



Introduction

San Diego has the location and the physical foundation in general for an important, perhaps a great, city. Its people are awake to its needs, and are resolved to meet them.

~ John Nolen, 1908

City Planner John Nolen wrote these words as a preface to San Diego's first grand vision statement of the 20th century. He looked at a young city with a population of less than 40,000 and imagined what it could become.

Against the backdrop of what Nolen considered San Diego's "permanent attractiveness beyond all other communities," he envisioned development of a civic center of downtown public buildings, more urban open space, parks and playgrounds, and a bayfront with promenades and public amenities. He urged San Diegans to build a city that capitalized on its many natural assets and enviable climate. Nolen's goals are still relevant today and they advised many of the planning decisions that shaped San Diego in the past century.

Since the Nolen Plan was commissioned, San Diego has grown from a small border town to a thriving metropolis of nearly 1.3 million people, complete with many distinct and diverse neighborhoods. The City's growth and evolution have served as a catalyst for the development of numerous planning visions and plan documents. Through the years, all of the plans have shared a somewhat common vision. They have sought ~~preservation of~~ to promote unique neighborhoods, good jobs and housing for all San Diegans, protection and enhancement of the environment, development of a diverse economy, an efficient and useful public transit system, well-maintained public facilities and services, and careful management of the growth and development of the City.

San Diego's Planning History

During the 1960s, the City engaged in a comprehensive planning process to prepare the first Progress Guide and General Plan, and in 1967 the City Council adopted and the electorate ratified that document as the first General Plan for the City of San Diego. In 1974, planning consultants Kevin Lynch and Donald Appleyard, funded through a grant from the prominent San Diego Marston family, produced *Temporary Paradise?* This groundbreaking study focused upon the natural base of the City and region; it recommended that new growth complement the regional landscape to preserve its precious natural resources and San Diego's high quality of life. *Temporary Paradise?* served as a major influence on the subsequent comprehensive update of the Progress Guide and General Plan adopted in 1979.



The City experienced both significant growth and a serious recession over the two following decades. Residential development reached the City's jurisdictional boundaries which also expanded during this period. The City's economic base evolved from tourism and defense to include high technology research and manufacturing, and international trade. The citizens of San Diego reacted to the growth and change by participating in numerous visioning efforts. They produced several documents, ballot initiatives, and programs including: the Urban Form Action Plan, the Regional Growth Management Strategy, the Livable Neighborhoods Initiative, Towards Permanent Paradise, the Renaissance Commission Report, and many others.

Based upon the planning principles and shared common values in all of these documents, the City Council adopted the Strategic Framework Element in 2002 to guide the comprehensive update of the entire 1979 Progress Guide and General Plan. These efforts culminated in a new General Plan in 2008.

A NewThe General Plan

While the General Plan Refresh maintains many goals and strategies of the 2008 General Plan, the year 2024 finds the City of San Diego and its citizens facing increased challenges: most notably, a lack of housing that is affordable, particularly in high resource areas, and a changing climate that poses environmental hazards to San Diegans. Further, the City is partially shaped by an existing pattern of sprawl that results in homes located far away from places of work, school, and other daily needs. This pattern has resulted in significant traffic congestion and harmful pollutants, including greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), that worsen our environment and air quality. The City of San Diego is addressing these challenges through policy and action, including a Climate Action Plan that calls for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and vehicular travel.

The City's Climate Action Plan calls for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and vehicular travel through a variety of strategies. While all strategies in the Climate Action Plan are critical to the City achieving its climate goals, the most significant reductions are anticipated to come from reducing the amount of distance that people need to drive to meet their daily needs. There are two critical components to reducing the distance that people need to drive: 1) planning for new homes and businesses in places where people are most likely to drive less, particularly in areas located close to transit, and 2) increasing the amount of travel that San Diegans do by walking/rolling, biking, and transit by making investments in infrastructure and programs designed to help people use these other travel modes safely, conveniently and enjoyably.

The General Plan addresses both of these critical components: the former with the 'City of Villages' strategy and land use policies that encourage new homes in areas with access to transit, jobs, and amenities; and the latter with mobility policies in this element that prioritize the most vulnerable modes of transportation so that all road-users can safely,



conveniently and enjoyably reach their desired destinations.

This General Plan provides policy guidance to balance the needs of a growing city while enhancing quality of life for current and future San Diegans. It provides a strategy, the City of Villages, for how the City can enhance its many communities and neighborhoods as growth occurs over time. It presents ten elements that overall provide a comprehensive “blueprint” for the City of San Diego’s growth over the next twenty plus years.

~~While this General Plan builds upon many goals and strategies of the 1979 General Plan, the year 2008 finds the City of San Diego and its citizens facing new issues: a lack of vacant developable land for future growth, unmet public facilities standards, a changing economic base, and major environmental challenges.~~

A century after Nolen, San Diego is once again anticipating its future and defining new strategies for the way we will live on the land for the next 20-50 years. The challenges require new approaches, sound public policies, and innovative and achievable solutions – in sum, a newrefreshed General Plan.

San Diego Profile

San Diego is the second largest city in California and eighth largest in the United States with a population of approximately 1.34 million in 200721. The City covers 342.5 square miles and stretches nearly 40 miles from north to south. There are 93 miles of shoreline including bays, lagoons and the Pacific Ocean. Elevations mostly range from sea level to 600 feet. High points include Mt. Soledad in La Jolla and Cowles Mountain in the eastern part of the City which is nearly 1,600 feet high.



San Diego has a unique and varied topography composed mostly of mesas intersected by canyons. Mission Valley is a prominent geographical feature near the center of the City. There are rather dramatic climate variations within the City. In the beach areas, summer high temperatures average in the low 70s while inland areas average in the mid to upper 80s. Rainfall averages only 10 inches per year.

San Diego has a varied economy with both high and low wage industries prominent. The higher wage economic sectors include international trade, telecommunications, software, biotech and higher education. The tourism and visitor sectors of the economy provide many of the lower wage jobs. There are relatively few middle income jobs resulting increasingly in an hourglass economy. ~~The Both manufacturing and the military~~ has long been ~~a mainstay~~ mainstays of the local economy offering middle income jobs, although ~~it is not~~ neither are as dominant as ~~it~~ they once ~~was~~. ~~Defense~~ were: defense industry and manufacturing jobs have declined in the past two decades.

San Diego is a major tourist and convention destination. The most visited sites are Balboa Park, the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park, SeaWorld, Cabrillo National Monument, and Old Town State Historic Park. The village area of La Jolla, Little Italy and the Gaslamp Quarter downtown are also popular destinations.

San Diego's population grew rapidly from 1940 to 1960 and again from 1970 to 1990. The population was approximately 200,000 in 1940, 700,000 in 1970 and over 1.22 million in 2000. ~~During the last few~~ – around half a million new residents every 30 years. Since 2000, the rate of population growth in the City has slowed: dramatically – only 200,000 residents have been added over the last 20 years, with 200,000 more projected by 2050 (1.6 million residents projected by 2050). Lack of vacant land and high housing costs relative to local incomes have deterred ~~recent~~ growth.

San Diego's population is diverse. Slightly less than half the population is composed of non-Hispanic whites. Hispanics make up ~~25-~~ approximately 30 percent of the population. Approximately 15-~~20~~ percent of the population has Asian and Pacific Island origins and about ~~76~~ percent are ~~black~~. The Hispanic ~~and Asian~~ populations are younger and ~~are~~ is continuing to increase ~~while~~; the non-Hispanic ~~white and black~~ population has been stagnant or declining in recent years. White population is also increasing but skews older. The Black, American Indian, and Asian American & Pacific Islander populations are relatively stagnant. The overall average age of ~~33.5~~ 37.6 years has been increasing, with the fastest growing segment being people over the age of 65. (See City of San Diego Fast Facts below, and Tables 8 and 9 in Appendix B of the Housing Element for more demographic information).





City of San Diego Fast Facts

Physical Characteristics:

Total area:	342.5 square miles
Latitude:	32.44 degrees north
Longitude:	117.10 degrees west
Coastline:	70 miles
Highest Point:	Cowles Mountain 1,586 feet
Lowest Point:	Sea Level
Average Altitude:	13 feet

Population Trends (1980 - 2020)

	1980 1980	1990 1990	2000 2000	2007 2010	2020
Total Population	875,538	1,110,549	1,223,400	1,316,837 301,617	1,421,462
Growth from Prior Period		27%	10%	8%	9%

Population Characteristics (2020 Estimates)

	Population	Percent of Total	Population < Age 18
Hispanic	360,021	27.31%	121,939
White	612,953	47.44%	28,609
Black	95,756	7.6%	26,188
American Indian	4,309	<1%	941
Asian American & Pacific Islander	189,384	14.15%	40,383
Hawaiian & Pacific Islander	5,617	<1%	1,588
All Other	3,562	<1%	1,312
Two or More Races	45,145	3%	17,816
All Ethnic Groups	1,316,837	100%	238,776

2050 Population, Housing and Employment Forecast

	2020	2030	2040	2050	% Change 2020-2050
Total Population	1,223,400	1,365,130	1,514,336	1,656,257	35.13%
Housing Units	440,367	45,834	12,004	633,002	30.25%
Civilian Employment	469,689	518,063	574,254	610,049	32.20%
	549,561	624,804	675,792	686,843	
	742,904	850,543	926,382	980,374	
	884,054	950,227	1,013,074	1,057,328	

Source: Demographic data provided by SANDAG, January 2008/2016 - 2023

