

## URBAN MYTHS – DEBUNKED

**MYTH:** *The Urban Core Master Plan (UCMP) and Urban Code District (UCD) include major changes to the General Plan and Zoning & Development Code without adequate public input.*

The UCMP efforts arose from City Council direction to develop a plan to guide development in the urban core and help locate new development projects in the most appropriate locations, ensuring continuity, planning and predictability in the development process. Councilmembers wanted to address community concerns related to lack of affordable housing and open space, loss of historic buildings, degradation of neighborhood character, lower-quality design and construction materials, and unplanned development patterns.

The UCMP and UCD, along with the related Development Bonus Program (DBP), were developed following extensive public input over a more-than-two-year public planning process. Since the project kick-off in November 2017, the city has sent out more than 213,000 postcards and 30,000 e-mails, and organized more than 50 public, stakeholder and focus-group meetings to discuss the urban core efforts and gather feedback. To date, more than 1,500 public comments have been received, recorded and considered.

**MYTH:** *The goal of Tempe’s urban core efforts is to increase height and density.*

Growth is already happening – in Tempe and throughout the Valley. Cities are limited by state and federal law in how they can address it. By law (Prop. 207), Tempe can’t stop or restrict private development beyond what current zoning allows. The intent of the urban core efforts is to foster thoughtful developments that bring benefits to the community by providing incentives for developers to include elements such as affordable housing, sustainability measures, community-gathering space and historic preservation. The UCMP, UCD and DBP provide a carefully crafted development framework that meets state and federal laws.

**MYTH:** *The proposed zoning changes provide more entitlements for developers of large projects – overriding the General Plan for the purpose of rezoning.*

The UCMP will not change any zoning, and the UCD is an opt-in zoning district that property owners may choose. The UCD does generally provide some additional developability, in return for accepting a lot of new design regulation. The UCMP and UCD will help make growth and development more predictable for developers and residents. The UCD has provisions to make development projects more transit-friendly and sustainable, and it discourages single-occupancy vehicle travel. The UCD also includes the voluntary DBP, which may provide a developer opportunity to obtain greater height and density in exchange for providing public benefits through the project. As a result of properties opting into the UCD, Tempe will receive greater assurance about development projects through land use and development standards based on sound planning practices.

The Major General Plan Amendment (GPA) application is made to support the vision in the UCD and UCMP to increase areas of mixed use and higher densities along transit corridors. The General Plan is designed to be a broad, flexible document that is legally amendable. Many decisions and events compel the General Plan to respond to the changing conditions, needs and desires of the community.

**MYTH:** *There’s still uncertainty about adequate increases in much-needed workforce housing units.*

Tempe’s Affordable Housing Strategy, adopted by the City Council in July 2019, was developed in concert with the UCMP and UCD. Because state law prohibits the city from requiring developers to include affordable and workforce housing units, the UCMP and UCD include incentives for developers to provide public benefits, including affordable housing. The City can’t require affordable housing in development, but it can incentivize it. Tempe can get much-needed affordable/workforce housing units in exchange for allowing developers to get a relatively small amount of increased height and density. The City can use an economic model to determine the value of the increased height/density in exchange for the value of the affordable housing units.

***MYTH: There's lack of coordination with NOVUS and other ASU developments.***

The size and potential for development within Novus was contemplated within the UCMP. Because the NOVUS effort was recent, there was no need to reconsider the approved development plan.

Because ASU projects (including NOVUS) occur on state owned land, the City processes these developments differently. However, a Joint Review Commission (JRC) was established as a result of negotiations with Tempe and ASU. The JRC operates similarly to the City's DRC, reviewing ASU projects that include a non-academic purpose. The NOVUS developments fall under the JRC's purview.

In addition, Tempe and ASU coordinate and share information through a variety of committees and other platforms, including: monthly coordination meetings between the City's Transportation and Community Development staff and ASU's Campus Planning, NOVUS and Transportation staff; ASU representation on a number of the City's boards and commissions, including the Transportation and Sustainability commissions (ASU representation per city code); the ASU and Tempe joint Small Area Transportation Study; and the Tempe Streetcar Community Advisory Board, which includes ASU representatives.

***MYTH: Implementation of the Urban Code (Text Amendment in the Zoning & Development Code) is ambiguous.***

The UCD was initially conceived as an update to the existing Transportation Overlay District (TOD), which was created almost 15 years ago to help promote transit ridership and shape development around the light rail; the UCD builds on the TOD with an updated list of land use regulations and comprehensive design standards around the existing light rail and future streetcar corridors. Because the UCD was created after Prop. 207 was enacted, it was prepared as an opt-in zoning district, while leaving the TOD intact in the Tempe Zoning & Development Code.

The draft UCD document has been available for public review since April 2019, and the DBP draft ordinance has been available since early November 2019. The public hearing and adoption schedule originally planned for fall 2019 was postponed specifically to provide more time for developing the details of the DBP, allowing public review, gathering and considering public feedback. At the Feb. 13, 2020, City Council hearing, staff recommended continuing final public hearing to May 7, 2020, to allow still more time for public consideration and feedback. City staff will continue to receive input from the community until the May 7 final public hearing. Staff request that feedback be as specific as possible so concerns related to the code text can be appropriately addressed.

***MYTH: The UCMP doesn't address increased traffic; there aren't any traffic studies.***

Chapter 2 of the UCMP specifically addresses transportation. The recommendations and design guidelines in the UCMP and UCD support increased use of public transit, biking and walking. Because most of the higher density growth is contemplated as mixed-use development on or near existing and planned transit corridors, people will have greater access to alternative modes of transportation, which should result in fewer drive-alone trips. Furthermore, both the UCMP and UCD include transportation demand management strategies to reduce the potential vehicular trips generated by new development. These strategies have been implemented in dozens of cities across the country and have been proven effective in mitigating the traffic impacts of development.

The City's Transportation Division conducts various transportation, traffic and transit studies, as well as collaborating with neighboring jurisdictions and regional entities to address transportation issues. For example, in 2015 Tempe and ASU collaborated on the Small Area Transportation Study to evaluate current and predicted traffic in the ASU/downtown Tempe area as part of the NOVUS Master Plan process (in addition to the phased Transportation Impact Studies required for each phase of the overall development).

The City's most comprehensive transportation study effort is the city-wide Tempe Transportation Plan, which is updated every 10 years to align with land use and circulation projections made in the City's General Plan, which is also updated and adopted every 10 years. In addition, developers are currently required to conduct Transportation Impact Studies when needed as part of the development process; this will continue regardless of whether the UCMP, UCD and DBP are adopted. Again, development is occurring – with or without a plan in place to help guide it. Short of preventing further development, which by law is not permitted, Tempe will continue to manage our mobility by creating a better multi-modal system.