

Eastern Area Communities Planning Committee Meeting Minutes Tuesday, September 8, 2026

A video of this meeting is available at: https://youtu.be/s24OHt_lg0E

Meeting called to order at 7:03 pm.

Members present

Lynn Edwards, (Co-Chair), Rolando Park	Emily Perez, Rolando
Bettina Rausa, (Co-Chair), Redwood Village (<i>online</i>)	Kim Nguyen, Rolando
Jim Westheimer, (Secretary), El Cerrito	Jessica Arreguin, Webster
John Hogan, (Treasurer), Redwood Village	Joseph Yorty, Business Owner (Webster)
Richard Diaz, Oak Park	Amertah Perman, Oak Park

Absent: Sonia Lang, (Vice Chair), Rolando Park; Jen Eastman, Webster; Valerie Inge, Member-at-Large (Webster)

Quorum: Yes

Chair's Welcome

Lynn Edwards opened the meeting and introduced a community partner initiative by Groundwork, which is conducting a survey to identify flood-prone areas in the Eastern Area communities. The survey link is posted on easternareacommunitiesplanning.com and will be emailed to the board for distribution in their communities.

Adoption of Agenda or Agenda Changes

The agenda was adopted as-is without objection.

Communication from the Public on Non-Agenda Item

- Vicki Church submitted an application for a Fire Safe Council to cover Oak Park, Redwood Village, Chollas Creek, and Fox Canyon, with guidance from the Rolando Park Fire Safe Council.
- Becky Rapp noted that Governor Newsom signed AB 2249 on August 31st, strengthening protections against cannabis marketing targeting children, specifically addressing cartoons, candy imagery, and child-oriented packaging. Most unintentional exposures in young children involved edibles.
- Paul Coogan said that libraries were largely closed over the weekend and on Labor Day during the extreme heat wave. The Kensington-Talmadge Library was also closed for operational reasons. Libraries serve as essential cooling refuges. Becky Rapp echoed Paul Coogan's concerns and added that rec centers and pools have also been completely shut down, calling it unacceptable.
- John Hogan reported on a news story about a building near the northwest corner of University and College in El Cerrito that has been taken over by homeless individuals. The landlord plans to convert it to a car wash, despite two other car washes already nearby. Concern raised about the area becoming dominated by storage facilities and car washes.

City, County, and State Representatives Reports

Bruce Williams – Webster and Oak Park, District 4, Councilmember Henry Foster III provided updates

- Constituents can meet with Councilmember Foster on Fridays between 1:30–4:30 PM. Call 619-236-6644 and ask for Sephora to schedule.
- Team Foster submitted 368 Get It Done reports in August alone, with one staff member dedicated full-time to the effort. Graffiti response has improved.
- The Fairmont Avenue Fire Station is not a priority for District 4. It has been removed from the budget priority memo. The office coordinated a meeting with Groundwork and the Fire Chief regarding an alternative site, and a meeting with the mayor's team and Groundwork is scheduled this month.
- Thanked volunteers for the September 5th Dumpster Day cleanup. Seven bins were filled with metal and other items. Special thanks to Elida, Rebecca, and the Teen Challenge team. Traffic was backed up past College Grove Way, demonstrating clear community need.
- Daniele Laman asked about traffic plans for the left turn into the new library under construction, specifically the placement of a traffic light and red curb.

Sam Gonzalez – Representative for 39th Senate District, State Senator Dr. Akilah Weber Pierson provided updates from the Office of State Senator Weber-Pearson.

- “Thriving Through the Change” event on menopause and Black women's health – September 21st, 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Southeastern Livewell Center, 5101 Market Street.
- “There Ought to Be a Law” program – accepting constituent legislative bill ideas starting September 1st. Ideas do not need to be formally written.
- Young Legislators Program (YLP) now accepting applications for high school students in the 39th Senate District. Meetings held 5–7 PM on the third Wednesday monthly through June 2027.
- Community Recognitions Program – upcoming deadlines include Filipino American Heritage Month (nomination deadline September 30th, 2026) and Native American Heritage Month (deadline October 30th, 2026).
- Senator Weber-Pearson's office can assist constituents with casework involving state agencies. Contact: sam.gonzalez@scn.ca.gov or 619-688-6700.
- A legislative package of 15 measures addressing healthcare, education, patient safety, physician accountability, public health, and consumer transparency has passed the legislature and is headed to the governor's desk.

Information and Action Items

Action Item: Update and proposed modifications to PRJ-1144708 Verizon Redwood Standpipe – 6046 Hughes St, Shelly A. Kilbourn, PlanCom, Inc. presented on behalf of Verizon, proposing modifications to an existing wireless facility on a city-owned water tank.

- The facility has operated since 2000. Modifications include replacing and enclosing AC units and the emergency generator, expanding the equipment enclosure from 288 sq ft to 475 sq ft, relocating one sector of antennas from the water tank to the top of the equipment enclosure, increasing total antennas from 8 to 12, and adding native landscaping (lemon berry and butterfly vine/honeysuckle) for screening.

- The project requires a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and Neighborhood Development Permit. It is a Process 3 decision going to a hearing officer.
- Daniele Laman asked about irrigation for the proposed landscaping. Shelly Kilbourn confirmed Verizon will coordinate watering with the city until native plants are established; permanent irrigation will not be installed.
- Vicki Church asked whether coverage to the west (toward 54th Street and Chollas Creek) would improve. Shelly Kilbourn confirmed the west-facing antennas are being replaced and coverage will be improved, though no additional antennas are being added to the west.
- Lindsay Riggs Rodriguez asked about Verizon's commitment to maintaining the landscaping. Shelly Kilbourn confirmed landscaping is required under the CUP; failure to maintain it constitutes a violation. Neighbors should alert city planners if issues arise.
- Motion to approve made by Jim, seconded by John. Approved unanimously, 8-0-0.

Information Item: Mid City Community Plan Update, Alex Frost, Principal Planner and Morgen Ruby, Senior Planner, City Planning Department, City of San Diego presented the first draft of the Mid-City Communities Plan Update.

Background and Process

- Mid-City comprises four communities – City Heights, Eastern Area, Kensington-Talmadge, and Normal Heights – with 24 neighborhoods. The plan is in Phase 3. Over 3,000 people have provided 9,300+ comments through 107 events and 2 online surveys.
- The plan is not an immediate change or mandate for development. It provides 30-year guidance on land use, mobility, infrastructure, urban design, public facilities, natural resources, and economic development.
- Second draft anticipated early 2027 (January/February). Adoption hearing targeted for June 2027.

Community Vision and Principles

- Vision principles include clean/safe/thriving communities, safer green streets, a park in every neighborhood, vibrant walkable mixed-use corridors, celebrating cultural diversity, new affordable homes, investment in community infrastructure, creek restoration, canyon protection, innovative business districts, and preservation of historical neighborhoods.

Land Use and Economic Prosperity

- Five land use concepts were developed; Concept 2 received the highest ranking from the working group in October 2025. Planning Commission supported a modified Concept 2 in March 2026.
- The proposed land use map aligns with the General Plan's Climate Smart Village Area, Fair Housing requirements, and SB 79. Most proposed changes are outside very high fire severity zones.
- Eastern Area designations include Community Village (large shopping centers such as College Grove, Marketplace, Federal Boulevard, Euclid/54th, Chollas Triangle, University Square, Community Commercial along corridors (109–218 DU/acre on El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue, Medium Residential (transitional densities of 44–109 DU/acre), and Low Residential (majority of Eastern Area remains single-family at Low Residential 2, with some Low Residential 4 at 29 DU/acre matching existing apartment density).

- The plan proposes adding over 32,000 homes in capacity across Mid-City (current: ~53,500 homes; adopted 1998 plan capacity: ~62,600). Realistically, only 20–30% may be built. In the past 25 years, only 3,800 units were built.
- Joe asked whether the planning department has influence over incentivizing specific business types (e.g., grocery stores) to locate in the area. Alex clarified that zoning can encourage or discourage certain uses, but cannot force businesses to open. Economic feasibility testing is conducted with consultants.
- Richard raised concern about the plan's community village designations potentially displacing existing grocery stores and creating food deserts. Alex Frost noted that commercial uses are not required to change; the plan creates flexibility for future mixed-use redevelopment if property owners choose.
- The plan creates flexibility and incentives, but cannot mandate private development.

Urban Design

- The plan envisions pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use, amenity-rich corridors and villages. Eastern Area has seven study areas with detailed urban design recommendations, more than any other community planning area.

Mobility

- A Complete Streets approach accommodates pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and drivers. District and corridor routes along El Cajon Boulevard, University Avenue, and parts of Euclid/Federal will see pedestrian amenities (wider sidewalks, shade trees, lighting, seating, wayfinding).
- Expanded separated bicycle facilities proposed along College, College Grove, Euclid south of Home, Federal, and 54th Street.
- Bus-only lane on El Cajon Boulevard to be extended as a shared bus-bike lane. New bus route (625) proposed connecting Chula Vista through Eastern Area to SDSU via 54th, University, and College. Microtransit service area expansion proposed.
- Purple Line draft alignment includes two stops in City Heights and a potential third stop at Euclid and Federal.
- Vickie Church raised concern about evacuation routes as streets are reduced to single lanes, particularly for residents without vehicles who rely on transit. Also flagged dangerous conditions on Home Avenue near Charles Lewis Park due to bike lane redesign causing vehicle damage.
- Geoff Hueter raised concern that upzoning Low 4 areas triggers Complete Communities requirements at the current 20 DU/acre threshold, incentivizing dense development away from corridors. Suggested raising the threshold to 45 DU/acre to keep density focused on corridors.

Parks and Public Facilities

- 46 new parks proposed for Mid-City (currently 43). Approximately 10 miles of new trails proposed.

- Eastern Area highlights include Chollas Triangle neighborhood park (partial street closure of Chollas Parkway), proposed joint use park at Carver Elementary School (city coordinating with San Diego Unified School District), South Chollas Lake Park (outside city ops yard, with active/passive uses and trail), proposed aquatic center (on non-landfill portion of the site), and proposed rec center paired with the new Oak Park Library.
- Bettina asked about the Rock Place Pocket Park listed in the Parks and Recreation Inventory, questioning whether it is the same as the 60th Street Mini Park. Morgan acknowledged the need to verify with the parks planning team.
- Jessica noted Webster has no dedicated park space and requested a joint use field at Webster Elementary. Morgan confirmed this feedback will be elevated to San Diego Unified for the second draft.
- Richard raised concern about the proposed aquatic center being near a landfill and asked about coordination with Carver Elementary. Morgan confirmed direct coordination with San Diego Unified facilities staff.
- Lynn noted that Groundwork is actively working with Redwood Village, Webster, and Rolando Park on three proposed parks, with one already completed.

Historic Preservation

- John raised concern that the plan's tree recommendations list no native species, with most trees not native to North America. Suggested oak trees as better alternatives for shade, drought tolerance, and wildlife support.
- Morgan said that tree selections were guided by the city's approved street tree selection guide and aimed at neighborhood brand consistency. Native varieties of oaks are on the guide. Suggested submitting this as a formal comment.
- Alex stated that the plan proposes historic districts in Kensington, Talmadge, and Normal Heights based on a consultant's windshield survey and historic context statement. Rolando and El Cerrito were reviewed, but did not meet all criteria at this time; however, they are not precluded from future designation.

Community Enhancement Overlay Zone (CEOZ)

- The CEOZ requires public space with new development on sites 10,000 sq ft or larger in designated areas. Dark blue areas (El Cajon Boulevard, University east of 54th, Euclid north of Federal) require an 8-foot greenway in addition to the sidewalk. Orange areas (west of 54th) require a 5-foot greenway. Teal areas (freeway-adjacent parcels near I-94) require a 30-foot setback for public space. All qualifying sites must dedicate 5% of parcel area as public space.

Water Supply

- Denise Padilla asked whether adequate water supply exists to support all proposed development.
- Alex stated that a water supply assessment is conducted as part of the plan update. The city's 2025 Urban Water Management Plan was recently approved. San Diego currently has excess water due to investments in storage, desalination, and conservation, and is attempting to sell excess water to other states.

Funding for the Plan Update

- An attendee asked where funding for the plan update comes from.
- Alex said that an S-CHIP grant from SANDAG (\$650,000) funded Phases 1 and 2. A competitive Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Grant is funding mobility and transportation studies. SANDAG grant funding derives from TransNet sales tax revenues.

Engagement and Next Steps

- Upcoming Working Group meeting – September 18th, 6–8 pm, Park De La Cruz gym, open to the public with 20–30 minutes for public comment.
- The planning team is attending all community planning group meetings this month, focus groups, and boards and commissions (Mobility Board completed; Parks and Rec Board in October; Planning Commission in November).
- Online public comment form available. All input will inform the second draft.
- Open houses will be held after the second draft release (early 2027), featuring park renderings and corridor design concepts.

Review, Correction, and Approval of August Minutes – Motion to approve the minutes as-is made by Jim, seconded by Emily. Minutes approved unanimously.

Subcommittee Reports

- Community updates
 - El Cerrito – Lindsay Riggs Rodriguez expressed interest in joining the board to fill the El Cerrito vacancy and is working on reconstituting the El Cerrito Community Council.
 - Oak Park – No updates.
 - Redwood Village – No updates.
 - Rolando – No updates.
 - Rolando Park
 - University Avenue Street Sweep cleanup scheduled for Saturday, 8–10 am, from College to Aragon.
 - Groundwork conducting a site visit for blue-green infrastructure recommendations in Rolando Park next Wednesday at Vista Grande and Rolando to assess stormwater drain issues and meet with flood victims and State Water Authority officials.
 - Webster – Webster held a potluck on the school lawn, successfully connecting neighbors.
- Mid-City Community Plan Update, Lynn – Next month’s meeting will focus on compiling board comments and concerns to draft a formal letter to city planners, due by October 31st.
- Parks & Recreation – Daniele Laman
 - San Diego Parks and Recreation Board meeting: September 17th (quorum pending).
 - Mid-City Community Plan Recreation Element presentation: October 15th, 6:00 pm, Balboa Park Club.
 - Colina CRG meeting: September 16th, 6:30 pm, Colina Rec Center.

- A new Performance Audit of Brush Management on Private Property (60 pages, two findings, 14 recommendations) is heading to City Council. Community members interested in brush management encouraged to review it.
- CPC Meeting, Lynn – Paul Coogan from Normal Heights gave a presentation of the gaps analysis on the Mid-City Community Plan Update first draft. Lynn will share the presentation with board members.

For the Good of the Order and Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:59 pm.