



Regional Comprehensive Plan

for the
San Diego
Region



Final
July 2004



Our vision. Our future.
THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



OUR REGIONAL VISION & CORE VALUES

Defining Where We Want to Go

"What do we want our region to be like in 2030?" That was the question SANDAG posed to the citizens of the San Diego region. Hundreds of people — concerned residents, stakeholders, business and education leaders, planning directors, and local elected officials — responded to this question at the first round of public workshops on the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP). Their responses shaped the RCP's regional Vision and Core Values, and helped paint a picture of what our future could be like 30 years from now and beyond.

OUR REGIONAL VISION

"To **preserve and enhance** the San Diego region's unique features – its vibrant and culturally-diverse communities, its beaches, deserts, mountains, lagoons, bluffs, and canyons, and its international setting – and promote **sustainability**, economic prosperity, and an outstanding **quality of life** for everyone."



ENVISIONING OUR FUTURE

Only time will tell if the RCP will result in a better tomorrow. If we imagine the future, what would we want to see? How would things be different? Here's a snapshot of how the San Diego region could look in 2030 based upon ideals and core values communicated by residents throughout the region...

2030 VISION

A **Vision** of San Diego in 2030

Our **Environment**... Our region has retained its natural beauty. We now have healthy and vibrant communities as well as well-preserved open space, agricultural lands, and rural areas. We have **permanently preserved open space corridors** that run from Orange and Riverside Counties to Mexico and from the Pacific Ocean to the Imperial Valley, which all residents of the region enjoy. This interregional and international preserve system protects native plants and animals that were once on the verge of extinction. Urban canyons, parks, and public spaces in our cities reflect the native habitats of the area. Native birds frequent local parks and our own backyards.

Our coastal environment, including reefs and kelp beds, continue to flourish. The **coastline is restored to its natural condition**, providing productive habitats for sea life and enhancing the region as a tourist destination with the best beaches on the West Coast. Our wide, sandy beaches help minimize damage from storms, while providing wonderful recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Our Economy... Our region is economically diverse. We have an educated and well-trained workforce, an innovative business culture, and excellent universities. Our **transportation, water, and energy infrastructure systems serve the needs** of the greater region while meeting the demands of the modern global marketplace.

We embrace our economic and social diversity. A majority of our residents have gainful employment with improved purchasing power and increasing economic prosperity. These attributes place our region among the most competitive in the world and have contributed to a significantly **higher and sustainable standard of living for all our residents**. Environmentally-friendly and sustainable business practices have become a hallmark of the region.

Our Housing and Neighborhoods... Housing prices are within reach of much of our population, including our children, our grandchildren, and our parents, meaning fewer of them are forced to **move out of the area to afford housing or retire**. We have a variety of housing types for a variety of lifestyles and family structures – many of them near places where we work, shop, and play. They are connected to **attractive, efficient, and well-integrated transit stations**. Many of our communities, particularly those along major transit corridors, are more compact, yet they don't feel crowded thanks to good urban design and landscaping. People enjoy living in **multifamily and mixed use** neighborhoods within an easy stroll of retail stores, parks, playgrounds, childcare, healthcare, restaurants, movie theatres, museums, vocational schools, and other recreational services and activities. Our historic main streets are vibrant. Our rural communities have grown, but retain their **small-town, country charm**.

Our homes are **built or retrofitted with environmentally-friendly materials** and universal design features, resulting in **greater energy and water efficiency** and significantly easier access for our aging and differently-abled population. Our **homes are also energy-efficient** and our yards are attractively **landscaped with less-thirsty native plants**. We are socially connected and more civically engaged, and as a result, have sound strategies for funding our schools, libraries, and other public services. Our neighborhoods are beautifully landscaped with **native trees and flowers**. Our **streets are walkable** and wheelchair accessible, and they're safer to cross. We regularly walk and ride our bikes, and this increased physical activity makes us healthier.

2030 VISION

Our Transportation Systems... We have **many convenient transportation choices**. Fast, frequent, and reliable public transit services interconnect our communities, and our major transit centers are integrated with housing, retail shops, food courts, shade-covered benches, and well-maintained restrooms. More of our residents who have cars opt to leave them at home and families need fewer cars per household. **Overall, it's easier and more convenient to get around by walking, biking, and using transit**. As a result, many children walk or bike to school, as we used to do when we were younger.

Many of our **existing regional freeways, highways**, and major roadways have been **expanded** and include an extensive managed lane network for transit and carpools. These systems are linked to the international airport, ensuring effective access to world markets. Roads, rails, and vehicles are better managed with technology, which increases public safety. In-road sensors and cameras help detect traffic incidents and slowing. Automated systems notify traffic-response teams in real-time and electronically adjust ramp meters and traffic signals to moderate traffic flow.

Despite nearly three decades of population and employment growth, the **average commute time is less than 30 minutes**, and **traffic congestion** in key corridors has improved. By better linking transportation and land use decisions in the past, more people now live close to their jobs and leave their cars at home. As a result, more people have additional leisure time and less travel-related stress.

Our Relationships with Regional Neighbors... The greater Southern California-Baja California region boasts a seamless network that connects our economies, infrastructure, transportation, environment, and tourism industries. Major achievements have been made in cross-border infrastructure investment. Our air, land, and sea ports are served by extensive highway and rail transportation networks geared toward moving freight and goods north and south, east and west.

We work closely with Mexico and our surrounding neighbors to maintain a healthy environment, and both sides of the international border are recognized throughout the world for clean air and water and thriving ecosystems. We have established linkages and common land management practices along our borders. Most of our workers live here in San Diego County. However, those who travel to and from neighboring counties and Mexico have a number of commuting choices, including high-speed rail, better trolleys, buses, and train-like services, and carpools and vanpools. Our international border is more transparent as many are in Europe, and border-crossings are fast and safe.

Our Energy Supply... The region has a reliable and diversified energy supply and has reduced its dependence upon outside sources. Local supplies satisfy a greater proportion of the region's demand. **Energy sources, including solar, wind, and geothermal power, are clean, efficiently produced, plentiful, and reasonably-priced**. We also draw energy from **converted organic materials, landfills, and water sources**. Our **utility lines are underground**, making our neighborhood skylines more attractive.

Our **Water Supply**... The region is more self-sufficient with regard to water. Water is valued as a **precious resource**. **Conservation is practiced** in our homes, gardens, businesses, farms, and ranches; and made easier with new and improved technologies. We have a diversified water supply with a broad range of water resources including seawater desalination, water transfers, water recycling, reclamation, and sustainable groundwater supplies. We are less dependent on water imports, and our region's water conveyance systems are flexible and reliable.

2030 VISION

Our **Water Quality...** We now have a greater awareness about the overall health of our watersheds: how our streams, lakes, and rivers are connected to groundwater, lagoons, and the ocean. Our water bodies are safe for plants, animals, and people. Pollution no longer closes beaches. Groundwater supplies, now free of pollutants, help us meet the region's water demands.

Our **Air Quality...** The air we breathe is clean. We enjoy exercising and playing outdoors. We drive less frequently, taking advantage of convenient transportation options such as transit, bicycling, and walking. Our cars and trucks are more fuel-efficient and use cleaner-burning fuels, and we have increased numbers of electric vehicles and those that run on alternative fuels. Industrial plants continue to upgrade pollution-control equipment and curb emissions. Residential neighborhoods are free of potentially harmful industries. **We now lead the country in exemplary compliance of all state and federal clean air standards**, and as a result, see fewer people with respiratory disease.

Our **Waste Management Systems...** Educational and **public awareness campaigns** that focused on reducing waste, increasing recycling, and promoting composting, have been so effective that our region is closer to achieving a zero-waste philosophy than any other metropolitan area in the United States. Composting has become a common practice for reducing green waste. We make regular use of new technologies that convert organic materials into energy, ethanol, solvents, and other products. We properly treat and dispose of hazardous wastes, protecting our streams and land from contamination and meeting the needs of our local industries. More construction and demolition debris is recycled, sparing the need for new landfills.

Our **Educational System...** The region's K-12 school system has the resources to provide well-trained teachers, deliver education programs that meet the needs of learners at all skill levels, and parents and families are committed partners in the education process. The region has a highly educated and well-trained workforce and all segments of society are able to participate in our economic prosperity. Our workforce is capable of adapting to the ever-changing needs of modern industry. Local businesses work closely with schools to develop programs that fit their needs.

Our **Quality of Life...** While the number of people in our region has grown, we have improved our quality of life. Our neighborhoods are safe, and residents can walk to quality schools and **well-maintained parks**. Sidewalks, buildings, and recreational facilities are accessible and barrier-free. We have strengthened collaborations between governments and stakeholders within our region and with surrounding areas. **All voices are heard in the decision-making process**. We are spending taxpayers' money more effectively through an improved infrastructure investment decision-making process, and local governments have enough money to fund important community services. We are now stronger as an international and interregional metropolis than we were as separate communities, and we have achieved a balance between economic prosperity, environmental health, and social equity.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

Sounds like a **wonderful future**, doesn't it? This vision was built upon the core values that were developed through extensive public outreach. Our core values reflect aspects of our future that people living and working in San Diego in 2003 would like to preserve or enhance. The core values serve not only as the launching pad for the envisioning scenario above, but also as a guide in formulating the goals, policy objectives, and actions included in the RCP chapters.

OUR REGIONAL CORE VALUES

What Do We Value?

Urban Form

- Livable, walkable, safe, and healthy neighborhoods that include a mix of housing, parks, schools, jobs, health care facilities, child care facilities, and shopping.
- Redevelopment and infill in urban areas along transit corridors, to promote sustainable growth.
- A variety of housing and transportation choices at various price ranges.
- Preserved and maintained open spaces, rural communities, and agricultural areas.
- Accessibility and a barrier-free physical environment for all.

Transportation

- A transportation system that better links jobs, homes, and major activity centers; enables more people to walk, bike, and use transit; efficiently transports goods; and provides effective transportation options for people of all ages and abilities.

Housing

- More apartments, condominiums, mixed-use housing, and single family homes in all price ranges; and closer to jobs, transit, shopping, and recreation centers.

Environment

- A sustainable region with healthy ecosystems and environmentally friendly development.
- Clean water, air, soils, water bodies, and coastlines; and healthy beaches.
- Protected open space and habitat conservation systems, and preserved natural topography.

Economic Prosperity

- A balanced variety of jobs with competitive wages.
- Education and training opportunities for the local workforce to meet the demand for these jobs, helping to ensure a rising standard of living.

Public Facilities

- Infrastructure systems that work for all residents in the region.
- Energy self-sufficiency.
- A diverse water supply that meets the region's needs, respects the environment, and emphasizes conservation and efficiency.
- Access to healthcare and social services.
- Good, safe schools for our children that provide a quality education and serve as focal points for our neighborhoods.

Binational and Interregional Coordination

- The uniqueness of the region as an international border community, embracing ethnic and cultural diversity and promoting a wide variety of cultural resources.
- Cooperative planning and coordination among local jurisdictions within the region, and with our local school districts, our Native American tribal governments, our neighboring counties, Mexico, and our military communities.

Effective and Responsible Planning and Implementation

- Broader public participation in the planning process and allocation of resources.
- A fiscal structure that provides an equitable distribution of burdens and benefits, promotes efficient resource use, and provides clear incentives for achieving plan goals.

MEETING OUR FUTURE NEEDS THROUGH SUSTAINABILITY AND SMART GROWTH

The regional vision and core values describe a future San Diego we would all be proud to call home. But, how do we get there? How do we ensure that we meet the needs of today, while also guaranteeing that the region will provide for our children and our grandchildren?

To answer these questions, the RCP calls for the application of principles of “sustainability” and “smart growth.”

Sustainability

Sustainability means simultaneously meeting our current economic, environmental, and community needs, while also ensuring that we aren’t jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Sustainability is often discussed in terms of the “Three Es:” Economy, Environment, and Equity. For the San Diego region, the Three Es represent:

- A Prosperous Economy: Ensuring a rising standard of living for all of our residents;
- A Healthy Environment: Creating a region with clean air and water, pristine sandy beaches, and protected open spaces and natural systems; and
- Social Equity: Ensuring that all communities are treated fairly and are given equal opportunities to participate in the planning process. Included within this is another important E, Environmental Justice: Ensuring that plans, policies, and actions do not disproportionately affect low income and minority communities in a negative manner.

Together, they are like three legs in a stool — lacking just one leg means the stool will not stand. Emphasizing one over the other puts us on uneven ground.

Defining Smart Growth

Smart growth is a compact, efficient, and environmentally-sensitive pattern of development that provides people with additional travel, housing, and employment choices by focusing future growth away from rural areas and closer to existing and planned job centers and public facilities, while preserving open space and natural resources and making more efficient use of existing urban infrastructure.

Smart Growth Principles

Land Use and Urban Design. Reduce land consumption by focusing future growth in the cities and in the appropriate unincorporated suburban communities and village centers through new development, redevelopment, and infill, emphasizing pedestrian friendly design and mixed use development.

Travel Choices. Provide people with additional travel choices (walking, biking, rail, bus, and automobile).

Jobs/Housing Mix. Locate housing near or within major employment areas and provide employment opportunities near major housing areas.

Housing Choices. Provide, in each community, a variety of housing types for residents of all incomes.

Infrastructure Capacity and Location. Provide adequate infrastructure in designated smart growth opportunity areas.

Environment. Protect open space and habitat areas. When constructing residential, commercial, or industrial areas, or building transportation systems, provide environmentally sensitive development that conserves water and energy, protects water quality, promotes the use of alternative energy sources, protects sensitive plants and habitats, and restores natural open spaces through the use of native plants.

Smart Growth

Smart growth means developing the region in a way that creates communities with more housing and transportation choices, better access to jobs, more public spaces, and more open space preservation. Smart growth more closely links jobs and housing, provides more urban public facilities like parks and police stations, makes our neighborhoods more walkable, and places more jobs and housing near transit. It reduces land consumption in our rural and agricultural areas and spurs reinvestment in our existing communities. Together, sustainability and smart growth form the philosophical foundation of the Regional Comprehensive Plan.