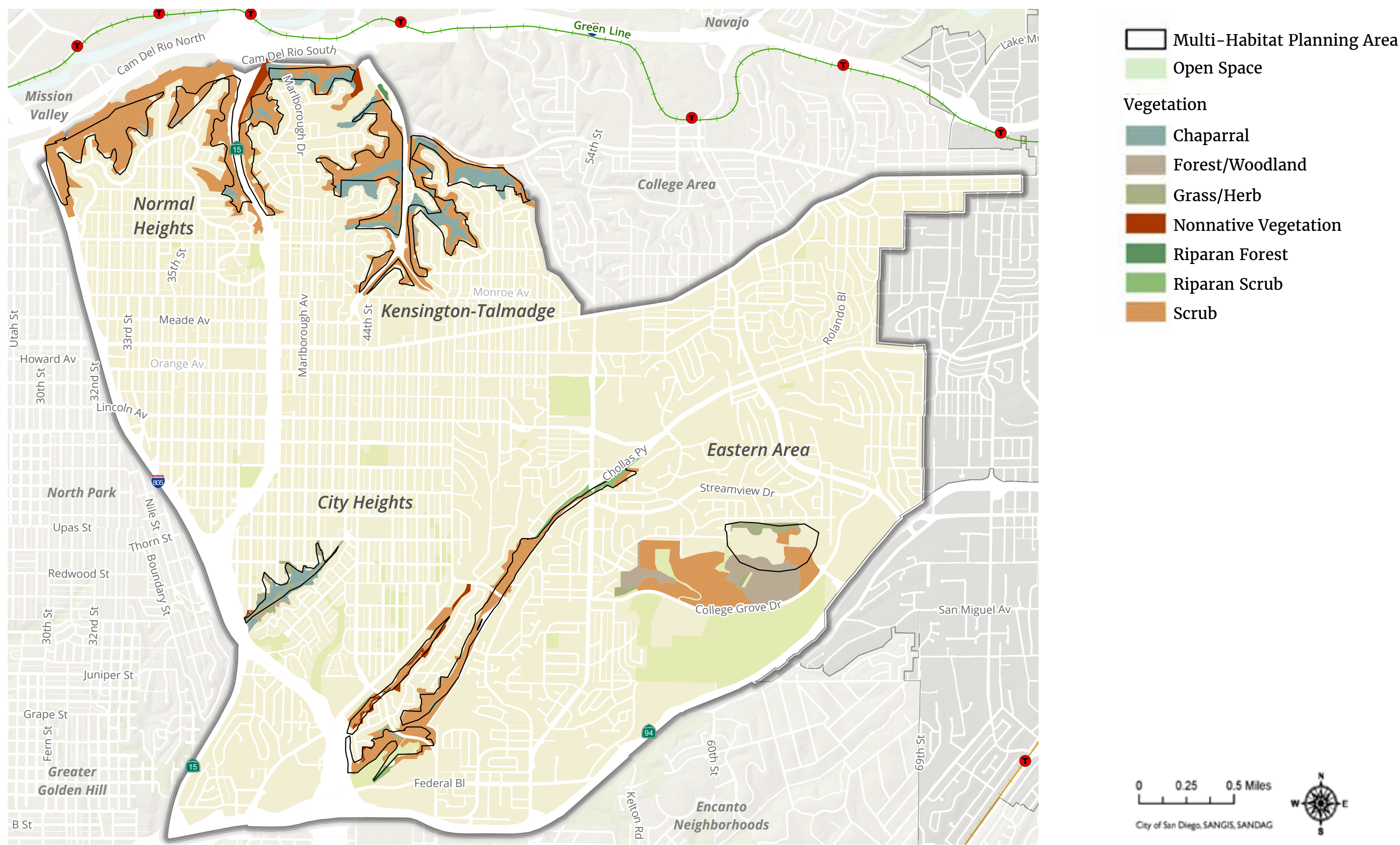


Educational Sign at Swan Canyon



Open space areas include hiking trails in the canyons

Figure 6-4 Multi-Habitat Planning Area and Vegetations



6.5. Parks, Public Facilities and Open Space Summary

This section summarizes the key information related to parks, public facilities and open space for the Mid-City planning area presented in this chapter.

- Mid-City’s system of parks and recreational facilities is diverse, ranging from **community and neighborhood parks to mini parks, sports fields, and aquatic centers**, some of which are shared with neighboring communities.
- Using the 2023 population, Mid City has substantial **future recreational opportunities** to meet the Recreational Value-Based Park Standard.
- Through the Chollas Creek Watershed Park Master Plan, Mid-City can expect **more outdoor recreation opportunities** while the natural qualities and habitats within the watershed continue to be preserved.
- Planned public facilities currently encompass a **proposed fire station** at the intersection of Fairmount Avenue and 47th Street in City Heights, along with the new Oak Park Library.
- **Substantial school capacity remains underutilized** due to drastic student enrollment declines (37% decline from 2000-2024) and the addition of four new elementary schools built in the 2000s.
- Acquiring **funding for Mid-City schools’ modernization** has been successful. Over the last 15 years, over \$614 million (non-inflation adjusted) has been invested.
- Although most of the planning area has been extensively developed, the remaining undisturbed areas, mostly along the **canyons, are protected under our City’s planned habitat preserve**, the Multi-Habitat Planning Area.

