

# URBAN DESIGN

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## INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Urban Design Element is to direct future development in a manner that ensures that the physical attributes that make Uptown unique will be retained and enhanced by design that responds to the community's particular context—its physical setting, market strengths, cultural and social amenities, and historical assets while acknowledging the potential for positive growth and change.

The intent of the Urban Design Element is to guide urban design for the six neighborhoods that comprise the 2,700-acre Uptown Community Plan Area. These include the neighborhoods of Mission Hills, Hillcrest, Middletown, Medical Complex, Bankers Hill/Park West, and University Heights. (See Figure 4-1) These policies set forth broad urban design concepts to guide future planning and development throughout Uptown, as well as more specific principles and related design guidelines to inform the planning and design in the individual neighborhoods.

## 4.1 EXISTING CONTEXT AND URBAN FORM

### NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS AND NODES

Urban design is influenced by land use, as each land use generates distinct building types and circulation patterns. Residential is the predominant land use in Uptown, but there are also several nodes of retail, employment, and mixed-use, creating centers within each of Uptown's neighborhoods. These centers are generally located along the major transportation corridors, where convenient accessibility better supports commercial uses. These neighborhood centers form a basis for locating village place types identified by the General Plan (reference Land Use Element Section 2.3).

The most significant concentration of the village place-type is in the Hillcrest core where several major corridors intersect. University Avenue is the anchor corridor of the urban village, which is characterized largely by commercial services and retail development. Key intersections within this center often act as additional nodes when sidewalk pedestrian density and street activating uses within adjacent buildings have a synergistic effect. The Hillcrest Core also includes Robinson Street between First and Fifth Avenues, and the retail uses supporting the medical facilities and adjoining the Medical Complex neighborhood fronting on Washington Street.

Washington Street west of the Hillcrest core functions as a center for the Mission Hills neighborhood. This center is focused at the intersection of Washington and Goldfinch, and also includes retail extending eastward to the Hillcrest Core. This center includes more recent multi-unit, midrise residential buildings, many of which include pedestrian-oriented retail on the ground floor. Various streetscape improvements and public art investments have also enhanced the character of this area.

Smaller neighborhood-scale community centers also exist in Uptown's residential neighborhoods, such as on Park Boulevard and Adams Avenue in University Heights, Fifth Avenue and Laurel Street in Bankers Hill/Park West, and along India Street in Middletown. Within these mixed use areas, pedestrian-oriented streets and building frontages create a vibrant public realm which serves the adjacent residential areas and also attracts visitors from throughout the city due to dining and entertainment destinations. Neighborhood Centers and Nodes are illustrated in Figure 4-2.

The concentration of hospitals and medical support uses in the Medical Complex neighborhood forms a community center with an important employment component. While the medical uses themselves have a distinct physical form and are visible landmarks, the distribution of office uses along Fourth and Fifth Avenues contributes a distinct personality to these north-south corridors, and limited retail serves the adjacent residential area.

Landmarks characterize distinct areas in Uptown and enhance the area's identity. Buildings such as St. Paul's Cathedral, Mr. A's, Village Hillcrest, and the Teachers Training annex are among those that serve as identifiable landmarks. The community's gateways and bridges are also landmarks. These include Uptown's unique pedestrian bridges (Quince, Spruce, and Vermont Street bridges), the historic gateway signs (Hillcrest, Mission Hills, and University Heights), and the monument signs indicating entrance into University Heights. Landmarks and gateways are important components of urban design because they create discernible markers of neighborhood distinction and can echo details of community identity. Landmarks and Gateways in Uptown are illustrated in Figure 4-3.

### **UPTOWN COMMUNITY URBAN DESIGN GOALS**

- Distinctive Neighborhoods
- Development Diversity
- Vibrant Commercial Districts
- Buildings with appropriate Scale and Graceful Transitions
- Sustainability Development

### **BUILT FORM AND DEVELOPMENT**

Uptown's physical form and design character is a product of its history, reflecting over a century and a half of growth and transformation. Uptown has been valued for its proximity to Downtown and its unobstructed views of the harbor, and includes a variety of architectural styles and mature landscapes dating to the City's early history and wealth. It also includes some of the city's most popular neighborhoods exhibiting recent trends towards more compact development and urban lifestyles, as well as infill, replacement and modification of buildings during past decades.

The urban form and quality in Uptown is evolving to include buildings that engage the public realm, and reflect and enhance the character of the community. At present, Uptown's urban design character is a unique "temporal collage" of development and physical improvements from all of San Diego's eras.

### **CANYONS AND VIEWS**

Due to its significant topography, Uptown has prominent view corridors, offering views to Downtown, Balboa Park, Mission Valley, and the San Diego Bay and Harbor. While views are common from vantage points under private ownership, such as single-family neighborhoods, view corridors refer to those areas that are accessible to the public, and therefore include mostly corridors and open spaces. See Figure 4-4 Canyons and Views.

## **4.2 URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK**

The Urban Design Framework provides the overarching concept for the focal points of urban design recommendations that are specific to individual geographies within Uptown. The Urban Design Framework (Figure 4-5) focuses on several key areas, which are addressed individually within each of Uptown's neighborhoods in the discussion that follows.

- Neighborhood Centers and Nodes
- View Corridors

- Landmarks and Gateways
- Major Connector Streets
- Bicycle Facilities
- Canyons and Parks

## ROLE OF THE PUBLIC REALM

The community’s development fabric is composed of two distinct, yet inter-related components: the “public” realm and the “private” realm. The public realm consists primarily of the publicly-owned street rights-of-way and other publicly accessible open spaces such as parks, squares, plazas, courtyards, and alleys. The private realm consists of privately-owned areas in large part developed with buildings and associated improvements, and is more limited in its accessibility to the public.

The public realm plays a critical role in the area’s character and function, serving overlapping roles, including:

- **Circulation and Access:** The public street rights-of-way provide for circulation within and through the community—accommodating pedestrians, bicycles, and buses, in addition to automobiles and trucks.
- **Development Framework:** The public street rights-of-way provide the fundamental structure that contains and organizes individual developments into a cohesive whole.
- **Public Open Space:** In addition to the community’s parks and plazas, public street rights-of-way play an important role as public open space; allowing for light, air, landscaping within developed areas, and serving as the “living room” for community life; places where people meet, interact, and linger.
- **Visual Character:** While buildings are important visual elements, the physical design of the public realm is critical in establishing the community’s identity and overall character.

The community’s original street system was laid out in the early 20th century as a grid pattern with primary and secondary streets. In addition to serving as transportation corridors, these primary streets contain much of the commercial land use for these communities.

### 4.3 STREETScape AND PUBLIC REALM

As the primary public space throughout the community, it is important that the pedestrian realm is managed not just for circulation purposes, but is also appropriately furnished and maintained. An attractive, well-designed public realm not only contributes to increased pedestrian activity, but also to increased community pride and sense of place. In order to transform the public streetscape from a transportation facility to vibrant public open space, it is important to add facilities and amenities that help to animate the pedestrian realm, support public use, and contribute to the social and economic vitality of the community’s neighborhoods.

Street furnishings encompass seating, such as benches, street lighting, bicycle racks, newspaper racks, refuse containers, and tree grates. Furnishings refer to those maintained as part of the public realm, rather than those maintained by individual businesses. Typically a suite of coordinated furnishings are chosen that represent district identity and serve passersby that are utilizing the sidewalk, and also create a sense of place that can be viewed by through traffic. Wayfinding signage may also be included as part of the streetscape elements. These are generally located in the amenity zone and in the frontage zone, adjacent to the building face. It is the goal that furnishings as a whole do not impede the circulation function of the pedestrian realm.

## POLICIES

### Streetscape:

- UD-3.1** Locate street furnishings along the streetside edge of the sidewalk or adjacent to the building face (if present) so as to not interfere with pedestrian circulation.

- UD-3.2 Maintain a consistent design character along the length of a block and on a district level through coordinated design, type, color and material of street furniture.
- UD-3.3 Landscape the public streetscape with street trees and other vegetation as a means of adding color and visual interest, softening the urban edges, providing shade, and assisting with air quality and stormwater management.
- UD-3.4 Provide fixed in place benches and other forms of seating (e.g. low walls, planter edges, and wide steps) throughout the community, particularly in pedestrian-oriented commercial areas and near transit stops.
- UD-3.5 Provide benches in sidewalks, plazas, parks, transit stops, and other high pedestrian use areas to further promote pedestrian use.
- UD-3.6 Provide benches constructed of durable and low maintenance materials, and reflect the design character of the area.
- UD-3.7 Encourage use of individual, movable chairs, within plazas and pedestrian nodes, where there is an organization that is willing to manage their use (e.g., secure the seats at night). Such seating provides appealing flexibility that can enhance public use.

### Neighborhood:

- LU-3.8 Encourage landscaping, screening and architectural design to enhance the appearance of hospital facilities. In particular, Mercy Hospital as viewed from the Sixth Avenue extension and the appearance of the Arbor Street parking structure, Bachman Canyon parking structure, and hillside areas within the UCSD Medical Center facility and the Somerset Hillcrest adjacent to Mercy Hospital.
- LU-3.9 Streetscape plan for India Street and San Diego Avenue in the Middletown Neighborhood Center/ Node to improve appearance and pedestrian amenities.

### Pedestrian-Oriented Street Lighting:

- UD-3.10 Use a consistent style and size of pole and fixture within a given neighborhood or street to create a unifying scheme of illumination that is appropriate to the scale of the street and the level and character of nighttime activity.
- UD-3.11 Coordinate the pole and fixture design with other street furniture and amenities to establish an attractive and unified design character.
- UD-3.12 Maintain a low height of light fixtures to establish a pedestrian-scaled environment and to minimize light spill into adjoining properties.
- UD-3.13 Encourage the placement of lights in close proximity so that the illumination standard may be reduced and provide appropriate levels of illumination.
- UD-3.14 Select light poles with armatures that allow for the hanging of banners or other amenities (e.g., hanging flower baskets, artwork, etc.).
- UD-3.15 Place street lighting to focus on illuminating the pedestrian zone (e.g., sidewalks, paseos, plazas, alleys, transit stops), rather than the vehicular zone (i.e., the street). Minimize the use of tall, cobra-head lighting to the degree possible.
- UD-3.16 Select color-balanced lamps that provide a warm white illumination and realistic color rendition are recommended.

### Newspaper Racks:

- UD-3.17 Consolidate newspaper racks into consistently designed newspaper boxes to reduce the physical and visual clutter of individually placed newspaper boxes.
- UD-3.18 Locate newspaper racks generally near intersections and co-located with transit stops, to provide an amenity to transit riders.

## Refuse Containers:

- UD-3.19 Locate refuse containers regularly at intersections, near major building entrances, near bus stops, and adjacent to outdoor seating areas.
- UD-3.20 Choose containers that include an area for recycling, prevent wind and rain from entering the container, facilitate convenient access to the liner, and have the option of being anchored to the pavement.
- UD-3.21 Coordinate refuse containers with the overall style and aesthetic of other street furnishings.

## Tree Grates, Guards, and Planting Strips:

- UD-3.22 Include tree grates or other porous materials in commercial areas and areas with high pedestrian activity to protect trees and reduce pedestrian safety hazards. In areas with lower levels of pedestrian activity, alternatives such as accent planting, decomposed granite or pavers, may be employed instead of tree grates.
- UD-3.23 Coordinate tree grate design and materials with overall character of the street and neighborhood and other street furnishings.
- UD-3.24 Consider grates that allow for integrated tree guards, decorative lighting, electrical fixtures and auxiliary power (for special events, holiday lighting, or maintenance).
- UD-3.25 Encourage the use of 3 – sided tree guards that have proven to increase the survivorship or new trees and require less maintenance and minimize trip hazards as an alternative to using tree grates
- UD 3.26 Locate street trees in tree grates and/or within paved areas planted in a structural soil medium that extends from the street curb to the full width of the adjacent property line or, if narrower, the extent of the mature canopy to maintain long-term health,. This larger growing area improves a tree’s stability and lifespan by ensuring that its roots are properly aerated and have room to grow.
- UD 3.27 Planting strips are encouraged rather than tree grates in primarily residential areas and areas with lighter pedestrian traffic.

## Signage and Wayfinding Systems:

- UD-3.28 As a significant destination for visitors, consider should be developing a wayfinding system that can assist both San Diego residents and visitors in navigating the community.
  - Provide directional and informational signs that are attractive, clear, and consistent in theme, location, and design.
  - Identify key historic, cultural, civic, and shopping destinations and facilities, e.g. public parking structures, parks and open space areas, transit routes, etc.
  - Be co-located with other streetscape elements (e.g. lighting) where possible to reduce visual clutter.
  - Have a distinctive design that contributes to the community’s identity and unique sense of place.

## Public Utilities:

- UD-3.29 Undergrounded utilities particularly on commercial streets, in order to reduce conflict with pedestrian movement and improve the aesthetic character of the public realm. Undergrounding projects should maximize space available for street trees.
- UD-3.30 When located above grade, utilities should be located outside of the sidewalk pedestrian zone and designed so as not to obstruct a clear path of travel.

## Streetscape Improvements in Residential Areas:

Residential streets generally do not have the same degree of pedestrian activity or need the level streetscape furnishings as streets in commercial and mixed-use areas. The primary intent is creating a safe, comfortable, and attractive pedestrian environment that

accommodates the needs of local residents. The following guidelines apply to streetscape improvements in primarily residential areas:

- UD-3.31** Include a planting strip between the curb and sidewalk to provide a buffer between pedestrians and the street edge.
- UD-3.32** Include unique neighborhood identity monuments or other features that contribute to neighborhood character in the planting strip or median, if present.
- UD-3.33** Increase the landscaping in the public right-of-way along Reynard Way and Curlew Street.
- UD-3.34** Maintain the historic scale and character on First Avenue south of Maple Canyon.

## Street Types

Uptown contains a variety of different streets types that differ in both function and design. Some streets, such as Washington Street and Park Boulevard, function as major through vehicular travel corridors that provide primary access to and through the area. Others, such as University Avenue and Fifth Avenue, serve as major connectors to adjacent neighborhoods. The majority of the streets, however, serve primarily as local streets that provide access to residential neighborhoods and shopping districts and carry much lower volumes of traffic.

The discussion and policies listed in this section of the Urban Design Element are intended, from an urban design standpoint to respond to and complement the functional classification and level-of-service requirements identified in the Mobility Element. Six general street types are addressed by the following discussion:

- Major Connector Streets
- The Avenues
- Pedestrian-oriented Retail Streets
- Green Streets
- Alleys

The following discussion sets forth a number of possible scenarios for altering the design of street cross-sections within the existing public right-of-way to achieve one or more of the community's objectives for the Uptown. In some instances, the recommendation is specific to a particular street, but more often the design is descriptive of a condition. The intent is not to comprehensively re-configure the streets of the Uptown, but to suggest a series of design options that might be introduced incrementally as conditions warrant and circumstances permit.

## Major Through-Corridor Streets

Major Through-Corridor Streets serve as the major circulation routes connecting the Uptown to freeways and state highways, and to the surrounding City context. They allow efficient circulation of high volumes of traffic through the Uptown. Uptown's two Through-Corridor Streets are Washington Street and Park Boulevard. Both streets are characterized by wide right-of-ways, multiple travel lanes, relatively high travel speeds, and limited pedestrian and bicycle facilities or streetscape amenities. The functional and aesthetic character of these corridors is not conducive to pedestrian, bicycle or transit use. As a result, development along these corridors tends to be more automobile-oriented in scale and design.

## POLICIES

- UD-3.35** Reduce the actual and/or apparent width of the vehicular travelway in order to both slow traffic and facilitate safe pedestrian crossing where feasible. Such measures might include:
  - The reduction of lane widths
  - The removal of travel lanes
  - The incorporation of a landscaped median
  - Neck downed (sidewalk bulb-outs) intersections

- UD-3.36** Incorporate gateway elements at key points to announce the entry into a neighborhood or commercial district and alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians and the need to slow down.
- UD-3.37** Utilize street trees to give scale and definition to corridors and to slow traffic. Street tree locations may include sidewalk zones, parking lanes, and median strips.
- UD-3.38** Widen sidewalks to provide a pedestrian zone that does not feel impinged upon by moving traffic. Pedestrian zones should include both parking and street trees as buffers between pedestrians and moving traffic.
- UD-3.39** Incorporate bike lanes, cycle tracks, or other appropriate improvements to accommodate safe bicycle use.

## The Avenues

The Avenues in Uptown are unique streets because they serve as important connectors between Uptown and Downtown. While they all have a similar width, the six avenues have different functions and character. First, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Avenues generally experience heavier traffic volumes due to their through connection between Downtown and Washington Street. Fourth and Fifth Avenues, in particular, are unique in that they are one-way streets that function as a couplet between Downtown and the Hillcrest core. Both streets include three travel lanes and parallel parking on both sides of the street. These streets are not the most pedestrian or bicycle friendly because the one-way traffic flow and three-lane configuration results in both higher travel speeds and volumes. First and Sixth Avenues, which are both two-way streets, generally have lower travel speeds. Second and Third Avenues, and the north-south streets west of First Avenue, all function as wide, two-lane local streets because they do not provide through north-south connections.

The design challenge on The Avenues is to make effective use of the generally wide street cross-sections (50+ feet) to create more pedestrian-, bicycle- and transit-friendly streets while accommodating vehicular traffic.

## POLICIES

- UD-3.40** Explore design solutions for the Avenues that make them more hospitable to pedestrian, bicycle and transit use while recognizing and enhancing the different functional characteristics of each street.
- UD-3.41** Create a more human scale to the street along First, Fourth and Fifth Avenues by enhancing pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and calming traffic. Such enhancements might include:
  - Consistent street tree planting
  - Widening of sidewalks and/or introduction of planting strips
  - Addition of bike lanes
  - Sidewalk bulb-outs at intersections
  - Addition of street furnishings to support pedestrian activity at key nodes
  - Enhanced transit stops
- UD-3.42** Create a greater sense of place along Fourth and Fifth Avenues. Design strategies might include:
  - The introduction of gateway elements (e.g., markers, signs, etc.) at key neighborhood or commercial district entries to reinforce neighborhood or district identities
  - Changing street tree and landscape palettes along different sections of the avenues
  - The use of distinctive paving, banners, public art, etc. to distinguish neighborhoods and districts
- UD-3.43** Narrow the actual and/or perceived street cross-section and making more creative use of the public right-of-way to complement the residential scale and character along Second and Third Avenues and the north-south streets west of First Avenue. Such enhancements might include:
  - Consistent street tree planting, including use of canopy trees, double rows of trees, and other strategies to enhance definition and sense of enclosure
  - Widening of sidewalks
  - Addition of bike lanes
  - Addition of diagonal parking
  - Sidewalk bulb-outs at intersections
  - Narrowing of street to create streetside pocket parks or greenways

## Pedestrian-Oriented Retail Streets

Uptown is known for its active, vibrant, retail streets filled with pedestrians throughout the day. The Uptown's retail streets are generally continuations of streets that connect to other parts of the City, but have different dimensions and design character as they pass through the commercial district. Typically, retail streets support neighborhood retail by providing low-speed vehicular access, convenient on-street parking, wide sidewalks with pedestrian amenities, and street trees and landscaping. Narrow street widths and enhanced pedestrian crossings encourage pedestrian activity that promotes retail vitality. The best Uptown examples include sections of Fifth Avenue in Hillcrest and the north end of Park Boulevard in University Heights. While balancing travel modes is important on retail streets, the preeminent design concern is creating a physical environment that supports the pedestrian activity that is essential for successful retail.

### POLICIES

- UD-3.44** Provide adequate sidewalk widths should be adequate to accommodate significant pedestrian traffic, street furniture, pedestrian amenities, and a welcoming frontage zone for commercial uses. Ideally, retail streets should have sidewalk widths of at least 15 feet, but no less than 12 feet.
- UD-3.45** Introduce consistent street tree planting at key retail streets to enhance the visual character, contribute to the pedestrian scale, and contribute to street/district identity.
- UD-3.46** Eliminate or significantly restrict driveways and curb cuts that create conflicts with within core retail districts. Ideally, vehicular access should be redirected to alley access or restricted to shared mid-block access to parking structures where alley or rear access is not available.
- UD-3.47** Encourage crosswalk improvements that enhance the visibility and signify the importance of the pedestrian zone. Paving materials, colors, textures and markings can be used to delineate the crosswalk area, though all crosswalk materials shall be durable and safe for pedestrian use. Special lighting—either flashing pavement markings or overhead fixtures focused upon the crosswalk—can be used to further enhance pedestrian visibility of crossings that are heavily used during evening hours. Curb extensions and flashing signals should be installed wherever mid-block crosswalks are provided.
- UD-3.48** Design retail streets to accommodate bicycle use, including off-streets facilities such as bike racks and directional signs.

## Green Streets

In the Uptown, “green” streets are intended as components of both the circulation and open space systems. Their purpose is to provide linkages between the Uptown's open space resources and provide safe pedestrian and bicycle connections to the area's parks and open space. The design intent is to have streets that have ample facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists, a lush, park-like character, and low traffic volumes and speeds. The design character will differ depending on street characteristics. Streets preliminarily identified as possible green streets include Laurel, Spruce, and Quince in Bankers Hill/Park West – San Diego Avenue, Sunset and Juan Streets in Mission Hills – and Richmond, Vermont, and Lincoln Streets in Hillcrest and University Heights.

### POLICIES

- UD-3.49** Explore opportunities for creating broad greenways (e.g., extra wide planting strip) on one or both sides of the green street by narrowing the paved street cross-section.
- UD-3.50** Design green street sidewalks at least ten feet wide, where feasible.
- UD-3.51** Incorporate signage to identify designated green streets.
- UD-3.52** Introduce a consistent street tree planting theme along each green street to create a visual connection between parks and the neighborhoods of Uptown. A double row of trees (either the same or different species) should be considered as a way of establishing the green street identity and creating a more verdant character.

**UD-3.53** Design planting strips to serve the dual purpose of “greening” the public realm and contributing to stormwater management by slowing and treating stormwater runoff. Bioswales and raingardens should be installed in planting strips when feasible.

**UD-3.54** Utilize native plantings and/or climate-appropriate species within green streets.

## Alleys in Commercial Areas

The Uptown’s alleys are an important urban design resource that can positively influence community character. Alleys in commercial districts should be used to provide access to parking and service areas for commercial buildings, reducing the need for garage entrances and curb cuts along street frontages. Currently, all of the major commercial districts are served by alleys, except for Washington Street and isolated blocks where development has been allowed to eliminate them.

Besides service access, there are other desirable functions that alleys potentially can perform. Alleys also can be designed for more than vehicular use. The Uptown’s alleys can provide access from rear parking lots to street front entrances either directly through alley-side entries or by means of the mid-block breezeways. They also can provide a secondary route for pedestrians and bicyclists to navigate through the commercial districts. They also could provide venues for markets, street parties, and other special events. With the addition of certain improvements, these other functions can be greatly enhanced.

## POLICIES

**UD-3.55** Consider the incorporation of alleys within commercial districts as part of a full block development if none exist, in order to provide rear service and parking access.

**UD-3.56** Provide gating and screening of service and loading areas for security.

**UD-3.57** Screen trash bins from view at all times and may not intrude into the alley right-of-way.

**UD-3.58** Underground overhead utility lines in order to improve the visual character of the Uptown’s alleys.

**UD-3.59** Minimize potential conflicts by locating and screening service and loading areas when alleys provide the boundary between residential and commercial uses.

## URBAN FORESTRY

The primary objectives of urban forest management are to maximize the benefits of trees, maximize the efficiencies in managing trees in an urban environment, and to minimize risks associated with urban trees. Street trees contribute significantly to the character, identity, and comfort of the community’s streets. Trees contribute to the spatial definition of the street, providing both a comfortable sense of scale and enclosure to the public realm. They add shade which contributes to pedestrian comfort, and color, texture and pattern that contribute to the street’s visual quality. They also can contribute to improved air quality and reduced stormwater runoff. As a powerful stormwater tool, street trees have the ability to absorb water through their root systems and transpire water vapor directly back into the atmosphere.

The policies in this section are to be used in conjunction with Tables 4-2 and 4-3 for residential and commercial streets and Figure 4-6 for street tree recommendations and locations. All other areas should utilize guidance from the City of San Diego Tree Selection matrices based on planting widths and healthy tree species in the area. Consistency of street trees is not imperative on all streets, given existing conditions where there is already a mixture of trees.

## POLICIES

**UD-3.60** Retain mature and health street trees when feasible.

**UD-3.61** Utilize street trees to establish a linkage between blocks.

**UD-3.62** Utilize large canopy street trees where appropriate.

**UD-3.63** Space trees consistently at an interval equal to provide rhythm and continuity.

**UD-3.64** Plant trees in areas where sufficient root growth and drainage can be accommodated.

- UD-3.65 Utilize structural soils over compacted soils, open planters with shrubs and groundcover over tree grates, and deep tree well pits with corner subsurface drainage options over low permeable soil types typical of Uptown.
- UD-3.66 Utilize tree root barriers along walkways in order to minimize sidewalk upheaval.
- UD-3.67 Create a network of green streets that provides urban greening features that enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment, storm water management features, and opportunities for additional street trees.
- UD-3.68 Employ the following guidelines in selecting street trees:
  - In order to support a comfortable pedestrian environment, street trees should have sufficient canopy to provide shading to the pedestrian zone. Spacing of trees will be dependent on species selected, but should be based on the ability to reasonably achieve shading of at least 50% of the public right-of-way within ten (10) years of planting, and provide a nearly continuous canopy at maturity.
  - Tree species should be suited to the San Diego climate and not require significant water, pesticides, or fertilizer to maintain health.
  - Tree species should be structurally sound, and not have weak branching habits that result in broken and falling branches.
  - Native or naturalized tree species provide more suitable habitat and nesting for local birds and wildlife.
  - Trees that are overly messy (e.g., heavy shedding of bark, leaves or seed pods) or have invasive root systems that can heave sidewalks or break pipes should be avoided.
  - Tree species need to be chosen to avoid potential conflicts with overhead or underground utilities, or with adjacent structures.
  - Broad canopy type trees should be selected for streets that are particularly wide and/or where shade is desirable.
  - Tree canopies should not be so dense that they obscure views of the street from upper floor windows or obstruct filtered light from reaching the pedestrian zone.
  - Tree species that have distinctive flowers, bark, or other special characteristic are particularly effective on pedestrian-oriented streets.
  - Palm trees should only be used as design or character defining elements and should be restricted to the corners of intersections and major entry ways where their other limitations are less apparent.

## COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD GATEWAYS

Gateways are already an important character-defining feature of Uptown with its prominent historic streetcar signs for Hillcrest, Mission Hills, University Heights, and El Cajon Boulevard. Smaller gateway signs are also located throughout the neighborhood, announcing neighborhood transitions. Incorporation of gateway elements should be considered at key points to announce the entry into a neighborhood or commercial district such as the Hillcrest Core District and alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians and the need to slow down. Gateways may demarcate key historic, cultural, civic, shopping destinations.

## POLICIES

- UD-3.69 Provide gateway markers within the public realm to announce entry into distinct neighborhoods.
- UD-3.70 Use gateway elements (e.g., markers, signs, etc.) to indicate at key neighborhood or commercial district entries to reinforce neighborhood or district identities.
- UD-3.71 Design gateway elements in a manner that reinforces neighborhood identity through the use of similar materials, historic features, and scale.
- UD-3.72 Appoint gateways with street furnishings that may encourage their development as a public gathering space.
- UD-3.73 Design gateways so that they may be experienced and viewed from multiple modes of transportation (i.e. pedestrian, bicyclists, vehicles)

- UD-3.74** Consider potential enhancements to Juan Street to signify it as a community gateway from Old Town into Mission Hills such as neighborhood identity signs and public right-of-way improvements. (UDE)
- UD-3.75** Maintain and enhance the “Egyptian Thematic District” along the commercial areas along Park Boulevard between Robinson Avenue and University Avenue which features a number of Egyptian Revival and Art Deco themed buildings and serves as a joint gateway corridor into the Uptown and Greater North Park communities from Balboa Park.
- UD-3.76** Identify the community gateway at Washington Street into Middletown from the Midway community. New development in the vicinity of this gateway should incorporate neighborhood identification, distinctive architecture, public art, right-of-way improvements that signify entry into the neighborhood.
- UD-3.77** Identify the community gateways in Bankers Hill/Park West that include Laurel Street from Midway, Laurel Street from Balboa Park, and First and Fifth Avenues from Downtown. New development in the vicinity of these gateways should incorporate neighborhood identification, distinctive architecture, public art, right-of-way improvements that signify entry into the neighborhood.

## 4.4 DEVELOPMENT FORM

Development form refers to buildings and improvements associated with the ‘private realm’ to the ‘public realm’ and is based on the following:

- Context:** Allow for creative architectural solutions that acknowledge contextual design through emulation, interpretation, or contrast in character.
- Character:** Complement the architectural character of older buildings and promote harmony in the visual relationships and transitions between new and older buildings.
- Pedestrian:** Encourage building design that helps activate and define the public realm and enhance the pedestrian experience.
- Materials:** Promote the use of high quality building materials that include detailing & landscaping.
- Integrated Services:** Promote functional & aesthetic integration of building services, vehicular access and parking facilities.
- Sustainable Design:** Promote sustainability in building design, construction and operation.

Much of the Uptown community is not anticipated to experience significant change. The focus of the development form policies is on commercial and mixed-use development, and residential infill.

## STREET WALL ARTICULATION

The blocks in the community’s commercial and mixed use areas originally had platted with 50 foot wide lot increments. This original lot pattern gives the development on these blocks a fine-grained pattern with its own rhythm and inherent variety. Variety in the street wall and articulation of building façades can help to create visual interest while maintaining the pedestrian scale.

## POLICIES

- UD-4.1** Vary and articulate building massing and façades to contribute to a fine-grained, pedestrian scale environment at the street level through the use of such features as notched setbacks, projecting bays, balconies, recessed storefront entrances, sidewalk cafes, window bays, and pedestrian passages to create visual interest.
- UD-4.2** Employ the use of vertical volumes and changes in height to break up long façades, provide focal features, and identify key locations such as, building entrances, entry to a paseo, and street corners.

- UD-4.3 Avoid repeating the same wall surface design horizontally.
- UD-4.4 Combine changes in depth or horizontal plane with a change in material and character. Changes in façade material or color should be associated with a change in plane.
- UD-4.5 Require façade articulation through the use of balconies, terraces and/or upper-story setbacks on high-rise buildings west side of Sixth Avenue to minimize view obstructions to Balboa Park. Establish a 10-foot setback from lot line for landscaping along the west side of Sixth Avenue with Palm trees planted adjacent to the sidewalks, resulting in a 30-foot setback from the curb.
- UD-4.6 Maintain and enhance views of Balboa Park from Fifth Avenue through the articulation of building façades, variations in setbacks and utilization of varied roof forms.

## GROUND LEVEL USES

The ground level design of buildings plays a significant role in the vitality of the public realm because of its interrelation with the pedestrian experience. The following guidelines apply to ground-level uses throughout the community with a focus on commercial and mixed use areas.

### POLICIES

- UD-4.7 Design floor-to-floor heights of between 16 feet and 18 feet as an optimal height for commercial ground floors in mixed-use buildings.
- UD-4.8 Design ground-floor elevations for commercial uses to be level with the elevation of the adjacent public sidewalk.
- UD-4.9 Avoid blank walls. If unavoidable, they should be landscaped or decorated in a manner that makes them visually interesting.
- UD-4.10 Where ground floor residential uses are permitted or desired, promote active residential street frontages by designing ground-floor units to provide living space that fronts the street and/or takes direct access from the street landscaped setbacks, planters, front porches, stoops and forecourts are encouraged to buffer residential uses as well as provide pedestrian interest. Fences, walls and landscaping shall be designed and maintained to provide “eyes on the street” rather than as a visual obstruction.
- UD-4.11 Design ground-floor residential uses within residential and mixed-use developments to provide a grade change from the public sidewalk to the first floor residence to protect the privacy of residential units.

## WINDOWS

Windows are important in creating active building façades that are visually engaging and in connecting a building’s interior activities with the public realm. From the outside, windows give human scale to buildings, and animate façades with their varying sizes, patterns and treatments. From the inside, they provide for natural light and views, and operable windows provide for natural ventilation.

### POLICIES

- UD-4.12 Group windows to establish rhythms across the façade and hierarchies at important places on the façade.
- UD-4.13 Include windows along all walls visible from the public realm.

## BUILDING MATERIALS

The craftsmanship and design detail that is embodied in the community’s historic and traditional buildings is highly valued. While newer construction techniques and design processes do not strive to replicate the hand-crafted quality of the past, the use of high quality materials is a design decision that is possible for new construction. The use of high quality materials is essential for creating

buildings that convey the sense of quality and permanence desired for the community. The materials such as plastered stucco, smooth stucco, glass, concrete, metal panel, synthetic panel tile, brick and decorative masonry, quarry stone, terra cotta, traditional decorative tile and masonry, brick and solid wood are examples of quality materials. Accent materials used in entryways, windows, and cornices must also be of the highest quality to ensure durability and character.

## POLICIES

- UD-4.14** Use high-quality, durable building materials and finishes in all projects. In taller buildings, use high quality materials at the street level where they are more visible to the public.
- UD-4.15** Design buildings with materials and colors that relate to masses and volumes. Changes in material or color should be designed with a change in the wall plane.

## LIGHTING

The primary purpose of illuminating buildings is to provide for security and pedestrian safety. Lighting is also used to enhance details of the front façade, and to illuminate plant materials and pathways in the landscaping. Known for their distinctive commercial areas and nightlife, various parts of Uptown employ lighting to promote commercial and entertainment activity. The manner in which it is illuminated is critical to maintaining community character, user comfort, and successful businesses.

## POLICIES

- UD-4.16** Incorporate lighting that complements and enhances building design and reinforces neighborhood character.
- UD-4.17** Consider the use of lighting to ensure public safety and enhance nighttime activities.

## SIGNS

Signs play a fundamental role in the community, especially in commercial areas. They facilitate local commerce by identifying where goods, services, and entertainment can be found. They also play a significant role in community character—contributing to either a more attractive and legible urban environment or one that is confusing, visually cluttered and unattractive. In order to reinforce pedestrian orientation, the type, size, and placement of signs is important. The inclusion of attractive, distinctive, and noticeable signage that is complementary to neighborhood character is a primary goal of private realm building design.

## POLICIES

- UD-4.18** Incorporate signage that complements building design and contributes to neighborhood character.
- UD-4.19** Construct signs of high-quality materials such as wood, metal, or stone.
- UD 4.20** Design signs as an integral part of the building, consistent with its architectural style, scale, materials, and color.

## CORNERS

Buildings located on corners are especially positioned to activate the public realm add visual interest to the pedestrian environment. Corner buildings are ideally situated for active ground-floor uses and commercial spaces with greater, more functional depths. They offer the opportunity to define street character with bold architecture, vertical height elements or place-making features. Designs for buildings situated on corners may include design enhancements on the ground floor, such as enhanced building entrances and ornament, as well as design treatments for upper story volumes, such as variations in material and color, and lighting treatments, as well as distinctive canopies.

## POLICIES

- UD-4.21** Design corner buildings to engage and add interest to the public realm.

- UD-4.22** For buildings on corner lots, locate entrances at the corner to anchor the intersection and create a seamless transition that captures pedestrian activity from both street frontages.
- UD 4.23** Accentuate the corner’s unique location with architectural features that actively engage the public realm and create a visual presence at the corner, such as:
- Chamfered or rounded corners.
  - Projecting and recessed balconies and entrances.
  - Accentuating features such as embellished doorways and volumetric manipulations (e.g., corner tower).
  - Enhanced window designs that may include floor-to-ceiling windows, display windows, clerestory windows, or distinctive glass design or colors.
- UD-4.24** In the Hillcrest Core and other community gateway locations, incorporate architectural design features that highlight the gateway and create a sense of entry.

## ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTIONS

Projections refer to additional architectural elements, such as cornices, balconies, window bays, and sun shades. These are placed at a height or distance from the street frontage that they do not impact pedestrian movement; however, they must be designed carefully to ensure that their scale and location is appropriate.

## POLICIES

- UD 4.25** Consider using canopies and awnings in buildings to protect pedestrians from summer heat and winter rain, and to contribute variety to storefronts and building entries.
- Should be consistent with the building’s architectural style and avoid obscuring distinctive architectural features.
  - Can be either permanent architectural features that incorporate materials consistent with the building’s architecture, or colored fabric mounted over a metal structural frame.
  - Utilize quality materials and avoid shiny or flimsy fabric.
- UD-4.26** Design balconies to add visual variety and interest to building façades.
- UD-4.27** Design street-level patios with consideration to useable space and security to create an active connection between public and private realms.
- UD-4.28** Design cornices, which are continuous horizontal courses or moldings along the top of building façades, to define and add character to buildings.
- UD-4.29** Utilize sunshades to control solar exposure into building interiors in order to limit heat gain, prevent glare, and enhance daylighting by re-directing and deflecting sunlight. With the emphasis on creating more sustainable buildings, the use of sunshades is expected to become ever more prevalent.

## ROOFTOPS AND MECHANICAL SCREENING

The silhouette created by building roof lines is an important component of community character whether it is a two-story commercial building viewed from the street frontage or a high-rise mixed use building viewed from afar. Rooftops need to accommodate servicing and life-safety requirements and mechanical areas need to be appropriately screened while still retaining a form that will be a distinctive and memorable contribution to the community’s skyline.

## POLICIES

- UD-4.30** Design rooftops in an expressive and contextual manner, with mechanical areas and equipment appropriately screened so that they are not visible from streets and other public spaces.

- UD-4.31 Consider screening and architecturally integrating all mechanical penthouses and stair towers into the form of the building.
- UD 4.32 Consider using green roofs, roof gardens or rooftop patios so that they can be used to enhance rooftop appearance from surrounding buildings.

## PUBLIC SPACE

Public space and landscaping plays a significant role in how people experience the urban environment, providing an interface between the public and private realms that unites them into a seamless whole.

## POLICIES

- UD-4.33 Integrate semi-public outdoor spaces such as on-site plazas, patios, courtyards, paseos, terraces and gardens to address the public realm and support pedestrian activity and community interaction. These are strongly encouraged in larger projects exceeding approximately one acre in size.
- UD-4.34 Delineate plazas and courtyards through building and landscape design. Ensure that plazas and courtyards are comfortably scaled, landscaped for shade and ornament, furnished with areas for sitting, and lighted for evening use. Courtyards should be surrounded by active façades or landscape treatments.
- UD-4.35 Provide a variety of seating options, such as benches, seat walls, and broad steps. Private patios may be located in courtyards if they are defined by a low wall or hedge.

As commercial corridors continue to redevelop and add residential density, the provision of public (and private) open space becomes more important. These spaces can provide needed open space for nearby residents, office workers, shoppers and visitors, especially when larger parks are not proximate, as is the case for most of the community's commercial and mixed-use areas. Refer to Figure 4-7 for an example of public open space within private development.

## POLICIES

- UD-4.36 Provide opportunities for public open spaces in neighborhood centers and nodes.
- UD-4.37 Orient public spaces within private development towards the public right-of-way and frame with active building façades (e.g., entrances, windows, balconies, etc.) that help activate the space and provide "eyes on the street" for security.
- UD-4.38 Explore creative ways to create permanent and temporary public spaces from underutilized rights-of-way, vacant parcels, and alleys.

## PUBLIC ART

Public art helps to activate the public realm by adding visual interest to the public streetscape and enriching the pedestrian experience. Adding elements that visually and intellectually engage the community can be an effective means of encouraging pedestrian activity and fostering community identity. Public art should be seen as something that is integral to the design of the many elements that occupy the public streetscape--making them more interesting, but not necessarily requiring more space.

## POLICIES

- UD-4.39 Locate public art in areas where it can be viewed and enjoyed by a large number of people, including sidewalks, intersections, plazas, and medians.
- UD-4.40 Use public art to as a means to enhance community understanding of the community's history and culture.

- UD-4.41 Determine the design and placement of public art so that it will be coordinated with and enhance other streetscape elements. Three-dimensional installations that occur within the public right-of-way should not obstruct pedestrian circulation, and should be considered in the same manner as other street furnishings.
- UD-4.42 Consider public art to mark key gateways and intersections.
- UD-4.43 Consider the use incorporation of interactive art that will encourage community participation or provides sensory stimulation through touch, movement, or sound.
- UD-4.44 Engage local San Diego artists in the creation of public art installations.

## STREET ORIENTATION AND SETBACKS

Much of the community’s vibrant pedestrian-oriented environment is a product of development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century’s, prior to the prominence of the automobile, when buildings were designed at a more pedestrian scale and sited to address the public realm, creating a well-defined street edge. The distance buildings are set back from the street helps to define the character of the public realm. In order to create a coherent character, it is important to establish a consistent alignment of building frontages without significant gaps within each block or series of blocks.

## POLICIES

- UD-4.45 Design and locate building with a strong orientation to the primary street frontage to define the pedestrian environment with main building entrances facing the street rather than parking lots.
- UD-4.46 Maintain a consistent streetwall along commercial streets except where public plazas, public spaces, and other amenities can be incorporated and enjoyed by the public.
- UD-4.47 Maintain quality architectural articulation and finishes around all visible sides of the buildings, not just the building fronts.
- UD-4.48 Restrict placing surface parking between the building frontage and the public street right-of-way in all circumstances.

## SUSTAINABLE BUILDING DESIGN

Sustainable building design is encouraged throughout Uptown and is an essential element to reduce energy, efficiently utilize resources, and to create environments that are livable, comfortable, safe, and productive. Other policies related to sustainable development and natural resource conservation can be found in the Conservation Element and the Historic Preservation Element.

## POLICIES

- UD-4.50 Incorporate of building features that allow natural ventilation, maximize daylight, reduce water consumption, and minimize solar heat gain.
- UD-4.51 Incorporate features that provide shade, passive cooling, and reduce daytime heat gain.
  - a. Incorporate architectural treatments such as eaves, awnings, canopies, trellises, or cornice treatments at entrances and windows.
  - b. Shade exposed south and west facing façades using shrubs and vines.
- UD-4.52 Incorporate inset windows and well-designed trims and details that provide shading and reduce solar heat gain.
- UD-4.53 Incorporate green roofs and vegetated roof systems along with gardens to help reduce the solar heat gain.
- UD-4.54 Incorporate white or reflective paint on rooftops and light paving materials to reflect heat away from buildings and reduce the need for mechanical cooling.
- UD-4.55 Incorporate elements to reduce the use of non-renewable energy such as small low-impact wind turbines or photovoltaic panels on flat roofs that are discretely located to limit to limit any visibility from the street or glare to adjacent properties.
- UD-4.56 Minimize impervious surfaces that have large thermal gain.
- UD-4.57 Encourage recycled, rapidly renewable, and locally sourced materials that reduce impacts related to materials extraction,

processing, and transportation.

- UD-4.58 Incorporate sustainable landscape treatments such as artificial turf, drought-tolerant, and climate-appropriate plant species, planting materials, and light-colored paving materials.
- UD-4.59 Orient buildings to minimize the extent of west facing façades and openings.
- UD-4.60 Use internal courtyards to trap cool air. Courtyards visible from the street will also encourage interaction with on-site open space.
- UD-4.61 Utilize decorative vertical shading and fins on the east and west facing building façades as integrated design features with a sustainable benefit.
- UD-4.62 Design buildings to allow for cross ventilation and minimize solar heat gain.
  - a. Provide vents or windows with low openings on western facing façades to capture cooler breezes into a building.
  - b. Provide vents or clerestory windows on eastern façades to naturally allow warmer air that collects near ceilings to escape.
- UD-4.63 Provide groundcover plantings to keep ground surfaces cooler near building façades particularly in place of concrete and other reflective surfaces.
- UD-4.64 Promote the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic structures to reinforce the history of the area and reinvest in existing resources.
- UD-4.65 Incorporate local history and heritage into the public realm through elements including signage, information placards, historic plaques, murals, gateway features, and unique pavers.
- UD-4.66 Encourage the restoration and maintenance of older structures that may not be historically designated but nonetheless contribute to the unique character and flavor of Uptown.

## HEIGHT AND MASSING IN NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS AND NODES

The community contains an eclectic variety of buildings in its commercial and mixed-use areas, ranging in scale, style, use, and material, among other attributes. Refer to Figures 4-8 through 4-11 for height and massing concepts.

### POLICIES

- UD-4.67 Employ a combination of building setbacks, upper-story setbacks, and articulated sub-volumes to sensitively transition to adjacent lower height.
- UD-4.68 Step back upper floors of buildings above the third story in order to maintain a pedestrian scale on community streets.
- UD 4.69 Incorporate streetwall indents when accommodating outdoor seating for eating and drinking establishments in order to minimize the extent of sidewalk encroachments.
- UD-4.70 Design taller buildings to differentiate between the building's base, middle and top sections in order to reduce the apparent mass.

## HEIGHT AND MASSING IN THE HILLCREST CORE

The core of Uptown contains the community's most concentrated mix of commercial and residential buildings. Residential, commercial, and employment are integrated with accessible, pedestrian-friendly, and attractive streets. Identified as an "Urban Village" in regional and citywide contexts, the Hillcrest Core supports the Uptown community and Medical Complex neighborhood employment area to sustain transit and walkability. Refer to Figures 4-10 and 4-13 (NEW) for height and massing concepts

### POLICIES

- UD-4.71 Employ a combination of setbacks, upper-story setbacks, and articulated sub-volumes to sensitively and adequately transition to adjacent lower height buildings.

- UD-4.72 Design upper-story additions that are set back from the primary façade of adaptive reuse buildings to maintain the overall form of the original building at the front setback.
- UD-4.73 Design the massing on combined lots to respond to the pattern and rhythm of both adjacent development and the prevailing development within the block.
- UD-4.74 Design interface and the public realm that creates a lively engagement with public amenities including: plazas, squares, courtyards, public art, and community gardens all of which provide an on-street vitality and public amenities that reinforce both the scale and energy of the core.

## HEIGHT AND MASSING IN RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

The scale, massing, and detailing of buildings has a substantial impact upon neighborhood character. Nearly all of the buildings in the community's residential areas are less than three stories (35') in height, and the vast majority is one or two stories. In order to ensure complementary infill and new development, establishing consistent massing and configuration of new buildings is crucial to producing high-quality, memorable architecture that is compatible with established development patterns.

### POLICIES

- UD-4.75 Design to conform to the predominant scale of the neighborhood and/or particular block and be sensitive to the scale of adjacent uses.
- UD-4.76 Employ a combination of setbacks, upper-story setbacks, and articulated sub-volumes to sensitively and adequately transition to adjacent lower height buildings.
- UD-4.77 Setback upper-story additions from the primary façade to preserve the original scale and form of the building at the front setback.
- UD-4.78 Design the massing on combined lots to respond to the pattern and rhythm of both adjacent development and the prevailing development within the block.
- UD-4.79 Design buildings with simple, harmonious proportions that reflect the neighborhoods historic buildings.
- UD-4.80 Use features, such as porches and stoops, deep entry and window openings, balconies, window bays, eaves and rooflines to add variety and interest, and to mitigate apparent massing.

### DEVELOPMENT TRANSITIONS

It is essential that new development be sensitively designed so that buildings transition from higher density areas to lower density areas. This is of particular importance within commercial centers and nodes and in residential neighborhoods where maximum building heights differ between adjacent properties or alleys as a result of zoning. Creating gradual development transitions can be done most successfully through design that addresses setbacks and upper-story setbacks for the portion of the building over a certain threshold. Refer to Figure 4-12 for building transitions.

- UD-4.81 Design buildings to create compatible transitions when they are located adjacent to areas designated at a lower density. Compatible transitions between higher and lower density areas should not exceed a 60 degree transition plane.
- UD-4.82 Consider the dominant architectural style of adjacent buildings including roof forms, architectural feature, and materials.
- UD-4.83 Consider the massing, scale, and height of adjacent buildings by using architectural design features to maintain a sense of scale and transition to adjacent buildings with lower heights.

- UD-4.84** Design the side and rear elevations of buildings with as much quality as the front façade and incorporate windows while respecting the need for light, air, and privacy of the adjacent buildings.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES BY BUILDING TYPE

### *Building Type: Low-Rise (Up to 35 feet) - Mixed-Use Buildings*

In Uptown, low-rise mixed-use buildings are defined as buildings that are three stories (35 feet) or less in height. This building type includes single-use commercial and mixed-use commercial/residential buildings, and is common along commercial corridors and commercial districts. Front and side setbacks are intended to be minimal or are set at zero for commercial frontages. Primary pedestrian access is from the primary street frontage. Parking is typically surface or tuck-under located behind the building, and accessed from a rear alley or from the side or front by a narrow side-drive. Where ground floor residential units are permitted, street level units should have direct access to the public street via front porches or stoops.

### *Building Type: Low-Rise: Up to 35 feet - Residential Only*

Low-rise residential buildings include buildings ranging from one to three stories. This type includes detached units (single-family houses), attached units (duplexes, townhouses), and stacked units (stacked flat apartment buildings). One- and two-story single-family houses are by far the most prevalent. Low-rise residential buildings generally have more generous front, side, and rear yard setbacks. Primary pedestrian access is from the public street frontage. Even in multi-family buildings, ground-floor units should have access to the public street frontage via street-facing front entry porches or stoops. Parking access generally depends on the block structure. On blocks with alleys, parking should be accessed from the rear of the lot, whereas, on blocks with no alleys, parking access is typically provided via driveways from the primary street frontage. Parking for low-rise buildings is typically within enclosed garages in single-family residences, and either surface or tuck-under parking in multi-family projects.

### *Building Type: Mid-Rise: 35 feet to 75 feet - Mixed-Use Buildings*

Mid-rise commercial and mixed-use buildings typically are between four and seven stories in height (45 feet - 75 feet) with ground-floor commercial and upper story residential, although there are also examples of mid-rise commercial buildings. This type is most commonly found along some of the busier corridors, such as Park Boulevard and Fifth Avenue, near the primary commercial districts. Front and side setbacks for commercial frontages are minimal or zero. Primary pedestrian access is from the public street frontage. Parking is typically integrated into the building footprint, either below grade or in a parking podium, and accessed via a rear alley or from the side or front by a narrow side-drive.

### *Building Type: High-Rise: Over 75 feet – 100 feet - Mixed Use Buildings*

High-rise buildings are defined as buildings that are eight stories or greater in height (85 feet plus). High-rise buildings in Uptown tend to be primarily residential in nature and are most often located where they can capture views of either Balboa Park or San Diego Bay. The primary exceptions are the hospital buildings in the Medical Complex neighborhood. Due to their scale, high-rise buildings often have a shallow front, side and rear yard setbacks. High-rise buildings developments generally occupy larger parcels, and single development can often occupy a quarter, half, or full block. A common building configuration uses a three to six-story “base” covering the majority of the site and one or two towers extending up from the base. Parking is located behind or under the buildings, on the interior of the block, screened from view. Parking is typically integrated into the building footprint, either below grade or in a parking podium, and accessed via a rear alley or from the side or front via a narrow side driveway. Façade articulation is typically in the form of recessed or projecting balconies and may include terraces at upper levels where the building steps back.

## CANYONS AND NATURAL OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

Canyons are among the community's most treasured elements, providing natural open space features that shape the community's identity and built form. Each of Uptown's neighborhoods abut at least one of these important open space resources and is influenced by the views, the natural environment, and the open space they provide. Given their significance, it is important that development along the canyons and steep slopes not detract from the aesthetic, environmental or open space benefits that they provide.

### POLICIES

- UD-4.85** Promote buildings design that is responsive to the community's unique canyon environment and steep slopes.
- UD-4.86** Ensure that canyon rim and hillside development is unobtrusive and maintains the scale and character of the adjacent buildings.
- UD-4.87** Design buildings to limit their visual impact on views from within or across the canyon through landscape screening and by stepping building volumes down the slope (rather than perching over the canyon on piers).
- UD-4.88** Design drives and parking access to conform, as closely as possible, to existing grades and minimize the need for the grading of slopes.
- UD-4.89** The permitted floor area for lots located partially within open space areas should be based only upon that portion of the lot not within the open space designation. As a minimum, the permitted floor area should assume a lot depth of 100 feet rather than the true lot depth. Garages should not be eliminated in an effort to reduce the floor area.
- UD-4.90** Design buildings along the canyon edge to conform to the hillside topography by providing a setback from top of slope where possible.
  - a. Provide a stepped foundation down the slope, rather than cantilevering over the canyon. In order to accommodate a reasonable building size for lots with limited flat area.
  - b. Design roof pitches to approximate the slope.
- UD-4.91** Protect the visual quality of landforms and the character of canyon neighborhoods by:
  - a. Dividing the building heights into one and two story components, varying the rooflines and wall planes, providing openings, projections, recesses and other building details.
  - b. Creative building shapes and uses of entries, arcades, stairs, overhangs and angles can help to complement the surrounding topography and vegetation to create and define outdoor space.
- UD-4.92** Avoid exposed under-floor areas, large downhill cantilevers, and/or tall support columns for overhanging areas for both aesthetic and fire safety reasons.
- UD-4.93** Use neutral, earth tone, or muted colors that complement the natural landscape, for building adjacent to designated open space.