Regional Comprehensive Plan
for the San Diego Region

Executive Summary

Final
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President Abraham Lincoln said, “You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.” As citizens of the greater San Diego region, we all share the responsibility for tomorrow. But what should that tomorrow look like? Many would say: less traffic, more home ownership, great schools, convenient transit, more and better paying jobs, clean air and water, pristine open space, and a higher standard of living.

These are lofty goals that will require bold actions and serious commitment to upholding effective public policies, adjusting our course where needed, and taking risks in the creation of new programs. The rewards of such efforts can be great. A regional approach, made possible through local commitment and actions, will make a significant difference in our quality of life for generations to come.

A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL ACTION

The Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) is the strategic planning framework for the San Diego region. It creates a regional vision. It provides a broad context in which local and regional decisions can be made that foster a healthy environment, a vibrant economy, and a high quality of life for all residents. It balances regional population, housing, and employment growth with habitat preservation, agriculture, open space, and infrastructure needs. It moves us toward a sustainable future — a future with more choices and opportunities for all residents.

True to its name, the RCP is comprehensive in its scope. It looks beyond our borders and considers the planning and growth underway in Imperial, Orange, and Riverside Counties as well as in Baja California, Mexico. It sheds new light on equity — and inequities — in our planning processes by asking: do all communities have access to the region’s resources and do all residents have an equal opportunity to participate in the process?

Today, each city and community in the region makes its own decisions regarding land use. The RCP looks at these individual decisions as a whole; assesses their collective impacts; and examines cumulative development trends well into the future. The RCP builds upon the best elements of our existing local general plans and regional infrastructure plans and provides a blueprint for where and how we want to grow. Perhaps more importantly, the RCP identifies challenges that we face as a region and offers guidance toward making better choices, both individually and together, providing an alternative to where we could end up if we continue with business as usual.
A SHARED VISION OF THE FUTURE

The RCP was crafted by citizens and representatives from the region's 18 cities and county government, working together as the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). The plan was founded on the ideas of thousands of people including residents, business owners, and local public officials. Together, they endorsed the following vision statement for the RCP:

“To preserve and enhance the San Diego region’s unique features – its vibrant and culturally-diverse communities, its beaches, deserts, mountains, lagoons, bluffs, and canyons, and its international setting – and promote sustainability, economic prosperity, and an outstanding quality of life for everyone.”

Citizens also helped articulate a series of Core Values, referenced throughout the RCP, which are the foundation for its policies and recommended actions. The policy recommendations are heavily shaped by principles of “sustainability” and “smart growth.”

Sustainability means meeting our current economic, environmental, and community needs while also ensuring that we aren’t jeopardizing the ability of future generations to do the same. Sustainability also means making a regional commitment to the “Three Es:” economy, environment, and equity — advancing a prosperous economy, supporting a healthy environment, and promoting social equity.

Smart growth means developing the region in a way that creates communities with more housing and transportation choices, better access to jobs, more public spaces, and more open space preservation. Smart growth more closely links jobs and housing, provides more urban public facilities such as parks and police stations, makes our neighborhoods more walkable, and places more jobs and housing near transit. It reduces land consumption in our rural and agricultural areas, and spurs reinvestment in our existing communities.

More and more, local officials are incorporating these principles of smart growth and sustainability into their general plans and policy documents. That’s good news, because our quality of life tomorrow will be determined, in large measure, by the extent to which we implement these concepts today.

OUR CURRENT PATH

The San Diego region has changed dramatically during the last hundred years. Our regional population today of three million is roughly equal to the population of the entire state of California a century ago. The region’s growth has fluctuated during economic cycles, but increased the most rapidly in the last 30 years. This is illustrated by the fact that 62 percent of the homes in the region were built after 1970.
As the numbers of folks have increased, the face of our population has changed, as well. Today our regional population is older and much more ethnically diverse. Consequently, the way we live is changing. Empty nesters are trading large homes in the suburbs for condominiums in vibrant urban neighborhoods. More households are made up of single parents with children. Different lifestyles demand different housing solutions.

SANDAG projections indicate that our regional population will increase by approximately one million people between 2000 and 2030. Although our actual rate of growth is slowing, and that trend will continue during the next several decades, we face the challenge of providing housing for a growing and diverse population at the same time the region is running out of open land for new development. Under current plans and policies, more than 90 percent of our remaining vacant land designated for housing is planned for densities of less than one home per acre, and most is in the rural back country areas dependent upon scarce groundwater supplies. And of the remaining vacant land planned for housing in the 18 incorporated cities, only about seven percent is planned for multifamily housing.

When taken together, the current land use plans of the 19 local jurisdictions do not accommodate the amount of growth anticipated in our region. SANDAG’s population forecast, which reflects the current adopted local land use plans in the region, projects that while population will increase by 37 percent by 2030, housing will grow by just 30 percent. The forecast shows that if local plans are not changed, demand for housing will continue to outpace the supply, just as it does today.

As a result, home prices will continue to skyrocket, forcing many to abandon their dreams of home ownership or move to neighboring areas with less expensive housing costs. These people, who teach our children, police our neighborhoods, and bag our groceries, often become long-distance commuters, and with few transit options, our freeways become more and more congested. The result for our region will be an ongoing housing crisis and worsening traffic.

**Future Outcomes If Local Plans Are Left Unchanged**

- **Reduced open space.** Current plans would consume far more land than a smart growth development pattern. Smart growth emphasizes more redevelopment and infill in existing urbanized areas near transit and activity centers such as downtowns and shopping areas, and more mixed use and compact development in currently-vacant areas that are planned for residential uses.

- **More expensive housing and fewer types of housing choices.** On average, current densities in the cities and urbanized unincorporated areas are relatively low, and planned densities on currently-vacant land are even lower. This pattern limits our ability to address our projected housing needs, and pushes up housing costs.

- **Imbalance between housing and jobs.** Jobs are a key driver of population growth. Current local general plans allow for more growth in jobs than housing. Additionally, local plans largely separate residential areas from job centers, which increase traffic.

- **Environmental degradation.** An imbalance between jobs and housing leads to more and longer commutes, and increased energy consumption. It also affects development patterns within our watersheds which increases urban runoff, and in turn, affects the quality of both our drinking water and our water bodies.
A BETTER APPROACH TO PLANNING

The Regional Comprehensive Plan establishes a new approach to planning in the San Diego region. This approach is based upon:

- A planning framework that parallels those used by cities and counties in preparing their general plans, and thereby strengthens the coordination of local and regional plans and programs; and

- A policy approach that focuses on connecting local and regional transportation and land use plans, and creating incentives that encourage “smart growth” planning and actions.

The Preferred Planning Concept

To remedy our housing and transportation challenges, and to help preserve more open space that would otherwise be developed, the San Diego region needs new planning approaches based on shared goals and objectives. Therefore, the RCP calls for a preferred planning concept that focuses on:

1. Improving connections between land use and transportation plans using smart growth principles;
2. Using land use and transportation plans to guide decisions regarding environmental and public facility investments; and
3. Focusing on collaboration and incentives to achieve regional goals and objectives.

As stated above, the first major emphasis of the RCP is on improving connections between land use and transportation. In this vein, a key recommendation of the RCP is to identify Smart Growth Opportunity Areas — areas where compact, mixed use, pedestrian-oriented development either exists now, is currently planned, or has the potential for future incorporation into local land use plans — and place a higher priority on directing transportation facility improvements and other infrastructure resources toward these areas.
When it comes to transportation funding and smart growth, the RCP directs SANDAG to put its money where its mouth is — to use regional transportation funding as an incentive for local agencies and service providers to make land use decisions and infrastructure investments that support smart growth.

The second emphasis area is on using land use and transportation to guide other plans. The designation of specific Smart Growth Opportunity Areas in the RCP will provide guidance to local governments, property owners, and service providers as to where smart growth development should occur from a regional perspective. It will focus attention on these areas as local jurisdictions update their general plans and redevelopment plans, and service providers update their facility master plans. By coordinating our planning in this manner, we will ensure that public and private investment in local and regional infrastructure is implemented in an efficient and sustainable manner.

The RCP implementation approach, which focuses on collaboration and incentives, springs from the local level to a regional framework, and calls for:

- Updating SANDAG’s transportation project evaluation criteria to better reflect the transportation and land use objectives of the RCP;
- Providing funding and other incentives for smart growth development in key areas throughout the region; and
- Placing a greater emphasis on subregional planning and implementation programs.

**HOW IS THE RCP ORGANIZED?**

The various chapters of the RCP address each of the major elements of planning for our region: urban form, transportation, housing, healthy environment, economic prosperity, public facilities, and borders issues. Each chapter begins with a vision for the San Diego region in 2030 and includes a description of existing conditions, existing plans and programs, an analysis of key issues, and recommended goals, policy objectives, and actions.

These chapters, along with the RCP’s Integrated Regional Infrastructure Strategy (IRIS), a regional smart growth investment and financing strategy, form the core of the Regional Comprehensive Plan.
This map portrays the connections between planned land uses, transportation systems, and open space. The challenge is to plan for smart growth in the areas shown in yellow, and connect them to existing and future transportation networks and public facilities.
URBAN FORM:
WHERE AND HOW SHOULD THE REGION GROW?

Where should we provide places in our region for people to live, work, shop, and play as our population continues to grow? How should we design our communities so that they provide us with a high quality of life? Will the impacts of future growth overwhelm the natural beauty of our environment?

Previous studies have demonstrated that the way land has been developed in the region during the past half century cannot be sustained as the region continues to grow. Dispersed, low density housing separated from auto-oriented commercial development pushes urban development into areas better suited for rural land uses and regional open space.

As homes and jobs are more dispersed and trips become longer, it is more difficult to travel any other way but in a car. Alternatives like transit and carpooling work best where urban land uses are focused along corridors conveniently close to transit stations or park and ride lots. Bicycling and walking are practical alternatives only when the distances are relatively short between shops, jobs, school, or services, or when they can be easily combined with transit.

While a significant number of the region’s population will continue to live in traditional suburban residential communities, more choices in both housing type and location are necessary to meet our mobility and housing needs. A better mix of jobs and housing, and better access to jobs are needed at both the regional and interregional levels. In particular, we need to reduce the number of lengthy commute trips across the region and across our borders every day.

Designing Livable Places

A strong sense of community identity in a vibrant and diverse urban landscape is the hallmark of livable places. While there is no simple formula for good urban design, a number of important design elements make a community work. Good design reflects the unique character of the community.

It enhances the identity of the community by improving existing public facilities and providing high quality design in new facilities. It takes advantage of the region’s remarkable climate by creating efficient, ecologically-friendly buildings, and encourages an active, healthy lifestyle. Over-dependence on the automobile results in communities that are dominated by the infrastructure necessary to accommodate the car. Healthy communities support a variety of transportation choices. How we design our transportation facilities plays a key role in determining the scale, walkability, and ultimately, the livability of our communities.
Coordinating Transportation and Land Use

SANDAG uses land use and urban design factors in its funding criteria for highways, transit, and regional arterials. The RCP strengthens that approach by including a process for identifying “Smart Growth Opportunity Areas,” and the use of transportation infrastructure funding to encourage development in these areas.

The first step toward focusing SANDAG’s infrastructure investments in support of smart growth is to identify the location of existing and potential smart growth areas. Because the San Diego region is so diverse, the character of smart growth opportunity areas will vary depending on the particular setting. Smart growth in downtown San Diego is different from that in downtown Escondido, which in turn is different from that in Ramona. Smart growth areas should reflect and enhance the special and unique features of our neighborhoods. And, although it is not a “one size fits all” approach, some general principles apply.

Under adopted SANDAG principles, smart growth areas are pedestrian-friendly activity centers that are connected to other activity centers by transit or could be in the future. The RCP identifies seven smart growth categories in the San Diego region:

- Metropolitan Center
- Urban Center
- Town Center
- Community Center
- Transit Corridor
- Special Use Center
- Rural Community

Some communities already demonstrate many smart growth principles, while others need changes to general plans and zoning ordinances, as well as infrastructure improvements, to realize their potential.

Of particular importance is the kind of public transit service provided in each type of smart growth area. Public transit needs to be coordinated with land uses because the two depend on one another. Rural communities represent a unique type of smart growth. Because they are remote from the urbanized areas of the region, transit generally cannot play as significant a role in meeting their travel needs. Nevertheless, rural communities can contribute to the region’s urban form goals because they can provide a focal point for commercial and civic uses that can serve surrounding rural areas. Additionally, they can focus development closer to the village core, helping relieve pressure for development in outlying areas and preserve open space.

The seven categories provide a basis for identifying Smart Growth Opportunity Areas throughout the region. Through a collaborative process, SANDAG and the local agencies will designate these areas on a Smart Growth Concept Map. The concept map will be used as a planning tool to communicate with local jurisdictions and infrastructure providers about where smart growth will happen.
Providing Incentives for Smart Growth

The RCP proposes several new funding strategies to help guide the region's urban form and provide incentives to implement Smart Growth Opportunity Areas. The planning concepts, funding strategies, and development priorities proposed in the RCP in many ways revolutionize today's planning processes.

Regional Transportation Network Priorities Based on Smart Growth. As the region's primary agency responsible for transportation funding, SANDAG has the greatest opportunity to provide incentives for smart growth development. Decisions regarding priorities for future regional transit, arterial, and highway corridor projects should be based, in part, on how well local communities have planned for smart growth land uses that increase mobility.

Direct Financial Incentives for Smart Growth. Smart growth development, particularly in redeveloping areas, can require significant upfront investments in infrastructure other than regional transportation facilities. In response to this need, the Smart Growth Incentive Program recommended in MOBILITY 2030, the adopted Regional Transportation Plan, serves as a five-year, $25 million pilot program to help local agencies fund the planning and infrastructure necessary to develop communities that meet the region's urban form goals. The program will invest in those areas of the region where local jurisdictions make clear commitments to implement the RCP's smart growth principles as reflected in existing or revised land use plans, and ultimately measured by actual on-the-ground projects.

Establishing an ongoing incentive program will require a long-term funding source like the Smart Growth Incentive Program included in the TransNet Extension ordinance, a proposed 40-year extension to the existing ½-cent sales tax that funds a wide range of transportation projects in the region.

Local Incentives for Smart Growth. The RCP encourages local jurisdictions to provide other incentives, such as permit streamlining, reduced parking standards, flexibility for mixed use development, increased densities, and fee reductions that promote redevelopment, infill development, and affordable housing development, particularly in Smart Growth Opportunity Areas. The RCP calls for rewarding local jurisdictions that provide smart growth incentives with higher priority for receiving regional incentives.
TRANSPORTATION:
MOVING PEOPLE AND GOODS

Our current regional transportation system will not meet the needs of a growing and mobile population.

Land use decisions and development patterns affect the region’s transportation systems and the travel choices people make. The location of where homes and businesses are built and the intensity of these land uses directly affect local roads and transit services as well as freeway and rail efficiency. Too often, local land use decisions do not include transit needs with the typical road improvements required of new development.

It’s time for a change.

MOBILITY 2030, SANDAG’s regional transportation plan, serves as the primary transportation element of the RCP, and helps position the region to achieve smarter, more sustainable growth.

But the implementation of MOBILITY 2030 requires local and regional land use agencies to work together to create more mixed use neighborhood and community centers that encourage transportation choices to reach jobs and services, including walking, bicycling, transit, and carpooling.

MOBILITY 2030 plays a key role in implementing the RCP. During the next three decades, SANDAG is expected to allocate more than $42 billion of transportation investments. The RCP calls upon SANDAG to update the Regional Transportation Plan and related programming documents in a way that maximizes opportunities for local jurisdictions to implement smart growth. At the same time, it calls for SANDAG to do its part by ensuring that the design and implementation of its regional transportation facilities support local smart growth.

Within this context, the Transportation chapter includes a variety of recommended actions to improve our mobility network, not the least of which is securing needed funding. It also calls for increasing the use of Transportation Demand Management programs, preparing new subregional transportation and land use studies, identifying priority transportation corridors for investment, incorporating pedestrian and bicycle access into urban design and development plans, and finalizing a regional airport solution with strong, multi-modal access. MOBILITY 2030 and the RCP go hand in hand, with updates to one setting the stage for updates and improvements to the other.
HOUSING: PROVIDING HOMES FOR ALL RESIDENTS

The San Diego region is in the midst of a housing crisis. Our region is regularly ranked as one of the areas with the highest priced and least affordable housing in the nation. The costs of renting or owning a home have risen dramatically during the past ten years.

Where and how housing is built are two of the most important decisions jurisdictions can make in shaping our region’s future. Currently, the San Diego region is not planning for or building the amount or type of housing necessary to meet the existing and future needs of its growing population or to accommodate its changing demographics. Adding to the lack of housing capacity is the fact that not all of the planned land supply and densities reflected in existing plans are likely to be developed due to a variety of factors including owners unwilling to sell, community opposition, environmental constraints, and lack of infrastructure or funding for infrastructure.

In addition to our future housing need, the region also has an existing unmet housing need. We have not been building enough housing to keep up with our population and job growth, and the housing we have been building is largely unaffordable to lower income households. This existing shortage forces many families, especially lower income families, to spend more than they can afford on housing, live in overcrowded or substandard housing, and/or move to and commute from neighboring regions.

The region is beginning to address its housing needs by implementing smart growth projects. Smart growth development is underway in communities throughout the region with small lot single family homes, townhomes, condominiums, and apartments offering homeownership or rental opportunities for residents close to shopping, schools, services, and planned transit. Additionally, older shopping centers, business complexes, and blighted areas are being redeveloped into attractive mixed use and housing projects. But much stronger commitments to smart growth, redevelopment, and infill are needed throughout the region.

While smart growth discussions often focus on redevelopment and infill in our existing urban areas, it is important to note there are also opportunities for smart growth development on our remaining vacant land. New suburban communities can be built so that they are more compact, walkable, and transit-accessible. By rezoning certain vacant land at higher densities, land can be used more efficiently, making it easier to include affordable and mixed use housing in new developments, while also preserving open space.

The RCP calls for a number of coordinated actions to give the region’s residents more housing choices – more apartments, condominiums, and single family homes in all price ranges, affordable to persons of all income levels, and accessible to persons of all abilities. The RCP advocates for locating additional housing choices in our urban communities close to jobs and transit to help
conserve our open space and rural areas, reinvigorate our existing neighborhoods, and lessen projected levels of interregional commuting.

The Housing chapter recommends the use of tools such as incentives, infill development, rezoning, rehabilitation, sustainable or “green” building techniques, inclusionary housing measures, rental assistance, replacement housing, and expedited permit processing to increase and diversify our region’s housing supply and to achieve smarter growth. It also calls for regional transportation incentives to be directed to local jurisdictions that provide affordable housing and other housing choices in smart growth opportunity areas.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT: ENHANCING OUR NATURAL HABITATS, AIR, WATER, AND BEACHES

San Diegans share a strong attachment to our regional landscape. When asked what they like most about San Diego, natives and newcomers alike consistently cite the enviable climate, beaches, bays, urban canyons, local mountains, and deserts.

To protect these special places and foster a healthy environment, the region must protect key open spaces and sensitive habitat areas, ensure that the air and water are clean, and restore eroding beaches.

To balance the need for development and sensitive lands conservation, our local jurisdictions have adopted regional habitat conservation plans and subarea plans. These play an important role in defining areas where development is appropriate. Also important to our healthy environment is urban ecology: those natural areas that remain in or around urbanized areas.

Clean air and water, viable natural habitats, and a well-managed shoreline are critical components to the health and well being of our residents. They also are critical to the overall economic prosperity of our region.

A number of activities in recent years have cleaned up our water, improved our air quality, and preserved open space. However, much more needs to be done. Sewage spills still occur, polluted runoff still flows into the ocean, and our open space is threatened. As a region, we must increase our commitment to improving these resources. Just like urban infrastructure, our natural resources require funding as well as a commitment from residents, and local, state, and federal agencies.

The Healthy Environment chapter identifies funding opportunities, details actions, and outlines how agencies and communities can work together to preserve and improve the environment. Among many recommendations, the plan calls for linking habitat corridors within San Diego County with surrounding counties and Mexico to create interregional and international preserve systems; securing a reliable funding source to ensure development and implementation of comprehensive regional storm water plans and programs; and preparing and implementing conservation plans for nearshore areas.
ECONOMIC PROSPERITY:
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR AN IMPROVING STANDARD OF LIVING

Our economy functions within a regional and global economic setting. The San Diego-Baja California binational region faces increasing domestic and global competition. Many people are aware of globalization; however, few understand that regionalization or the increasing importance of regional economies is the other side of the coin. In economic terms, our region is directly connected to the greater Los Angeles area and Baja California, Mexico, which are our gateways to the domestic and international marketplaces. Access to international markets is critical for the economic prosperity of the region. To the south, we depend on Baja California for an important part of our labor pool. Southwestern Riverside County also is becoming an increasingly important source of labor and an alternative housing choice for many.

Our region and its workforce are ideally situated to benefit from this economic landscape. One way to increase the region’s competitiveness is to encourage collaborative efforts by private-sector organizations and government agencies responsible for maintaining and improving the region's access to domestic and international markets.

The adopted SANDAG Regional Economic Prosperity Strategy serves as the primary economic element of the Regional Comprehensive Plan. The Strategy’s recommended actions call for infrastructure investment and public policy support in key areas to strengthen the region's economic foundation. The Strategy makes the connections among a strong economy and sufficient land for jobs and housing, a superior infrastructure system to support business and industry, and an education system that prepares residents to succeed in the workforce.

The Regional Economic Prosperity Strategy calls for retaining and expanding local businesses, creating more well-paying jobs, and preparing our residents to fill these jobs. The primary goal is to increase, through these jobs, personal income, and thus raise the standard of living for all of the region’s residents. Rising incomes are part of the solution to making housing more affordable.

Other actions outlined in the Economic Prosperity chapter include attracting venture capital to retain and attract industries that will produce more high-quality jobs in the region; providing infrastructure that enables emerging technologies and existing businesses that provide high-quality jobs to flourish; and implementing a consensus-based state-local fiscal reform proposal that provides financial incentives to local jurisdictions to increase the supply and affordability of housing and helps achieve the smart growth goals of the RCP.
PUBLIC FACILITIES: STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF OUR COMMUNITIES

Most of us give little thought to the origins of the water that flows from our faucets, or to the final destination of the trash that disappears from our curbsides. Similarly, many of us are not very familiar with how our schools, parks, libraries, hospitals, and police stations are provided; yet, we consider these public facilities essential to the quality of our daily lives.

A sometimes complicated mix of public agencies and funding sources are responsible for our public facilities and services. Residents require reliable supplies of water and energy, opportunities to reuse and recycle materials, and sufficient disposal options for waste. Therefore, it is imperative that these agencies coordinate efforts, achieve greater efficiencies, and have the resources necessary to provide public facilities that meet our current and future needs.

As a region, we can make more efficient use of finite resources. We can do this by locating public facilities where they will most effectively provide access and availability of needed services and protect public health and safety. At the same time, we need to ensure that lower income and minority communities are not disproportionately affected in a negative manner.

The RCP focuses on a number of key issues that relate to improving our public facilities infrastructure: meeting our regional water demand; diversifying our water sources; stabilizing the cost of energy; upgrading aging energy infrastructure; and dealing with dwindling landfill space.

The Public Facilities chapter calls for new policies and programs that, among many things, maximize water resources through diversification strategies such as transfer agreements, water recycling and reclamation, seawater desalination, and sustainable groundwater development; promote the local production of energy to reduce our dependence on imported energy; and encourage incentives for composting, recycling, and household hazardous waste collection programs.

The overall goal of the chapter is to ensure that the region provides public facilities that meet our current and future needs in a timely, efficient, and sustainable manner. Although the Public Facilities chapter primarily focuses on water supply, energy, and waste management, it also calls for the enhancement of important assets such as parks, libraries, police, fire, hospitals, and schools.
BORDERS:
FORGING A BETTER FUTURE WITH OUR NEIGHBORS

The RCP strives to create a regional community where San Diego County, our 18 local cities, three neighboring counties, 17 tribal governments, and northern Baja California, Mexico mutually benefit from our varied resources and international location.

To achieve that goal, the RCP calls for the coordination of shared infrastructure, efficient transportation systems, integrated environmental planning, and economic development with all of our regional neighbors. It recognizes that our region is a unique and dynamic place to live — one that embraces cultural diversity, promotes interregional understanding, and benefits from our varied history and experience.

Improving Access to Jobs and Housing

One of SANDAG’s most active programs is the state-funded I-15 Interregional Partnership, a voluntary partnership between elected officials representing communities along Interstate 15. Three regional government agencies, including SANDAG, the Southern California Association of Governments, and the Western Riverside Council of Governments, are working together to address the inaccessibility between jobs and housing that has caused increasing traffic congestion between San Diego and Riverside Counties. It has been a successful, ongoing collaborative effort. SANDAG is now considering a similar effort with Imperial County.

Along our international border, although struggling to meet its own demand for housing units, Tijuana is beginning to see San Diegans buying homes and crossing daily to work in San Diego. We must address both the issues of San Diegans migrating southward for affordable housing and the northward migration of Mexicans in search of work along the border. Similar to the partnership created with southwestern Riverside County, the RCP calls for developing a partnership with authorities in Mexico to address the issues surrounding jobs/housing accessibility in the binational region.

Enhancing Transportation Systems and Trade Routes

As growth continues in this region and the surrounding areas, maintaining major transportation systems will be an even greater challenge. Agencies must work together to provide reliable and efficient transportation systems associated with interregional commuting corridors, key trade corridors, tribal reservations, and ports of entry. The Borders chapter recognizes that the San Diego region needs support from its northern and eastern neighbors to acquire funding for trade corridor infrastructure in the international border zone.
Energy, Water Supply, and the Environment

Water, energy, and the environment are other key areas that span our regional, international, and intergovernmental borders. Policies and infrastructure are needed to meet binational, tribal reservation, and interregional long-term energy and water needs in a fiscally and environmentally sound manner. Maintaining habitat corridors, and improving air and water quality will contribute to a healthy binational and interregional environment.

Specifically, the Borders chapter calls for increasing the use of renewable energy resources throughout the binational and interregional region; coordinating long-term water planning with surrounding counties, Mexico, and tribal governments; and establishing a cross-border cooperative effort to protect border communities from potentially harmful environmental impacts of projects on either side of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Economic Development

Interregional partnerships can contribute significantly to the success of the Regional Economic Prosperity Strategy and position the greater binational and interregional area as a strong competitor in the global marketplace. Specific actions called for the in Borders chapter include supporting the I-15 Interregional Partnership’s economic development strategies; enacting policies and measures that promote economic development along the border in Mexico, such as the Maquiladora Program; and establishing a forum for increased communication with tribal governments regarding economic development.

Homeland Security

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, homeland security presents an increased challenge for our international border region. Local, state, and federal officials from both countries have been charged with keeping the nation secure while protecting the quality of life in the greater border region. European countries provide helpful models for maintaining security and fluidity in border areas. The Borders chapter outlines how improvements can be made to binational ports of entry through the application of new technologies and increased involvement of local agencies.

SOCIAL EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ASSESSMENT: FAIR PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL COMMUNITIES

Social equity and environmental justice considerations in the RCP focus on the goal that in the future, all communities should thrive as the region grows. Many communities have traditionally been left behind or excluded from the planning and development process, including low income and minority communities, persons with disabilities, and seniors.
Ensuring social equity does not necessarily guarantee equality — but it does mean giving every community an equal voice and opportunity. Social equity is providing all residents with access to affordable and safe housing, quality jobs, adequate infrastructure, and quality education. It means providing the opportunity for children and families of all races, abilities, and income levels to live in the best possible environment.

Environmental justice is an important component of social equity, and means that everyone, regardless of race, culture, or income, enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process.

The Social Equity and Environmental Justice chapter analyzes equity issues in the RCP, much like an environmental impact report, but with an emphasis on social impacts. We know from experience that regions grow healthier when all communities are strong, which is why social equity is one of the three “E”s of sustainability (equity, environment, and economy). Without it, the region cannot have true prosperity.

Equity considerations are especially important when discussing urban form (where and how our region grows). In the discussions of where the region should grow, the focus is often on the environmental consequences of development patterns, such as increased traffic, air pollution, loss of open space, and energy consumption. However, development patterns also have social and economic consequences. They can accelerate the decline of urban infrastructure, concentrate poverty in urban areas, create a spatial mismatch between urban workers and suburban job centers, and negatively affect public health.

The RCP identifies four key steps that must be taken to promote social equity and environmental justice in the San Diego region:

- Expand and enhance public involvement;
- Expand current analysis efforts to assess existing social equity and environmental justice conditions in the region;
- Evaluate future plans, programs, and projects; and
- Monitor the performance of the RCP.

Monitoring performance on a regional basis, identifying shortfalls, making improvements, and increasing access to the region’s resources and decision-making processes will result in a better quality of life for all residents.

INTEGRATED REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY: ENSURING THE FOUNDATION OF OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Demand for infrastructure is driven by population growth. How well the region responds to the challenges of our population growth will define our quality of life for decades to come. In drafting the RCP and its Integrated Regional Infrastructure Strategy (IRIS), SANDAG is developing a blueprint to help achieve the goal of responding to population growth and creating a sustainable region.
The IRIS outlines a forward-looking investment and financing strategy that will help the San Diego region meet its collective infrastructure needs. All infrastructure needs cannot be met immediately. Timing is the key to ensuring the adequacy of infrastructure services and funding. The IRIS recommends a phased approach. If our local and regional expenditures are working together toward a long-term goal, then we are making progress toward addressing our needs in an efficient and focused manner.

The IRIS focuses on eight important infrastructure areas:

- Transportation (including regional airport, maritime port, transit, highways, and international ports of entry)
- Water supply and delivery system
- Wastewater (sewage collection, treatment and discharge system)
- Storm water management
- Solid waste collection, recycling, and disposal
- Energy supply and delivery system
- Education (including elementary and secondary schools, community colleges, and universities)
- Parks and open space (including parks and recreation, shoreline preservation, and habitat preservation)

Over time, when the RCP goals and objectives are implemented, an increasing proportion of our region’s growth will occur as redevelopment and urban infill. To adequately prepare for this change, the urban form and design goals in the RCP need to be universally embraced to help ensure that infrastructure is in place prior to or concurrent with the land use decisions that implement the urban form goals.

Today, however, most infrastructure planning is done without a framework that would coordinate long-term visionary planning with short-term capital expenditures. Integration of long range planning with current expenditures should be the standard practice.

For example, implementation of the RTP requires an extension of the TransNet ½-cent sales tax program, and meeting the energy, water, and solid waste needs of the region will require additional levels of recycling and conservation beyond what occurs today. If these assumptions do not occur as hoped, the implementation of the strategic planning and capital budgeting may fail.

The IRIS recommends the following actions to help align our infrastructure plans and investments with our RCP goals and objectives:

1. Local jurisdictions, acting individually and collectively through SANDAG, should use funding for transportation projects to provide incentives for changes in land use to achieve the urban form and design goals of the RCP. This action provides a link to other infrastructure providers.
2. Infrastructure service providers should develop and implement strategic plans to bridge annual expenditures of a capital improvement program to long-term goals of a facilities master plan. The facility master plans of each infrastructure provider should be linked to each other and the RCP.

3. Local jurisdictions and service providers should formally establish procedures and mechanisms, such as memorandums of understanding (MOUs) or compacts, to coordinate planning and investment in regional infrastructure facilities to support the RCP.

As the San Diego region continues to change, we must regularly assess the ability of our infrastructure to keep pace and to maintain our quality of life.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

How will we track our progress? In many cases, the RCP calls for major changes in the 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.

The Performance Monitoring chapter contains a set of annual performance indicators to monitor the region’s progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the RCP. It also includes periodic indicators — indicators that may not be available on an annual basis but can provide relevant information for assessing the region’s quality of life.

A baseline monitoring report will be published to create a benchmark by which to measure future performance. Specific targets to be used as performance measures will be developed after the publication of the baseline monitoring report. Where possible, both a short-range target — probably five years — and a year 2030 target will be developed for each indicator. The baseline monitoring report will serve as a starting point, and subsequent annual reports will describe further progress.
TRANSLATING VISION INTO ACTION

The Implementation chapter focuses on two fundamental themes: collaboration and incentives. Building upon these themes, the heart of the chapter is a collection of "Strategic Initiatives" — an initial work program that organizes and prioritizes the recommended actions and concepts in each chapter of the RCP.

The RCP was not designed as a regulatory plan, but rather as a guidance plan. As such, the preferred implementation approach is that local and regional agencies incorporate the recommended policy objectives and actions into their local and regional plans as they update those plans. Updates to local and general plans will then be reflected in SANDAG’s regional growth forecast, the Regional Comprehensive Plan, and the Regional Transportation Plan. In other words, the implementation of the RCP will be a dynamic and iterative process.

The collaborative aspect of the implementation strategy includes:

- Strengthening the connection between local and regional land use and transportation plans;
- Creating subregional planning programs;
- Encouraging private sector participation; and
- Developing compacts or agreements between agencies within and across our borders.

The incentives aspect of the implementation strategy focuses on strengthening the link between smart growth land uses and transportation investments. Because SANDAG is the transportation planning and implementation agency for the San Diego region, the RCP calls for using regional transportation funds, in conjunction with local land use incentives, as catalysts to encourage smart growth development in key locations throughout the region. The application of incentives will take place under a three-pronged approach: developing a Smart Growth Concept Map that will serve as a planning tool to communicate where smart growth will happen; developing the smart growth incentive program and applying those incentives toward Smart Growth Opportunity Areas; and assembling an urban design "best practices" manual focused on smart growth development principles for use by local and regional agencies.

Other key implementation components of the RCP important across all areas of the plan are: public participation, social equity and environmental justice, intergovernmental review, performance monitoring, and analytical tools.

The RCP is unique in that it advocates for a collaborative, incentive-based, bottom-up approach to implementation. The plan will only succeed with strong partnerships that include local governments, public agencies at all levels, community interest groups, the private sector, and the public; and proposed timeframes in which to achieve the plan’s recommended actions.
CONCLUSION: MOVING FORWARD, TOGETHER

What does the RCP mean to you and me? On a more personal level, it will help us to breathe easier by promoting cleaner air. It may not be able to reduce traffic in the short run, but it will give us more ways to avoid it over the long haul by providing other travel options. It will give us more housing styles to choose from. It will give us more opportunities to live and work in the same neighborhood. By saving more land for habitat, the RCP will help us leave a greater legacy by safeguarding the future for our children and grandchildren.

Better connecting our land use and transportation plans is critical for our region to grow in a smarter, more sustainable way. The RCP provides a blueprint for coordinating transportation and other regional infrastructure investments, and directing these investments into Smart Growth Opportunity Areas identified in collaboration with local jurisdictions.

The Regional Comprehensive Plan will function as a “living” document, evolving over time as specific policies and programs are advanced. It will be updated every few years to reflect the region's accomplishments, add new topics that weren't included in this initial RCP, and address the region's changing needs.

Now and in the future, SANDAG welcomes your ideas into this dynamic and vital process.

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