

Balboa Avenue Station Area Specific Plan Public Comment Summary

The Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the Balboa Avenue Station Area Specific Plan was made available for public review beginning April 13, 2018. Public review comments and responses to comments addressing the Environmental Impact Report are found in the Final Environmental Impact Report. Public review comments that specifically pertained to the Specific Plan received during the public review period for both the Draft Specific Plan and Draft PEIR are addressed below. The comments provided through the public review process addressed a range of topics related to the Specific Plan, including a pedestrian bridge over Interstate 5 (I-5), infrastructure financing, potential impacts of development on Rose Creek, potential traffic impacts associated with development, proposed residential densities, proposed bicycle facilities.

Below is a summary of the issues raised and the Planning Department's response.

Comment Topic: Residential Densities
<p>The Specific Plan will implement the goals of the City's General Plan and Climate Action Plan (CAP) by increasing employment and housing opportunities near transit, promoting walking and bicycle use as viable travel choices, and improving transit access and frequency in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>The draft Specific Plan focuses increased density in the Community Village areas within Pacific Beach along Garnet Ave and Mission Bay Drive and allows for a range of dwelling units in the residential neighborhood surrounding Bond Street adjacent to Rose Creek.</p> <p>The draft Specific Plan proposes to increase the capacity for new housing within the area by approximately 3,500 units as compared to the adopted Pacific Beach Community Plan. The range of densities within the Specific Plan area presents an opportunity to provide a range of housing opportunities, types, and affordability levels. Additionally, all properties are subject to the City's affordable housing requirements as outlined in the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.</p> <p>As discussed in the recent report by the San Diego Housing Commission, Addressing the Housing Affordability Crisis, rezoning residential areas within a half mile radius of the City's transit opportunity areas will be the largest single tool in providing additional housing in San Diego, a key factor in increasing the supply of units affordable to low- and moderate-income families. Concentrating housing around transit opportunity areas aligns with City, regional, and State goals, including the General Plan City of Villages Strategy, SANDAG's Smart Growth Plan, and the State of California's climate commitments, by facilitating alternatives to private vehicle transport and creating walkable, mixed-use areas.</p> <p>How can the proposed densities be achieved within the Coastal Height Limit (30 feet)?</p> <p><i>Planning Department Response:</i></p> <p>The proposed residential densities could be achieved through maximizing a site's buildable area and through the inclusion of smaller units.</p>

There are multiple examples of three-story residential development projects with comparable density along Hancock Street, located within the Midway-Pacific Highway community of San Diego.

Within the Specific Plan area, the recently approved Jefferson Project located at Mission Bay Drive and Rosewood Street is under construction for 171 dwelling units at a density of approximately 60 dwelling units per acre.

Comment Topic: How does the draft Specific Plan address the community's request for a pedestrian bridge connecting the trolley station to Pacific Beach?

Planning Department Response:

The draft Specific Plan includes a policy to support the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) to consider a bicycle and pedestrian access via a connection across I-5 from the Balboa Avenue Trolley Station to the area east of Mission Bay Drive within the vicinity of Magnolia Avenue and Bunker Hill Street. This connection could include a bridge, aerial skyway, or other means with potential connections to Mission Bay Park and Mission Boulevard.

Identification of funding sources and implementation of the facility would require further coordination by SANDAG and MTS.

Comment Topic: Infrastructure Finance Study

The "Infrastructure Financing Study" should be completed before the draft Specific Plan moves forward in the planning process so that the community can understand the improvements to be made, who will pay for them, and the timeline for implementation before increased housing density is permitted.

Planning Department Response:

Chapter 6 of the draft Specific Plan identifies the infrastructure and facilities that serve the Specific Plan area. The draft PEIR includes analysis of the impacts of the draft Specific Plan on public services, including fire protection and emergency services, police protection, schools, libraries, and parks and recreational facilities.

A comprehensive Impact Fee Study (IFS) will be completed for the Pacific Beach community planning area subsequent to the adoption of the Specific Plan that will define applicable Development Impact Fees (DIF) fees for future development. The IFS will contain a list of public facilities projects and cost estimates within the Specific Plan area that will establish fees for funding public facilities in the Pacific Beach community. As future development is proposed within the Specific Plan area, individual projects would be subject to applicable DIF for public facilities financing. The DIF, when adopted, will be a partial funding source for the public facilities envisioned for the community and contained within the IFS. Portions of facilities costs not funded by DIF will need to be identified by future City Council actions in conjunction with the adoption of Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budgets.

Comment Topic: Rose Creek

The draft Specific Plan should include the dedication of Rose Creek as parkland managed for habitat, water quality, and recreational uses.

Planning Department Response:

The draft Specific Plan does not propose any changes to land use within Rose Creek. The parcels would remain designated open space and the City's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Land Use Adjacency Guidelines for protected open space lands would apply to the area.

City-owned parcels within Rose Creek are primarily managed by the Transportation and Storm Water (TSW) Department; other City-owned parcels within Rose Creek are managed by the Real Estate Assets and Parks and Recreation Departments. A majority of the City-owned parcels have storm water related projects and are currently used for storm water management. As a result, these parcels are not suitable for Dedicated Parkland per Charter Section 55 due to the current or future TSW uses.

The draft Specific Plan should address lighting installed along the Creek to avoid negative impacts to wildlife.

Planning Department Response:

All lighting installed along or adjacent to Rose Creek is subject to the lighting requirements of the MSCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines.

New development on Rose Creek must celebrate the creek not turn its back on the Creek. Do not allow walling off the Creek Frontage.

Planning Department Response:

The Urban Design Chapter's policies (Section 4.2) envision pedestrian and bicycle connections to the creek and promote outdoor dining and public spaces taking advantage of views of Rose Creek (Policy 4.2.2). Policies also discourage parking or blank walls fronting Rose Creek (Policy 4.3.3) and the City's Land Use Adjacency Guidelines for protected open space lands would apply to the area.

Any additional parks or parklets provided by redevelopment should be publicly accessible and include dog accessible areas to reduce the impact of Rose Creek being the only community dog walking area.

Planning Department Response:

The Recreation Chapter of the Draft Specific Plan includes policies to provide community park facilities that meet the need of the future residential population and encourages new development to incorporate park amenities within their building footprint or on site.

The City's public park design and development regulations require public access to all public park facilities.

Planting along Rose Creek should consist solely of plants in the Coastal Sage Scrub community to protect the habitat within the creek. Non-native plants should be prohibited along the creek or within the neighboring community.

Planning Department Response:

The Conservation Chapter of the Specific Plan includes a policy to implement the MSCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines through the project review process for properties in proximity to Rose Creek.

The Land Use Adjacency Guidelines prohibit the inclusion of invasive non-native plant species in areas adjacent to land within the City's Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA). Rose Creek includes areas that are within the City's MHPA.

Comment Topic: Traffic Impacts

How does the draft Specific Plan ensure easy pedestrian and bicycle access in all directions? How does the plan propose to minimize potential conflicts between pedestrians and motorists?

Planning Department Response:

The draft Specific Plan identifies multi-modal improvements to enhance access from Clairemont Mesa and Pacific Beach to the Balboa Avenue Trolley Station. Section 3.2 of the Specific Plan identifies pedestrian improvements, which include non-contiguous sidewalks and shared use paths along Garnet Avenue and Mission Bay Drive, as well as modifications at intersections to improve pedestrian mobility by shorten crossing distances. Bicycle improvements are identified in Section 3.3 and include a variety of facilities within the area for bicyclists of different abilities.

How does the Specific Plan address access to the Balboa Avenue Station for travelers located east of Morena Boulevard?

Planning Department Response:

The draft Specific Plan identifies pedestrian and bicycle improvements along Balboa Avenue and Morena Boulevard to improve multimodal access to the Balboa Avenue Trolley Station.

For individuals travelling north along Morena Boulevard to the Balboa Avenue Trolley Station, the draft Specific Plan recommends a two-way cycle track (Class IV bicycle facility) along the west side of Morena Boulevard. Pedestrian access to the Balboa Avenue Trolley Station would be provided via new sidewalks on both the east and west sides of Morena Boulevard south of Balboa Avenue.

For individuals travelling west along Balboa Avenue to the trolley station, sidewalk improvements are identified along both sides of the street and pedestrian access is included in the Morena Boulevard ramp improvements along the southside of Balboa Avenue. The Specific Plan's recommendation to consolidate the loop ramps at Balboa Avenue and Morena Boulevard is proposed to reduce pedestrian-vehicular conflicts both along Balboa Avenue as well as Morena Boulevard.

How does the draft Specific Plan address mobility along Morena Boulevard?

Planning Department Response:

The proposed reconfiguration of the right-of-way would allow for a two-way cycle track (Class IV bicycle facility) along the west side of Morena Boulevard to enhance bicycle access to the trolley station and connect to the City's bicycle network.

As addressed in the Traffic Impact Study of the draft PEIR (which is included as Appendix K), Morena Boulevard is not anticipated to result in significant impacts to vehicle travel capacity with the reduction of one southbound travel lane.

How does the draft Specific Plan address vehicle traffic associated with new development?

Planning Department Response:

The draft Specific Plan establishes a multi-modal network that focuses on access to the Balboa Avenue Trolley Station. The Specific Plan recommends improvements that balance the needs of all users, decrease dependence on single occupancy vehicles, and reduce average commute distances.

Mission Bay Drive at Grand Avenue would be changed to realign the travel lanes so that Grand Avenue becomes the through movement rather than Mission Bay Drive. This would reduce delays at the intersection and provide a pedestrian crossing to enhance access to Mission Bay Park.

Improvements to the Garnet Avenue and Mission Bay Drive intersection including the addition of a second left turn lane for westbound traffic to increase the capacity for vehicles traveling to Pacific Beach.

Garnet Avenue west of Mission Bay Drive would be widened from four lanes to six lanes to enhance vehicle capacity in the area and facilitate the bus connection from Pacific Beach to the Balboa Avenue Trolley Station.

Comment Topic: Bicycle Facilities

The draft Specific Plan identifies Class III bike lanes along Garnet Avenue near the I-5 loops and the Mission Bay Avenue intersection.

Community members identified bicycle access along Balboa/Garnet Avenue as a concern and suggested a Class IV bicycle facility along the roadway.

Planning Department Response:

With redevelopment along Garnet Avenue, a shared-use path (Class I facility) will be constructed along the north and south sides of Garnet Avenue from Mission Bay Drive to the I-5 freeway underpass. The shared-use path will then continue along the north side of Garnet/Balboa Avenue further east to Moraga Avenue. The Specific Plan identifies a Class II facility along the south side of Garnet /Balboa Avenue east of the I-5 freeway underpass.

Bicycle advocates and community members recommended allowing Class II bikeways to have an option for upgrade to Class IV status.

Planning Department Response:

Class II bikeways are assumed to include a buffer. The City Engineer has the discretion to convert a bicycle facility from a Class II to a Class IV facility. In addition, the Specific Plan policies include consolidating/sharing driveways, which would help to reduce conflicts between motorists and cyclists. The Specific Plan also includes policies that support enhanced bicycle lanes which can include Class IV bikeways. During implementation, feasibility of bicycle facility improvements will be considered and addressed at a project level analysis to provide the best facility feasible for cyclist taking into consideration the balance of all modes and constraints along the specific roadway.

Comment Topic: Pacific Beach EcoDistrict
How does the draft Specific Plan relate to the Project Design Guidelines for the Pacific Beach EcoDistrict Compatibility Checklist?
<i>Planning Department Response:</i> <p>The draft Specific Plan includes policies within the Land Use, Mobility, Urban Design, and Conservation Chapter that are consistent with the measures of the EcoDistrict Performance areas, including Appropriate Development, Health and Well Being, and Access and Mobility. Policies within the Specific Plan require active frontages and address measures including multimodal connections, street trees, storm water filtration, drought-tolerant landscaping, and provide guidance for usable outdoor spaces.</p> <p>The Urban Design and Conservation Chapters further promote sustainability within the Specific Plan area through the inclusion of policies addressing site and building design, including energy consumption, use of drought-tolerant landscaping, and integration of storm water best management practices to help implement the goals of the General Plan and CAP. Also, the CAP Consistency Checklist would be applied as a part of the development permit review process.</p> <p>Additionally, energy efficiencies within future development would be realized through the mandatory energy requirements of the California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) and the California Energy Code (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations). CALGreen addresses enhanced design and construction of buildings using concepts which reduce negative impacts and promote those principles which have a positive environmental impact and encourage sustainable construction practices.</p>
Comment Topic: Specific Plan Graphics
Will the Final Specific Plan include any updates to maps or graphics, which more clearly indicate the changes that are proposed?
<i>Planning Department Response:</i> <p>The Draft Final Specific Plan has been updated to include improved mobility maps and graphics that more clearly identify the proposed multi-modal improvements within the Specific Plan area.</p>