

KENSINGTON-TALMADGE PLANNING GROUP
FIRST DRAFT MID-CITY COMMUNITIES PLAN RESPONSE

October 19, 2026

OVERALL COMMENTS ABOUT THE ENTIRE PLAN

Unlike most Community Plan Updates that focus on one community, the Mid-City Communities Plan Update encompasses Kensington-Talmadge, Normal Heights, City Heights, and Eastern Area. These four communities are very different from each other and should be considered and treated differently as they were in the previous plan in 1998. The decisions made now will shape zoning and density in these communities permanently under current state law which prohibits any future net downzoning, so it is critical to get this plan update done correctly.

The City's Draft Plan proposes major density increases, including significant upzoning within established neighborhoods, without a clear economic development strategy, population justification, emergency evacuation plan, adequate protection of Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZs) or commitments to the parks, libraries, community facilities, and other infrastructure needed to support that growth.

The elected Kensington-Talmadge Planning Group (KTPG) believes there is a better, smarter approach. Mid-City has miles of underutilized commercial and transit corridors, particularly along El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue, where new housing and mixed-use development can revitalize our communities while putting growth where transit and services already exist.

The KTPG has developed an SB79 Alternative Plan. We believe that the most expansive requirements of SB79 are its FAR limits, more so than the du/ac requirements, and that once FARs are established that are compliant with SB79, the other factors of height and density easily fall into line.

North of Meade Avenue, the KTPG proposes keeping the existing zoning within the SB79 affected areas, but applying a 1.25 and 1.5 FAR overlay in the ½ mile zone and ¼ mile zone respectively. Done in conjunction with the Bonus ADU program, this overlay does not exceed the maximum 50% reduction and will comply with SB79. The KTPG alternative map accomplishes the goals of SB79 while providing better transitions between the new, higher density development and the existing single-family homes

Retaining the existing zoning would be more respectful of the pending Kensington Historic District which was first identified in the 1998 community plan and provide protection of our historic resources. SB79 specifically calls out historic resources and VHFHSZs for exemption from its requirements.

As agreed verbally by the planning department representatives in our September 21st public meeting, where they presented the First Draft Mid-City Communities Plan, we are requesting a meeting to discuss our proposed SB79 Alternative Plan so that we can clearly and completely communicate why we believe our plan is compliant. We look forward to working together to come up with a plan that is mutually agreeable to the City Planners and the KTPG.

A most significant issue is the failure of the draft plan to mention or include all the already existing and applicable bonus development programs. These include Bonus ADUs, Sustainable Development Areas, Transit Priority Areas, and Complete Communities Housing Solutions, etc. The Bonus ADU Program, for example, already allows up to 6 dwelling units depending on lot size for most single-family lots. The combined effect of layering these programs on one another is not shown in the draft City Plan.

The Complete Communities program is particularly egregious within our RM-zoned areas in that it allows an extra 33 feet in height where zoning is for 20 du/ac or more. This would apply to all the proposed land use categories above Residential Low 3 in the draft City Plan.

Because of these programs, what is shown in Figure 2-1 Planned Land Uses on page 13 and depicted in the Land Use Designations pictures on pages 16 to 20 in the draft plan, the 2-story attached duplexes that are pictured can be 5-story, the 3-story attached townhomes, rowhomes, attached flats, and multi-family buildings can be 6-story, and 5-story multi-family buildings can be 8-story apartment buildings. These Land Use Designations pictures are at best inaccurate and misleading and at worst disingenuous and knowingly deceptive.

What should change in the plan?

Focus new density on and near transit and commercial corridors, rather than deep within established neighborhoods.

Leave existing residential zoning intact. Bonus ADUs, SB 9, and other state and local programs already allow substantial additional housing in these areas.

Require infrastructure to accompany growth, not lag behind it, including parks, libraries, and community facilities.

Respect Kensington and Talmadge's historic resources and recognize existing State and National historic districts locally. Strongly support existing historic districts in Talmadge and proposed historic districts in Kensington by modifying the SB79 TOD Alternative plan accordingly.

Provide for adequate emergency evacuation from VHFHSZs and through adjacent areas. Kensington-Talmadge is much greater than 50% VHFHSZ.

In the following sections, references to specific pages refer to the Draft Communities Plan, or alternatively to Appendix X, the Park & Recreation Inventory.

ELEMENT 1 INTRODUCTION

GENERAL CHAPTER COMMENTS

The KTPG is concerned that the City created a system where people outside of our communities are dictating the fate of communities in which they don't live. The greater Balboa Park area was attempted as a combined plan, and failed. We believe this combined effort has similarly failed.

The draft plan states, "Mid-City is one of the oldest and most diverse communities in the City." This diversity is not being acknowledged by the broad statements being made about Mid-City. At the time of the 1998 plan, it was recognized that the four areas were very different with differing needs, and each planning area was treated differently in that plan. As was done in 1998, each of the four community planning areas should be treated differently in this current plan.

2020 Census data show that Kensington-Talmadge is a diverse community, with 52.4% of residents identifying as racial or ethnic minorities. This is an increase from 38% in 2000. The plan should explain why substantially changing existing historic single-family neighborhoods is necessary to achieve greater diversity, particularly when those neighborhoods contain a significant concentration of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture that is itself part of the diversity of the community's cultural and architectural heritage

The plan states that "Since the 1998 community plan, Mid-City has seen significant expansion of parks, schools, and other public facilities." While this may have occurred in other Mid-City communities, it has not been uniform, and certainly has not occurred in Kensington-Talmadge.

The City plan describes Mid-City as an area facing significant population growth. However, available Census data show a long-term decline in Mid-City's population since 2000. Mid-City's population was highest in 2000 and has declined by approximately 9% since then. This raises questions about the assumptions used to justify large density increases.

The plan compares Mid-City population versus housing units from 1970 to 2024 (Figure 1-3). It is important to note that while the population increased 45.0 % during this period, the number of housing units increased 49.5% from 1970 to 2024, indicating that Mid-City is making clear progress without upzoning.

However, the population increase did indeed outpace the delivery of community facilities, including schools, libraries, parks, and infrastructure by the City of San Diego.

The referenced population decline in Mid-City from 2000 to 2024 may also be explained by people moving to higher opportunity areas with better community facilities as they became more financially able to do so. It may also be partially explained by the removal of three-square city blocks of housing for the construction of elementary schools during recent decades. Cherry-picking data and blaming lack of housing units for all of the population issues described in the plan is both misleading and disingenuous.

The draft plan creates capacity for approximately 89,000 additional residents over the next 30 years. This represents a significant departure from Mid-City's recent population trends, which show a long-term decline. The plan should explain how this level of additional development capacity is justified by the City's population projections, particularly where it would result in significantly increased density and disruption in historic single-family neighborhoods.

The City points to the large number of workers who commute into Mid-City as a reason for adding more housing. The City reports that about 17,500 workers commute into Mid-City for jobs. However, a much larger number—61,025 workers—commute out of Mid-City for work. Most significantly, only a small portion of Mid-City workers—3,941—both live and work in Mid-City. If adding housing near jobs is intended to reduce commuting, the plan should explain why so many people who live in Mid-City currently commute elsewhere for work and how the proposed additional housing is expected to change this pattern.

The draft plan states that it is a result of extensive community engagement. In actuality, most of the community members in Kensington and Talmadge are largely unaware of the plan update or even that there is a community plan for land use and development. In addition, the new “working group” process minimized and restricted the role of the elected community planning groups, who are most familiar with the needs of the community.

The Mid-City Plan states that local communities have and will be consulted on changes. However, several significant decisions affecting Kensington-Talmadge have not reflected the views expressed by the community.

The composition of the Mid-City Plan Working Group raises questions about how well Kensington-Talmadge residents were represented in decisions affecting the neighborhood. The 16-member Working Group was designed to represent all four Mid-City communities, with only three seats associated with Kensington-Talmadge. This allowed a majority of the working group to push out-sized density into communities which simply did not have the votes to counter this abuse. As a result, the Working Group ranked Concept 2 highest overall, while the Kensington-Talmadge Planning Group supported Concept 5. Concept 5 focused on concentrating up zoning along transit corridors while preserving single-family homes.

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS & EDITS

1Q-1: Under “Homes”, the document states, “6260 homes built in the past 20 years”. Is this a net number or a gross number? Does that number take into account the homes that had to be demolished to build new schools? (Page 8)

1C-1: Under “Community Engagement” much is made of the broad spectrum of engagement that occurred. However, there appears to be a strong disconnect between the input received through the planning department engagement process and what the Kensington-Talmadge planning group found through its online community poll about ‘corner stores’. The Planning Department found broad, nearly universal support for corner stores, while the online poll found only 12% support. Additionally, when flyers were recently distributed to the community,

informing them of the in-process community plan update, and September 2026 planning department presentation, a broad majority of people had no idea this was happening. This lessens the department's credibility regarding their community engagement process. (Page 10)

ELEMENT 2 LAND USE & ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

GENERAL CHAPTER COMMENTS

Figure 2-1 should be modified to change proposed land uses in several areas. The 4400 block of Euclid Avenue should be changed to a commercial district. The "Sustainable Communities section (Page 57) states that the Community Plan focuses on reducing reliance on cars. This supports the development of Euclid Avenue as a commercial district. The current zoning of the 4500 blocks of Talmadge within the Historic District should remain unchanged to protect the communities' historic resources.

The City proposes that large portions of Kensington-Talmadge be rezoned for higher-density residential development. The area between Adams Ave and El Cajon Blvd from I-15 to Fairmount, as well as part of Kensington Village, is proposed for substantially higher residential density. Based on our review of the proposed zoning combined with current zoning and state and city bonus programs, buildings of roughly 6–8 stories would be possible.

On page 13, the proposed zoning maps show base zoning, but they do not show the full range of development that could be permitted through other applicable programs. For example, zoning that allows 20 du/ac or more may be eligible for additional development through programs such as Complete Communities. The proposed zoning would substantially increase allowable residential density and, when combined with other applicable development incentives or up-zoning programs, could allow buildings substantially larger than the existing neighborhood pattern.

On page 14, the plan proposes transition zoning to provide a gradual change between higher- and lower-density areas and, on paper, to soften the impact of higher-density development on single-family neighborhoods. However, in practice, transition zoning can extend higher-density development further into existing single-family neighborhoods. When combined with other development programs, this could allow large buildings next to single-family homes—the opposite of the intent of transition zoning. (Page 14)

Responsible development is an important community need. Housing goals should be balanced with infrastructure capacity, transportation, fire safety, parking, historic resources, and the existing neighborhood context

Table 2-3 Relevant General Plan Properties supports that Mid-City is a diverse community, supports both the goal of no corner stores, and supports a neighborhood serving commercial

district on the 4400 block of Euclid Avenue. It further supports the need for community parks and infrastructure.

The plan emphasizes economic development and local businesses as important anchors of the community. However, it does not expand the Euclid business corridor to serve the Talmadge area, as residents have requested. In addition, parking meters were installed along Adams Ave and around Kensington Park despite local opposition. The added parking costs raise concerns about the impact on local businesses and access to the park and library, particularly for lower-income residents.

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS & EDITS

2C-1: Under “Goals”, 4th bullet point, the plan states a goal of “Affordable Homes are Abundant & Preserved”. However, the zoning plan within our historic districts targets our most affordable homes for redevelopment and does not preserve them. Therefore, the City is removing the most affordable first rung of home ownership. (Page 12)

2C-2: Under “Vision” the plan states that corner stores were broadly supported in all residential zones, in all communities. However, one simple online poll in Talmadge showed only 12% support for corner stores in that community. We question the accuracy of that statement, and the efficacy of the City’s community engagement process, particularly for Kensington and Talmadge. (Page 12)

2C-3: Under “Transitions”, the description and visual examples of transitions is not valid given the ability to apply multiple bonus programs to the same development. (Page 14)

2C-4: Under “Anti-Displacement and Affordable Housing,” the new housing that most effectively prevents displacement is along El Cajon Boulevard where housing currently doesn’t exist. (Page 14)

2E-1: Modify “Anti-Displacement and Affordable Housing” as follows:

The potential for displacement of existing community members must be addressed when planning for additional growth. Displacement can occur when new developments ~~wealthier residents~~ and/or businesses ~~move to~~ are built in an older community, which can increase property values and the cost of homes and rents. (Page 14-15)

2E-2: Add a table of all bonus programs which may be layered on top of existing zoning, showing density, height and FAR, and in which zoning ranges they are applicable. (Page 15)

2E-3: In Figure 2-1, provide additional visual examples of developments that include application of all bonus programs. (Page 16 – 23)

2Q-1: The City seeks to avoid over-concentration of affordable housing. How does the City define “over-concentration” of affordable housing? (Page 15).

2Q-2: Are the City’s inclusionary housing regulations applied on a community planning area basis, or by the community plan? (Page 15)

2E-2: Given that Community Plan Policy 2.2 is based upon a false impression that corner stores are universally supported, modify 2.2 as follows:

Support corner stores, markets and neighborhood-serving retail uses to encourage accessibility to services only within residential areas where there is demonstrated community support. (Page 34)

2Q-3: In Community Planning Policy 2.6, the City envisions supporting the preservation and renovation of culturally and historically significant residential units in a sustainable manner. How does the City’s maximalist implementation of SB79 by upzoning within historic district areas support this? (Page 34)

2E-3 Modify Community Planning Policy 2.8 to include a metric which defines over-concentration of affordable housing. (Page 34)

2Q-4: In order to implement Community Planning Policy 2.16, what Mid-City specific policy does the City propose to achieve their goal of equitably distributed affordable housing within Mid-City? (Page 35)

2Q-5 In order to implement Community Planning Policy 2.17, what specific changes is the City envisioning? Why would these only apply to Mid-City and not citywide? (Page 35)

ELEMENT 3 HISTORIC PRESERVATION

GENERAL CHAPTER COMMENTS

On page 37, in reference to “Goals” the first bullet point states that “Significant historical resources are identified, preserved and celebrated as part of Mid-City’s evolving community fabric.” This is not supported by the draft plan’s policies which are eating away at the historic districts of Kensington and Talmadge.

On page 37, in reference to “Vision” it states that “The Community Plan...celebrates significant and important historical resources and balances historic preservation with new development.” The building of compatible ADUs behind an existing historic house strikes appropriate balance between new development and historic preservation. The construction of an apartment building next door does not balance historic preservation with new development.

On pages 37 and 52, under section HP-A.5b, the plan's proposed zoning should be reviewed alongside the City's historic preservation work in Kensington-Talmadge. The City's historic survey has identified Kensington Park, Kensington Manor & Heights, and Talmadge Park as potential historic districts. The proposed density changes could significantly change the character of these areas and should be evaluated in the context of the plan's stated historic preservation goals.

The City should take full advantage of the state's allowance for a SB79 Alternative plan to protect Monroe Avenue to Adams Avenue to the maximum extent possible, as proposed by the Kensington-Talmadge Planning Group.

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS & EDITS

3E-1: Edit Resource Identification and Preservation for clarity as follows:

"The Mid-City focused reconnaissance survey identified four new potential historic districts, including two residential districts in the Kensington area (Kensington Park; Kensington Manor and Heights, Kensington Park), one residential district in the Kensington and Talmadge area (Talmadge Park), and one commercial district in Normal Heights on Adams Avenue (Carteri Center). A focused reconnaissance survey is not the final survey. An intensive level survey would need to be done before any Mid-City historic districts are designated by the City."

ELEMENT 4 SUSTAINABILITY, EQUITY, RESILIENCE AND CONSERVATION

GENERAL CHAPTER COMMENTS

On page 63, under "Fire" that document states the need for additional fire resources to maintain adequate fire services in Mid-City depending on the amount of future development. Much more than 50% of Kensington-Talmadge is in the VHFHSZ with many brush-covered hillsides and canyons that increase the risk of fire. Increased density and much taller buildings will make it more difficult or perhaps even impossible to effectively respond to fires. The existing hydrants and water mains may not be able to provide adequate flows and pressures to fight fires in tall apartment buildings that are located in single-family neighborhoods. These additional fire resources must precede or at a minimum accompany increased density and development.

There is also the heightened concern that evacuees and emergency responders will be traveling not only through the VHFHSZs but also must travel through the adjacent highly densified SB79 areas. An updated and adequate emergency evacuation plan that takes all the above concerns into account must be part of the community plan to ensure public safety.

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS AND EDITS

4E-1: Add under Urban Forestry and Greening, as follows:

Street Tree Corridors identifies primary street trees for major corridors in Mid-City. The Street Tree Plan further identifies secondary and accent street trees, as shown in Figure 4-2 and Table 4-1. Alternative street tree selections may be allowed with City approval. (Page 64)

4C-1: The legend for Figure 4-3 appears to conflate Open Space with Park Space, and the two are not the same. And the color shown on the legend for Open Space is somewhat different from the green shown in the figure. (Page 70)

4E-2: Remove the “Open Space” designation from the legend. (Page 70)

4E-3: Edit Community Planning Policy 4.19 as follows:

~~Promote~~Provide adequate water supply, flow rate, and duration levels - and ensure proper spacing and Draft readiness of fire hydrants - to support effective fire suppression. (Page 78)

4E-4: Add new Community Planning Policy 4.25 under “Flooding” as follows:

Prioritize improvement of existing stormwater facilities to manage urban street runoff where flooding of streets and adjacent property currently occurs. (Page 79)

ELEMENT 5 URBAN DESIGN

GENERAL CHAPTER COMMENTS

Missing Middle Housing refers to a range of multi-unit residential buildings, such as duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes, that are compatible in scale with single-family homes. This type of housing is supposed to provide a transition between single-family homes and larger apartment complexes. The draft community plan in its current form does not provide an appropriate transition in its proposed land use map. The proposed land use adjacent to single-family homes is overly dense and overdeveloped. This situation is exacerbated by the existing state and city bonus programs that will create nightmare situations for neighboring single family homes analogous to what occurred with the City’s Bonus ADU program. In this case, it will not be an unforeseen result as we have already seen it happen.

Many of the qualities the City wants in a well-planned community and is attempting to replicate or reintroduce elsewhere, already exist in Kensington-Talmadge. Its single-family neighborhoods, tree-lined and winding streets, historic character, small business district, and community gathering places make it distinctive. Replacing parts of these neighborhoods with larger apartment buildings could undermine the qualities that make the community special.

COMMENTS, QUESTION & EDITS

5C-1: On the legend in Figure 5-1, the combination of “Existing and Proposed Parks and Open Space”, shown in one color green, gives a false impression that there would be far more park space than is actually possible. We can not overstate how misleading this map is in its current form. (Page 83)

5E-1: Modify Figure 5-1 to separate “Existing and Proposed Parks and Open Space” into two categories “Existing and Proposed Parks” and “Existing and Proposed Open Space” with different, clearly distinguishable colors. (Page 83)

5E-2: Modify “Alleys” as follows:

Alleyways ~~are often~~which are underutilized, ~~and where appropriate, spaces that~~ can be transformed into vibrant green corridors, serving as valuable connectors within neighborhoods as long as basic functions are maintained, such as waste management, parking and garage access, utility easements, and deliveries. Green alleys integrate stormwater management, urban greening and cooling, safety and connectivity. (Page 87)

5Q-1: Does the westward expansion of the Little Saigon Cultural and Commercial District encompass Hoover High school? (Page 88)

5C-2: While current policies and municipal code promote the activation of our main commercial corridors, such as El Cajon Boulevard, many new businesses comply with the code by installing a primary door on the main street frontage and then keeping it locked. (Page 112)

5E-3: Combine and replace Community Planning Policies 5.12 & 5.13 as follows:

Support building design that promotes placement of windows and primary doors to enhance visibility and provide passive surveillance of streets and public spaces. To promote these goals, require that primary doors are accessible during regular business hours, facing the main commercial corridor. (Page 112)

5E-4: Add language under “El Cajon Boulevard & 54th Street” as follows:

El Cajon Boulevard Transit Corridor at 54th Street is focused around the “Crawford Cluster” of three schools, access to Colina Del Sol from south 54th Street, and the gateway to the College Planning Area to the northeast. Given the area's many uses, it can accommodate high mixed-use densities near high-quality transit, including the extension of the bus-bike lane. This study would incorporate bike, transit, and streetscape improvements to complement the high active transportation propensity. To promote walkability, each quadrant defined by the intersection that will be encompassed by new development, should be walkable within itself. (Page 95)

5C-3: The policies of 5.73 should apply to all streets. (Page 117)

5E-5: Modify Community Planning Policy 5.73, under “Transit Villages, Corridors and Main Streets” as follows:

Underground utilities to reduce conflicts with pedestrian movement where possible.

When located above grade, locate utilities outside of the sidewalk pedestrian areas to allow for a clear path of travel wherever possible. [For other streets, see Community Planning Policy 7.29](#) (Page 117)

ELEMENT 6 MOBILITY

GENERAL CHAPTER COMMENTS

The draft plan classifies Kensington-Talmadge as a transit neighborhood and describes the area as a bus/bike-to-work community served by public transportation. This statement is aspirational at best. The Route 11 bus does not travel to where most of the jobs are now located in North County without a transfer or multiple transfers. A 1-1/2 to 2- hour commute to and from work is not practical. Biking to work is not safe or practical for a commute to where most jobs are now located

The plan does not provide clear evidence that a large increase in Mid-city residential density without adequate parking will result in a large shift from automobiles to public transportation or biking. The plan includes proposals for additional trolley service via the Purple Line, an added bus lane on El Cajon Boulevard, as well as the transition of Route 11 into Rapid Route 211. These are aspirational future projects that most probably will never be funded or built especially given recent proposals by MTS to substantially reduce services. They should not be treated as existing transit service when justifying the amount of additional housing the area can support. The additional proposed housing should coincide with, or better, be preceded by the additional transit.

Currently, congestion on side streets, combined with numerous parked cars, can restrict two-way traffic, requiring vehicles to pull over to allow oncoming traffic to pass, and hinder emergency services and public evacuation. Parking meters on Adams Avenue has made the parking issues worse as people park on the neighboring streets to avoid paying the parking fees. Because new high-density development south of Adams can be approved with substantially reduced or no minimum automobile parking requirements, parking issues will worsen in this area.

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, & EDITS

6Q-1: Figure 6-1, the path/trail which circumnavigates Kensington thickens in color along Aldine Drive. Can you clarify what is being proposed. The graphics are unclear. (Page 120)

6C-1: Figures 6-1 and 6-2, the Aldine Drive bicycle and pedestrian paths should be separated from the roadway as we mention in a comment for Chapter 7 (7E-17). (Pages 120, 122)

6E-1: Figure 6-1 Change pedestrian path along 4400 Block of Euclid Avenue from green “connector” to blue “corridor” to coincide with the proposed zoning change to Neighborhood Commercial. (Page 120)

6Q-2: Figure 6-2 shows a Class III Enhanced Bikeway along Monroe Avenue. Is the City anticipating installation of roundabouts on Monroe Avenue? Something else? Something more? (Page 122)

6C-2: We are very concerned about developing an entire community plan based upon the proposed Purple Line trolley that lacks funding under any current funding scenarios. (Page 123)

6C-3: Bus 211 is not in the planned transit facilities legend so it should not be on the map. Also, Adams Avenue lacks road width to support a Rapid Bus, or Rapid Bus Transit. (Page 124)

6C-4: Figure 6-4, reducing El Cajon Boulevard to two lanes (one each way) is inadequate to the task of transporting 35,000 ADTs. We are opposed to reducing El Cajon Boulevard to two lanes which will divert traffic onto residential side streets. (Page 127)

6E-2: Figure 6-4, modify to include a more expansive legend that defines all symbols and acronyms. (Page 127)

6C-5: Community Plan Policies 6.9, we are concerned that these changes will divert traffic into the neighborhood, as well as push business parking into the residential areas. (Page 132)

6E-3: Modify Community Plan Policy 6.15 as follows:

Manage the supply of on-street parking within business districts while balancing the need for sidewalk and bicycle improvements. Consider implementation of a residential neighborhood permit parking system that does not dispense more permits than available parking. (Page 133)

6E-4: Modify Community Plan Policy 6.3 as follows:

Encourage mobility improvements that support walking and rolling to everyday needs such as stores, schools, parks, and other neighborhood-serving destinations to promote neighborhood interconnection. Provide pedestrian pathway along the north side of Aldine Drive between Kensington and Talmadge, via a cantilevered structure separated from vehicular traffic. See our edit 7E-17. (Page 132)

6E-5: Modify Community Plan Policy 6.19 as follows:

Consider and evaluate new pedestrian and bicycle bridges across canyons or across freeways connecting Mid-City to neighboring communities. (Page 133)

ELEMENT 7 PARKS & PUBLIC FACILITIES

GENERAL CHAPTER COMMENTS

The Mid-City Plan proposes large increases in housing density. The plan does not, however, clearly state if or how needed infrastructure improvements will be funded, when they will be completed, and whether they will be in place as new development occurs.

How will the City provide the additional park and recreation facilities needed to support the plan's substantial increase in development capacity if none of the identified solutions, for example the Teralta freeway-lid expansion, have a funding commitment or established construction cost? This is particularly significant given the historical record of park and recreational goals not being fully implemented. All avenues of land acquisition should be explored.

Some proposed public facilities and open-space improvements rely on privately owned public spaces, where private developers would provide and maintain facilities that are publicly accessible. How will the City ensure that needed public facilities are provided if new housing is built mostly in non-CEOZ areas and not in CEOZ areas where these facilities are required?

Kensington-Talmadge has narrow residential streets, steep slopes, and canyons that can create challenges for emergency access, fire response, and evacuation. The Mid-City Atlas identifies a large majority of Kensington-Talmadge within Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. The plan should identify what fire-safety and emergency-access improvements will be needed to support the proposed increase in residential density, whether those improvements are feasible, and what milestones will ensure they are completed before development that depends on them is allowed to proceed.

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, & EDITS

7Q-1 The document discusses existing, planned, proposed, and potential park facilities. What is the difference between planned, proposed, and potential park facilities? (Pages 138-139)

7E-1: Include a definition of existing, planned, proposed, and potential park facilities.

7E-2: We believe the existing and aspirational park points should be clearly and separately quantified. The majority of the added park points are not achievable and should not be described with the certainty that the adjective “planned” gives to them. These edits should be made as follows (Page 138):

Parks

The Parks Master Plan standard of 100 Recreation Value Based points per 1,000 community members results in the need for approximately 22,700 Recreation Value Points based on the projected population of 227,000 people at full community buildout. The Community Plan identifies opportunities for parks over the planning horizon. The Community Plan identifies approximately ~~11,870.75~~ 6198.5 existing and ~~5672.25~~ planned

potential Recreation Value Points, as shown in Table 7-1. New development and other future park opportunities could provide an additional 10,830 Recreational Value Points to ensure public benefit is provided as Mid-City grows.

7C-1: Mid-City has many existing, proposed, and potential parks shown in Figure 7-1 (page 139). However, these existing, planned, and potential parks are unevenly distributed between the four planning areas which already have a great disparity in park points, with the proportion varying from 8% to 77% of the standard. Table 7-1 (page 140) amalgamates this data inappropriately, and obscures the disparity between the four planning areas. This data should not be buried in an appendix that decision makers may not review.

7E-3: Separate the data within Table 7-1 among the four community planning areas. (Page 140)

7C-2: Combining park point totals into one number only serves to hide the depth of the current deficiency. Additionally, many of the potential park facilities are so unrealistic that they should be listed in a new category titled “aspirational” so as not to be confused with something that could actually be built. (Page 140)

7E-4: Modify “Small and Non-Traditional Space” as follows:

To meet the need for more recreational spaces, the Community Plan identifies small and non-traditional areas as potential opportunities for additional public parks such as including excess or eligible rights-of-way, ends of streets and smaller undeveloped lots. However, their purpose should be to supplement more traditional parks, as opposed to replacing them. (Page 140)

7E-5: Modify “Access to Parks & Recreational Facilities” as follows:

Ensuring equitable access to parks and recreation facilities is a central goal of the Parks Master Plan, which calls for prioritizing park investments in areas with limited recreational opportunities and should be given greater weight within the prioritization process. Every proposed, planned, or potential park within this document should be evaluated and scored via Council Policy 800-14 and other internal City processes within 3 years of adoption of this plan, and the score should be kept on file for future implementation opportunities. (page 140)

7Q-2: Is Appendix X (referenced on page 141) the Park & Recreation Inventory document which is available on the City’s website for the Mid-City Communities Plan related documents?

7E-6: If yes, then we make the following comments and edits to Appendix X and the Park & Recreation Inventory:

(The following comments refer to Appendix X, Park & Recreation Inventory)

General Comment: We believe that listing specific amenity additions creates the impression of having taken input and come to a community consensus which has not occurred. For example,

recently proposed design improvements for Ward Canyon Park were not widely disseminated to nearby communities until nearly complete.

TERALTA PARK NORTHERN EXPANSION (Freeway Lid parks)

7C-3: UNREALISTIC due to cost and need for outside funding.

7E-7: When breaking apart the potential park scores for the planning areas, 1/3 of the points for the Teralta Park Northern Expansion points should be assigned to Kensington-Talmadge.

KENSINGTON NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

7C-4: POSSIBLE As mentioned above, specific amenity additions should not be included since they have not been vetted through a public input process.

7E-8:

Park is located on Adams Avenue in Kensington and shares its site with the Kensington-Normal Heights Branch Library, which is recommended for ~~replacement~~ relocation with a new facility in the City's Vision 2040 Public Library Master Plan. The park is directly accessible from the Adams Avenue bus stop. Existing amenities include seating and picnic tables, large specimen trees and palms, a play area, and a multi-purpose turf area.

Future improvements to include amenities and upgrades guided by a community input process. ~~such as a bocce ball court or similar recreational feature, an expanded play area, a community garden, and a public art or placemaking element.~~ Additional upgrades Any future improvements shall be implemented in coordination with ~~the~~ future library ~~replacement relocation as~~ outlined in the Public Library Master Plan.

TERRACE COURT PARK

7C-5: UNLIKELY. The expansion requires buying the property from Caltrans.

7C-6: POSSIBLE. It's possible to add amenities to this location, and that some of the ideas proposed for the Kensington Neighborhood Park could be located here if the community input process supported it.

7E-9:

Possible Expand expansion south toward Adams Avenue to create additional programming space, including removal of bollards and parking reconfiguration along Terrace Drive. Future improvements to be determined through a community input process. ~~include features such as a children's play area, fitness stations, a shade pavilion with seating, public art and placemaking elements, and a wayfinding signage system.~~

ALDINE DRIVE POCKET PARK

7C-7: UNREALISTIC due to location and potential need to construct retaining wall to create usable land.

7E-10: Delete entirely because high ADT count makes the location undesirable.

MIRACLE DRIVE PARK

7C-8: POSSIBLE.

7E-11:

Develop a park, to include partial street vacation of west side of Miracle Drive, with facilities such as canyon-side overlook seating, wayfinding signage, and interpretive/educational elements, or potential children's play area as determined by a community input process. The park could evolve into a trailhead pocket park should future trail plans in the open space be proposed and implemented.

MONROE PARK

7C-9: POSSIBLE. However, note that the location may require construction of a retaining wall.

7E-12: For clarity, rename this site "Max & Monroe"

7E-13: Develop a park with facilities such as ~~a children's play area~~, overlook seating with views into the adjacent canyon, a shade pavilion, and wayfinding signage as determined by a community input process.

ADAMS AVENUE PARK

7C-10: POSSIBLE.

7E-14: For clarity rename this site as Adams & 51st

7E-15: Edit as follows:

Design and construct a park with facilities such as shaded seating, ~~a walking path~~, a fitness element, ~~an open lawn~~, and a placemaking element as determined by a community input process.

MEADE AVENUE PARK

7C-11: POSSIBLE.

FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY JOINT USE PARK

7C-12: POSSIBLE.

7E-16: Correct the area calculation. The park inventory identifies a size of 1.45 acres when the actual size is approximately 1.20 – 1.25 acres.

ALDINE DRIVE TRAIL

7C-13: POSSIBLE given that the privately owned lots are vacant.

7E-17:

Establish a recreation easement to create an approximate 1/4-mile cantilevered trail segment along Aldine Drive with a trailhead entrance ~~at Aldine Drive~~, connecting to the proposed Kensington Loop Trail. Amenities include a formal trailhead with wayfinding signage and seating.

KENSINGTON LOOP TRAIL

7C-14: UNREALISTIC. ALL of the private property owners along the potential alignment of the trail would have to grant easements for it to be viable and usable.

(The comments below now return to the Mid-Cities Draft Communities Plan)

7Q-3: The “Community Enhancement Overlay Zone and Additional Recreation Access” offers increased development allowances to developers in exchange for publicly accessible open areas and recreational amenities. We would like to know how much more in density/FAR benefits does a developer get by implementing the CEOZ versus utilizing Complete Communities? It should be noted that the requirements of Complete Communities can be converted into a fee that can be spent elsewhere for other purposes. (Page 142)

7C-15: The vision of the Library Master Plan is to relocate the substandard Kensington-Normal Heights library located in the Kensington Neighborhood Park. This vision is supported by proposed Community Plan Policy (Public Facilities) 7.9.

7E-18: Modify the “Libraries” section as follows:

The Library Master Plan provides a long-range vision and strategy for the modernization and investment of the City library system, addressing the need for community meeting rooms, modern information technology, and activity spaces, as well as needed building repairs and upgrades. To further the vision of the master plan, relocate the Kensington-Normal Heights library to a commercial site along Adams Avenue in Normal Heights and repurpose the former library building into a multi-purpose community space. (Page 145)

7C-16: Under “Public Utility Services”, There are areas in Kensington-Talmadge where the street lighting has failed completely and no longer functions. (Page 146)

7C-17: Some stormwater facilities are inadequate to prevent flooding of streets and private property from street runoff. (Page 146)

7C-18: Current lighting in much of Kensington-Talmadge does not meet the established standard for an urban area, and should be upgraded. This should occur with the undergrounding of utilities as per current City undergrounding policy. (Page 150)

7E-19: Modify Policy 7.5 as follows:

Replace, expand and upgrade public facilities and infrastructure as needed to meet adopted city standards and to maintain service levels that address community needs and enhance safety and environmental performance (Page 150)

7E-20: Modify Community Plan Policies “Public Facilities” as follows:

7.13 ~~Encourage~~ Community participation in the planning, design, and improvement of parks and community facilities shall be required and include adjacent community planning areas which will utilize the facilities. (Page 151)

7E-21: Add proposed “Community Plan Policy” under “Public Facilities” as follows:

Provide stormwater facilities that accommodate existing and proposed development to prevent flooding of private property, streets and other public rights-of-way, and promote public safety. (Page 151)

7E-22: Add proposed “Community Plan Policies” under “Libraries” as follows:

Relocate the Kensington-Normal Heights library to a commercial site along Adams Avenue in Normal Heights and repurpose the former library building into a multi-purpose community space. (Page 152)

7E-23: Modify Community Planning policy 7.29 as follows:

Prioritize the undergrounding of overhead electrical and communication wires to remove all utility poles and wires from canyons, private property, alleys, and sidewalks. The new, above-grade utility boxes should not be placed within pedestrian rights-of-way nor create new obstructions, in high foot traffic areas, especially in pedestrian districts and corridor route types and along commercial corridors. (Page 152)

ELEMENT 8 IMPLEMENTATION

GENERAL CHAPTER COMMENTS

None.

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, & EDITS

8C-1: City is proposing to create a Community Enhancement Overlay Zone that will require private investment and owners to build, maintain, and operate public infrastructure on private land along our main business corridors. See also our Chapter 7 General Comment for further elaboration. (Page 153)

8Q-1: Why does the City believe that these costs and legal liabilities will not drive new development away from the corridors and into the neighborhoods where these added costs and legal liabilities are not required? This would add residents without development of any needed community amenities, and retard development of the corridors where redevelopment is actively being sought. In other word, the choice will become “There are two pieces of property, appropriately priced for their development capacity. One requires an added, unknowable future legal risk, and the other does not. Which one should I choose?” (Page 153)

8C-2: Capital Improvements are prioritized using a scoring matrix broadly described in Council Policy 800-14, and more finely developed within Engineering and Capital Projects (EC&P) Department that was only publicly disclosed earlier this year (2026). To lessen the workload for E&CP, not all projects are forwarded by asset-owning departments to E&CP for scoring. Therefore, many projects that would score high, higher than many projects that are actually funded, do not receive consideration for funding or are even acknowledged within the process that they are high-scoring, meritorious projects. (Page 153)

8Q-2: What will this plan do to overturn this discriminatory, internal practice? (Page 153)

8E-1: Describe in the plan, CEOZ Subareas A, B, and C that are shown on Figure 8-1. (Page 154)

Appendix A

Errata

Page 4	Introduction, Purpose , line 4, misspelled “Talmage”
Page 16	Figure 2-2 , Land Use Designations, mislabeled as “Figure 2-1”.
Page 26	Table 2-2 doesn’t list the five Kensington MADs. There is no “Table 2-1”.
Page 28	Figure 2-4 doesn’t show the five Kensington MADs
Page 31	LU-H.10 (g) , formatting error
Page 70	Figure 4-3 , delete “Open Space” designation from Legend. See comment 4E-2.
Page 71	Chollas Creek Watershed , line 3, misspelled “Talmage”
Page 71	Chollas Creek Watershed , line 3, add “and” before Encanto
Page 85	Canyon and Open Space Interface , line 12 (last line) add “.”
Page 109	UD-B.1 (d)(2) extra spaces and commas.
Page 112	Building Form and Scale 5.3, “vary” s/b “variety of”
Page 123	Transit Lanes , formatting error
Page 143	Figure 7-2 , Fairmount Avenue, between Kensington and Talmadge shows an extra bus stop that does not exist
Page 143	Figure 7-2 , no station numbers shown for Normal Heights and City Heights fire stations 17 and 18
Page 143	Figure 7-2 , on Estrella Avenue, America’s Finest Charter School has closed
Page 152	7.26 , delete “the” before “library branches”