



# The Regional Vision Initiative

The San Diego Foundation

“Onward to where?”

*Ted Geisel (Dr. Seuss), 1967 editorial cartoon, The Evening Tribune*

*Let's Imagine ...*



Understanding  
The San Diego Region

The San Diego Foundation

*We must understand. Then we can act.*



---

# Imagine

---

*“Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a nobler, logical diagram, once recorded, will never die ....”*

*Daniel Burnham (on the plan of Chicago), 1907*

Imagine San Diego in 2050 as a region embodying world-class quality of life. Stunning natural advantages, such as an idyllic climate and 70 miles of beaches, have been preserved and enhanced through long-term strategic planning. Development and environmental stewardship are not conflicting forces, but are united in the public interest.

How did this happen? Not through random chance, as citizens and elected leaders will agree, but as a direct result of an unprecedented visioning process begun in 2009 to dream of a uniquely livable region in 2060 and 2110 ... and deliberative decision-making that made every major threat and opportunity a means to move the region towards a wildly imaginative future.

This is a success story not writ often. Imagine ... and then join us in the process.

---

## The Need

---

- *“(A) question from my preacher father, then 95 years old, who visited San Diego, admired it, but kept asking me: ‘What is the purpose of this place?’*

Neil Morgan, speech to the San Diego Rotary Club 33,  
August 12, 2004

The need is clear and the time is now.

A long-term regional vision will provide a critical context within which to make decisions so important and so difficult they are often avoided. One need only think of our struggles with transit, smart growth, the airport, energy generation and transmission, water supply, and the port to see that we lack a fabric within which to weave a thread from “here” to “there.” Even major projects are stymied by a lack of agreement on whether these will lead us where we want to go. We do not know what we want our region to be, or if we want to make that journey.

Doing nothing will jeopardize our region and our quality of life. A regional vision will chart a path through fully satisfy threats, some of which have always been with us, others of which are unique to our era. Population growth, insufficient infrastructure and affordability are not new. But now they are yoked with climate change, global pandemics, fossil fuel depletion, and an inability to fully satisfy the world’s thirst and hunger. Doing nothing is simply not acceptable.

And what of opportunities we might seize to create an almost-unimaginable future? Creating industries that undo the impacts of industry; technologies that improve the course of human life; initiatives that create new global competitive advantages.

A regional vision to be developed 100 years after the first major plan for San Diego, near the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that great treasure, Balboa Park, in this new century of cascading change, will be a beacon to follow and a reason to hope.



---

# Why This Will be Different

---

Like many regions, San Diego has no lack of plans and visions. Yet clearly not one has been powerful enough to have endured or had major impact on policy decisions. Indeed, one of the most oft-repeated complaints in the region is, “a lack of vision.”

Why is this effort any more likely to succeed than so many others?

## **Ambitious Scope**

50- to 100-year time frame.

Truly regional (the issues will define the region)

## **Unique Integrated Approach**

Top-down, leadership-driven AND bottom-up, community engagement

All-inclusive and collaborative – genuine and encompassing public engagement from the outset

Neutral ownership/leadership (The San Diego Foundation)

**Built on History  
and Best Practices**

A compilation of San Diego plans and visions (100 years)

A study of other regions' successful (and failed) efforts

**Implementation  
Built-In**

The San Diego Foundation Center for Civic Engagement ...initially funded.



---

## What We Have Learned

---

Those efforts that have succeeded elsewhere have informed the Regional Vision Initiative for the San Diego region.

First, we know that there must be widespread public engagement reaching far beyond “the usual suspects.” A living, dynamic vision must reflect the will of all the people ... from our leaders to our most under-represented.

Second, we know that there must be an entity that “owns” the completed vision and ensures it will shape the future. An organization that is dedicated to linking the vision to public policy and planning decisions, as well as ongoing community engagement, will ensure that the result is not yet one more document that sits on a shelf.

Third, we know that there are national experts who have done this and can help, but that they must work hand-in-glove with local experts who understand our unique regional qualities. We will bring together the best of both.

We have learned that these things will lead to success – a better, brighter, inspiring place for people to live, work and play – for generations to come.

---

# Phase 1: Understanding the Will of the People and Structuring Inclusive Engagement

---

We will begin with a comprehensive values study to identify the issues of greatest interest, understand the underlying values of our diverse population, and know what will compel citizens to engage on a grand scale.

That study, consisting of survey research, in-depth interviews and much more, will be supplemented by more focused studies. Those will include population projections, resource studies and other tools that will help frame the ongoing discussion.

At the same time, the focal points for engaging the community will emerge, based on collective learning. The San Diego Foundation will establish the necessary partnerships and hire the talent to manage the process.

Potential future scenarios will be developed to engage people's thoughts, desires, hopes and concerns for a comprehensive regional engagement process of unprecedented scale.

**The Charge:** To understand how we engage *everyone* to create a 50- to 100-year vision that inspires bold and ongoing action. Before we begin, we will know how best to do just that.

**Budget:** \$500,000

**Time Frame:** Six months

---

## Phase 2: Engaging the Community

---

The most successful regional visioning efforts are those that engage the greatest number of participants representing all-encompassing diversity. Traditional engagement includes extensive media outreach, workshops, and grand-scale convenings and town halls. The explosive growth of online participation and social media promise to cast the net even wider.

All this will allow the community to weigh in and create its own vision – while the project team remains agnostic to the outcomes ... and open to unforeseen surprises.

What will emerge is a cohesive vision of the San Diego region – one, two and even three generations from now – a consensus vision to ensure that our children and their children and their children’s children enjoy the paradise we know and love. How do we protect what nature has provided and make it even better *because we are here?* We do not yet know; but, with the combined thoughts and dreams of our citizenry, we will ... and then we will make it so.

*“It is not that you don’t need leadership and vision, but success comes from consensus within the community.”*

Amanda Burden, New York City Commissioner of City Planning (quoted by Mary McLellan and Michel Stepner, *The Daily Transcript*, June 2, 2006)

**Budget:** \$1,000,000

**Time Frame:** 12 months

---

## **Phase 3: Introducing and Creating the Reality ... in Perpetuity**

---

Beginning with the end in mind is key to success. The Regional Vision Initiative begins with the intent of informing and empowering the San Diego Center for Civic Engagement, a new entity to be created by The San Diego Foundation and already initially funded.

The ongoing cost of the Center's work has yet to be determined, but is initially anticipated to be on the order of \$500,000 annually. This entity will keep the vision alive, in perpetuity, sounding a lasting clarion call for the region to move further into the future than any of us will ever see.



## JOIN WITH US

We are seeking committed individuals and organizations to join us and help fund these efforts in phases. With 10 commitments of \$50,000 each, we can conduct Phase 1. With the deliverables from that effort in hand, we will revisit those committed partners for supplemental donations of \$100,000 each. We know that this will be an 18-month process and cost a total of about \$1.5 million. Neither the time frame nor the funding requirements are daunting when one considers the benefits that we will all realize ... and leave to our children and grandchildren.

*“Go to the people. Learn from them. Love them. Start with what they know. Build on what they have. But of the best leaders, when their task is accomplished, their work is done, the people will remark, ‘We have done it ourselves.’”*

Ancient Chinese poem

Rev. 11/16/09



The San Diego  
Foundation

A foundation for your passion

2508 Historic Decatur Road  
Suite 200  
San Diego, CA 92106  
619-235-2300  
[www.sdfoundation.org](http://www.sdfoundation.org)