

Meeting Minutes January 2026

Minutes for Tuesday, January 6, 2026

Normal Heights Community Center/Zoom

4649 Hawley Avenue

Attendees:

X = in attendance

X	Paul Coogan (C)	X	Kenny Patrick	X	Emilie Dedeic
	Allan Harjala (VC)		Dan Soderberg	X	Sierra Orsinelli-Rivers
X	Julia Corbett (S)	X	Mark Lawler	X	Brian Adams
X	Frances Prichett (T)	X	Nancy Lawler	X	Madison Stevens
X	Sami Burrows		Kim Pham	X	Matthew Chaffee

*Denotes Virtual Attendance

Paul called the meeting to order at 6:06 and read the opening reflection. Then Paul gave a brief overview of the meeting procedure.

Community Attendees

Estimate: 3 zoom participants, 6 attendees in person.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

- Becky Rapp*: HUD requires all public housing to be smoke-free, but this does not apply to publicly funded, privately operated affordable housing. As a public health educator, she emphasized the importance of smoke-free housing to vulnerable populations like the elderly, medically fragile, and children. She urges folks to support legislation that mandates all affordable housing in San Diego is smoke-free in the City's 2026 Legislative Platform.

Discussion on NHCPG Priorities

Priority 1: Pedestrian & Bicycle mobility, including related infrastructure

Paul: Based on our discussion last month, it seems that pedestrian and bicycle mobility, including related infrastructure improvements, were the most commonly mentioned priorities in the group.

Brian: I believe that homeowners are responsible for sidewalk repairs to the sidewalk directly in front of their property. The problem is that those repairs are too expensive for many homeowners.

Paul: The city does some repairs, but generally bills homeowners.

Brian: Maybe we could **reduce repair costs to homeowners by getting neighbors together for a deal with a single contractor.**

Audience member: The sidewalk at Copley & 33rd is really bad, even hazardous, because of the root systems from trees in the homeowner's yard. It's not ADA accessible.

Paul: The city can send out a code inspector, but that seems kind of harsh considering the price of repairs.

Matthew: **There are a lot of companies that install temporary ramps, maybe that could be a solution to the sidewalk at Copley & 33rd?**

Julia: How is the City planning on preventing that kind of sidewalk damage from the trees they're planting around San Diego?

Paul: There's a list from the city of tree species (does not include palm trees) that have root systems that won't damage the sidewalks

Audience: In San Francisco they build tree wells with barriers into the sidewalks

Sami: Property management companies might be able to afford sidewalk repairs

Kenny: When my property was subdivided they were required to improve the surrounding area including the sidewalk

Sami: What can we do as the NHCPG?

Julia: NHCPG could **request that projects/developers pending permits are required to improve the sidewalk by the City**

Emilie: NHCPG could **raise awareness about the [Safe Sidewalks program](#)**

Sami: How do we get the 'unfunded needs list' funded?

Emilie: The City's draft budget is released April 15, public comment is in May, and final edits are made to the budget in June.

Paul: It sounds like **NHCPG should have a list by March to advocate for funding. Creates a subcommittee** with himself (Paul), Allan, and Matthew

Priority 2: Development Projects in Normal Heights

Paul: The next priority seemed to be keeping tabs on development projects in Normal Heights

Brian: I think we should figure out what the new owner of DeMilles' has planned

Paul: **Currently it is permitted to build up to 8 stories at the DeMilles' lot**, but usually developers will build up to 7 stories. **It will most likely be a mixed-use space, with commercial activity on the ground floor and residential above. It will probably include parking.** The apartment complex in North Park that didn't offer any parking to residents ended up having to cut a deal with the parking garage in town since they were unsuccessful in finding renters initially. **Also, there are 2 offers upwards of \$20 million on the old Rite Aid property.** But we won't know what's going on for at least 3 months.

Madison: **There's a 3-story project proposed for next to bica**, but they haven't submitted permits yet.

Priority 3: Green Space and Tree Canopy

Audience: Expresses their appreciation that the mock building has been torn down. Can we plant trees there?

Nancy: **The playground at Ward Canyon Park will be moved away from Adams Ave. and an artist will install artwork in its place.**

Emilie: The City had a program where they would give you a tree for free (under certain conditions) if you agree to water it, but they've canceled the program due to budget cuts.

Paul: **SDGE also has a free tree program, but they will only supply to organizations (like NHGPG) not individuals.**

Audience: Consider a mini-park by Cherokee near the Vons/RiteAid lot

Paul: Maybe **the NHCPG can create a Normal Heights community unfunded needs list on our website.**

Audience: Notes the City used to put an above-ground pool near the Normal Heights Rec Center in the summer. Asks the NHCPG to push for a library in Normal Heights and inquire about an above-ground pool.

Madison: **We could have a tree-planting signup at community events, where folks who want a tree sign up and the NHCPG helps provide them with one.**

Paul: Good idea. **We could also have folks sign up for sidewalk repairs.**

Actions/Decisions

December Minutes approved

Brian 1st, Sami 2nd

Yes: Nancy, Mark, Matthew, Brian, Paul, Sami, Kenny, Frances, Julia

Abstain: Madison, Sierra, Emilie

Normal Heights Fire Safe Council

Susan: There will be an event on '[Wildfire Safety in Our Community](#)' at the Kroc Center with all Mid-City Fire Safe Councils on January 26 at 6pm. The event will include dinner for up to 200 people and an SDGE 'go-bag' giveaway with some essentials in-case of emergency. Please RSVP if you would like to attend.

Reports/Updates

Elected Officials

Mayor Todd Gloria's office - Fatima

1. Recommends preparing for upcoming storms
2. Contact the City regarding flooding through Get It Done or 911 for emergencies
3. Avoid parking under trees during a storm
4. Sex trafficking legislation (A.B. 379) has been proposed with the support of the mayor, San Diego Police Chief, and the San Diego District Attorney. The law makes it a crime for any person to loiter in place with the intention of purchasing commercial sex, and creates a Survivor Support Fund to help provide services and outreach to victims of sex trafficking and exploitation.
5. [The Neighborhood Homes For All of Us program](#) will support first-time homebuyers by creating opportunities to own mid-density housing (like cottages, duplexes, townhomes) in high-resource, transit-friendly neighborhoods. The program also intends to partner with community land trusts. Phase 1 of public engagement will inform what these neighborhood homes will look like, and will take place Winter 2025 - Summer 2026.

Paul: Can Normal Heights get its own planning area and community plan instead of being lumped in with the Mid-City Communities Plan?

Emilie: That's unlikely due to budgeting, but worth bringing up to the City and other planning areas in Mid-City

Audience: The Eastern Area has talked about splitting off into its own planning area in the past.

Standing Committees

Community Planners' Committee - Paul

The Ward Canyon cleanup was changed to February 7. The City will provide mulch, so the event will also include mulching at the community garden site.

Normal Heights for Smart Growth - Paul

The main push right now is building out the community garden & setting up the 501(c)3 for the garden. There will be a mulching event at the community garden along with the Ward Canyon cleanup on February 7th. Water installation is now expected at the community garden in March. Next-steps include obtaining occupancy permits and water. Hopefully, planting will begin in the Spring.

Advisory Committees

Utility Undergrounding & Street Lighting MAD - Emilie

We should receive feedback from the City in the next month on the cost-estimate for acorn lights we requested. We are hoping to host our own meeting on utility undergrounding and street lighting, including a cost-estimate, since the City declined to present to the community. A similar project has already taken place in North Park, so the acorn lights in Normal Heights should look similar to those in North Park.

Adjournment

Paul called the meeting to adjournment at about 7:35