

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## BACKGROUND

During the next 30 years, San Diego County is expected to grow by more than one million people, bringing the total population to almost four million. Many of these people will be our children and grandchildren. Where will they live? Where will they work? And what will the region around them be like?



The region's 19 local governments, working under the umbrella of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), have developed a plan to address our region's projected population growth. The goal is to ensure a high quality of life for ourselves and our future generations — to work toward a society that has resolved its housing shortage, transportation problems, and energy issues, and provides healthy, desirable environments for people and nature.

## MANDATE ON MONITORING RCP PERFORMANCE

Thousands of people collaborated to produce the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) over a nearly two-year period. Individuals, stakeholders, planning directors, public works directors, city managers, community-based organizations, elected officials, and representatives from tribal governments, state and federal agencies, neighboring counties, and the Republic of Mexico all contributed to the plan's formation. The RCP was adopted by the SANDAG Board in July of 2004.

The result is a consensus statement of the region's vision, core values, key issues, goals, objectives, and needed actions. It is a comprehensive summary of where we are today, where we want to be tomorrow, and what we need to do to get there.



But how will we track our progress? In many cases, we are talking about making major changes in our current ways of doing business, looking out 30 years and beyond. Many of the actions and paradigm shifts discussed in the plan may take years to develop, fund, and implement. Some short-term impacts are likely to be subtle. Some will be more noticeable. Over time, however, smart decisions and the cumulative effects of our actions will result in the future that the plan envisions.

Monitoring our progress is not just a good idea, it's a legal requirement. Assembly Bill 361 (Kehe) was signed into law in September 2003. It declares that the intent of the legislature is that SANDAG shall "complete the public process of preparing and adopting a regional comprehensive plan...by June 30, 2004." And it contains specific language regarding monitoring:

*"To ensure that the vision and goals of the regional comprehensive plan are implemented, the consolidated agency [SANDAG] must monitor its progress through realistic measurable standards and criteria, which must be included in the regional comprehensive plan itself and made available to the public."*

## **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

Because of the wide range of actions included in the RCP, participants developed a list of "Strategic Initiatives," that is, sets of priority actions to be undertaken by various groups to implement the recommended actions and concepts in the adopted plan. The Strategic Initiatives allow for the recommended actions to be organized into manageable units of work and prioritized by timeframe, helping ensure implementation.

Several "Early Actions" were included in the list. These are actions that were underway prior to adoption of the RCP in July 2004, or were expected to be initiated immediately after adoption. All of the "Early Actions" identified have been initiated and include:

- Preparation of a Smart Growth Concept Map
- Development of a regional funding program for MOBILITY 2030 (*TransNet*)
- Evaluation of the use of transportation impact funding
- Adoption of updated Regional Housing Needs Assessment
- Development of a regional habitat funding program

Many other Strategic Initiatives are underway or are planned to be undertaken in this fiscal year. Further discussion on efforts underway is included in the conclusion of the various sections of this report.

## **WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE**

As a region, we should provide enough homes to meet the demand created by projected job and population growth. The RCP recognizes that local land use plans, if left unchanged, do not provide enough capacity to meet the region's projected housing needs over time. If housing capacities in key locations of our more urbanized areas are not increased, more San Diego workers will live in surrounding areas including Riverside and Imperial Counties and Baja California. The result for our region will be a continued housing crisis and worsening traffic. Furthermore, the RCP calls for the San Diego region to take more responsibility for its own housing needs and create additional housing and mixed use capacity in appropriate locations.

The major challenges before us are how to intelligently use the small amount of remaining undeveloped land designated for residential development, how to protect our natural

environment, how to maximize urban redevelopment and infill opportunities, and how to coordinate these revitalization efforts with our current and future transportation networks, maximizing mobility within our region.

From an economic perspective, the RCP calls for creating opportunities for an improving standard of living. This report indicates that while our workforce is increasingly well-educated, job growth in the region has been concentrated in low wage industries. And, overall, our region's standard of living is growing very slowly and we have not made progress on reducing poverty.

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

Based on the data collected for this Baseline Report, some highlights become apparent both positive and in areas where improvement is needed.

### *Moving in the right direction*

- Nearly one-third of new housing units built in 2005 were in Smart Growth Opportunity Areas
- Ninety nine percent of new housing units built in the region in 2005 are located within the San Diego County Water Authority service area.
- Growth in transit ridership has outpaced population growth
- Crime has decreased
- Beach closures have declined
- Air quality has improved
- The share of the region's energy produced from renewable resources has increased significantly

### *Areas for improvement*

- The region continues to experience a serious housing affordability problem
- Congestion on most roads and freeways has increased over the last ten years as have total hours of delay per traveler
- Many waterbodies have some degree of impairment
- Several beaches are losing sand
- Job growth in the region has been concentrated in low-wage industries

Many of the actions and paradigm shifts discussed in the Regional Comprehensive Plan may take years to develop, fund, and implement. Some short-term impacts are likely to be subtle, though some will be more noticeable. This baseline report will serve as the benchmark for monitoring progress. If progress is not made over time, SANDAG, through its policy committees or the Board may wish to re-evaluate the strategies and actions recommended in the RCP.