

# WORKING DRAFT URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

The General Plan provides goals and policies to guide physical development toward a desired scale and character that is consistent with the social, economic and aesthetic values of the City. The policies in the Community Plan focus on specific urban design issues as well as enhancing the Clairemont's major attributes such as its canyons, distinct single-family neighborhoods, its connection to Mission Bay, and its commercial centers.

As the community experiences infill development and building renovations, the Community Plan encourages new development to include innovative building forms and architecture, while respecting the suburban context of the community and promoting design sensitivity to the natural environment. The Urban Design Element provides policies to protect, enhance, and encourage quality design that highlights the unique features of Clairemont while recognizing that there will be changes and a need to respond to future urban design issues.

## URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT GOALS

- Mixed-use and residential development along major corridors that complements Clairemont's suburban context and preserves the qualities of adjacent single-family residential neighborhoods with appropriate scale, massing, and building transitions
- Building design within residential neighborhoods adjacent to canyons, that highlights a sensitivity to the natural environment
- Safe and direct pedestrian and bike access from Clairemont to Mission Bay
- Public view corridors that are preserved and view sheds that maintain their orientation to canyons and Mission Bay.

- Gateways at community entry points that generate a sense of place and arrival and signs that promote neighborhood identity
- Development that incorporates sustainable design techniques to enhance the efficient use of natural resources and energy
- Buildings designed to contribute to safer and secure environments through pedestrian orientation and activity

## BOX UD-1: GENERAL PLAN TOPICS

*The Urban Design Element policies in the General Plan and in the Community Plan provide goals and policies to capitalize on the City's natural beauty and the unique neighborhoods, by calling for development that respects the natural setting, enhances the distinctiveness of neighborhoods, strengthens natural and built linkages, and creates mixed-use and walkable communities. Related Urban Design Element Topics covered in the General Plan include the following and should be referenced as applicable:*

- *General Urban Design*
- *Distinctive Neighborhoods and Residential Design*
- *Mixed-Use Villages and Commercial Areas*
- *Office and Business Park Development*
- *Public Spaces and Civic Architecture*
- *Public Art and Cultural Amenities*

## 4.1 URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

*Figure 4-1 Urban Design Framework Map* illustrates the various defining features and relationships in the community related to the built form and the natural environment. Clairemont's Urban Design Framework includes:

- Community centers, nodes, and districts that reinforce community identity with a vibrant mix of uses, goods and services, public spaces, entertainment, and a highly walkable streetscape.
- Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit routes that provide access from residential neighborhoods

to destinations and activity centers in the community

- Public view corridors to Mission Bay and viewsheds oriented towards canyons/open space
- Community gateways at key entry points that establish a sense of place and arrival through the use of landmarks and quality architecture, unique signs, public art, landscape features, and/or public space
- Multifamily residential corridors that transition to lower-scale, single-family neighborhoods
- An integrated community circulation system that connects pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders to residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, employment, canyons and to Mission Bay

*(Insert Figure 4-1 Urban Design Framework Map)*

## 4.2 STREETSCAPE AND PUBLIC REALM

The public realm includes all the spaces between buildings that can be freely accessed; it encompasses all outdoor areas including roads, parks, squares, and pedestrian and bicycle routes. Through intentional design, the roadway, parkways, sidewalks, and areas immediately next to the building can create opportunities for social interaction, business activation, and an attractive pedestrian area.

Streetscape elements are all those functional and decorative elements that are placed, planted or built within the public realm. They include public utilities and amenities, visible elements of service infrastructure, street lights, traffic signs and signals, street trees, street furniture, advertising signs, and decorations.

How buildings interface with the sidewalks and parkways and enhance multi-modal connectivity is a focus of this Urban Design Element. Sidewalks can incorporate pedestrian access, gathering space, unique design, and public art. The community plan also envisions shared public spaces that accommodate all users while also incorporating elements of sustainability. This vision will be accomplished through a combination of design strategies including reduction

in impervious surfaces and expansion and enhancement of parkways, sidewalks, and public spaces.

The network, pattern and design details for streets, sidewalks, and abutting public spaces is fundamental to the perception of the community's urban design framework. Therefore, features and improvements within these spaces need to include urban design features as well as provide mobility functions.

## SIDEWALKS AND PEDESTRIAN ORIENTATION

Pedestrian walkways in Clairemont provide access from residential areas to schools, commercial centers, and parks. Many of Clairemont's earliest subdivisions include landscaped parkways with mature trees between the sidewalk and curb. These streets are attractive and provide a desirable feature in the community. Noteworthy landscaping features in the community include: the Eucalyptus Trees and pine trees along Morena Boulevard, North of Balboa Avenue; landscaped islands in the public right-of-way along Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, west of I-805 and along Genesee Avenue south of Chateau Drive; and the Eucalyptus trees and ash trees along Cowley Way between Iroquois Avenue and Dakota Drive.

## POLICIES

- UD-2.x Create publicly accessible plazas and paseos as part of new development.
- UD-2.x Accentuate key focal points, entrances, and corners of a development with art, signs, special lighting, and accent landscaping.
- UD-2.x Define the edges, boundaries, and transitions between private and public space areas with landscaping, grade separations, covered patios, garden walls, gates, and paving materials.
- UD-2.x Create a strong sense of edge along streets and open spaces by incorporating a continuous row of trees and/or by providing consistent building setbacks.
- UD-2.x Provide continuous and consistently designed right-of-way improvements, so

that a development project reads as one unified project. Create a seamless connection of landscape improvements between properties and across streets.

- UD-2.x Use streetscape elements, including kiosks, walkways, street furniture, street lighting, and wayfinding signage to enhance the appearance and function of commercial developments.

## URBAN FORESTRY

Street trees are encouraged throughout Clairemont. A consistent street tree palette will enhance neighborhood identity, unify corridors, add visual interest, reduce the heat island effect, and provide shade within the public realm. Street trees also serve as a powerful storm water tool due to their ability to absorb water through their root systems and transpire water vapor back into the atmosphere. This section establishes a hierarchy of street tree species based on their size and function. The urban forestry policies are to be used in conjunction with *Table 4-x: Street Tree Selection Guide* and *Figure 4-x: Recommended Street Trees*, which provide tree species by street location. All other areas of the community should utilize the City of San Diego Street Tree Selection matrices to select species based on available planting widths and add tree species that already exist in the area. Consistency of street trees is not imperative on all streets, given existing conditions where there is already a mixture trees.

## POLICIES

- UD-2.x Incorporate street trees consistent with the street palette in Figure 4-x Recommended Street Trees to create strong, recognizable themes along major streets.
- UD-2.x Retain mature and healthy street trees when feasible.
- UD-2.x Utilize street trees to establish a linkage between blocks and to frame public views.
- UD-2.x Maximize tree shade canopy by planting the tree species with the largest canopy at maturity that are appropriate for the street size, existing infrastructure, community needs, and environmental limitations.

- UD-2.x Space trees consistently at an equal interval to provide rhythm and continuity.
- UD-2.x Maximize growth space by increasing tree well and parkway sizes and soil volumes using suspended pavements or structural soils.
- UD-2.x 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 Clairemont.
- UD-2.x Look for more opportunities to plant more street trees in Clairemont as part of the Citywide effort to implement green infrastructure.

## PUBLIC VIEWS

Due to the community's sloping topography, public views (both near and far) are common. Views are particularly associated with the community's natural scenic amenities of Mission Bay, Tecolote Canyon Natural Park, Stevenson Canyon, and Marion Bear Memorial Park (San Clemente Canyon). Views have a strong association with the desirable character and attractiveness of the community.

Public view resources include:

**Viewsheds:** Generally, line-of-site (unobstructed) panoramic views from a public vantage point (viewsheds are shown in *Figure 4-X*).

**View Corridors:** Unobstructed framed views down a public right-of-way

Visual access to public view resources is intended to be protected. Accordingly, development should not be permitted to obstruct public view resources. Public view corridors and viewsheds are identified in *Figure 4-X*. Visual quality within neighborhoods adjacent to the various community canyons and affected by hillside landforms is intended to be maintained and enhanced by application of policies related to these specific locations as well as the Municipal Code's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Regulations. Refer also to the policies in the Canyons and Open Space Interface section. Strict application of these polices is important

within these neighborhoods to preserve their overall visual quality.

## POLICIES

- UD-2.x Preserve and enhance viewsheds from public vantage points by application of the policies that follow. Specific locations for these resources are identified on *Figure 4-X*.
- UD-2.x Respect required setbacks for buildings within viewsheds.
  - a. Do not support structural encroachments, fences and landscape screens generally over 42 inches high within front or street side yard setbacks.
  - b. Do not support setback reductions that block designated viewsheds unless alternative or improved public views are proposed.
- UD-2.x Apply special design consideration to lots at street corners within viewsheds. Development and tall landscape material should be set back, truncated, or terraced from the corner portion of the lot to maintain views.

## COMMUNITY GATEWAYS

Gateways mark significant entry points into the community, the incorporation of gateway elements at key points should announce the entry into centers, nodes, districts, and neighborhoods to alert pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers to the presence of pedestrians, shoppers, or places of importance.

## POLICIES

- UD-2x Incorporate neighborhood identity signs to Identify Clairemont neighborhoods.
- UD-2.x Enhance the gateways into Clairemont within the community by utilizing signage, landscaping, other public improvements, iconic architecture, monuments, plazas, and public art. (Refer to *Figure 4-x* for their location).
- UD-2.x Coordinate gateway improvements at Centers, Nodes, Districts and neighborhood

locations. For example, gateways in low-speed, low-intensity areas should be reflective of these factors, while gateways in high-speed, auto-oriented areas should be reflective of these factors in order to be seen and recognized by those passing into the new area.

- UD-2.x Design gateways to be reflective of either historical values or future aspirational values.
- UD-2.x Incorporate appropriate gateway elements including architectural, sculptural, and/or signage, or combination of these.

## 4.3 CANYONS AND OPEN SPACE INTERFACE

Canyons and open space are defining natural features of the community and contribute to Clairemont's identity. Not only do these areas provide for recreation, but they provide visual relief and are an integral part of Clairemont's residential neighborhoods. To preserve and enhance the canyons' natural context, building design will need a sensitive approach that highlights and responds to the community's unique canyon environment.

## POLICIES

- UD-3.x Maintain the scale and character of the canyon and hillside neighborhoods and landforms by designing new buildings to minimize bulk and be low-scale.
- UD-3.x Maintain views from public vantage points and streets as well as public access to canyon areas where designated.
- UD-3.x Design buildings along the canyon edge to conform to the hillside topography and limit encroachment.
  - a. Cluster development on level and less sensitive surfaces of site.
  - b. Provide a stepped foundation down the slope, to accommodate a reasonable building size for lots with limited flat area.
  - c. Grading should be minimized by using building types, such as houses on stilts,

which avoid the typical grading of slab/construction and have limited environmental impact.

- d. Incorporate landscape screening.
- e. Design roof pitches to mimic the slope.
- f. Align vehicle access and other improvements to conform to existing slopes and minimize grading.

UD-3.x Step development down with canyon and hillside landforms to maximize view opportunities and allow for decks and patios.

UD-3.x When all or a portion of a property is within designated open space, locate structures within the least visually prominent portion of a lot, and outside or toward the edge of designated open space. Maintain views as appropriate by respecting development setbacks.

## 4.4 SUSTAINABLE BUILDING DESIGN

Sustainable building design is an essential element to reduce energy and resource consumption. See also policies contained in the Conservation Element related to sustainable development and natural resource conservation and the Historic Preservation Element.

### POLICIES

#### *Sustainable Building Design*

UD-4.x Incorporate building features that allow natural ventilation, maximize day-light, reduce water consumption, and minimize solar heat gain.

UD-4.x 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 facades using shrubs and vines.

UD-4.x Incorporate inset windows with well-designed trims and details that provide shading and reduce solar heat gain.

Incorporate green and vegetated roof systems along with gardens to help reduce solar heat gain.

UD-4.x 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.x 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 visibility from the street or glare to adjacent properties.

UD-4.x Minimize impervious surfaces that have large thermal gain.

UD-4.x Encourage recycled, rapidly renewable, and locally sourced materials that reduce impacts related to materials extraction, processing, and transportation.

UD-4.x Incorporate sustainable landscape treatments such as drought-tolerant, and climate-appropriate plant species, planting materials, and light-colored paving materials.

UD-4.x Orient buildings to minimize the extent of west facing facades and openings.

UD-4.x Use internal courtyards to trap cool air. Courtyards visible from the street will also encourage interaction with on-site open space.

UD-4.x Utilize decorative vertical shading and fins on east and west facing building facades as integrated design features with a sustainable benefit.

UD-4.x Design buildings to allow for cross ventilation and minimize solar heat gain.

- a. Provide vents or windows with low openings on western facing facades to capture cooler breezes into a building.
- b. Provide vents or clerestory windows on eastern facing facades to naturally allow

warmer air that collects near ceilings to escape.

- UD-4.x Provide groundcover plantings to keep ground surfaces cooler near building facades particularly in place of concrete and other reflective surfaces.

#### *Defensible Site Design*

- UD-4.x Position windows to allow residents to have visible sight lines or “eyes on the street” toward public spaces, parking areas, and entrances to dwellings.
- UD-4.x Design common spaces and entryways to be visible from the street, allowing clear vision by neighbors and law enforcement officers.
- UD-4.x Locate sidewalks and paths between parking areas and residences, and between the street and residences to allow natural surveillance over the entire path.
- UD-4.x Provide night lighting along walkways, streets, and at parking lots by using fixtures that will shape and deflect light into a layer close to the ground. This will place light where it is needed most and reduce interference with windows.
- UD-4.x Buffer parking areas from the street with planting while allowing for surveillance through use of low shrubs and ground covers.
- UD-4.x Design fencing to be an architectural feature integrated into the overall design of the project.

## **4.5 URBAN GREENING**

Urban greening integrates storm water management and treatment with the planting of trees and landscaping in the public right-of-way and private development areas. The application of urban greening treatments in Clairemont will support walkability, clean the air, clean storm water, cool the pavement, and calm traffic. Street trees and landscaping are vital parts of the envisioned urban character as well as the urban greening infrastructure system. The community street tree plan (see Figure x-x and Appendix x) establish street

tree themes for primary street corridors and each district and village. Bio-retention and bio-infiltration facilities in the public right-of-way supplement the storm drain system and help cleanse storm water of contaminants.

## **GREEN STREETS**

Green streets, as identified in Figure x-x, will link people to parks, public spaces, and adjacent communities. These streets will incorporate a bicycle and pedestrian orientation, storm water improvements, canopy shade street trees, pedestrian lighting, and other pedestrian amenities. Other suitable streets may also receive green street improvements to help meet storm water pollution reduction goals.

## **POLICIES**

- UD-5.x Design green streets to incorporate enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities, canopy street trees, and storm water features that increase absorption of storm water, urban runoff, pollutants, and carbon dioxide. Consider operational and maintenance needs for green street elements when designing improvements.
- UD-5.x Design and construct all new public streets with green street features to the extent feasible.

## **LANDSCAPING**

Landscaping in the public right-of-way and development sites can capture and infiltrate storm water into the ground, reduce the urban heat island effect, and shade buildings from solar heat. Landscaping in parkways can also create a physical barrier between pedestrian areas and vehicular areas to increase pedestrian comfort.

## **POLICIES**

- UD-5.x. Incorporate drought-tolerant and native species for landscaping in parkways, medians, other public spaces, and private development.
- UD-5.x. Minimize the use of impervious surfaces and surfaces that have large thermal gain to promote storm water infiltration and reduce the urban heat island effect.

- UD-5x. Maximize the use of landscaping to provide shade and passive cooling to buildings, outdoor recreational spaces, and paved surfaces. (Refer to Box 4-1.)
- UD-5x. Preserve existing mature trees in landscaping areas wherever possible, as they are providing the greatest environmental benefits to the community.
- UD-5x. Incorporate low impact development landscaping techniques within surface parking areas, such as inverted planting strips, turf-crete, and tree wells with shade trees.
- UD-5x. Incorporate green features in the design of parking structures, such as cascading vines, rooftop landscaping visible from the public right-of-way, and planting features along the deck edges.

## 4.5 BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN

### *POLICIES (TBD)*

- *Policies on building scale, compatibility, and transitions*
- *Allow height to achieve aesthetics and better design (e.g. articulation, views, public space, etc.)*
- *Working with topography*