



Opening Remarks

Overview of the Evolution of San Diego

As a former public official and a past president of the local chapter, let me officially welcome you to San Diego.

San Diego is not necessarily a center of architecture, spelled with a BIG "A"; but, as I believe you will see, we are on the right track with a small "a."

We think this was validated by a recent survey in *Travel and Leisure* magazine that ranked America's top 25 cities. We were ranked #2 with best outdoor activities, the best parks, and the best-looking people. We were also ranked the best destination for getting around by car; and, I hope that latter "best" is correct because your Saturday tours are very tightly scheduled!

What prevented us from being #1 was architecture. We were ranked #16 out of 25.

However, we were ranked #3 as a "Creative City" by Richard Florida; and, sense of place and urban design are included in his criteria. Although he recently dropped us to #12 due to high housing costs.

This week, Partners for Livable Places ranked us as one of the ten most livable big cities in the United States. And, two recent books, *Get Urban: The Beginners' Guide to City Living* and *Making Places Special* were both highly complimentary to San Diego in recognition of its efforts at city building.

Nevertheless, I'm afraid surveys should be taken with a grain of salt.

And, we in San Diego don't always see the things other see; but, what others see result from a long-standing community interest in the built environment.

History of San Diego from 1850 to the Present with an Emphasis on Housing and on the Science R&D Community

Since the establishment of Mission San Diego de Alcala in 1769, growth and development-that is to say, interest in the built environment and the natural environment-has been an activity, a business, and, also, to many, a spectator sport.

San Diego is a very well-defined region. To the west is the Pacific Ocean; to the east are the mountains and the desert; to the south is the international border with Mexico-really the other half of our region-and the north is our armed boundary, the Camp Pendleton Marine Base, protecting us from Los Angeles.

The best place to start understanding San Diego is to take a look around downtown. What you see today is a very vibrant area-the heart of a city of 1.3 million in a region of 4-1/2 million (2 million live literally across the street in the city of Tijuana, the world's busiest border crossing and the other half of our metropolis). We project another one million people will be added on this side of the border in the next twenty years.

When you came into San Diego, you saw the suburban edges-just like the development in many other areas; but, we have red tile roofs!

It is classic urban sprawl. But, if you look closer, you will begin to see that we are reclaiming older areas-a different approach to new development, including the preservation of open space and sensitive habitat and we are forging a renewed interest in the public realm. The current theme in the city of San Diego is the "City of Villages." Although it is today's current wisdom, it really has been going on for some time. (MORE ON THIS ON SATURDAY.)

Some history: The first settlement in what is now Old Town was laid out in accordance with the Laws of the Indies, promulgated by the King of Spain in the 1500's for towns in the "New World." Roger Showley, resident *San Diego Union-Tribune* urban affairs writer, best described planning in 1848, after California became part of the United States, this way:

"Subdividers and speculators were the defacto city planners of the west; they bought the land, laid out the streets, sold off lots to individuals and developers, and walked away with the profits. However, there was no one to tie the entrepreneurs' dreams together. And the consequence was erratically placed connector streets, sparsely located parks, and an unrelenting series of grid-shaped neighborhoods."

California became a state in 1850 and the city of San Diego was incorporated. In 1853, the U. S. government sent Army surveyors to plat the newly acquired territory. After laying out what was then called New Town (today's Marina area of Centre City), two of the surveyors resigned their commissions and began to speculate on the land they had just mapped. In 1868, Alonzo Horton arrived in San Diego from Wisconsin via a short stay in San Francisco. He purchased 960 acres of what is now Centre City and Hillcrest for \$265 and laid out the land for development with small blocks connected by wide streets. This was done in order to maximize the number of corner lots available for commercial purposes. In conjunction with Horton's activities, the city fathers acquired 1400 acres for City Park (now Balboa Park). This was a little less than one acre for each resident of the city.

In 1880, the city, with a population of 2,600, anticipated being the western terminus of the transcontinental railroad and the maritime gateway to the Pacific. A building boom and population explosion ensued. The buildings (Gaslamp Quarter) were the latest in architectural design and subdivisions were laid out to accommodate the anticipated population. The Hotel Del Coronado was built in 1888, the population soared to 40,000, and the downtown was developed to be the hub of a city of 100,000.

But, Los Angeles was selected as the railroad terminus and by 1890 the population had dwindled to 16,000.

Again, from Roger Showley:

"Comprehensive planning here was born of a desire in 1903 to relocate City Hall.

"George Marston, founder of the Marston Department Store chain (now part of the Macy's chain by way of Broadway Stores), prompted the Chamber of Commerce to form a civic improvement committee.

"Marston first underwrote the cost of retaining Samuel Parsons, Jr., consulting architect for New York's Central Park, to prepare a master plan for Balboa Park. He also convinced the civic improvement committee to hire John Nolen ' . . . to lend some direction to San Diego's unmanaged growth'"

Nolen's *Plan for the Improvement of San Diego*, published in 1908, was a classic City Beautiful plan. It called for improvements to the waterfront and segregating industrial and recreational uses. It also called for creation of a civic center--something we are still discussing--and a system of parks, boulevards, and civic spaces. Unfortunately, we did not do very much of what Nolen advised.

In 1893, Irving Gill arrived in San Diego. As described in the AIA Guidebook, *San Diego Architecture*, Gill's arrival marked the beginning of the modern era in San Diego. Ultimately, Gill added an ingredient that defined San Diego's best architecture. He took his cues from the region, not from distant sources.

You will hear more about Gill later this evening and on tomorrow's tour you will see his work and the work of his contemporaries and colleagues, Louis Gill, Richard Requa, Emmor Brooke Weaver, Hazel Waterman, William Hebbard, and Frank Mead. It is important to take note of some of Gill's clients--Alice Lee, Katherine Teats--women who were among the ranks of San Diego's early developers.

In 1915, the Panama-California Exposition opened in Balboa Park to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal. John Charles Olmstead did the park master plan; Bertran Goodhue was the architect for the exposition buildings. The Spanish revival style of architecture was the theme for the exposition, a style that was being promoted all over Southern California in an attempt to establish its desired history. This official style for all public and private buildings was enforced through a city design review process that continued until the mid-1950s.

Civic leader George Marston, espousing Nolen's plans, campaigned but lost the race for mayor in 1913 and 1914. His opponent, banker-developer Louis J. Wilde, tagged him "Geranium George" alluding to Marston's stance for civic beauty rather than favoring smokestacks, jobs, and economic growth. After Wilde defeated Marston, the year-old planning commission resigned under pressure and the "smokestacks vs. geraniums" taunt has challenged planning and community development ever since.

While the city fathers talked about industry, the focus was on "clean" industry. Clean was not only in relation to the manufacturing process (continues to today with high-tech and bio-med) but, also, clean in terms of avoiding unions and strikes. Hence, we went after and convinced the Navy to make San Diego its major port on the West Coast.

In the 1920s, concern for the future of San Diego arose. ". . . the City hired Nolen for \$10,000 to prepare a city, harbor, and parks plan. The plan was presented in 1926. At an American Legion speech, Will Rogers urged, "Now, you have a real plan, prepared by Nolen. Don't let any prominent citizen get up and talk you out of it." Nolen's ideas became the cornerstone of all master planning of the city for the next 42 years.

The second world war brought tremendous growth to San Diego and all planning was geared to support the war effort. New developments of all kinds were established throughout the city. The construction of accessory units was strongly encouraged. Linda Vista was the site of a new town patterned, in part, on the plan for Radburn, New Jersey. In addition to retail, the town center contained recreational uses and public services as well. The town center, dedicated by Eleanor Roosevelt, is considered to be the first of the modern shopping centers. Only fragments of the original development remain.

The postwar period was marked by rapid growth to accommodate the returning veterans as well as the workers who had been recruited for defense work and who chose to stay here. The city focused on defense-related manufacturing, which declined greatly as a result of the end of the cold war.

The rapid growth led to a questioning of the Spanish Revival design requirements for all construction

and, to facilitate growth, the City Council removed them for they had been enforced only sporadically after the war. Planning focused on zoning land for new development and the public works projects that served it.

Post-war development led to a change in the region's architecture and the development of the San Diego School of Modernism, led by Lloyd Ruocco. Homer Delawie, Bob Mosher, Roy Drew, Ward Deems, Richard Wheeler, and many others put their mark on the San Diego landscape. But, as with most communities, San Diego seemed to double in size every ten years by virtue of its rapid population growth. Most of the development mirrored the tract development occurring everywhere, coupled with the flight from the inner city that also occurred everywhere.

Mission Valley had been the northern edge of city development until WWII. It was the site of truck farms and dairies that served the city and was unofficially viewed as an open space preserve. Pressure to open the valley for development grew after several resort hotels and golf courses displaced some of the agricultural activities.

In 1958, intense pressure from the May Company Department Stores resulted in the City Council's approval to rezone and allow construction of the Mission Valley Shopping Center. This action accelerated the displacement of farming and hastened the decline of downtown. At the time of the Council's action, Arthur Jessop, a downtown merchant, said, "We might as well tattoo on the Council wall, 'Here died planning in San Diego.'"

The changes to Mission Valley and concerns over what was happening led to a planning effort that culminated in the early 1980's. The result is that the valley is now a model of integrated land use, transportation, and environmental planning. Although many would have preferred retaining Mission Valley as farm land and open space in the pre-environmental era of the 1960s, that was not an option.

In 1966, the city adopted its general plan by ballot. Opponents had placed it on the ballot because they called planning "a step in the creeping socialism that was sweeping the country." In the subsequent vote, voters supported planning, the plan, and an independent planning department. But, perhaps the biggest beneficiary was the concept of community involvement. Realizing that a number of the city's communities were bigger than many small- and even medium-sized cities, it was recognized that the citywide plan had to be tailored to the needs of individual communities.

As a result, a process for establishing elected community planning groups was instituted. There are now over forty such groups in the city.

By the 1970s, the city was being overwhelmed by new development. Canyons and hillsides that characterized San Diego were being bulldozed to accommodate new subdivisions. Public facilities and services were not keeping pace however. A week after residents of new areas moved in, they typically demanded that construction stop until something was done; and, in spite of some new office buildings, downtown continued to decline.

In 1971, Pete Wilson was elected mayor, partly on a platform of growth management and Centre City revitalization. He directed city staff to work with the community to resolve the problems associated with rapid growth. In 1973, Hamilton Marston and his aunt, Miss Mary Marston, grandson and daughter, respectively, of George W. Marston, approached the city with a proposal. They would put up \$10,000 (the same amount paid to John Nolen for the 1926 plan) if the city would look at the region and its future challenges and opportunities. It was not to be a plan but, rather, a reconnaissance and a sketchbook of ideas that the city could consider.

Temporary Paradise and the Growth Wars

Kevin Lynch of MIT and Donald Appleyard of U.C. Berkeley were retained. In 1974, they presented the report, *Temporary Paradise? A Look at the Special Landscape of the San Diego Region*. In the report, which is a milestone in the recent planning history of San Diego, Lynch and Appleyard wrote:

"If San Diego cannot hope for Los Angeles' giant size, it can easily imitate it in other ways--spread out its dry suburbs, channel its streams, fill its valleys and lagoons, choke its roads and darken its air, sharpen the social gradient, harden the border. Could we rename it San Diego de Los Angeles? . . .

"The city should begin to take thought for the long-term quality of its environment . . . Most of all, we hope that San Diego takes charge of its future."

The report called for the region to understand and manage its growth; and, in 1975, the City Council adopted its initial growth management policies, calling for the timing and phasing of new development and requiring new development to pay its own way with services coordinated with residential construction.

Also that year, the City Council formed the Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) to oversee the redevelopment of downtown.

Though it was in formation for many years, a new general plan was adopted in 1979 that incorporated and refined many of the growth management policies and principles from *Temporary Paradise?*

Passage of Proposition 13 in June, 1978, sharply limited property tax revenues for California cities. This, in turn, limited the funds available for facilities and services in older areas. It also limited the funds available for developing the guidelines to ensure that infill was sensitive to the existing neighborhoods. At the same time, an economic slowdown made it easier for infill projects to occur in the urbanized areas than for new development in the planned urbanizing areas. As a consequence, the older neighborhoods felt threatened and overwhelmed by new development. Then, as the economy gradually picked up, development in outlying areas appeared to be making up for lost time. Where 5 - 7,000 residential units per year were expected in normal economic cycles, San Diego suddenly started to see 12 - 15,000 residential units annually.

The establishment of the University of California in the late 1960s led to the growth of high-tech and bio-med activities. The roots of this began around the turn of the century with the establishment of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in a building designed by Irving Gill.

Scripps grew into UCSD and UCSD has spun off the research and development that is a major factor in San Diego's economy and our culture and one of the factors that put us on Richard Florida's Creative Class list.

We were a city that tied for #3; we have now fallen to #12. Housing--or the lack thereof--is the critical factor. San Diego ranks as one of the most expensive housing markets in the country. This housing-cost number is exacerbated by the fact that, coupled with transportation costs, San Diegans spend a greater share of their income on those two items than is spent anywhere else in the country. A factor in all of this is that we pay in sunshine dollars.

Our housing shortage--estimated to be around 80,000 units to meet current and projected needs--is not being resolved for a variety of reasons.

Major Development Influences

During the boom time of the 1980s, growth was the focus of most planning, but planning was taking place on other fronts as well.

Planning for fixed rail had been going on since the mid-1970s, but the new general plan gave the mayor a city policy on transit to go along with those being advocated by the regional transit agency, the Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB). The first leg of the east line of the San Diego Trolley opened in 1986 and the south line, in 1991. Both the east line and the south line have been extended twice and more extensions and new routes are being incorporated currently.

Horton Plaza, the centerpiece of downtown redevelopment, opened in 1985. It has served as the catalyst for new housing and commercial development and has reinforced the convention center and the Gaslamp Quarter. Yet downtown revitalization led to the loss of older transient hotels.

In the mid-1980s, the city developed a single resident occupancy program (SRO) that resulted in building the first new SRO in San Diego in 75 years and in the United States in 60 years. The program required an ordinance; but, the more difficult aspect was overcoming preconceived ideas of what SRO's were, how they functioned, and how to make them function better. The city won an Innovations Award from the Ford Foundation for this effort.

En route to the '90s

The 1990s brought a shift to planning in San Diego. A downturn in the economy slowed development activity to a snail's pace. Many of the regulatory schemes developed in the 1980s to slow growth were questioned. In fact, the role of planning itself was questioned because of the over-emphasis on regulation not within the context of an overall vision or framework.

The city has come to understand that San Diego and the city of Tijuana are part of the same region. Efforts to work together have been undertaken but have never- until now-taken hold. In the late 1960s, a joint planning effort was funded by the federal government. However, because the U. S. government feared that any document that included recommendations for both countries would be an infringement on the sovereign rights of each country, the joint effort did not go further than the initial stages.

After the publication of *Temporary Paradise?*, various efforts for transborder planning occurred but they, too, did not take hold because there was no official sponsorship. In 1993, Mayor Susan Golding and the mayor of Tijuana, Jamie Hector Osuna, signed a binational agreement to work together on joint issues of land use and transportation, public safety, the environment, and economic development. The agreement has forged strong working arrangements between the two cities.

Moving Forward

In 1994, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of *Temporary Paradise?*, C-3 kicked off a program, Toward Permanent Paradise, to reacquaint the community with *Temporary Paradise?* Neil Morgan, former senior editor and columnist for the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, wrote in his introduction to the C-3 effort:

"San Diegans have trouble agreeing on what we want the region to become because we can't agree on what it is now. So many issues span the region- environment, social, transportation, business-that it is hard to solve problems without regional consensus.

"San Diego county suffers from decades of incremental decisions. No issue ever goes away. To make plans, we rarely look beyond a year or two, which in planning is a minute.

"We talk a lot about the imperative for leadership and reform but not much happens. Even civic fear and dread no longer produce old-time consensus. It's everybody for themselves (sic). There has been much talk of vision, so many panels and task forces and master plans that were soon forgotten that we have grown wary of depending on them to fix things.

"San Diego needs audacity. Too few of us devote personal energy to our communities and make individual sacrifices for the good of the community. If we're going to stay, we must wake up and get serious."

In the late 1990s, planning returned as a formal function to San Diego. Community pressure and a recognition of the enormous changes facing the region caused the initiation of a number of comprehensive planning efforts.

SANDAG began a regional comprehensive plan process and, together with MTDB, created the TransitFirst plan, an initiative to make transit everyone's first choice for travel. The county of San Diego began a comprehensive general plan revision. The city of San Diego initiated its City of Villages General Plan Update and the city of Chula Vista also began an update of its general plan. Discussions are currently underway about the best way to establish a regional governance model to tie it all together.

Envision San Diego

Civic solutions

The Civic Initiative

San Diego is a changing city. We are no longer a community/region with vast amounts of land for future expansion. Notwithstanding some large undeveloped land in the southern part of the county, the region is close to being built out. SANDAG projects that by 2010 we will have run out of raw, undeveloped land for residential construction. Our growth will have to focus inward through infill, redevelopment, and the reuse of no-longer-productive land in communities that are already developed.

San Diego's planning history is fully described in Roger Showley's book, *Perfecting Paradise*.

"Just as Nolen's to-do list of civic priorities for San Diego was never fulfilled, today's lengthy wish list includes many projects that will never be accomplished. But history shows that San Diego can achieve the seemingly impossible. It has turned a desert into a lush landscape; held fairs, festivals, and sporting events with worldwide appeal; helped defend the nation and cure disease; advanced the arts and contributed to popular culture."

The form and character of San Diego is a direct result of public and private stops and starts, introspection, enthusiasm, fear, bravado, and weather. We routinely forget and then recall the past and, in that way, share similarities with other major cities in the United States.

