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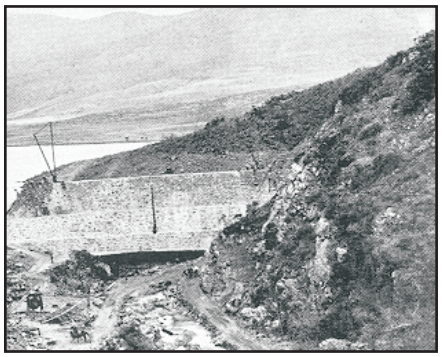
1.0 REGIONAL SETTING

We've got a great location

The City of Chula Vista is located in southern San Diego County and has a wide variety of physical features (Figure 3-1). The bayfront, rivers, and foothills define the City's planning area. Located just minutes from downtown San Diego and the U.S. Mexican border, Chula Vista has convenient access to cultural; recreational; educational; and business opportunities.

2.0 HISTORY

Our history is rich and varied


Sweetwater Dam 1886

Subsequent to the prehistoric era, when Native Americans were the primary inhabitants of the region, the history of the Chula Vista area evolved through contact with the Spaniards, Mexicans, and Americans, and later was heavily influenced by World Wars I and II. (See Section 3.1.9 of Chapter 9, the Environmental Element, for information on Native American presence in the area.)

Alta California, the counterpart to Baja Caliornia, underwent colonization by the Spanish beginning in 1769 with the arrival of Father Crespi and Father Junipero Serra, who oversaw the creation of a chain of missions. While under Spanish control, the Chula Vista area became part of a Spanish land grant known as Rancho del Rey (King's Ranch). The ranch included the portion of the South Bay area that is now National City, Chula Vista, Bonita, Sunnyside, and the Sweetwater River Valley, and was used as grazing land for the large Spanish herds of horses and cattle.

When Mexico achieved its independence from Spain in 1821, Alta California became the frontier of Mexico, and Rancho del Rey became known as Rancho de la Nacion (National Ranch). Secularization of the missions took place over the next decade and the former mission lands were transferred to the large Mexican families that had settled in the area during the period of Spanish control. Vast ranchos were formed from these lands, creating a cattle based economy which dominated the landscape. In 1845, Rancho de la Nacion was granted to John Forster, the son-in-law of Mexican governor Pio Pico.

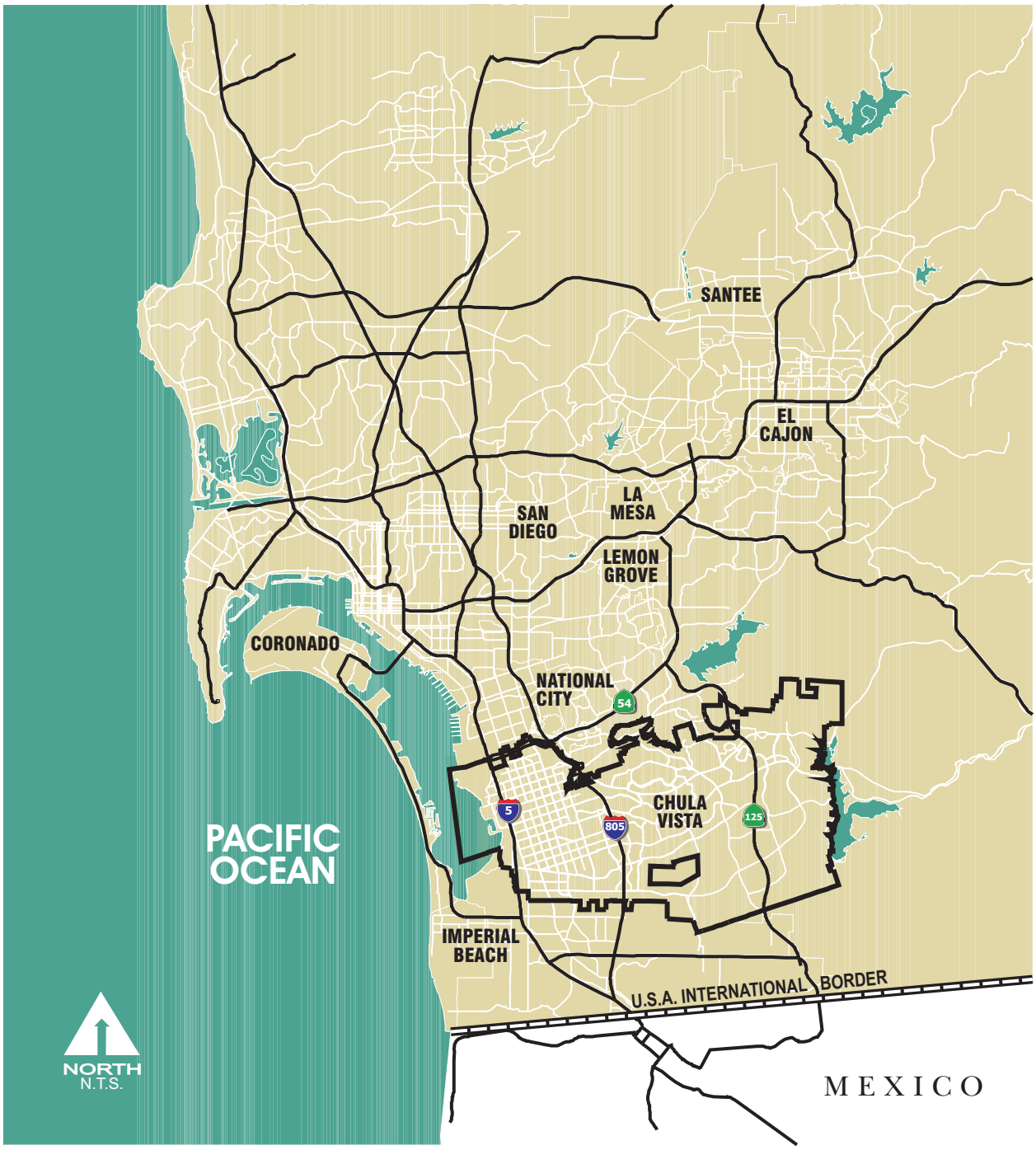

SANTEE
EL CAJON
LA MESA
SAN DIEGO
LEMON GROVE
CORONADO
NATIONAL CITY
54
CHULA VISTA
5
805
125
PACIFIC OCEAN
IMPERIAL BEACH
U.S.A. INTERNATIONAL BORDER
MEXICO
NORTH
N.T.S.

Figure 3-1

With the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, California became a territory of the United States. With the discovery of gold, the Gold Rush brought over 100,000 people to California. When California became a state in 1850, the previous land grants were allowed to continue as private property under American law. In 1854, the U.S. Lands Commission confirmed the National Ranch land grant to John Forster, who continued to operate the ranch for approximately another decade until selling it to another interest, who in turn sold it to the Kimball Brothers in 1868 for $30,000.

A city begins

The Kimballs acquired water rights on the Sweetwater River and made plans to construct a dam to provide water for their planned development. They also reached an agreement with the Santa Fe Railroad and plans were finalized in 1880 to build a railroad from National City to Barstow. While the dam was under construction, the National City and Otay Railroad was incorporated in 1886 and construction of a rail line connecting Chula Vista to National City and San Diego began in 1887. This rail line laid the foundation for the development of the San Diego Land and Town Company's 5,000-acre Chula Vista tract, planned by professional town planner Colonel W.G. Dickinson, as residents could commute to San Diego and reach other areas of the South Bay and businesses could transport their produce to market. James D. Schulyer suggested the name "Chula Vista" for the town, roughly translated in Spanish as "beautiful view". Land sales in Chula Vista started in 1887, and by the end of the year many new homes were under construction. Citrus groves and other types of produce were planted on hundreds of acres surrounding the new homes, creating an orchard community. The most successful crop proved to be citrus trees, and for a period of time Chula Vista became the largest lemon-growing center in the world.

Colonel W.G. Dickinson

On October 17, 1911, a successful election was held in Chula Vista to incorporate as a city, which was approved by the State of California.

Chula Vista grows and serves the nation during World Wars I & II

In 1916, the Hercules Powder Company's kelp processing plant was constructed. The plant, located on the 30-acre bayfront site now known as Gunpowder Point, produced potash and acetone to make cordite, a smokeless gunpowder used to make military munitions that was used extensively by the British military during World War I. World War II ushered in changes that would affect the City of Chula Vista forever. Rohr Aircraft Corporation relocated to Chula Vista just months prior to the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the entrance by the U.S. into World War II. At the height of its wartime production, Rohr employed approximately 9,000 workers, contributing significantly to the tripling

of the City's population from about 5,000 in 1940 to approximately 16,000 in 1950. The presence of numerous military installations in the county contributed greatly to the population growth of Chula Vista and other communities in the region following World War II, as many veterans from other parts of the country chose to live and raise their families here.

We become the jewel of South Bay

During the years of the Great Depression in the 1930s, Chula Vista suffered less than many other areas the San Diego County, due to the City's strong agricultural foundation. However, the City's economic focus shifted away from agriculture when the United States entered World War II. Chula Vista's orchards and farms were gradually displaced by housing, businesses, schools, and other development while the City expanded to meet the needs of its growing population. Chula Vista grew into one of the largest communities in the county, reaching a population of approximately 42,000 by 1960, a significant increase from its 1950 population of about 16,000.

General Store & Post Office 1911

Figure 3-2 shows historic expansion of Chula Vista's boundaries at various stages, from incorporation in 1911 through 2004. The City's initial boundaries did not change until 1949, when a small area east of Hilltop Drive was annexed. During the 1950s, more extensive areas to the east and southeast were annexed, along with tidelands and over two square miles of the southern portion of San Diego Bay. The City generally expanded eastward in ensuing decades. In 1985, residents of the unincorporated Montgomery area voted to become part of the City; this annexation became the largest inhabited annexation approved in California, resulting in the addition of 23,300 residents to the City of Chula Vista. During the latter half of the 1980s and the 1990s, Rancho del Rey, Eastlake, and other master planned communities in eastern Chula Vista began to develop, and over 14 square miles of Otay Ranch were annexed and planned for future development.

In 2005, the City encompasses approximately 52 square miles of land area, from the San Diego Bay eastward to the Otay Lakes, and includes most of the land area between the Sweetwater River to the north, and the Otay River to the south. As Chula Vista continues to grow, the community strives to balance development of attractive neighborhoods and strong businesses, while protecting the environment. This General Plan provides the constitution for achieving a healthy balance of land uses, based on the sense of community and small town values upon which Chula Vista was founded.

Boundary Expansion

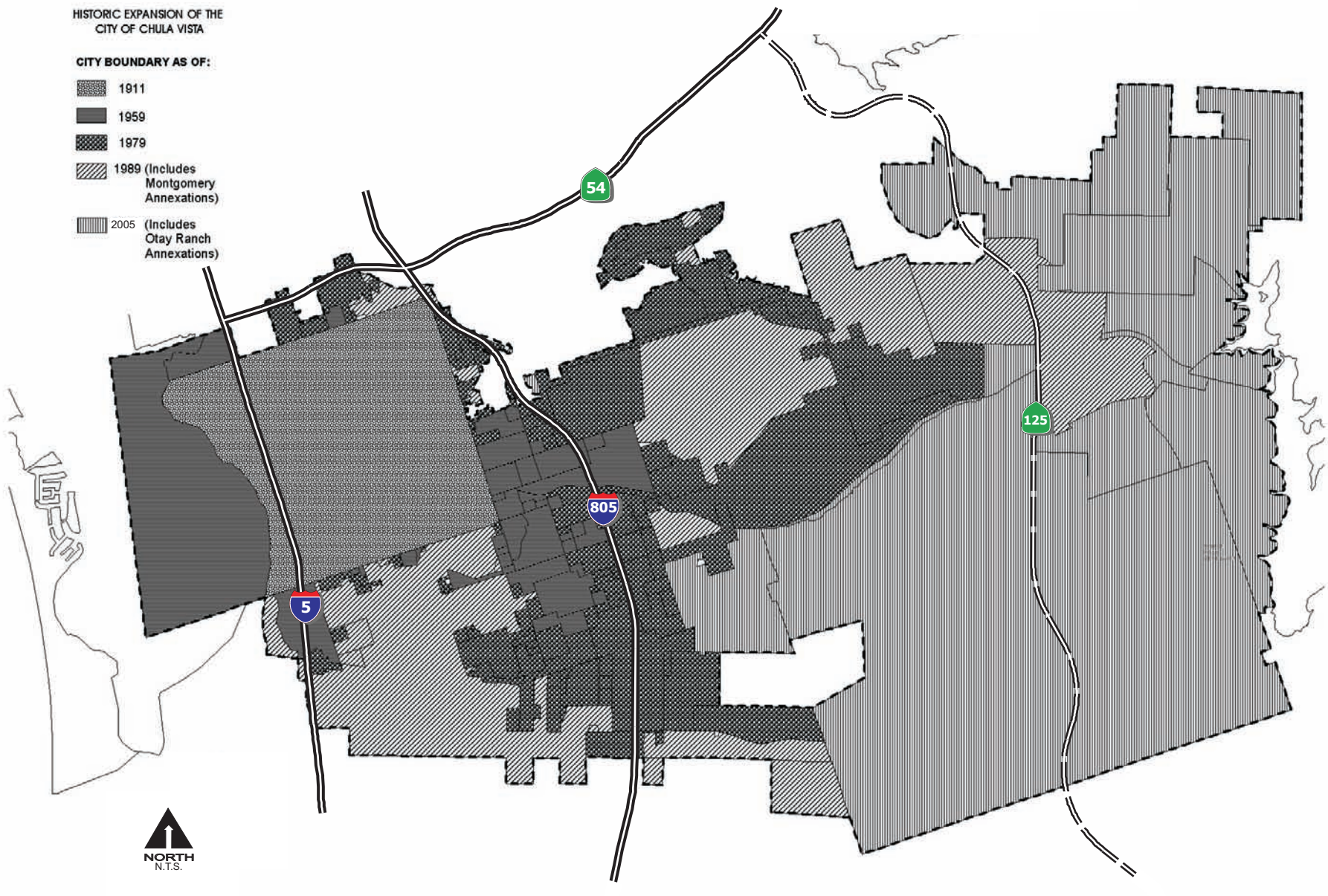


Figure 3-2

CITY OF CHULA VISTA

3.0 WHO WE ARE TODAY

3.1 Population

Chula Vista is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States

The City of Chula Vista is home to an estimated 209,133 people (Department of Finance estimate as of January 1, 2004), accounting for approximately seven percent of the San Diego region's population. Figure 3-3 illustrates Chula Vista population by decade from 1910 to 2000, based on U. S. Census data. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) forecasts that population in Chula Vista will continue to grow, approaching 280,000 by 2030. It should be noted that this forecast was based upon existing plans when the forecast was adopted in 2003. As part of the forecast and the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), SANDAG acknowledged that approximately 93,000 households would be "exported" to outside the region because of a shortfall in the capacity of existing plans to accommodate needed new housing production. A number of problems result including growing long-distance commutes from areas such as Riverside County, Imperial County, and Baja California to jobs in San Diego County.

The resulting emphasis from SANDAG via the RCP is for jurisdictions within the San Diego Region to add housing capacity through future General Plan updates as part of smart growth. Chula Vista's General Plan Update takes this to heart, and related planning outcomes are further discussed in the Land Us Use and Transportation (LUT) Element sections 1.5, 4.9, and through land use policies throughout LUT section 7.0

Figure 3-4 compares Chula Vista's population growth with that of San Diego County and the State of California.

Figure 3-3

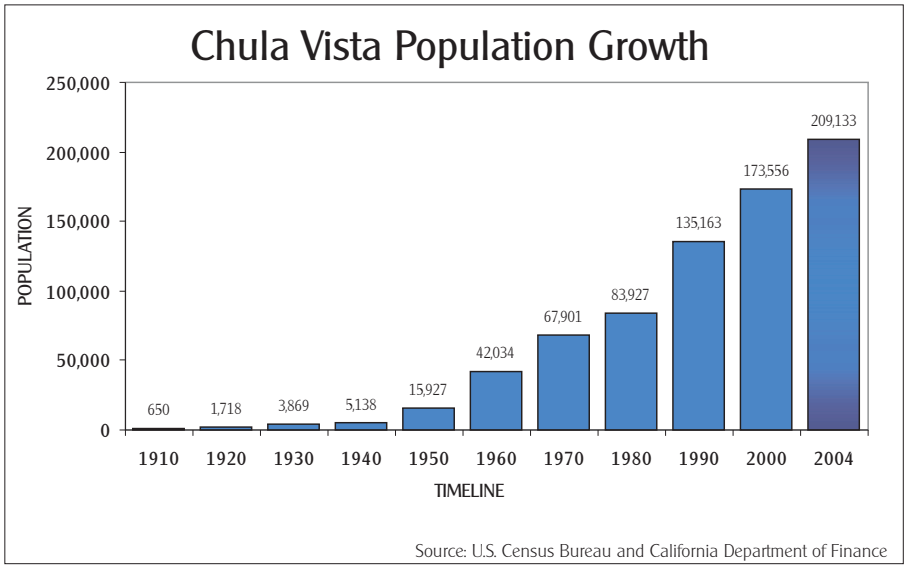


Figure 3-4

Chula Vista Population
Growth Compared to San Diego, County and State

Year	California	San Diego County	San Diego City	Chula Vista	Chula Vista & San Diego	Rest of County
1910	2,377,549	61,665	39,578	650	40,228	21,437
1920	3,426,861	112,248	74,361	1,718	76,079	36,169
1930	5,677,251	209,659	147,995	3,869	151,864	57,795
1940	6,907,387	289,348	203,341	5,138	208,479	80,869
1950	10,586,223	556,808	333,865	15,927	349,792	207,016
1960	15,717,204	1,033,011	573,224	42,034	615,258	417,753
1970	19,971,069	1,357,854	696,769	67,901	764,670	593,184
1980	23,667,764	1,861,846	875,538	83,927	959,465	902,381
1990	29,760,021	2,498,016	1,110,549	135,163	1,245,712	1,252,304
2000	33,871,648	2,813,833	1,223,400	173,556	1,396,956	1,416,877
2004	36,144,267	3,017,204	1,294,032	209,133	1,503,165	1,514,039

*Totals are as of April 1, except the 2004 estimate, which is as of January 1, 2004.

Source: California Department of Finance

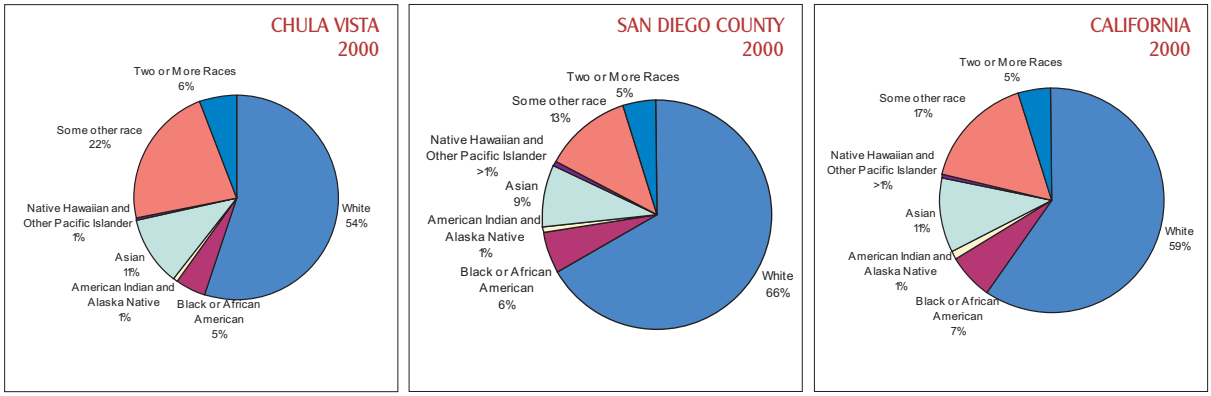
Of cities with over 100,000 people, Chula Vista had the eighth fastest percentage growth rate nationally since the 2000 Census (U. S. Census Bureau, 2003). The vast majority of recent growth within the region has been through natural increase (births minus deaths), not people moving here.

Ethnically, the City's population is mixed with over 49 percent identified to be of Hispanic or Latino origin, and over ten percent to be of Asian origin, primarily from the Philippines. Figure 3-5 shows the racial makeup of Chula Vista.

A major shift in the age structure of the region's population is expected over the next 20 years. Based on 2000 census data, the estimated average age in Chula Vista is 33.3 years. The forecasted average age is over 40 by the year 2030. This will alter workforce dynamics, as the population of 18-54-year-olds declines, and the population of those 55 and over increases.

Figure 3-5

Chula Vista Population Mix*



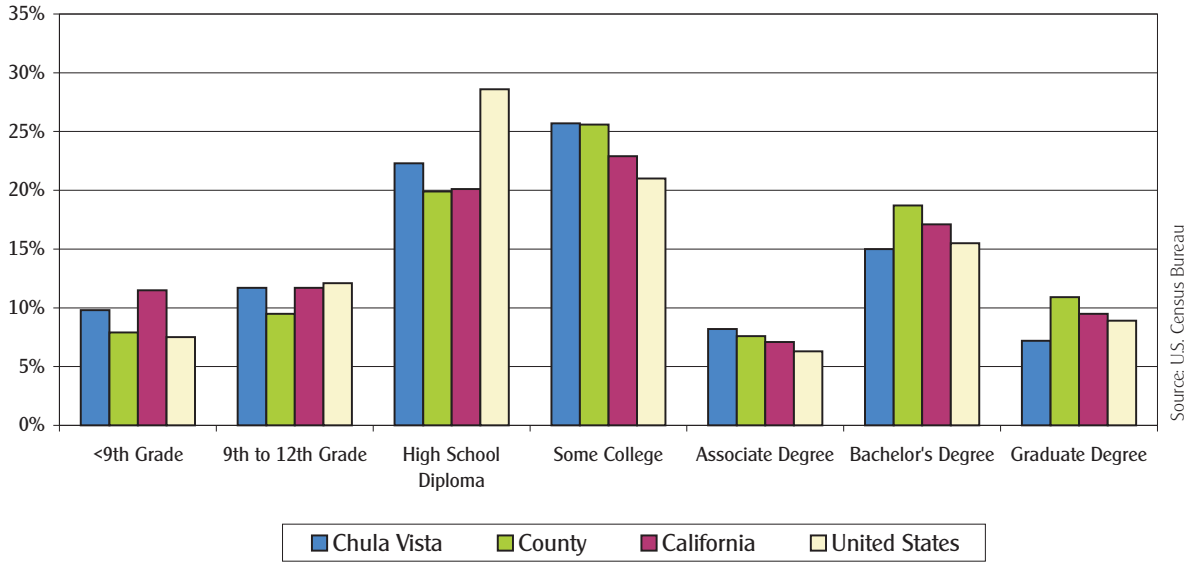
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (July 2003)

* Figure reflects a change in the way information about Hispanic background was collected in the 2000 census. Specifically, Hispanic is not characterized as a separate racial group. That is, one may be characterized as Hispanic and white, Hispanic and black, etc.

Figure 3-6 compares educational attainment for residents 25 years of age or older in Chula Vista; San Diego County; the State of Californic; and the United States. In 2000, Chula Vista had a higher percentage of residents with a college education and associate degrees than California or the U.S. population. Over 25 percent of the population over age 25 had graduated from high school. Over 17.5 percent of the population had recieved college degrees. Given the changing demographic characteristics in Chula Vista as new higher-income households move in, average education and income levels are expected to increase.

Figure 3-6

Educational Attainment In Chula Vista
Compared To County, State and Nation



At least 25% of the families living in Chula Vista report an annual income of at least $75,000. The 2000 Census shows that Chula Vista now has a lower percentage of below poverty level families than either the region or the state. In 2003, the estimated median household income in Chula Vista was $49,521 (in 1999 dollars), approximately the same as the region but over 16 percent higher than the national median. It is forecast that median income will increase in both Chula Vista and the region over the next 20 years, with the rate of income growth in Chula Vista expected to greatly exceed that of the region (SANDAG, 2003).

3.2 Economy

During the 1990s, employment in nearly all industries grew robustly in Chula Vista

Chula Vista is uniquely positioned where two powerful, regional economic forces converge. The first is the economic integration that occurs due to the United States/Mexico border. The second is the prominence of high technology research and development that is occurring in the San Diego region. By proactively planning for these technology and trade opportunities, Chula Vista has created a rich environment for corporate headquarters; high-tech research; development and production centers; and importers/exporters serving Mexico and the Pacific Rim. In addition, Chula Vista is a leader in fostering small and emerging business networks and technological alliances to create a diversified, ever-growing economic base.

In 2000, Chula Vista had nearly 54,000 jobs. Between 2000 and 2030, employment in Chula Vista is expected to grow by nearly 30,000 jobs, to almost 80,000 (SANDAG, December 2003). During the 1990s, employment in nearly all industries grew vigorously in Chula Vista. For example, the services sector expanded by four percent annually. Other sectors experienced average annual growth rates ranging from three to five percent. Chula Vista has a sizeable proportion of large employers (500+ employees). As of January 1, 2004, Chula Vista's largest non-government employers included Goodrich Aerospace; Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center; Scripps Memorial Hospital; and Knott's Soak City.

Employment land is concentrated in three principal areas: the tideland area, the Montgomery area, and the Otay Valley area. Emerging light industrial development is underway in the eastern portion of the City, including areas of Eastlake and Otay Ranch. The smallest businesses (those with fewer than nine employees), are largely found west of Interstate 805, concentrated in the Third Avenue District, the Broadway corridor, and Main Street.

3.3 Land Use

Chula Vista seeks to balance land use and transportation options

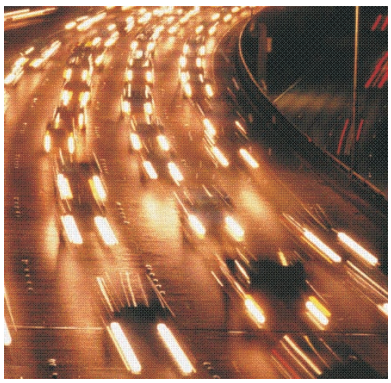
Land uses in Chula Vista reflect its status as the premier recreational, cultural, commercial, and entertainment center of San Diego's South County. Located on San Diego Bay, the City is a tourist destination offering bayside recreational activities and an

array of leisure-time experiences. The City is home to older residential areas, vibrant urban neighborhoods and newer, master-planned communities.

It boasts a thriving business community that encompasses the notable Downtown Third Avenue District; several retail centers; new, state-of-the-art office complexes; and manufacturing facilities. The City offers extensive leisure opportunities, including four golf courses; two harbor marinas; miles of pedestrian; biking and equestrian trails; and numerous parks and other recreation facilities. Significant visitor attractions include the ARCO U.S. Olympic Training Center; Coors Amphitheatre; Knott's Soak City; National Wildlife Refuges; the Chula Vista Nature Center; and the Otay Valley Regional Park.

As of December 2000, the Meyers Group, a research and data warehouse source for residential and real estate information, reported more than 50 new residential developments offering detached single-family homes, and seven offering attached homes in Chula Vista. As with the rest of the region, residential, commercial and industrial land values continue to steadily increase.

3.4 Transportation



Several regional freeways access Chula Vista from the north, south and east. These are supplemented by local, prime arterials that transition from the freeways to the neighborhoods. Traditional neighborhoods in the flatter, western portion of the City benefit from a conventional grid system, providing opportunities for access to the many public institutions; medical facilities; recreational areas; and cultural and community events in the area. Transit services in the City, including bus and trolley facilities, aid commuter transportation. As population levels increase and economic growth occurs within the General Plan area and the surrounding region, a corresponding increase in travel demand is anticipated.

3.5 Resources

Natural resources and development are kept in balance

Chula Vista has, and is surrounded by significant natural features and landforms, including San Diego Bay; Otay and Sweetwater River Valleys; Upper and Lower Otay Reservoirs; Sweetwater Reservoir; Mother Miguel and San Miguel Mountains; and the foothills of the Jamul and San Ysidro Mountains. The undeveloped open space and beautiful views provided by these natural features are an important part of Chula Vista's image and sense of place.

The City has preserved important landforms and natural features as part of a recreation-oriented open space network and continues to balance development with environmental stewardship. The Chula Vista Greenbelt is a system of 28 miles of open space and parks that encircle the City. Part of this greenbelt includes the Chula Vista Nature Center, located on the 316-acre Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge.

Credit: Dudek R Associates, Inc.

Chula Vista participates in and implements the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). The MSCP is a comprehensive, long-term habitat conservation plan that addresses the potential impacts of urban growth, natural habitat loss, and species endangerment. It creates a plan to mitigate the potential loss of identified resources and habitat due to the impacts of development of both public and private lands. The City's MSCP Preserve will eventually encompass approximately 5,000 acres of the most sensitive open space areas. In addition, another approximately 4,200 acres outside the City's jurisdiction will be preserved as a result of development occurring within the City's urban boundaries.

3.6 Fiscal Indicators

The City's General Fund budget, in real terms adjusted for inflation, has grown from $57.8 million in fiscal year 1990-91 to $103 million in fiscal year 2002-03, for a real annual growth rate of 6.5 percent. The General Fund supports both the Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The Operating Budget funds various services to the community and is organized by functions, including Legislative and Administrative; Development and Maintenance Services; Culture and Leisure Services; and Public Safety Services. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds the acquisition, rehabilitation or construction of major capital facilities, infrastructure or equipment. CIP projects include things like streets and drainage improvements, new public buildings, and parks.

General Fund revenue sources include sales and property taxes, Transient Occupancy Taxes, and Tax Increment Funds (TIF) from the City's redevelopment project areas. The City also receives General Fund revenue from fees charged for services rendered by the City.

3.7 Challenges Facing Chula Vista

Challenges facing Chula Vista over the next 20 years include housing availability and cost; job development; traffic congestion; environmental resource management; and adequate public facilities.

- **Housing Availability and Cost**

  While the City's population is expected to continue to increase over the next 20 years, the rate of growth is expected to slow as the supply of vacant, developable land is consumed. Housing availability and cost is a major regional challenge, with Chula Vista and the south county area absorbing an increasing share of the region's population growth. The ability to provide varied housing opportunities is addressed through the land use plan and the Housing Element.

- **Job Development**

  Providing a range of job opportunities helps communities remain economically viable. The challenge to create employment opportunities is addressed through the land use plan and the Economic Development Element.

- **Traffic Congestion**

  Increased population will contribute to increased traffic. The challenge to accommodate increased traffic is addressed through the Land Use and Transportation Element.

- **Environmental Resource Management**

  As development in the City continues, impacts to natural resources are affected. The challenge to wisely manage these resources is addressed in the Environmental Element.

- **Public Facilities**

  Household size is forecasted to increase in the region, with Chula Vista continuing to have a larger household size than the region as a whole. Chula Vista is also forecast to continue to have a lower vacancy rate than the remainder of the region. These factors will pose public facility and service challenges, such as demands for school facilities; park and recreation facilities and programs; and police and emergency services. The challenge to provide adequate public services and facilities is addressed in the Public Facilities and Services Element and in the Growth Management Element.