



6. THE PUBLIC REALM

What is the Public Realm?

The Public Realm, as illustrated in Figure 7 - Public Realm, is the continuous network of public streetscapes, parks, public facilities and natural open spaces that are interconnected to provide pleasant and meaningful travel corridors, places for community gatherings and activities, areas for quiet contemplation and a framework for the Private Realm's residential and shopping areas.



Public Realm and the Neighborhood Vision

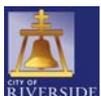
The Neighborhood Vision for the Public Realm reflects input from residents at the community meetings discussed in Section 2. Thus the Neighborhood Vision embodies the:

- Preservation of the Neighborhood's unique natural areas for reflection and the maintenance of the quiet, single family areas east of Watkins Drive;
- Maintenance and upgrading of the Neighborhood's schools and parks and the addition of a community center including facilities for families and seniors;
- Creation of gathering places for community activities and celebrations;
- Development of attractive travel corridors that provide wayfinding information, connect important public facilities, and enhance the character of the University Neighborhood through distinctive landscaping, lighting, street furniture, public art and graphics; and
- Provision of public art at appropriate locations within the public spaces associated with schools, parks and streetscapes.



Relationship to General Plan 2025

The Urban Design Framework in the General Plan 2025 describes a citywide network of linked public facilities, including educational institutions, parks, open spaces and parkways. New Parkway are defined that are park-like in their design and function as travel corridors making connections between components of Riverside Park – a citywide network of natural and cultivated open spaces. In some instances the Parkway can also incorporate new passive or active park land. The University Neighborhood Plan Urban Design Framework and Public Realm Plan incorporate the citywide elements of the Urban Design Framework and Riverside Park, define or add local open space connections and recommended additions or upgrades to University Neighborhood public facilities.





By implementing a thoughtfully planned and designed Public Realm, the University Neighborhood can increase its quality of life as experienced in recreational areas, reflection areas, gathering areas and travel corridors. Public facilities can also be upgraded in appearance and/or amenities to create appealing destinations, or meeting spaces within the Public Realm.

Public Safety is also an important element of life in the University Neighborhood and in the Public Realm. The Public Safety Element of the General Plan describes the role that Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) can play in assuring a safe environment for the community. The goal of CPTED is to reduce crime by involving the community and designing places that facilitate police surveillance, reduce hiding places and promote defensible space. CPTED approaches the challenge of creating a defensible environment by addressing both the physical and psychological aspects of design.



Public Realm Challenges and Opportunities

The Challenges and Opportunities to achieving the Public Realm Vision for the University Neighborhood include the:

- Unfamiliarity of the Public Realm concept, which views the public environment as interconnected rather than as a series of isolated components;
- Damage being done to natural areas by the encroachment of off-road vehicles and the sometimes poorly designed edges between residential units and the natural open spaces;
- Lack of spaces for community recreation and gathering;
- Lack of an integrated approach to the design of the major streetscapes as automobile traffic carriers, bicycle and pedestrian pathways, public transit corridors and visually attractive, linear open space corridors; and
- Unfamiliarity in the community with the principles and practices of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design.

Some of the major Public Realm recommendations are listed in Figure 7.



UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



LEGEND

- PRIMARY NEIGHBORHOOD/UCR GATEWAYS
- SECONDARY NEIGHBORHOOD/UCR GATEWAYS
- MAJOR STREETSCAPES
- POTENTIAL METROLINK CORRIDORS
- I-215/SR-60 FREEWAY
- GAGE CANAL REGIONAL HIKING TRAIL
- PROPOSED WATKINS DRIVE PARKWAY TREATMENT NORTH OF VALENCIA HILL DR.
- PROPOSED WATKINS DRIVE PARKWAY TREATMENT SOUTH OF VALENCIA HILL DR.
- UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS
P.1: HIGHLAND PARK (71 ACRES)
P.2: ISLANDER PARK (8 ACRES)
P.3: MT. VERNON PARK (8.3 ACRES)
- UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS
S.1: NORTH HIGH SCHOOL
S.2: UNIVERSITY MIDDLE SCHOOL
S.3: HYATT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
S.4: HIGHLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- UCR
- BOX SPRINGS MOUNTAINS RESERVE

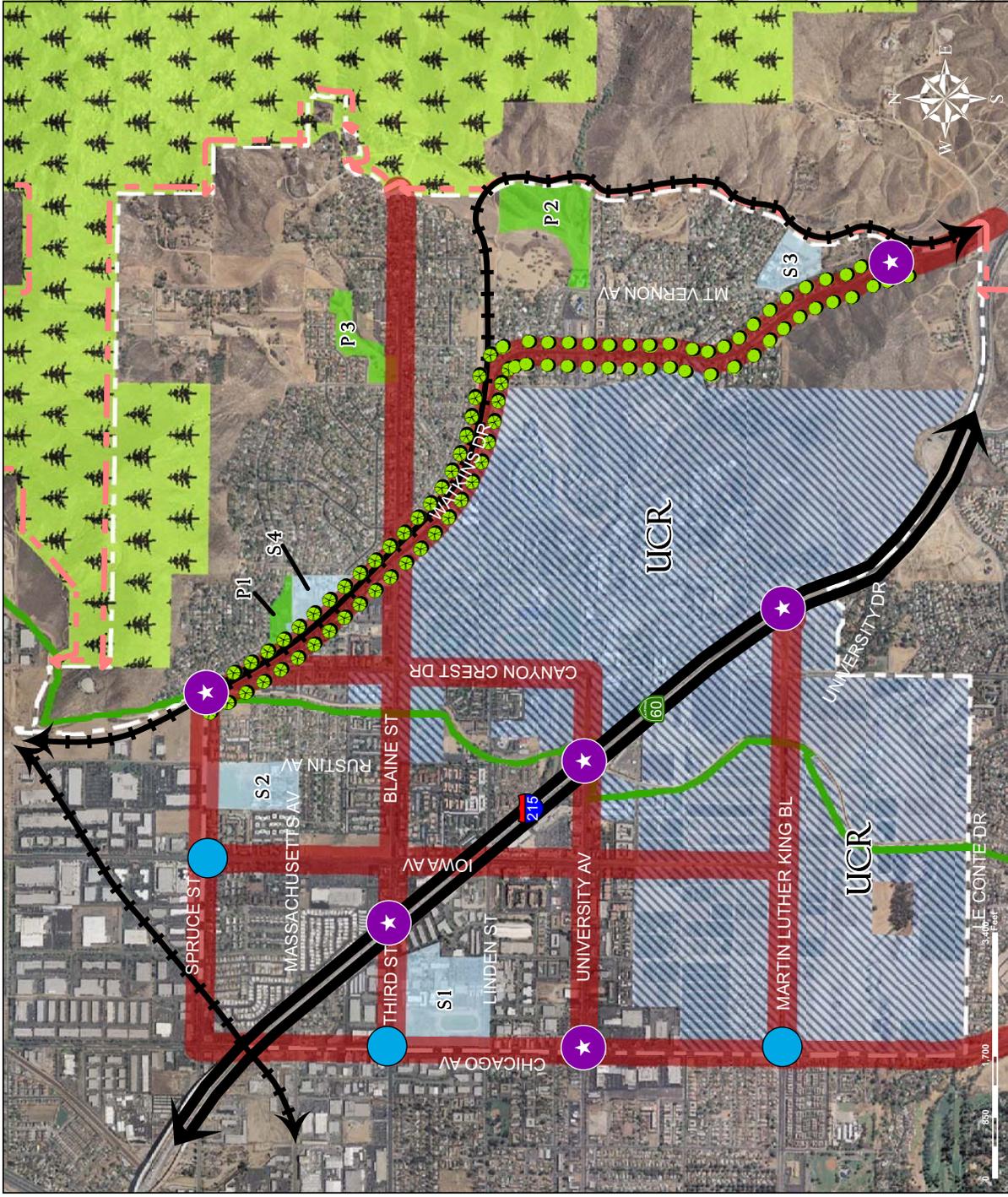


FIGURE 7:
UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD
PUBLIC REALM



Public Realm Objective, Policies and Implementation Tools

The following Objective was defined based on the Neighborhood Vision and is used to formulate the Policies and Tools. The related Policies and Implementation Tools are proposed to achieve the Public Realm Vision and Objective, and address the challenges and opportunities.

The major components of the University Neighborhood Public Realm, illustrated in Figure 7, include the:

- Major Streetscapes, which serve the multiple functions of traffic carriers, communicators of wayfinding information, connectors of public and private activities and linear special experiences;
- Watkins Drive Parkway, which will be both a Neighborhood travel corridor and a new linear park;
- Gage Canal/Bikeway/Pedestrian Path as part of the citywide trail network defined in the General Plan;
- Existing Neighborhood Parks;
- Box Springs Mountains Reserve;
- Public Schools; and
- Gateways to the University Neighborhood and UCR.



Objective UNP 7: Enhance the University Neighborhood’s quality of life through improvements to school and park sites, upgrading streetscapes and protecting open space and conservation areas.

Policy UNP 7.1 Upgrade or add needed Public Facilities to the Public Realm serving the University Neighborhood.

The Public Realm should be viewed as a connected network of the University Neighborhood’s public elements creating both a pleasant environmental experience and a framework for the preservation, enhancement and development of the Private Realm of residential and commercial areas.

Tool UNP 7.1.1 Develop and implement a comprehensive park improvement plan that is consistent with the Park Master Plan to preserve, upgrade, or enhance public parks as needed including Highland Park, Islander Park and Mt. Vernon Park.





The residents have expressed interest in upgrading or enhancing some park space, while preserving other areas. A comprehensive park improvement plan would determine the needs and desires of the community and would establish specific goals and improvement/preservation projects for each park in the neighborhood.

Tool UNP 7.1.2 Preserve the Box Springs Mountain Reserve Park through access restrictions and prevention of off-road vehicles in the open spaces within and adjacent to the University Neighborhood.

The continued use of off-road vehicles within existing open spaces such as the Box Springs Mountain Reserve Park threatens the overall environmental quality in these important wildlife areas. The presence of off-road vehicles within these parks is also damaging because riders operate their vehicles too close to local residential areas, thus creating noise that disturbs residents. Off-road vehicles should be prohibited through law enforcement and the construction of physical barriers to prevent off-road vehicles from entering local parks.

Tool UNP 7.1.3 Explore the possibility of constructing or establishing the Gage Canal Citywide Bikeway and Hiking Trail consistent with the Bicycle Master Plan and the General Plan.

Tool UNP 7.1.4 Upgrade the major streetscapes with appropriate auto and pedestrian lighting and landscaping that both reinforces citywide corridor images where appropriate and reinforces a distinctive image for the University Neighborhood.

Tool UNP 7.1.5 Create special public art and wayfinding graphics at primary and secondary gateways to the University Neighborhood and UCR.

Tool UNP 7.1.6 Coordinate with University Neighborhood residents to explore a suitable location for a Community/Senior Center.

Tool UNP 7.1.7 Encourage the provision of public gathering spaces within all new high density and mixed-use developments.





Policy UNP 7.2 The Public Realm should be systematically upgraded over time through a cooperative effort involving the University Neighborhood, the City of Riverside and UCR.

Tool UNP 7.2.1 Continue to coordinate with the University Neighborhood Association and UCR to discuss and seek comments on land use issues that impact the Neighborhood.

Tool UNP 7.2.2 Establish a program to regularly review, discuss and update the University Neighborhood Plan with the residents, property and business owners and other community stakeholders.

Policy UNP 7.3 Utilize law enforcement and other City departments and programs to protect all open spaces and wildlife areas within the Neighborhood from outside impacts, including inappropriate activities and/or illegal activities.

Tool UNP 7.3.1 Implement the C.U.R.E. program (Clean Up Riverside's Environment) to stop illegal dumping of trash and other hazardous materials that currently occurs within the Box Springs Mountain Reserve Park, Islander Park and other conservation areas.

The Box Springs Mountain Reserve Park and other local open spaces are being degraded by the illegal dumping of trash and other materials that contribute to the overall deterioration of sensitive wildlife habitat. This dumping should be prohibited through increased enforcement, as well as the construction of barriers at selected park entrances to prevent people from dumping trash in the natural open spaces.

Tool UNP 7.3.2 Organize and support regular litter clean-up events at the public parks and entrances to the Box Springs Mountains Reserve.

Policy UNP 7.4 Improve University Neighborhood access to adjacent open space and conservation areas for community enjoyment while maintaining their integrity.

Tool UNP 7.4.1 Work with Riverside County to connect regional trails within the Box Springs Mountain Reserve Park and Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park with local trails within the University Neighborhood.





The Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan was prepared to guide habitat conservation efforts in Western Riverside County. The University Neighborhood and the City and County should protect this important wildlife corridor, as it provides an important habitat connection between the Box Springs Mountain Reserve Park and the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park. Carefully considered local trail connections should be made from the University Neighborhood to these areas.

Policy UNP 7.5 Promote local stewardship through public information and educational programs that relate to the Public Realm in terms of function, aesthetics and public safety.

Tool UNP 7.5.1 Develop a program to educate students and residents about the natural and manmade components of the Public Realm, how they may be preserved or enhanced and the value of linkages between components.

This Information and Education Program could also include the study of Riverside Park as proposed in the General Plan with an emphasis on the components in or adjacent to the University Neighborhood.

Tool UNP 7.5.2 Implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) policies in the design review process for all new development revitalization or rehabilitation projects in the University Neighborhood.

This design review should pay particular attention to maintaining views to areas located along public rights-of-way, appropriate lighting and the creation of pedestrian activity to reinforce the reality and perception of public safety.

Tool UNP 7.5.3 Continue and expand the UNET Program including 24/7 round the clock policing and the integration of policing and code enforcement activities to enforce speed limits and parking regulations.

The University Neighborhood Enhancement Team (UNET) is a cooperative program between the Riverside Police Department and the UCR Police Department. Each agency has committed policing staff to cooperatively serve a seventeen square mile area that surrounds the University. In addition to responding to calls for service during the early morning hours, officers are encouraged to identify community concerns and seek out practical and innovative approaches to addressing those concerns.





It is recommended that a public safety project focusing on upgrading the existing infrastructure in the Neighborhood be added to the UNET enhancement area. This project would focus on implementing capital improvements projects such as the installation of lighting along busy pedestrian corridors.

Tool UNP 7.5.4 Explore opportunities to encourage or potentially require property owners to become partners in the City's Crime Free Program.

Policy UNP 7.6 Promote sustainability by ensuring that any City project (including landscaping of medians, parks, civic buildings, and other public facilities) complies with the City's Green Action Plan and the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance.

Policy UNP 7.7 Reduce airborne dust created from City-initiated weed abatement activities in Islander Park through mowing in lieu of discing whenever practical.

Policy UNP 7.8 Encourage park stewardship by creating an Islander Park Task Force to create a vision and develop goals and policies for the development of Islander Park.

