



San Diego Metropolitan Area

The Region

Formerly a military outpost, San Diego has quietly transformed itself into “Biotech Beach,” the third largest biotech cluster in the nation after the San Francisco Bay Area and the Boston metropolitan area. Defense remains a strong contributor to the economy, but it has been joined by telecommunications (Qualcomm) and biotechnology. The foundation for this high-tech renaissance is the area’s many well-respected medical research institutions. The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, the University of California San Diego, Scripps Clinic and the La Jolla Cancer Research Foundation are all located in close proximity. The region ranks 7th in high-tech jobs and venture capital, and 5th in terms of patents.

The Business-Led Organizations

The San Diego region has several business-led organizations that operate on a regional level. The primary business-led organization is the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is one of the most influential business-civic organizations in the region when it comes to local government and economic development. The Chamber has more than 3,000 members and is actively involved in public policy issues and advocacy for its members.

Although San Diego Dialogue is a multi-sector public policy organization, this organization has a significant amount of business leadership. The Dialogue has a membership of approximately 120 and attempts to find solutions to the region’s problems by focusing on the economy, the environment and equity.

Another influential organization with a significant amount of business involvement is the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation. The Economic Development Corporation’s goal is to help the region create a competitive business environment that in turn creates high-wage, high-value jobs that contribute to a high quality of life. The Economic Development Corporation also specializes in business retention and expansion, finance and strategic planning, development and redevelopment, marketing and attraction, and workforce education.

The Regional Business-Civic Landscape

Over the last few years, the cost of living in the San Diego region has dramatically increased. This has put more financial pressure on middle-class and low-income residents who are struggling to find affordable housing and make enough money to live comfortably in the region. As a result, the leading business-led civic organizations in the region have focused on issues such as increasing the supply of affordable housing, improving the quality of public education, improving workforce development programs

HOUSING ACTION NETWORK (HAN)

The San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation is part of a unique collaboration called the Housing Action Network (HAN). HAN represents a broad range of organizations and interests and has members who are interested in seeing affordable, well-designed, well-constructed and appropriately located housing in the San Diego region. The strategy of HAN is to maintain a strong coalition of business, environmental, community, faith, and real estate organizations to support projects that will help the region grow “smarter.”

For more information, see www.sandiegobusiness.org

and building a better public transportation network. For example, the Economic Development Corporation focuses specifically on housing, transportation, infrastructure, workforce and education.

Additionally, the San Diego Regional Chamber has been working with several regional organizations on transportation-related issues that impact the day-to-day operation of the business community in the area. Since traffic congestion is a concern for business leaders, the Chamber has established a Transportation Committee that meets monthly to review various proposals and strategic plans. The Committee has worked hard at building a stronger relationship between the business community and the agencies responsible for facilitating transportation projects.

In addition to transportation, the Chamber also concentrates on the inadequate supply of housing. According to the Chamber, less than half of the housing demand is being met annually. To accommodate future population growth, the region must create 407,000 new housing units by 2020. The Chamber argues that the chronic housing deficit in the San Diego area has resulted in the region’s median new home price of \$289,000 (and counting). Therefore, the Chamber has created a Housing Committee to propose and influence measures aimed at rapidly accelerating the construction of attainable housing in the region.

Finally, San Diego Dialogue has been engaged in three primary areas: cross-border development, smart growth and environmental preservation, and education reform. The Dialogue has been active in trying to generate more tax revenue for investment in the regional transportation system and for specific transportation projects. The Dialogue hopes that more investment in transportation will increase regional mobility for residents. The Dialogue is also developing strategies to build support for a San Diego sales tax law that would provide 0.5% of all sales tax to smart growth projects. This would include the preservation of open space, urban runoff and regional water quality, and reinvestments in older communities.

Business Leadership

In the San Diego region, the level of business leaders’ attention given and time spent

on regional civic issues has increased over the last five years. One of the reasons for this is that the region has become an expensive place to live. Housing costs have skyrocketed and the disparity in income is growing between the haves and have-nots. Business leaders recognize this challenge and the importance to get involved on a regional level in solving these systemic problems. However, according to one leader in the region, the level of cooperation among the various business-led civic organizations is still low, compared to other regions.