San Diego

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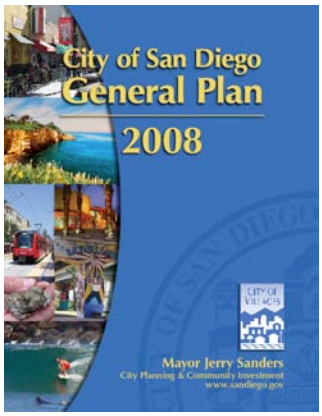
Ensuring a high quality of life for all generations.

Land Use, Housing and Open Space



The City of San Diego's General Plan (2008), was recently honored by the American Planning Association with its most prestigious award, The Daniel Burnham Award for a Comprehensive Plan. The 2008 General Plan is principled upon a City of Villages smart growth strategy which demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainable land use practices. The City of Village's strategy focuses growth into mixed-use villages, of different scales, that are linked to the transit system, while respecting San Diego's natural environment and wealth of distinctive neighborhoods.

Villages provide a variety of housing types, and allow for pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, with easy transit access to job centers and other more distant destinations. Village locations are consistent with smart growth areas identified in the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Regional Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to targeting new growth into the right locations, smart growth also requires that natural systems be preserved and protected. The City of San Diego has more than 39,000 acres of parks, open spaces, trails, and recreation facilities that annually serve millions of residents and visitors. In addition, San Diego's many canyons, valleys, mesas, hillsides, beaches, and other natural landforms create a unique setting that fosters biodiversity and a sense of place.

In fact, San Diego is the most bio-diverse county in the continental United States. Many unique and endangered species are found in the San Diego region. Ensuring their survival is essential to maintaining a healthy local ecosystem. Over half of these species inhabit the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) study area. The MSCP is a comprehensive habitat conservation planning program that was adopted in 1997 to preserve and manage sensitive species at an ecosystem level. It will protect habitat for more than 1,000 native and non-native plant species and more than 380 species of fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. The City's total conservation goal is 52,727 acres and to date, 49,230 acres (93% of total) are conserved or are obligated to be conserved.

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Additional examples and initiatives to plan for sustainability include:

- **Community Plans** – Updates to community plans covering nearly a third of the city are either recently completed or in process. These plans implement General Plan smart growth strategies at the neighborhood level and identify housing opportunities for a variety of household sizes. Compact, walkable districts are to be focused in the vicinity of major employment centers and transit services.
- **Affordable/Infill Housing Expedite Program** – This development incentive program reduces processing times by approximately 50 percent for projects that meet established criteria as affordable/ infill projects.
- **Density Bonus** – Increased density and incentives, including reduced parking requirements, are offered to developments that provide affordable housing.
- **Inclusionary Housing** – Citywide ordinance mandates that 10 percent of all new residential development be affordable to low- and moderate-income households throughout the city and near all major employment centers. Alternatively, developers may pay an in-lieu fee, which is re-invested in communities with a lesser proportion of affordable housing.
- **Workforce Housing Efforts** – In 2009, the San Diego Housing Commission launched an innovative finance plan to increase affordable housing for low- and moderate-income workforce families by approximately 1,000 rental units over the next three to five years. After receiving federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program funding, the San Diego Housing Commission launched a first-time homebuyer program that focuses on neighborhoods most affected by foreclosures.
- **Housing Opportunity Fund** – This fund is administered by the City's Affordable Housing Collaborative, and has invested approximately $89 million toward the creation and rehabilitation of affordable housing opportunities. Projects that include sustainable development principles and achieve LEED certification status or equivalent are prioritized for funding commitments.
- **Housing Enhancement Loan Program (HELP)** – This program offers loans between $5,000 and $10,000 to incentivize housing rehabilitation and community enhancement. Additional funds are available for sustainability/water conserving improvements.
- **Community Enhancement** – Tailored grant and loan programs provide opportunities for qualified applicants to carry out home and community improvements which conserve resources and enhance the public spaces.
- **Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control** – The City's Lead Safe Neighborhoods Program was created in 2002 and since that time has evolved into the nationally recognized "Healthy Homes" program- a comprehensive, coordinated approach to address all substandard housing conditions, while implementing other housing objectives, such as energy efficiency, weatherization, and fair housing.
- **Downtown Redevelopment** – The guiding principles of the City of San Diego Downtown Community Plan (2006) target burgeoning downtown populations, which potentially may triple to 90,000 residents and double to 160,000 employees by 2030. The Downtown Community Plan emphasizes sustainability in both public and private development, by defining incentives and guidelines that promote energy efficiency, conservation, and "public realm" enhancements with designated "green streets."
- **Downtown Sustainability Master Plan** – This draft plan will provide guidelines and incentives that can be integrated into the design review and development entitlement process, and will identify sustainability indicators (energy, water, healthy spaces, streetscape vitality, economic prosperity, material and mobility) that are transferrable to the city and region.

Mobility

Senate Bill (SB) 375 requires that each region in California to achieve greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions from cars and light-duty trucks through a reduction of vehicle miles traveled. These reductions can occur through development patterns, transportation infrastructure investments, or additional transportation measures or policies. San Diego will be the first region in the California to implement SB 375, which requires both the city and the region to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Transit will play a key role in achieving this reduction. The City is working closely with SANDAG, the Metropolitan Transit System and other cities in the region to increase transit ridership.

City efforts to enhance mobility in an environmentally sustainable manner include:

- **Pedestrian Master Plan** – The City is developing a Citywide Pedestrian Master Plan to identify pedestrian needs and solutions at the neighborhood level, with an emphasis on community input throughout the process.
- **Bicycle Master Plan** – The City has adopted a Citywide Bicycle Master Plan to guide the development and maintenance of bicycle facilities throughout the City.
- **Corridor Mobility Studies** – In recognition of the need for streets to be designed to serve a variety of users (pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and motorists) the City has undertaken corridor studies that produce recommended strategies or alternatives for multi-modal improvements.
- **Community Parking District program** – In an effort to help manage parking and foster community and economic development, a portion (45%) of the revenue from parking meters and other parking related revenues is allocated to designated parking districts to implement solutions to parking problems.
- **Traffic Signal Synchronization** – Traffic signal synchronization and other transportation system management improvements help reduce congestion and improve peak travel times and air quality, while avoiding the cost and negative environmental impacts of road widening and construction. The City of San Diego, in cooperation with SANDAG, is currently retiming 275 traffic signals along eight major arterials and within the Center City grid.

Cleantech and the Economy

With its wealth of research institutions, San Diego is uniquely positioned to develop and support a high-growth, innovation-driven industry such as clean technology. Since 2006, when Mayor Jerry Sanders launched a Cleantech Initiative to catalyze industry growth, more than 100 new cleantech companies have opened in San Diego, many of them affiliated with the City's world-class universities and biotechnology industry. With early support and commitment to nurturing this sector, San Diego stands to become a hub for the development and commercialization of cleantech products and technology.

Components of San Diego's Cleantech Initiative include:

- **CleanTech Innovation Challenge** – This joint effort of the City of San Diego, University of California San Diego, San Diego State University and others is designed to accelerate the time needed to bring new clean technologies from university labs into the marketplace.
- **Zoological Society Biomimicry Partnership** – Biomimicry is an emerging discipline that studies and imitates natural designs and processes to solve human problems. With San Diego's natural assets providing the inspiration and the San Diego Zoological Society and local industries providing initiative and resources, San Diego is positioning itself to become the hub for biomimicry.
- **The San Diego Clean Enterprise Program** – This program, funded by San Diego Gas & Electric and marketed by CleanTech San Diego, provides interest-free financing for up to 10 years to fund energy-efficiency improvements for small businesses.
- **Clean Generation Program** – The program provides a financing for energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy installations on private property. Participants agree to be part of an assessment district and will pay for the cost of the improvements, plus interest, over a 20-year period on their property tax bill. Qualified projects include renewable energy installations as well as retrofits associated with energy efficiency and water conservation. By making it easier for City residents to embrace clean technologies, the program will lower GHG emissions, stimulate the demand for local cleantech products, and save property owners money.

Energy

Under the leadership of Mayor Sanders, the City is taking great strides to lead the region in the direction of clean renewable energy. In 2009, San Diego was rated as the number one city in California for solar energy use. In recognition of San Diego's ongoing efforts as well as its further potential to use solar power, the City was selected by the U.S. Department of Energy for the Solar America Cities partnership. This initiative provides funding and support for programs to encourage adoption of solar energy by residents and businesses. To date, about 33.3 Mega Watts (MW) of commercial and residential solar energy is produced in the region (commercial and residential), with over 2 MW installed at City facilities. In 2009, an average of 46 photovoltaic systems per month were installed on single family homes. Solar energy production is poised to increase even more as a result of the City's Clean Generation Program.

The first EPA Energy Star for Buildings designation was given to the City's Environmental Services Department Headquarters building in 1999. The success of the building served as a catalyst for the development of the City's Sustainable Building Policy. The City now has more than ten Energy Star buildings and five Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) buildings.

The City's Green Building and Energy Initiatives include:

- **Sustainable Building Policy** – All new City buildings and major renovations greater than 5,000 sq ft must meet the LEED Green Building Rating System Silver Rating or equivalent. The policy was adopted in 2002 and is currently being updated.
- **Sustainable Development Incentives** – This incentive program encourages the private-sector to develop sustainable buildings by offering expedited permit processing. The policy was adopted in 2003 and is currently being updated. After 5 years of implementation, over 1,000 residential and commercial units have added energy efficiency and solar photovoltaic systems to their projects, resulting in nearly 2 MW of new solar power.
- **Renewable Energy** – Over 19 MW of renewable energy is produced at City facilities, and the City was designated the nation's #1 Green Power Purchasing Agency by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2006.
- **Streetlight Program** – Large scale adoption of broad spectrum lighting (induction and LED) will significantly reduce energy use and enhance night lighting in the community.
- **City Building Retrofits** – The City saves energy and money through strategic incorporation of energy efficiency measures, and installation of photovoltaic and co-generation systems. The City has a goal of 3 million kilowatt-hours of energy reduction annually, and has realized 27 million kilowatt-hours of savings since 1997.
- **Energy Efficiency Block Grant (EECBG)** – More than $12.5 million was allocated to the City of San Diego through the EECBG, and of that, nearly 40 percent will be allocated to retrofits of existing homes and about 60 percent is allocated to infrastructure and City facility energy efficiency projects.

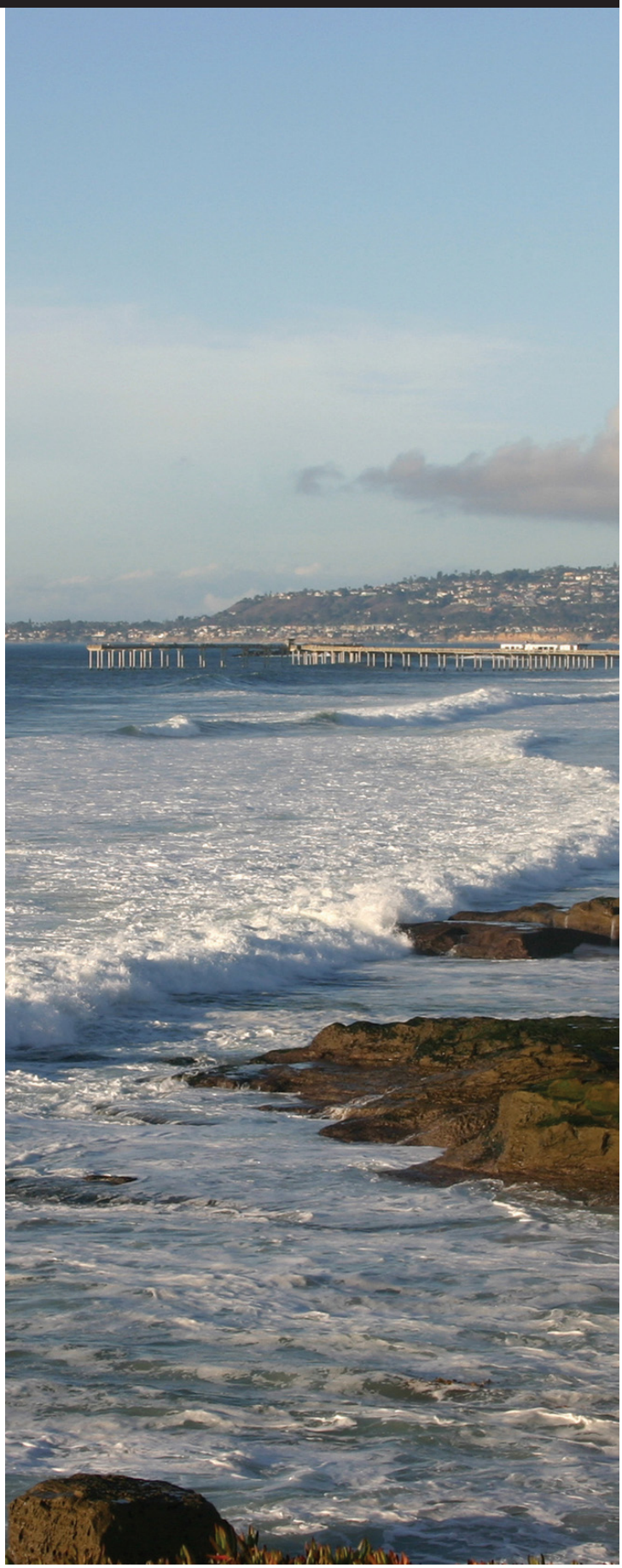
Climate Protection

San Diego's Sustainable Community Program was the municipal recipient of the EPA's 2004 Climate Protection Award. This program set goals, created indicators, and established a greenhouse gas (GHG) emission inventory. Development of a Climate Protection Action Plan followed in 2004, and the emissions inventory has been kept up-to-date over the years. The Action Plan is currently being updated to broaden its scope and to address adaptation.

Efforts to implement the Sustainable Community Program include:

- **Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program** – This program requires twelve environmental characteristics to be considered when purchasing products or services. The program expands the commitment of the City to purchase products with recycled content, lower toxicity, and greater conservation of energy, water, and other resources.
- **Idling Reduction** – In order to improve air quality and reduce energy use, the City limits unnecessary idling of City vehicles and other equipment.
- **Greener Vehicle Fleet** – The City's fleet of vehicles is transitioning from higher emitting vehicles to hybrid and super low emission vehicles. Emissions have also been reduced through particulate trap retrofits, replacement of older diesel fleet, and introducing alternative bio fuels.
- **Urban Forestry** – San Diego currently has an inventory of more than 230,000 City-owned trees. The City's urban forest, comprised of publicly and privately owned trees, helps reduce energy consumption, improve air quality, reduce storm water runoff, decrease soil erosion, improve the pedestrian environment, reduce glare, and improve community image and aesthetics. For these reasons, the City has landscape standards and a policy for tree protection.

"To engage San Diegans to envision, plan, implement, and maintain a sustainable city through the wise use of land, resources, and aesthetics ensuring a high quality of life for all generations."



Water & Waste Management

The San Diego region is experiencing a water supply crisis. Since San Diego imports 85-90 percent of its water, these conditions put considerable stress on the City's water system. Efforts to increase water conservation and reclamation have been effective, as current Citywide water usage is approximately at the same level it was 18 years ago, despite a percent increase in population.

Efforts to conserve water and to develop additional water resources include:

Water Conservation – The City of San Diego, through its award winning "Waste No Water" campaign has seen a 12 percent reduction in water use above water consumption compared to a similar period in previous years. The State of California has established a goal of reducing water use by 20% per capita statewide by the year 2020 and San Diego is well positioned to meet that mandate. For more information, please see www.sandiego.gov/wateremergency.

- **Think Blue Campaign** – This storm water pollution prevention program recently completed its tenth year. Through an aggressive outreach and education effort, San Diegans are able to learn about their responsibilities and options for protecting San Diego's limited water resources and waterways. Working in concert with state and federal agencies supporting the Clean Water Act, Think Blue reaches each and every San Diegan through promotional activities, special events and broad-ranging advertisements regarding "best practices" for protecting our watersheds.

- **Water Reclamation** – The City of San Diego operates the North City Water Reclamation Plant and the South Bay Water Reclamation Plant, providing San Diego with 45 million gallons per day of dependable, year-round, locally controlled water. These plants treat wastewater to a level that is approved for irrigation, manufacturing and other non-drinking, or non-potable purposes.

- **Landscape Water Calculator** – This easy-to-access on-line tool was designed to help citizens develop customized recommended water schedules for their landscapes to reduce overwatering and save customers money on their water bills. This award-winning tool can be found at www.sandiego.gov/water/conservation.

- **Plumbing Retrofit Ordinance** – In an effort to address sustainability in existing buildings, the City adopted a "Retrofit Upon Resale" ordinance which requires property owners to ensure that water saving devices are installed upon change of property ownership or bathroom remodel.

- **Wastewater System Programs** – The City of San Diego was the first wastewater system in the nation to receive ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 14001 certification, which documented and continues to monitor that the City is implementing sustainable environmental programs and goals as a part of its operations. These programs include a reduction in the use of potable water to the extent that the plants are operating on up to 98% reclaimed or process water.

NO TIME TO WASTE
NO WATER TO WASTE

The City's waste reduction and recycling efforts allowed the City to achieve a 64% waste diversion rate in 2008. To meet the City's waste management needs in an environmentally sound manner, the City has undertaken the following programs:

- **Miramar Landfill** – San Diego is the first municipally-operated landfill in the nation to be certified to the ISO 14001 standard for Environmental Management Systems.

- **City Recycling Ordinance (2007)** – Recycling services are required to be provided at businesses and commercial facilities, single- and multi-family residences, and special events in the City.

- **Construction and Demolition (C&D) Debris Deposit Ordinance (2007)** – A deposit is required for all C&D projects, which is refunded if at least 50% of the debris is recycled.