



# EXECUTIVE **SUMMARY**



**C**reative City is the City of San Diego's (City) first comprehensive cultural plan, providing a long-term framework to advance arts, culture and creativity for the benefit of San Diegans as well as the greater transborder region. Developed through extensive and inclusive public engagement involving nearly 1,800 people, the plan sets forth a shared vision and actionable strategies to sustain and grow San Diego's vibrant creative ecosystems, where arts and culture advance dialogue, development, and diversity, defining San Diego as a global creative center.

In 2022 Mayor Gloria and City Council adopted the City's Strategic Plan, which provides overarching guidance for how all elements of city government should focus their work to a common purpose. Creative City was intentionally designed to align with and respond to the City's Strategic Plan, to ensure that arts, culture, and creativity are "part of the solution" by leveraging arts and culture to achieve the City's ambitious goals. While the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is the agency primarily responsible for stewardship of Creative City, this plan identifies many cross-department priorities and identifies partnerships with other departments and agencies to amplify the impact of their collective efforts.

**Equity and inclusion are guiding principles for the City's Strategic Plan. The Creative City plan reflects that commitment to equity.**

### City of San Diego Equity Commitment

*Equity is an achievable outcome when disparities are eliminated in systems, and when everyone has access to inclusive City services and resources essential to reaching opportunities and thriving in San Diego.*

*To do this successfully, we need to honestly and directly address persistent issues connected to neighborhood inequity and systemic racism in the City of San Diego. Creating equitable outcomes requires an intentional approach that includes and empowers our communities experiencing structural exclusion through ensuring disparities are eliminated in systems. We recognize the strength, worth, and promise of each person in San Diego, and will work towards creating a better future...for all of us.*

Arts and culture are in San Diego's DNA. They bring people together and highlight the many traditions, ecologies, and practices of a highly diverse population. San Diegans participate in arts and culture at high levels, attending festivals, concerts, museums, and galleries, as well as expressing their personal creativity personally or in community. The creative workforce itself is high-achieving and diverse. For example, San Diego theaters continue to regularly send productions to Broadway. The city was awarded the 2024 World Design Capital designation in partnership with Tijuana. And there are six vital cultural districts with unique community characteristics, including the Balboa Park Cultural District, Barrio Logan Cultural District, Black Arts and Culture District, Convoy Pan-Asian Cultural and Business Innovation District, Arts District Liberty Station, and the anticipated Downtown Arts District.

However, Creative City arrives at a critical moment for San Diego and is a call to action. The creative and cultural sectors face mounting challenges that threaten their sustainability. The rising costs of living and doing business, the lack of affordable spaces, ongoing inequities in access to resources, and changes in consumer and participatory behaviors – these difficulties make it imperative to have a solutions-oriented plan. Additional problems arose during Creative City discussions, such as the lack of work and sales opportunities for artists and creatives, and “arts deserts” in certain areas of the city. For San Diego to maintain its vibrancy and compete in a global marketplace for creative talent and ideas, action is now required.



**Additional findings of Creative City are:**

- San Diego’s creative economy is large and growing, generating \$10.8 billion in economic impact and nearly 170,000 jobs.
- There is significant potential to expand creative tourism and position San Diego as a global cultural destination.
- The City has among the largest number of city-owned cultural facilities in the U.S. The more than 60 varied buildings – 36 in Balboa Park and an additional 24 located downtown and elsewhere in the city – offer opportunities to leverage these public assets for greater community benefit and to assure their maintenance and conservation.
- With nearly 1.4 million inhabitants, San Diego is the eighth largest and one of the most diverse cities in the nation. There are more than 100 languages spoken by people who have come from all parts of the world to live here. The city’s population is growing, diversifying, and aging. Demographics suggest the need to plan for increased demand for cultural opportunities and resources, to overcome access barriers, and provide increasingly diverse cultural experiences.
- Situated adjacent to the busiest land border crossing in the Western Hemisphere with over 150,000 pedestrians and passage vehicles crossing daily between the U.S. and Mexico, San Diego and Tijuana together anchor a transborder region that is both an economic zone and a highly interconnected cultural community. Transborder culture and artistry are unique and defining elements of San Diego to be celebrated and supported.

**The plan outlines four main goals, each with specific strategies and actions:**

- **Centering Artists, Creatives and Spaces:** Support artists and cultural organizations through affordable spaces, expanded funding, and capacity building.
- **Arts in Community:** Increase access to arts and culture throughout the city, with a focus on historically less-resourced areas.
- **Creative Entrepreneurship:** Foster growth of the creative economy through business support, workforce development, and industry partnerships.
- **Global Creative City:** Elevate San Diego’s profile as an international hub for arts, culture and creativity.

Implementation of Creative City will require new ways of thinking about existing arts and culture assets and resources as well as new investments in programs, strategies, staffing, and overall capacity. The plan recommends a range of new funding options, including dedicated revenue sources, public-private partnerships, an arts and culture foundation, and implementation of the “Penny for the Arts” policy.

With sustained commitment and resources, Creative City positions San Diego to fully realize a future with creativity at its center, fostering a more equitable place of inspiration and prosperity for all San Diegans.

