

Sustainable Paradise



a vision for the future of the
San Diego/Tijuana Metropolitan region

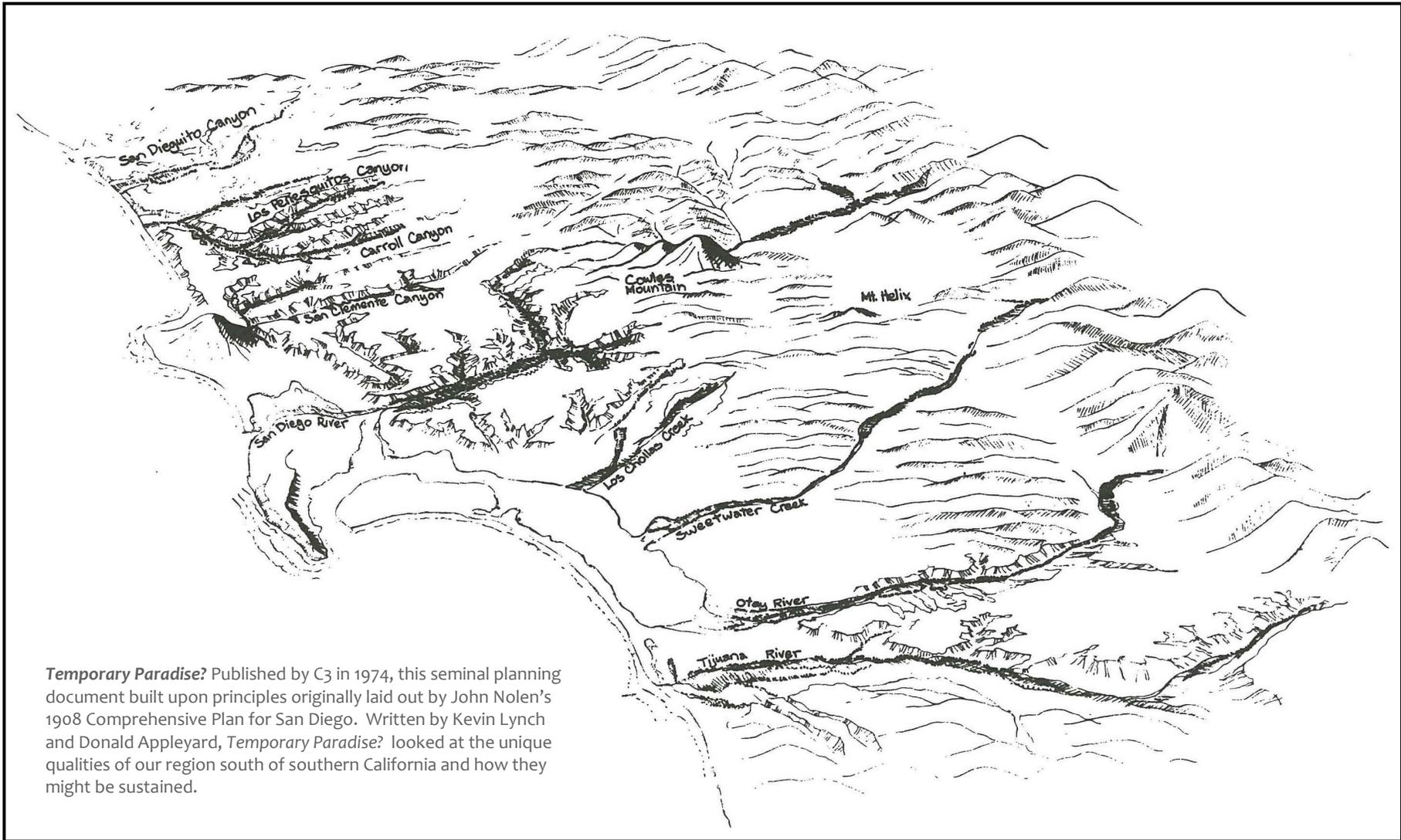
An aerial photograph of the San Diego region, showing the coastline on the left, the city of San Diego in the center, and the surrounding mountains and hills. A semi-transparent white text box is overlaid on the center of the image.

About C3

Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 (C3) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization of informed citizens interested in regional planning issues, preservation, and revitalization of downtown San Diego.

C3 was founded in 1961 by Lloyd Ruocco and Esther Scott with the support of Hamilton Marston and Ellen Revelle. Their objectives were to conserve and promote "a handsome & functional community" through research, education and coordinated citizen action.

C3 Mission Statement: To establish a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization of informed citizens which will strive for the conservation and improvement of the San Diego region. To present objective information, constructive opinion, and educational programs reflecting the deliberation of its members. To weigh all matters in view of the contribution toward achieving the highest standards of environmental quality, physical design, economic benefit, and social progress.



Temporary Paradise? Published by C3 in 1974, this seminal planning document built upon principles originally laid out by John Nolen's 1908 Comprehensive Plan for San Diego. Written by Kevin Lynch and Donald Appleyard, *Temporary Paradise?* looked at the unique qualities of our region south of southern California and how they might be sustained.

Introduction

For 50 years, Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 (C3) has promoted principles of good design and planning that can help achieve a healthy environment, strong economy, and social progress in the San Diego/Tijuana region. These principles, originally laid out by John Nolen's 1908 Comprehensive Plan for San Diego, were reiterated in *Temporary Paradise?* This seminal planning document for our region was written by Kevin Lynch and Donald Appleyard in 1974. *Temporary Paradise?* looked at the unique qualities of our region south of southern California and how they might be sustained.

In 1998, C3 assessed our region's progress in achieving the vision articulated in *Temporary Paradise?* In recognition of the significant gaps in achieving this vision, C3 published *Toward Permanent Paradise*, a forward look at the special landscape of the San Diego region. *Toward Permanent Paradise* identified ten areas of focus necessary to achieve the vision presented in *Temporary Paradise?*:

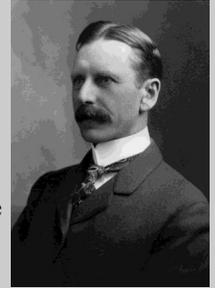
- Valleys and Canyons
- The Seacoast
- Getting About
- Growth
- Older Neighborhoods
- Major Centers
- The Mexican Connection
- The Environment

At that time, the key threats to preserving the region's unique qualities were perceived to be rapid development and consumption of both our natural and public resources. Since 1998, new threats have emerged, including climate change and the effects of natural disasters; conflicts over dwindling resources; new technologies that change how we live; globally linked economies and an aging society. While global in scale, these issues have resounding effects at the local level. As a society we need to need to adapt to and thrive in the midst of these threats.

As the 8th largest city in the United States and the 5th largest metropolitan region in Mexico, the San Diego/Tijuana metropolitan area has a combined population of over five million (2010 Census). Around the two major urban centers of downtown San Diego and Tijuana are several dozen distinct smaller cities, coastal villages, and country towns that exist in some of the most diverse environments in the west.

With a superbly mild climate that is warm in the winter and cool in the summer, the region is a favored location for world class athletes to live and train. East of the coast in the Laguna Mountains and the Anza Borrego Desert, temperatures and rainfall change dramatically. Because of its diverse landscapes, the region has been designated a biological 'hotspot'. Past efforts to conserve the region's natural environment have resulted in one of the most extensive park and habitat conservation systems in the world. Along with a wealth of cultural resources and premier educational institutions, the bi-national region is unique in its physical, cultural, and historic association between the people of Baja California and southern California.

*About John Nolen
(1869 - 1937)*



John Nolen was a pioneering landscape architect and urban planner. He wrote the 1908 report "San Diego: A Comprehensive Plan for Its Improvement" which reconceived the city's image and imagined a new destiny.

Over seventy years after his death, Nolen's vision remains inspiring and topical. Linking the city's two great assets, San Diego Bay and Balboa Park, was his idea, one which is now coming to fruition along the Park Boulevard corridor.

Another of his ideas was to place a civic center on the waterfront. Accomplished in 1938, the County Administration Center is today arguably the grandest public building in the region. He advocated broad avenues – later engineered into many of today's freeways – and small neighborhood parks, too few of which have been built.

- *San Diego Union Tribune, 01/07/07*





I. The Environment



II. Communities



III. Economic Prosperity



IV. The International Region



V. Sustainable Life Systems



VI. Sustainable Social Systems



C3 Vision

C3's vision of the future includes a functionally integrated international metropolis, free of violence. Our vision is of a region that:

- preserves its natural and historic assets;
- displays its unique cultural identity through the design of distinct cities and neighborhoods;
- provides attractive transportation alternatives to cars;
- designs streets that are fun and safe to walk and bike;
- values architecture, art, and the environment; and
- provides affordable access to world class education and health care systems.

However, as we look to the future through the prism of the present, we see an international region vulnerable to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change. We see a region marred by the violence of human trafficking and a war on drugs; a region where our land uses and transportation systems are organized around the car; a region where sewer systems must be better maintained to prevent water pollution; a region with a very limited supply of local water; an energy system dependent on imported fossil fuels; and an economy that does not generate enough affordable housing.

Each topic included in this booklet is important to the quality of life in the San Diego region, and as such, has been identified by C3 as an area for advocacy and action. No single topic is most important, nor do they stand in isolation. C3 takes a systems view of planning and community issues, understanding that it is the relationships among these topics that is crucial to creating a sustainable region. The topics include:

- I. The Environment
- II. Communities
- III. Economic Prosperity
- IV. The International Region
- V. Sustainable Life Systems
- VI. Sustainable Social Systems





I. The Environment

Big Idea - Build our communities so that every neighborhood has ready access to our region's natural (parks and open spaces) and cultural (historical and archaeological) resources.

The river valleys, canyons, and coastline are San Diego's priceless assets. They are a naturally connected system of open space close to nearly every neighborhood. Evidence that the public values these assets is demonstrated by the dedication of so much parkland and open space that the region has one of the largest park systems in North America.

Since *Toward Permanent Paradise*, major steps have been taken to preserve our natural habitats and improve the environment. Environmental regulations have been strengthened. Air quality has improved; even while the number of vehicle miles traveled has more than doubled. Sewer spills have been dramatically reduced from one per day to less than one per month. The water quality in our bays and ocean is much improved. Most jurisdictions have adopted Habitat Conservation Plans. Our remaining river valleys have been protected from development and are now incorporated into river parks.

These efforts have made a positive impact on the environment, but more must be done. Funding for the management of preserved open space and river valleys is neither assured nor adequate. Water bodies remain impaired. Our community forests are in decline and park maintenance is underfunded.

We must remain physically and emotionally connected to our natural areas and open spaces if we are to be stewards of these treasures for the next generation.

Strategies and Actions

1. Protect our beaches, parks, canyons, rivers, and valleys from development, overuse, and pollution.
2. Prepare and implement management plans for river valleys that include areas for preservation, recreation, and walking trails.
3. Implement habitat conservation plans across the region.
4. Build trails through open spaces and facilitate interaction with the local natural environment.
5. Permanently fund management and monitoring of conserved areas.
6. Designate expansive marine conservation areas.
7. Create archaeological and historic resource districts.
8. Identify permanent funding sources for our parks and community forests.

II. Communities

Big Idea - Accommodate future growth through mixed-use, infill development, where the intensity of use matches proximity to transit and infrastructure while respecting the character of each neighborhood.

A. Accommodating Growth

San Diego county will grow by 1.1 million more people by 2050 (SANDAG). Tijuana will experience even greater population growth. To accommodate this growth, San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) has drafted a Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) and Smart Growth Map.

This plan directs growth into a series of districts throughout the region. These districts—including a Metropolitan Center, Urban Centers, Town Centers, Community Centers, Rural Villages and Mixed Use Corridors—link future land uses to transportation opportunities beyond the automobile. The plan suggests directing most future development to the more temperate coastal region while preserving networks of open space associated with habitat conservation plans. Finally, the RCP proposes urban design strategies that orient future development around complete neighborhoods and communities.

Strategies and Actions

1. Support SANDAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan and Smart Growth initiatives, and the inclusion of these urban design strategies into the General Plans of local cities.
2. Amend zoning regulations to: a) emphasize mixed use projects in business districts; b) encourage walkable neighborhoods; and c) allow urban gardens to produce locally grown food.
3. Develop "Green Building" standards with incentives to substantially reduce energy, water, and fuel consumption.
4. Redevelop blighted and under-developed urban areas while accommodating existing residents.
5. Establish funding programs for infrastructure including sewer, water, parks, libraries, and schools.
6. Promote "granny" flats and similar flexible and affordable housing types consistent with the local community character.





B. Getting About

How people perceive their environment is a function of how they move through it. Transportation systems define the character of cities and our region is primarily auto-oriented. Congestion, air and water quality impacts, social isolation, and poor physical health are just some of the high costs that result when we put cars first.

We should put “transit first” by focusing our expenditures on creating and improving transit options before widening freeways and building roads. The emphasis should be on creating places where people can walk, bike, and take transit as the preferred alternative to driving. Bus stops and trolley stations should support higher development densities and become community activity centers.

Attention should be given to balancing all modes of travel and an emphasis should be placed on making systems more pedestrian and bike friendly. Urban street design guidelines should facilitate creation of “Complete Streets” that favor pedestrian safety/convenience and neighborhood character over automobile speed.

Strategies and Actions

1. Upgrade and expand existing transportation systems, including bus and light rail (trolley), and add new systems such as the Electric Trolley Cars and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service.
2. Improve transit frequency and increase available routes, particularly around employment centers.
3. Provide real-time access to transit times via GPS systems.
4. Integrate transit with a comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle network, for which San Diego's mild climate is ideally suited.
5. Implement SANDAG's Regional Bike Master Plan.
6. Plan transit and land use together to create mixed-use communities and active "people-oriented" places, with jobs, homes, schools, and consumer goods within walking/biking distance.
7. Support transportation demand management (TDM) strategies such as telecommuting, employee rideshare, carpool/vanpool and/or subsidized transit passes; and traffic reduction strategies such as car and bike sharing programs.
8. Support policies that put “transit first” and reduce reliance on automobile travel.
9. Encourage SANDAG to prioritize public transportation and mass transit projects and minimize the expansion of single-vehicle general purpose highway lanes.



C. Complete Neighborhoods

Some older neighborhoods such as North and South Park, Golden Hill, City Heights, and Barrio Logan are seeing resurgence in both investment and community involvement. These neighborhoods have undergone revitalization and are thriving—offering an array of dining, entertainment, shopping, and housing choices within easy walking distance. Other neighborhoods suffer from inadequate investment in services, infrastructure, and an aging housing stock. With investment, these neighborhoods can become the healthy communities they were when first built.

A greater challenge is redeveloping neighborhoods that have been oriented around the automobile, with big box and strip commercial centers, large streets, and large-scale merchant built housing. Many of these areas are aging, with underused commercial space organized around streets that discourage walking. These communities need to be redeveloped as transit, bicycle, and pedestrian friendly areas.

Strategies and Actions

1. Use SANDAG's smart growth indicators to measure the quality of life status of communities, and to identify areas for reinvestment.
2. Engage schools, public safety providers, employers, merchants, and, most importantly, the residents in planning for revitalization.
3. Develop community design programs to create distinct identities for commercial strips and residential neighborhoods.

D. City Centers

The world's great cities are known by their centers. The San Diego region's geography and climate sets the framework for a great city-region, with varied and distinct urban centers where mixed-use, urban development is concentrated. A rational public transportation system would connect these centers, bringing people together to share culture, commerce, and experiences.

The main centers of our region are downtown San Diego and Tijuana. Other major urban centers include Chula Vista, La Mesa, Oceanside, San Marcos, and Escondido. These urban areas are integrated to some degree with light rail transit and other rail and bus transportation options that are critical to achieving less dependence on the automobile. Our focus should be on developing urban centers into a series of destinations connected by transit.

Strategies and Actions

1. Implement SANDAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan and Smart Growth Map.
2. Engage with local planning agencies in the creation of transit-oriented, walkable neighborhoods that provide a range of housing options and access to shopping and jobs.
3. Support equal access for all communities to essential amenities including employment, education, housing, recreation, and transportation.





III. Economic Prosperity

Big Idea - *Become a center of education where continuous learning leads to enriching lifetime occupations.*

In the 20th century, San Diego's regional economy evolved from one based on agriculture to one comprised of defense, tourism, and manufacturing. Our economy is now more diverse with high tech, telecommunications, and biotech industries balancing out the mix. San Diego is also emerging as a leader in the clean and green technology sector. Our prosperity relies on strengthening and expanding existing business sectors, propagating new sectors, and reinforcing the institutions and infrastructure that support our economy.

A sustainable economy requires a trained, well-educated work force—one that can continually update their skills to remain competitive in an ever-changing economy and can afford housing near jobs, schools, and cultural venues.

The regional economy also depends on an assured supply of water and energy as well as reliable transportation and telecommunication networks.

Strategies and Actions

1. Advocate for a regional Economic Development Element that establishes policies for maintaining and expanding a vital economy, linking regional economic growth to all communities and raising real per capita income.
2. Support strategies that recognize that education is the cornerstone to a successful economy and that the region can become a national leader in educating all segments of our community.
3. Promote greater interaction among universities, the Kindergarten-12 school system, local government, community groups, and business.
4. Support policies that favor both high value-added industries with well-paying jobs and opportunities for a skilled work force in service-oriented jobs.
5. Support policies that reinforce agriculture as a major employer and as a means of preserving open space.
6. Develop cultural tourism by linking key cultural sites that illustrate the historic diversity of the region.



IV. The International Region

Big Idea - Create a bi-national Regional Master Plan that addresses common issues of concern with a goal of promoting the same freedom of movement of people as currently exists in the movement of capital.

It is, in part, the symbiotic relationship between Tijuana and the San Diego that makes our region unique among the world's large metropolitan areas. With a population of over five million, the San Diego-Tijuana region is the largest International Metropolitan Area along the United States border. With over 50 million crossings a year, our port-of-entries are the busiest in the world.

We share much in terms of history and culture. We also share the same climate, water, air, and landscapes. Our economies are linked through our respective spending power and a large labor pool to support our industries.

Unfortunately, the region is also plagued by high crime associated with drug smuggling and human trafficking. Even the perception that it is not safe to travel to Baja California affects both sides of the border. The challenges and their solutions are regional in nature. Although urban plans now show both sides of the border, it is important to cooperatively address these border issues and develop an economically sound and culturally desirable international region.

Strategies and Actions

1. Strengthen cultural, economic, social, and civic ties and cooperation through border organizations and activities.
2. Jointly prepare a regional border plan with shared goals. This should include land use, urban design, environmental protection, and transportation strategies, as well as policies related to infrastructure for sewer, water, and energy.
3. Promote border industries that conserve the region's limited supply of water.
4. Preserve the Tijuana River Valley for ecological resource preservation, agriculture, and recreation.





V. Sustainable Life Systems

Big Idea - Transform our current production systems (water, energy, and waste) to sustainable systems more quickly than most believe possible. Conserve more and waste nothing.

In spite of our mild climate and beautiful coastline, our region is essentially a desert with limited and erratic rainfall. 90 percent of our water is imported, yet it is nearly impossible to legally reuse our wastewater. We rely on imported oil and natural gas to fuel our power plants. We've adopted diets that require trains, planes, and trucks to bring food from around the globe.

Local production, where possible, and resource conservation could better ensure long-term stability both in price and availability. Though many other global activities affect the health and functioning of our life systems, implementing these strategies at the local level provides great opportunities to improve our regional quality of life.

We have become a disposable culture in which the consequences of our waste production can be ignored. For most of us, throwing something away means it goes into a bin, never to be thought of again. Local landfills are nearing capacity and opening new ones is nearly impossible. While we fight new landfills we do little to reduce waste and eliminate the need for them. In the city of San Diego, residents in single family communities don't even pay a fee for waste removal and therefore have even less incentive to reduce their trash.

Strategies and Actions

1. Promote energy and water efficiency standards for new construction.
2. Streamline the permit process for grey water reuse.
3. Incentivize energy and water conservation.
4. Support the County Water Authority's water supply diversification goals.
5. Construct large-scale local water desalination projects.
6. Adopt state legislation that encourages small scale distributive energy production.
7. Promote the creation of urban agriculture as a supplement to our food supply.
8. Divert and compost organic material (plant, paper, food and animal products) from the landfill and make compost available throughout the region.
9. Ban Single Use Plastic Bags from San Diego County.
10. Adopt a region-wide Zero Waste/Zero Spill Plan.

VI. Sustainable Social Systems

Big Idea – *Integrate local food production and the value of nutrition into the education and health care delivery systems.*

Creating a sustainable San Diego region requires us to understand the factors that drive our lifestyle choices and the impact our choices have on the social and physical nature of our communities. It requires us to consider issues not typically within the purview of planners; specifically our schools and community health.

Although the San Diego region supports some fine K-12 programs, it also has a despairing number of underperforming schools. These schools are often associated with low-income neighborhoods and communities where English is the second language. School curricula have also been revised to teach to national test standards at the expenses of classroom time devoted to art, music and issues relating to a distinct community. An educational framework needs to be developed that identifies the learning opportunities in all areas of the region. The success of charter schools shows us that new models can be developed to assure an education system that will support the path to sustainability.

Studies have documented the relationships between how our neighborhoods are developed and a community's health and wellness. Streets and parks that are not safe limit the opportunities for exercise. The lack of exercise and the food we eat are contributing to a nationwide obesity and diabetes epidemic. Community design should promote public safety, health, and well-being.

Strategies and Actions

1. Develop and implement community public health programs that focus on both medical services and education.
2. Maintain physical education programs for all communities through both the school system and community recreation centers.
3. Develop healthy food programs that incorporate local produce to serve neighborhoods with high concentrations of fast food outlets.
4. Adopt procurement policies and nutrition standards that make healthy, sustainable, locally-grown foods accessible to all residents in the region at prices that are profitable for local farmers.
5. Develop and support community garden, school garden, backyard farming, and cooking programs for all ages to provide hands-on education and training on food production and nutrition as well as direct access to fresh produce.
6. Create a new paradigm for education in San Diego that reflects both the ethnic diversity of the region and new learning strategies.
7. Link more K-12 education programs to university and charter school models.





Desert



Mountains



Coast

Conclusion

To be a Sustainable Paradise, we envision a San Diego and Tijuana region that is made up of uniquely designed urban centers laced with extensive natural open spaces and pristine beaches. Planning will be a cooperative undertaking throughout the bi-national region for both urban design and environmental management. Our region will be crime free—with integrated economies that benefit both sides of the border.

The San Diego region will continue as one of the great natural regions of North America designed around an open space network that features our bay fronts and sea-shore, linked recreational and ecological preserves, and alternative modes of transportation. Green fingers of parks and open space will define individual neighborhoods, towns, and cities.

Each community will have its own center, character, and sense of place. Circulation within and to community centers from the surrounding neighborhoods will be planned to give highest priority to pedestrians and other non-motorized traffic, then to public transit, and finally to the automobile. Each community will have non-motorized access to the open space network. Communities will be linked by a transportation system that emphasizes fast, convenient public transit and deemphasizes individual automobiles. The transportation system will be designed to facilitate access for all to beaches and other recreational and cultural activities.

Landscaping standards that are appropriate for our regional climate and rainfall will be maintained throughout the region. In addition to the two major metropolitan areas, downtown San Diego and downtown Tijuana, the region will also support other distinct urban centers with an assortment of cultural, commercial, residential, and entertainment developments. Downtown San Diego will be physically and visually open to the waterfront, which will be linked to Balboa Park, its great center city and cultural park assets. Commercial and industrial neighborhoods will be efficiently served by public transit.

The regional housing stock will be highly diverse both as to location and type, offering wide choice and unrestricted access to a culturally and ethnically diverse population at various stages of life. Good schools will be available to all segments of the population, regardless of where they live.

The region's economy will maintain stability, full employment, and prosperity by continually strengthening its base. This includes being a center for high-technology; diversified and environmentally sustainable industries; major Navy and Marine Corps bases, world-class tourist attractions, major higher education facilities, and agriculture.

Our vision is one for long-term sustainability built on the natural resources of the region, climate, and location along the border with Mexico, and most importantly our diverse population.



Sustainability Starts with You: How You Can Shape Your Region

You and Your Family: Consider how each of our independent actions combines to affect our global world. Act with a sense of stewardship. Look for ways to be “green” – conserve, compost, catch water; reduce, reuse, and recycle; and practice conscious consumerism. Drive less, walk or bike more. Lead by example. Support leaders with a community-based vision for future smart growth. Get involved early in comprehensive community planning. Attend community meetings and public hearings to show your support for sustainable development—compact, mixed-use development that is integrated with the transportation system and that fits in with the neighborhood character.

Community Leaders/Community Organizations: Learn more about sustainable development and help spread the word. Urge local leaders to create a community-based vision for future smart growth. Voice your support for compact, mixed-use development that serves as a catalyst for the community and provides a variety of housing choices including affordable housing.

Elected Officials: Work to ensure that the regulatory climate is aligned with sustainable, smart growth principles. Foster a political climate of collaboration, not competition. Help educate those you represent about the benefits of sustainable development. Lead the charge for comprehensive community planning updates and a shared public vision of how our region will grow into the future.







Acknowledgments

C3 thanks all those who contributed their time, energy and vision to this effort.

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