

2021 Regional Plan
Programs and Policies

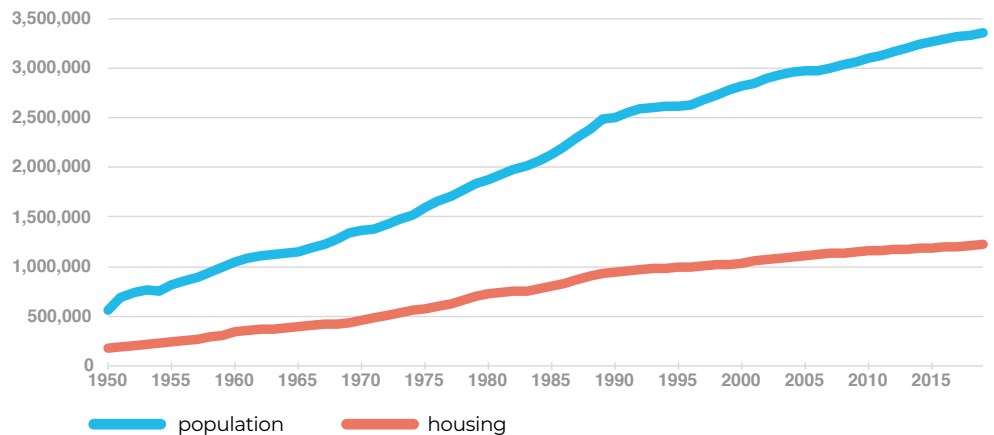
HOUSING

The State of California faces a persistent housing crisis, and San Diego County is no exception. More than 70% of San Diegans say housing affordability is a big problem across the region, especially for low-income families and younger residents.

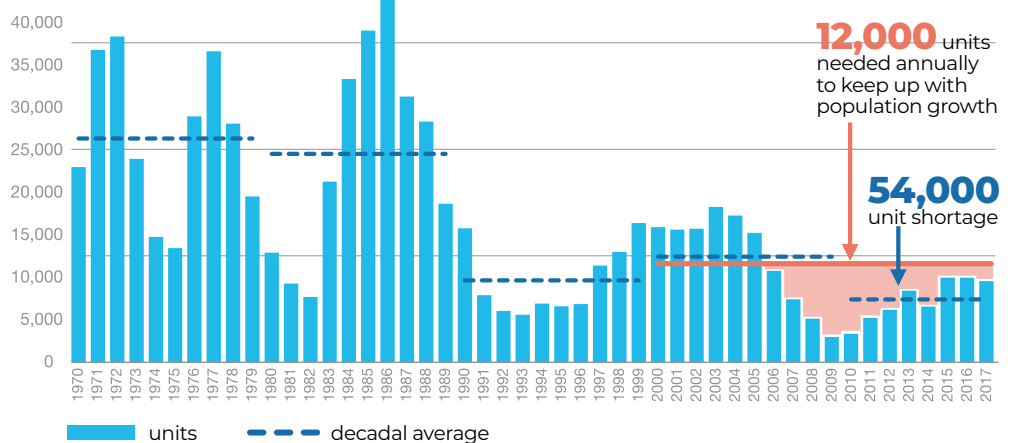
Addressing housing availability and affordability requires action at the local, regional, and state levels. For example, cities in the San Diego region have taken steps to increase affordable housing by making the development process faster and easier. The State of California offers grants to accelerate the production of housing and approves legislation that allows for more types of homes, like accessory dwelling units (see below), to be built statewide. Regionally, government agencies are considering how to better align housing policies with transportation initiatives because both contribute substantially to the region's cost of living.

Through implementation of the 5 Big Moves, the transportation system envisioned for the 2021 Regional Plan will bring more mobility options to where people live. The 2021 Regional Plan will also include policies to encourage new housing in Mobility Hubs, which are places of connectivity where a variety of transit and Flexible Fleet options come together.

San Diego region's growth in population and homes, 1950–2019



Number of new building permits issued in the San Diego region, 1970–2017



What are some strategies to increase housing availability and affordability?

Minimum zoning near transit: Zoning requirements dictate the types of structures that can be built on a parcel of land and establish development standards such as height limit, unit size, and density. Cities and counties can establish minimum zoning requirements near high-quality transit services that result in an increase in housing near transit. This locates residents near non-car transportation options, which can help reduce the number of miles that San Diegans drive. To encourage more transit use, cities and counties can also waive or lower parking requirements for housing near transit.

Permit process streamlining: Clear guidelines and permit processes for housing developers can reduce the cost and time it takes to build housing. Cities and counties can streamline the process by providing faster review for affordable housing, development that is consistent with the zoning code, and development that meets the design standards for the area.

Fee-waiver program: Cities and counties charge developers fees to cover the cost of providing water, sewer, street maintenance, and other services associated with new housing. Cities and counties can establish a program to waive some or all of these fees if developers build additional affordable units in their housing projects.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs): ADUs—also known as granny flats, in-law units, or backyard cottages—are housing units on the property of a primary house. California Assembly Bill 881 (Bloom) and California Assembly Bill 671 (Friedman), both passed in 2019, require cities and counties to adopt an ADU policy that makes it easier for families to build these units.

Leveraging public land for affordable housing: Surplus and underused land owned by the federal, state, and local governments (as well as other public agencies, such as transit operators) can be leveraged to support affordable housing development. Government agencies can allow residential units to be built on surplus land or use the revenue from selling surplus land to fund affordable housing elsewhere. California Assembly Bill 1255 (Rivas) and California Senate Bill 6 (Beall), both passed in 2019, require state and local government entities to publish an inventory of surplus land in local and statewide databases. Local governments can adopt policies that make it a priority to use these lands for affordable housing.

What should I know about regional housing needs?

The Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) is mandated by state law. The RHNA process identifies how much housing the region needs—currently and in the future—to meet projected increases in population and the size of individual households. SANDAG is overseeing the sixth RHNA cycle. On November 22, 2019, the SANDAG Board of Directors approved the final methodology for allocating housing units to each city and county in the region based on the transit and jobs in each jurisdiction. Jurisdictions have until April 2021 to update their general plans to show how and where their city can accommodate the housing units allocated through the RHNA process.

What does SANDAG do?

- Develops and offers technical resources to support cities and the county with updating their general plans to accommodate housing growth
- Provides transportation infrastructure and planning grants in areas with access to transit
- Creates a collaborative forum for sharing resources, successful strategies, and best practices

Resources

Affordable Housing Regulations and Expedite Program
sandiego.gov/development-services/news-programs/ahrep

Accessory Dwelling Units
hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/AccessoryDwellingUnits.shtml

Regional Housing Needs Assessment 6th Cycle
sandag.org/RHNA

Local Early Action Planning (LEAP) Grants
hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/active-funding/leap.shtml

Senate Bill 2 Planning Grants
hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/active-funding/planning-grants.shtml

San Diego Housing Commission
sdhc.org

San Diego Housing Federation
housingsandiego.org