



REPORT

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

DATE ISSUED: March 16, 2026

REPORT NO.: 201

ATTENTION: Parks and Recreation Board
Agenda of March 19, 2026

SUBJECT: Draft Mid-City Ideas Report – Parks and Trails

SUMMARY

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

BACKGROUND

The Mid-City Communities Plan area encompasses approximately 8,052 acres and includes four communities: City Heights, Eastern Area, Kensington–Talmadge, and Normal Heights. The northern portion of Mid-City is bounded by Interstate 8 and the College Area community. The western boundary generally follows Interstate 805 and State Route 15, adjoining the North Park and Greater Golden Hill communities. The eastern boundary abuts the City of La Mesa, while the southern portion is bounded by State Route 94 and the Southeastern San Diego and Encanto Neighborhoods communities. In total, 24 neighborhoods are located within the four Mid-City communities.

As of 2022, Mid-City had approximately 133,267 community members and 52,453 homes. Businesses in the area employed more than 20,000 people in 2019. Parks within the Mid-City Communities Plan area currently provide 7,083 recreational value points. Additional recreational opportunities have been identified through the Draft Mid-City Ideas Report as part of the Mid-City Communities Plan Update. Staff is seeking feedback from the Parks and Recreation Board on these concepts as work continues on the first draft of the Community Plan Update.

DISCUSSION

The Draft Mid-City Ideas Report, released in August 2025, presents conceptual ideas and planning frameworks related to History and Place, Sustainability, Equity and Climate Resilience, Land Use, Urban Design, Mobility, and Parks, Public Facilities and Open Space. The document was informed by extensive public engagement and existing conditions analyses. The purpose of the report is to share ideas and concepts with the public to facilitate discussion and gather input that will inform the draft community plan. The Parks, Public Facilities and Open Space chapter highlights draft goals, policies, planning frameworks, and proposed projects related to parks, open space, trails and habitat restoration, green corridors and public facilities.

These concepts are intended to guide future park planning and investment consistent with the City's Parks Master Plan and its focus on equitable access to recreational opportunities.

The Draft Mid-City Ideas Report identifies opportunities to expand recreational opportunities both within existing parks and through the creation of new parks, trails, plazas, and other public spaces as new developments occur over the life of the plan. These opportunities could be realized through future public and private investment that incorporates recreational amenities into development projects, helping to improve access to parks and active recreation spaces for Mid-City's community members. The report also supports continued use of joint-use agreements with schools and ongoing coordination with the San Diego Unified School District to increase public access to recreational facilities in areas where land for new parks may be limited.

The Draft Mid-City Ideas Report Guiding Objectives are as follows:

- Create a connected network of recreational facilities
- Provide equitable access to parks and recreation
- Expand recreational opportunities
- Optimize public lands and facilities
- Protect natural resources
- Develop an integrated open space network
- Advance sustainability and climate resilience
- Create inclusive, safe, and resilient environments
- Strengthen cultural expression and social connections in public spaces

Key Policies suggested in the Draft Mid-City Ideas Report for further exploration include the following:

- Pursue land acquisitions and right-of-way easements
- Establish open space connections
- Encourage developers to incorporate recreational amenities
- Preserve, expand, and enhance recreation centers and aquatic facilities
- Facilitate urban gardening
- Encourage development of public parks
- Promote wildland fire preparedness

These policies support the creation of a more connected network of parks, trails, and public spaces while also addressing environmental stewardship, community health and climate resilience.

Parks Studied in the Draft Mid-City Ideas Report

The Draft Mid-City Ideas Report identifies opportunities to both enhance existing parks with additional recreational amenities and create new neighborhood parks or pocket parks where opportunities exist.

Enhancements to Existing Parks

The following parks are existing facilities where additional recreational amenities or improvements could increase recreational opportunities and recreational value points:

- **Teralta Community Park Expansion** – The expansion of the existing Teralta Community Park would create additional freeway lids to accommodate the construction of additional park space.
- **South Chollas Lake Regional Park** – South Chollas Lake Regional Park expands on the existing Chollas Lake Regional Park, with potential enhancements that include off-leash dog areas, shade trellises, and alternative recreational activities such as disc golf.
- **Sunshine Berardini Park** – Improvements are currently being explored through the park's General Development Plan process and may include new or improved ballfields, walking paths, and landscape enhancements.
- **Cherokee Point Pocket Park**– Proposing to formalize the existing community space known as Postage Stamp Point into Cherokee Point Pocket Park. Recreation amenities such as shade structures, educational signage, nature play, and a fitness circuit are possible.
- **North Chollas Community Park** – Potential additions include off-leash dog areas, playground expansions, shade structures, fitness equipment, disc golf, native plant gardens, and trail improvements.

Potential New Park Opportunities

The Draft Mid-City Ideas Report also identifies opportunities for new neighborhood parks, pocket parks, and joint-use facilities where land availability, partnerships, or redevelopment may allow additional recreation spaces.

- **Chollas Triangle Park** – A proposed linear park between 54th Street and University Avenue. Chollas Parkway will be closed and integrated into the park space. Proposed park amenities include active and flexible spaces such as play areas, walking paths, open turf, a community gathering space, and picnic areas.
- **Eugene Place Pocket Park** – A potential small neighborhood park providing seating, shade, and passive recreation opportunities.
- **Carver Elementary Joint-Use & 60th Street Pocket Park** – A potential partnership with San Diego Unified School District to provide a shared publicly accessible field and walking path outside of school hours and a pocket park at the end of 60th street.
- **Olivia Canyon Trailhead Pocket Park** – A potential small park space providing improved access to canyon trails near City Farmers Nursery.
- **Monroe Avenue Pocket Park** – A suggested pocket park on City-owned land to provide neighborhood-scale recreation.
- **Manzanita Canyon Pocket Park** – A proposed small park within the canyon loop that could complement existing community art and garden space.
- **Federal Boulevard Pocket Park** – A potential park on City-owned land south of Federal Boulevard that could provide approximately one acre of active and passive recreation space.

These sites were identified based on opportunities to improve park access, enhance recreational amenities, and strengthen connections to open space areas and neighborhood destinations.

Trails studied in the Draft Mid-City Ideas Report include the following:

Existing Trail Opportunities:

- **City Heights Loop** – An existing 3-mile loop trail that connects Manzanita Canyon, Hollywood Canyon, Mid-City Open Space, and Olivia Canyon. Potential amenities may include seating areas, educational signage, scenic overlooks, and wayfinding.
- **Oak Park Trail** – A 2.3-mile trail currently in the design phase that will connect the easternmost portion of Sunshine Berardini Park and extend along Chollas Creek to 54th Street.

Potential New Trail Opportunities:

- **Kensington Loop Trail** – A proposed 3-mile trail that follows the natural contours of the hillside along Kensington Open Space, located south of Interstate 8 and east of Interstate 15. Potential amenities may include seating areas, educational signage, scenic overlooks, and wayfinding elements.
- **Cherokee Point and Castle Trail** – A proposed 1.75-mile trail along Cherokee Avenue connecting Cherokee Point Elementary School and Park de la Cruz. Potential amenities may include seating, educational signage, overlooks, exercise equipment, and wayfinding.
- **South Chollas Lake Trails** – Approximately 2.25 miles of trails located around Chollas Lake Regional Park, north of State Route 94. Potential amenities may include seating, educational signage, exercise equipment, shade structures, and wayfinding.

These trail opportunities focus on improving connections between neighborhoods, parks, and canyon open space areas while expanding opportunities for walking, hiking, and nature-based recreation.

Community Engagement

Since the launch of the community plan update in Winter 2024, the Mid-City Communities Plan Update process has engaged more than 3,000 people, who have provided over 9,300 comments through 103 events and two online surveys. These activities include 5 Working Group sessions, 7 workshops, 11 community interviews, 16 pop-up events, 5 community forums and 27 youth engagement sessions. In addition, staff hosted six open-office sessions to provide opportunities for community members to ask questions and provide feedback.

As part of this engagement process, City staff presented the Draft Ideas Report during the summer and fall of 2025 at two Working Group meetings held in Normal Heights and City Heights, as well as at four planning group meetings in City Heights, Eastern Area, Kensington-Talmadge, and Normal Heights.

Community Input

The City Planning Department received 887 comments on the Draft Ideas Report. These comments will inform the refinement of concepts, study areas and policies that will help shape the first draft of the Mid-City Communities Plan.

Community members strongly supported ensuring that every resident has access to a park within walking distance. Feedback on proposed aquatic centers at Sunshine Berardini Field and South Chollas Landfill was mixed, with concerns about location, site constraints, and the feasibility of the South Chollas Recreation Center. Some suggested considering Azalea Park or North Chollas Community Park as alternative locations. While there was broad support for additional parks, community members raised concerns about maintenance capacity, infrastructure limitations, and public safety issues.

Community members expressed mixed support for the flexibility of joint-use parks, while raising concerns about public health issues and frequent closures. There are sites identified as future joint-use parks, and the City is evaluating the feasibility of these sites with the San Diego Unified School District.

The City is continuing to evaluate opportunities for potential parks, recreation centers, aquatic complexes, trails, public facilities, and habitat restorations to develop more refined concepts for inclusion in the draft community plan.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The community plan update process is now in the third phase of community engagement with a focus on collecting feedback on the refined proposals and concepts, as well as developing the draft community plan, scheduled for release in spring 2026.

There will be additional focus groups and pop-ups, and three open houses are scheduled at:

- City Heights Library – Mar. 23, 2026 – 5 to 7 p.m.
- Normal Heights Community Center – Mar. 24, 2026 – 5 to 7 p.m.
- Teen Challenge – Mar. 25, 2026 – 5 to 7 p.m.

The next Working Group meeting is tentatively scheduled for May/June 2026 to discuss the planned land uses and the draft community plan.

Staff will continue to conduct public engagement to obtain community input through the Working Group, Community Planning Groups, and community members as the Community Plan Update is developed. The City welcomes and values ongoing feedback from the Parks and Recreation Board and the broader community. Staff anticipates returning in the coming months to provide an overview of the recreation element included in the first draft of the Mid-City Communities Plan Update.

All community plan update documents are available on the project website: www.planmidcity.org.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments (links):

- A. [Draft Mid-City Ideas Report – Parks, Public Facilities and Open Space](#)