

URBAN DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES FOR THE SAN YSIDRO/TIJUANA PORT OF ENTRY BORDER ZONE

Briefing Paper

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This study focuses on the changing urban development scenarios facing the San Ysidro/Tijuana border zone in the area adjacent to the ports of entry. The San Diego-Tijuana region must prepare itself for economic integration with NAFTA, and for the larger global economy. The region needs not only infrastructure, technology, capital and a trained workforce, it needs a physical plant-- a well planned cross-border urban land use and design framework-- to operationalize its place in the 21st century world economy. One key to the success of San Diego-Tijuana as a global business center will be its ability to better utilize the border zone, and its port of entry/ gateway space to facilitate cross-border exchanges.

The San Ysidro-Tijuana port of entry/ border zone is the single largest connector along the U.S.-Mexico border. Thirty four million vehicles and over seven million pedestrians cross this gate each year. But the port of entry and surrounding zone on both sides of the border is fragmented by a variety of land use and design problems-- traffic congestion, poor circulation routes, disorganized land uses, conflicts between local interests, crime and public safety concerns, and unresolved land development plans. This vital physical space, the anchor for the region's cross-border economic development, **must** be carefully planned and redeveloped in the next decade. This study reviews the history of cross-border planning and cooperation in the region, and around the port of entry at San Ysidro-Tijuana, describes the nature of the physical and social spaces, outlines key projects and land use concerns, and raises some planning and design issues that deserve future discussion.

Major Findings and Recommendations

- 1) Recent history demonstrates a clear acceleration of participation among institutions and planning entities in moving toward cross-border planning and cooperation in San Diego-Tijuana. Where once the notion of cross-border planning was a distant fantasy, in the next decades elements of serious cooperative planning are likely to be on the table.
- 2) Since the signing of NAFTA in 1992, a number of cross-border infrastructure projects have either been proposed or built in San Diego-Tijuana. Most of the projects lie either in the transportation area (roads, mass transit) or the environment (sewage treatment, water purification, etc.). Missing in cross-border cooperation are joint land use planning, economic development and urban design approaches.

- 3) There are significant competing interests among land users in the San Ysidro-Tijuana port of entry/border zone, both within and across national boundaries. Finding ways to accommodate these interests will be one of the key challenges to successful port of entry/border zone design and planning.
- 4) Land use planning tied to economic development should be a priority in this key junction; the pre-1950 notions of ports of entry as protected spaces for immigration and customs monitoring **only** must give way to the realities of post-NAFTA border life. Environmental impacts of land use change must also be given a high priority.
- 5) Far more thought must be given to planning the Mexican connection from the San Diego side. Given Tijuana's unique character and land use patterns around the port of entry, every change proposed for the San Diego side should be carefully reviewed for its impacts on Mexico.
- 6) The border zone can no longer be thought of as only a "pass through" space, in contemplating its future redevelopment and planning. It can become more than a connector for the regional economy; it can become an important **destination**. The enormous density of flows of pedestrian visitors and automobiles through the district offers a built in potential for increasing tertiary economies. Trade and tourism can flourish here, if the San Ysidro-Tijuana border zone is redesigned to be an urban village - a neighborhood with a sense of place that will attract people, both local and external, to gather. Such a scenario will have multiplier effects on the sub-regional economies of south bay San Diego, as well as downtown Tijuana.
- 7) To bolster the possibility of building an "urban village" around the border crossing, land use plans should be adapted and supported by transportation development. The key is to balance the flow of automobiles through the zone against the need for safe and comfortable pedestrian spaces. Strong "walkable" spaces are needed, creating a vital public life around the boundary. Such activities will be supported by good mass transit connections within the zone.
- 8) Border monitoring must continue to have a function within the district. Steps should be taken, however, to buffer monitoring agencies from public spaces, with careful landscape design. Further, any monitoring-related functions that do not require location at the San Ysidro gate would be best relocated outside the immediate boundary zone.

Introduction

In the next decade, San Diego's economic integration with Tijuana and Baja California will reach far greater dimensions than ever imagined. With billions of dollars in revenue driven by NAFTA and cross border connections, San Diego must recognize that it needs to reinvent itself as a metropolis. To do this it will have to convert itself from a city facing the sea, to one that also embraces the Mexican connection. Part of this reconstruction process will involve an actual physical reorganization of land uses, transportation and development projects. The traditional tilt toward the Pacific ocean and the water port will not disappear, it will simply be balanced by a restructuring toward the south. A range of infrastructure will begin to make these cross-border connections: freeways, mass transit systems, telecommunications, airports, import-export operations.

While many of these efforts began over the last two decades, the time has come to consolidate and accelerate urban development at the border. A new urban plan is called for-- one that creates a physical system of interlocked spaces and activity systems-- allowing cross-border commuting, retailing, and business to expand. The San Diego-Tijuana region of the 21st century will be a metropolis where the monitoring and surveillance around the boundary is no longer the dominant force-- but rather a dynamic international community-- residents, visitors, workers, businesses-- will extend north and south in a transnational living space supported by good urban design. Much like twin cities such as Minneapolis-St. Paul, the transfrontier metropolis will continue to embrace two distinct cities, but those cities will be part of an efficient transborder economic region.

To achieve this vision, the pre-1950 protectionist, military functions of the land boundary must be scaled back to adapt to the cross-border social and economic realities of the late 20th century. The fact is that the Mexico-U.S. border zone is no longer merely a buffer between two distant neighbors, but rather a connector for economic opportunity, and even a destination for tourism growth poles, and regional sub-centers of local service and retail activities, entertainment, and gathering.

For the San Diego-Tijuana metropolis, the anchor of these possibilities lies at the San Ysidro/Tijuana Port of Entry, and its surrounding area-- from the I-5 merge with I-805, west to the edge of the Tia Juana River open space, south into Tijuana, from its Zona Norte to the highway connector to downtown Tijuana and the River Zone (see Figure 1). This border/port of entry economic zone has suffered a growing list of planning and design problems: lack of identity, poor transport circulation, chaotic land use patterns, noise, air pollution, traffic congestion, and a negative visual image. For San Diego-Tijuana to realize its potential as a major economic gateway, and global business setting, this physical space must be dramatically transformed.

This paper offers an overview of some of the main issues facing policy makers, planners, and other decision-makers involved in the transformation of this border zone. Part I offers a brief history of changing boundaries and border cities, as a way of understanding the shifting circumstances facing ports of entry at the end of the 20th century. It outlines some of the key cross-border economic activities that depend on the port of entry connector. Part I ends with a short description of recent efforts toward binational and coordination in San Diego-Tijuana.

Part II focuses on "Planning in the San Ysidro Border Zone." This section outlines the social and physical organization of the zone, the planning problems nested within it, as well as the major short and medium term projects that are being discussed. Two key challenges are emphasized: first, dealing with competing interests among land users and interest groups, and second, addressing the all important Mexican connection to San Ysidro's redevelopment. The conclusion offers a summary of some of the issues that will be faced in the near future.

PART I. BACKGROUND

Urban Development, Ports of Entry and the Border

Since the creation of the Mexico-U.S. border in 1848, the role and function of international ports of entry and border crossings has responded to the larger functions of the border itself. For most of the last century and a half, international boundaries had one essential defining role-- the "shelter function" in the words of one scholar.¹ The "shelter function" emphasized the fact that international boundaries were created essentially as buffer zones between nation states, defended edges to be fortified with military infrastructure, and carefully avoided as locations for key economic and social infrastructure of production, development and settlement. Indeed, prior to the last few decades of the twentieth century, most of the great cities of the world remained purposefully lodged in their nations' interiors, far from the uncertainties of the defining line of national sovereignty-- the international boundary.

Ports of entry thus became the administrative checkpoints through which all legal flows of goods, services and people across the international lines of jurisdictions would be monitored. Most governments designated one national level administrative agency to oversee and monitor the port of entry facility itself (the General Services Administration in the U.S., CABIN, *Comision de Avaluos de Bienes Nacionales* in Mexico); and others to deal with immigration (INS/Dept. of State in U.S.; *Secretaria de Gobernacion/* Immigration Services in Mexico), and Customs (U.S. Customs in U.S., *Aduana/Treasury* in Mexico). In general, the administrative structure of land border ports of entry in most nations-- including Mexico and the United States-- is defined around the assumption of the land port of entry as a relatively isolated facility in a high security, protected boundary zone-- part of the larger buffer area between nation states.

The problem is that since 1950, land boundary functions have gradually shifted away from the pre-1950 "shelter function" toward an increasingly more porous border zone. This change can be tracked by viewing the ways in which national defense strategies embraced physical land boundaries over time. Before 1950, land boundaries were seen as essential strategic lines of defense in global military thinking. However, the development of cross-border systems of rocketry, nuclear power, and computer-driven aerospace technology have rendered the traditional ground-oriented military system somewhat obsolete. Indeed, the scale of national defense has shifted away from land boundaries, as was best illustrated in the Persian Gulf War of the early 1990's, in which, much of the war was negotiated through air strikes and computer-driven missile and anti-missile engagements.

Meanwhile, new technologies have led to the globalization of markets, communication and transportation, and have profoundly changed the way nations organize their territory and understand the ecosystem. As the 20th century comes to a close, we live, territorially speaking, in a very different world-- one in which international boundaries pose enormous new opportunities for resource development, production, and urban growth. As land boundaries around the world-- from Western Europe to Latin American and the U.S.-Mexico frontier-- embrace emerging economic opportunities (including development of natural resources, cross-border industrial sharing, trade and tourism) and become more urbanized, international ports of entry must rethink their strategies as they now lie in the midst of densely developed urban space.

For example, a prototype of global urban space in the next century is what can be called the "transfrontier metropolis²." Since the dawn of the nation state in the nineteenth century, cities have been understood as physical places that lie within the boundaries of one sovereign nation. Yet the late 20th century marks a new global geography, where city-regions housing millions of inhabitants sprawl

¹ See Jean Gottman, *The Significance of Territory* (1973)

² Herzog, *Where North Meets South: Cities, Space and Politics on the U.S.-Mexico Border* (1990)

across international boundaries, most notably in Western Europe and North America. Important European transfrontier urban agglomerations, with populations ranging between 300,000 and one million inhabitants, include Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg (Swiss-French-German border); Maastricht-Aachen-Liege (Dutch-German-Belgian border); the Geneva metropolitan area (Swiss-French border) and the Strasbourg metropolitan area (French-German border). In North America, one finds transfrontier urban regions housing between 250,000 and four million people along the Canadian-US border at Vancouver-Victoria-Seattle, Detroit-Windsor and Toronto-Hamilton-Buffalo, and on the Mexico-US border at Tijuana-San Diego (estimated population, 4.5 million), Ciudad Juarez-El Paso (2.5 million); Mexicali-Calexico (2.0 million), Reynosa-McAllen (0.8 million), Matamoros-Brownsville (0.7 million), and Nuevo Laredo-Laredo (0.5 million).

Transfrontier metropolitan regions typically consist of two or more settlement core areas located around an international boundary. Over time, these settlement centers have fused together to form a single ecological and functional city/region. Somewhere in the center of these connected urban spaces, lie the gateways/ filter monitors-- the ports of entry.

The Port of Entry in the U.S.-Mexico Transfrontier Metropolis

Probably the most important example of the new “transfrontier metropolis” is found along the border between Mexico and the United States. More than ten million people today live in transfrontier metropolitan regions that blanket the two thousand mile boundary from Matamoros-Brownsville to Tijuana-San Diego. Equally important, more than thirty million vehicles and nearly 100 million people cross the border between California and Mexico each year (see Appendix). Urban neighbors have become part of a common transnational living and working space. Under these conditions it will be necessary to rethink the organization of border crossings and the way they function. Specifically, border ports of entry in the 21st century will need to upgrade their ability to serve as conduits for the dynamic cross border activity systems that define the urban regions they anchor. For example, at least five major trans-frontier activity circuits connect U.S. and Mexican border cities within a larger transfrontier economic region:

1. Transfrontier labor markets:

Nearly 300,000 workers legally travel across the border, from the Mexican to the US side of a transfrontier metropolis, to work in the United States on a daily or weekly basis. Countless thousands of others cross illegally with a border resident card (which permits Mexican border residents to cross into the US for non-work purposes, but which is frequently used illegally to get to work). In the 21st century, border ports of entry must find ways to facilitate the cross-border legal movement of workers in the NAFTA transborder economy.

2. Transfrontier consumer markets:

Some twenty billion dollars in trade occurs annually across the California- Mexico border; over thirty million vehicles and nearly one hundred million people cross this border each year. Clearly, this is the most densely populated and heavily used border region in the world. Consumers constitute the most active group of legal border crossers, and are perhaps the primary population that ties together the two sides of the Mexico-US transfrontier metropolis. The North American Free Trade Agreement

(NAFTA), with its emphasis on opening borders and increasing economic integration, will heighten the unification of settlements that defines transfrontier cities. Consumers constitute a complex web of flows north and south across the border. Once again, ports of entry must find ways to support the trade sector, which may include activities located in and around the actual physical port of entry facility itself.

3. Transfrontier tourism/services

Since the 1920's, Mexican border cities have defined themselves partly as recreational places for US border region residents and visitors. In the 1920's, prohibition of alcohol and gambling in the United States served as a powerful catalyst to the formation of a new Mexican industry—border tourism. By the second half of the decade of the 1920's, tourism infrastructure became the defining feature of the architecture of Mexican border towns. So too, the landscape of Mexican border cities began to transform itself in ways that would attract more American consumers. This legacy has endured to the end of this century. Tourism continues to be a vital generator of revenue in the border region. For Mexico as a nation, tourism is the third largest source of national income after oil and manufacturing. At many of Ports of Entry, the tourism zone lies adjacent to the port of entry. In other locations, such as San Ysidro/Tijuana, it is either nearby (downtown Tijuana); the port of entry has the potential to become a destination area for tourists.

4. Transfrontier manufacturing/ Global factories

. Much has been said and written about "offshore" manufacturing, where multinational corporations relocate their assembly work to cheap labor enclaves in places like Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Haiti. Since 1965, Mexico has been an important participant in this emerging trend toward the globalization of the factory. Most of the global factories in Mexico are located in the transfrontier cities. A cheap labor enclave on the Mexican side of the border (in Spanish called a *maquiladora*) is linked to a headquarter office and warehouse on the US side of the border, creating within the larger fabric of the transfrontier metropolis a "twin plant" system of US investors/managers and Mexican assemblers. These global factories are very profitable for both sides. Mexicans charge dollarized rents and gain wages for a growing army of industrial workers (some three quarter million at last count), while US (and other foreign) companies save millions of dollars in labor costs. This sector brings an estimated five to ten billion dollars of annual income to Mexico. The port of entry plays a crucial role, not only in facilitating the flow of technology, expertise, raw materials and products, but also in housing activities connected with this sector.

5. Transnational housing and land markets.

Urban dwellers in the transfrontier metropoli consume not only goods and services on both sides of the boundary, but housing and land as well. NAFTA is spurring the purchase/ lease of land by global investors along the border, particularly in the Baja California region, where plans for international resorts, hotel complexes, commercial development and luxury housing are abundant. Baja California already has the second largest enclave of expatriate American homeowners (the largest lies in the Guadalajara region), with some 15,000-20,000 Americans residing in homes along the Baja

coast. Meanwhile, increasing numbers of Mexican immigrants, as they legitimize their work and immigration status, are purchasing homes on the US side of the border. The border zone itself may also become a neighborhood which could increasingly house some residential development, especially around newly developed commercial areas. Further, the border zone could become a kind of commercial center for certain household related service needs of border residents. For example, banks, mortgage companies, household products and construction materials companies might be attracted to build facilities near the border to serve the cross-border populations that live or work on the other side of the boundary.

The San Diego-Tijuana economic region: a brief history of cross-border cooperation

San Diego-Tijuana may be the most important test case for the 21st century era of globalization and reinvention of the boundary. This is the most heavily populated and economically polarized border sub-region. The challenges for cross-border planning are greater both because the scale of urban growth is greater, and the differences in economy, lifestyle and quality of life are more pronounced. While nearly fifty percent of city dwellers in the Ensenada-Tijuana corridor live in conditions of substandard housing and services, nearly three quarters of southern California's residents live in, by comparison, relatively luxurious suburban dwellings, with a full complement of household services as well as neighborhood amenities such as schools, street lighting and paved roads, something not all Mexican border dwellers can count on. Yet San Diegans have, in the last two decades, begun to acknowledge the need for cross-border planning and cooperation.

As early as the 1960's, the city of San Diego recognized that its future would need to be cast with an eye toward its southern neighbor; a "Border Area Plan" was commissioned in 1965, the first attempt to rethink the growth of San Diego's south bay area and its links with Mexico. That plan forecast San Ysidro as the anchor of the south bay/Mexico connection for the region.³ In 1973, the City of San Diego commissioned two city planning specialists to carry out a major design and planning study of the future of the region. The resulting landmark report urged the city to rethink its planning strategies, placing greater emphasis on land use, environmental and design approaches that embraced the cross-border connections. As the report stated: "San Diego thinks of itself as a border town, but in reality it is part of the functioning metropolitan region of San Diego/Tijuana... San Diego/Tijuana could be the center of a large international region, a vital meeting point of two living cultures. The metropolis would share its water, its energy, its landscape, its culture, its economy. The border would be converted into a zone of confluence."⁴

By the mid-1970's the burgeoning economic and social ties between San Diego and Tijuana were bringing the cities into closer contact. As larger volumes of goods, people, technology and capital moved back and forth across the border on a daily and weekly basis, the first early wave of citizen recognition began to produce a series of conferences on the cross-border connection. For example, in 1976, a coalition of U.S. and Mexican institutions sponsored a bicentennial conference series called the "Fronteras Project," which brought together public and private officials from both sides of the border to

³ City of San Diego, *San Diego Border Area Plan* (San Diego, 1965)

⁴ Kevin Lynch and Donald Appleyard, *Temporary Paradise? A Look at the Special Landscape of the San Diego Region*. Report to the City of San Diego. (San Diego, 1974).

describe the emerging interrelations of the San Diego-Tijuana region.⁵ The following year, construction began on a sixty million dollar light rail connection between downtown San Diego and the Mexican border. One important rationale for building the the “border trolley” was the growing interdependence between the two border cities.⁶

During the late 1970’s, as the economic and social ties across the region’s frontier mounted, both the State and Federal government on the U.S. side of the border began to upgrade their efforts to understand the policy implications for the San Diego region. A landmark 1978 study of the California border economy became the state of the art reference tool on the major economic sectors and policy issues for the region over the next decade.⁷ At the local level, the San Diego Chamber of Commerce initiated new studies of the Mexican connection.⁸ Meanwhile, concern for the growing impact of undocumented Mexican immigrants on the region unleashed a tide of new studies and reports.⁹

All of these initiatives reflected the larger reality of growing physical connections between San Diego’s south bay region and Tijuana. During the 1970’s, Tijuana had fully channelized the Tia Juana river, while San Diego responded with the more modest dissipator constructions. East of the San Ysidro port of entry, the two cities were negotiating a second border crossing, deemed crucial in light of the growing congestion at the existing border gate.¹⁰

By the early and mid 1980’s, the idea of transfrontier cooperation and bi-national planning began to emerge at local conferences, government meetings, public forums, and in the print media.¹¹ Both the City of San Diego and County of San Diego created special offices to address border issues-- the Binational Planning office in the city; the Department of Transborder Affairs in the county. The economic boom in southern California during the 1980’s increased the attention of the national and local media on illegal immigration, while smuggling of narcotics began to increase along the California border. Further, the problems of the border environment began to seriously confront regional planners, most notably those in the realm of border sewage spills, flooding and air pollution.¹²

The early 1990’s brought the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which for San Diego-Tijuana simply reinforced the recognition that economic integration would underscore the region’s future. Locally, the creation in San Diego of an important public policy research and action organization in 1991-- San Diego Dialogue-- added a major new force in cross-border policy-making. Indeed, from its inception, the Dialogue carried out serious studies of cross-border flows of traffic, planning for economic development, and the region’s demography.¹³ The

⁵ See Fronteras, *A View of the Border From Mexico: Proceedings of a Conference* (San Diego, 1976); Fronteras, *San Diego-Tijuana: The International Border in Community Relations: Gateway or Barrier?* (San Diego, 1976).

⁶ See Metropolitan Transit Development Board, *San Diego-Tijuana: One Region* (San Diego, MTDB, 1977).

⁷ State of California and U.S. Economic Development Administration, *Economic Problems of the California Border Region* (Washington, D.C., 1978)

⁸ Economic Research Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, “The Baja California-San Diego County Linkage,” in *San Diego Economic Profile* (San Diego, 1978)

⁹ See for example Community Research Associates, *Undocumented Immigrants: Their Impact on the County of San Diego* (San Diego, 1980).

¹⁰ The key policy analysis on this issue was: Comprehensive Planning Organization, *International Border Crossing: Otay Mesa/Mesa de Otay* (San Diego, 1978).

¹¹ See for example, Lawrence A. Herzog, *Planning the International Border Metropolis* (La Jolla, 1986)

¹² See Lawrence A. Herzog, *Where North Meets South* (San Diego, 1990), chapter 7, pp. 189-246.

¹³ See San Diego Dialogue, *Who Crosses the Border* (San Diego, 1994); *Demographic Atlas: San Diego/Tijuana* (San Diego, 1995); *Planning for Prosperity in the San Diego/Baja California Region* (San Diego, 1993)

Dialogue also sought to inject regional border issues into the 1996 Republican National Convention held in San Diego, by the publication of a border briefing book.¹⁴ Attention to planning along the physical boundary also accelerated with discussions of a possible binational airport on the Otay Mesa/Mesa de Otay, with the completion and opening of the second border crossing at Otay Mesa, and a host of new manufacturing activities around it. Meanwhile, the side agreement on the environment created by the signing of NAFTA ignited an array of new policy organizations and studies concerned with the sustainability of environment.¹⁵

Tight budgets in the early 1990's wiped out the two local border planning offices at the City and County. However, concern and attention to the cross-border problems of the region remained. The City of San Diego continues to address cross-border issues through the City Manager's Office, Binational Planning Program. The County of San Diego holds U.S.-Mexico Border Summits, that bring together county officials and Mexican officials. The county is heavily involved in cooperation with Mexico on service issues ranging from criminal justice, agriculture, environmental health, child services, to air pollution, and hazardous materials. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) actively works on cross-border planning with Tijuana, especially in the areas of watershed research, energy, transportation planning, data collection and the environment.

In the 1990's it has become obvious that a package of new transport infrastructure is needed to strengthen the regional economy. a third border crossing facility, a redesigned border crossing at San Ysidro, a bi-national mass transit connection between downtown San Diego and downtown Tijuana, cross-border highway linkages, regional port improvements in San Diego and Ensenada (Tijuana's service port some 70 miles to the south), rail linkage connections from the urban hinterland to both ports, and a bi-national airport that would serve the transfrontier region.¹⁶

An empirical examination of recent border region infrastructure projects is presented in Table 1 below, which lists projects by category (transport, land use, environment), region, project type and lead actors. This data was gathered over a two month period from first hand interviews, public documents, internet web sites, and library archival sources. It does not represent a comprehensive list of all border region projects, but rather an approximation of the scope of projects in the planning stages, under construction or recently completed. Several observations can be made about this data: 1) The lead actors range from local, state, and national political jurisdictions to private companies, quasi-public economic development agencies, NGO's and cross-border coalitions. There is no single formula for political administration of border projects; 2) Transportation and environmental projects dominate the landscape at this point. Transport projects like roads, airports and rail lines are seen as positive assets to accompany cross-border economic development in the spirit of NAFTA. Environmental projects address immediate infrastructure needs to cities and towns with resource management problems. The "glue" that ties together the environment and the economy is **land use**-- literally the form and functioning of urban regions, and this is the category of project development that is least coordinated on a bi-national basis. Clearly, one of the missions for the twenty first century will be to better balance ecology and economy through land use planning. Obviously, the ports of entry will be the cornerstones of good land use planning along the border.

¹⁴ San Diego Dialogue, *The San Diego-Tijuana Binational Region*, 1996: A Briefing Book. (San Diego, 1996).

¹⁵ See Mark J. Spalding, ed. *Sustainable Development in San Diego-Tijuana* (La Jolla, 1999).

¹⁶ See Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce and San Diego Dialogue, *Planning for Prosperity in the San Diego/Baja California Region* (San Diego, 1993).

TABLE 1

**RECENT U.S.-MEXICO BORDER REGION
INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS: SAN DIEGO-TIJUANA**
(Planned, in progress or completed)

<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>PROJECT</i>	<i>LEAD ACTOR(S)</i>
Transport	Twin ports/airport	City of San Diego
“	Port of entry--Otay Mesa	County of S.D.
“	San Diego Eastern Desert Rail Line	Metropolitan Transit Development Bd. (MTDB)
	Virginia Ave. Border Crossing	U.S., Mex. federal govt.
	San Ysidro Intermodal Transport Facility	MTDB
	Freeway Rts. 905, 125	Calif. Dept of Transportation (CALTRANS)
	Widening Otay Mesa Rd.	City of S.D.
	Tijuana Light Rail transit	Mun. of Tijuana
	Tijuana 2000, peripheral hwy. ring	SAHOPE
	International Ave.: circulation plan for border crossing	Mun. of Tijuana
	Road improvements	Mun. of Tijuana
Land use	International Gateway, mixed use development	Land Grant Development (private) w. City of S.D.
	Tijuana pedestrian space redevelopment at border crossing	Mun. of Tijuana
Environment	Wastewater treatment plant	National Development Bank (NADB)/ BECC
	Ecopark expansion	NADB
	Southbay border wastewater treatment plant, S.D.	City of S.D.
	Border Power Plant	Pacific Gas & Electric (private)

PART II. : Planning the San Ysidro Border Zone

1. Planning and urban development history in brief

San Ysidro became an international port of entry in 1913. But, the town's emergence as a significant population center in the region can probably be traced to its selection as a "bedroom community" or tent city, housing workers and investors for the 1920's tourism boom in Tijuana. This marked the beginning of a powerful cross-border synergy between San Ysidro and Tijuana. In 1957, under pressure to stabilize its supply of California water from the Colorado river, and in the face of growing costs of urbanization, San Ysidro became annexed to the City of San Diego.

During the 1960's, urban growth continued in the region. San Ysidro was designated as a Model Cities neighborhood, and through Federal funds, an array of new multifamily housing projects was constructed. Private developers also took advantage of low land prices and built low and moderate income housing. The result was, according to some sources, a city that had "become the dumping ground for low income housing."¹⁷ The increasing densification of San Ysidro caused further planning problems, as the community suffered loss of identity, schools became overcrowded, and recreational facilities and parks were inadequate. The construction of three freeways, and a light rail transit line further contributed to the fragmentation and land use chaos that continue to define the community. The growth of the port of entry into the world's largest land border crossing has brought increased traffic, noise, and air pollution to the community. Meanwhile, the heavy concentration of border-related commercial activities-- such as money exchange houses-- also attracts illegal activities and instability for the neighborhood. Observers reported a feeling of alienation from government in the 1970's and 1980's.¹⁸ Further, there have been internal rivalries within the community over issues ranging from the widening of San Ysidro Blvd. to the school district, ethnic politics, and future development of the site of the McDonald's tragedy.

2. The geography of the San Ysidro crossing zone.

We can define the San Ysidro border crossing zone generally as the area between downtown San Ysidro (just north of the intersection of I-5 and I-805) and the international border. According to the San Diego General Plan, this area can then be subdivided into three districts:

a) *International crossing/"Grand central station" zone.* This is the area immediately adjacent to the pedestrian crossing. It is bordered by the I-5 to the west, the rail line to the east, the border to the south, and the extension of Camino de La Plaza, where it meets Beyer Blvd. This would be the great gesture of urban design that defines the border crossing. It will house the trolley stop and new multi-mode transit center, as well as entertainment, hotels and shops. The San Ysidro plan calls for this space to be pedestrian-

¹⁷ Herzog, *Where North Meets South*, p. 183

¹⁸ City of San Diego Planning Department, R/UDAT Briefing Book (San Diego, 1987).

oriented, and relatively free of automobiles. It is also a space that houses the bulk of federal monitoring activities of the INS, Customs, and GSA.

b) *International Commerce Support Area*, to the north of the Grand Central Station zone, this is the rest of the space east of the I-5/I-805 as they come together, west of the rail lines and south of the historic downtown San Ysidro business district. This district is proposed as a transition area between downtown San Ysidro and the border, a zone that would continue the pedestrian useage in the grand central station area, , but also include some auto-oriented use, as well as tourist parking.

c) *Future Tourist Commercial zone*, lying west of the border crossing and west of I-5 mainly between Camino de La Plaza and the international boundary, this area is proposed by the San Ysidro Community Plan as a master planned development with tourist-oriented, commercial, professional office and parking land uses. The community plan also suggests a landscaped buffer along the Tijuana river channel to mitigate disturbances from Border Patrol operations.

3. Toward an urban development and planning approach at the San Ysidro crossing

If there is one single characteristic of the San Ysidro crossing zone today it might be termed a crisis of image. Our regional leaders have recognized this. Speaking of the San Ysidro border crossing, one city council member has stated: “Few would disagree that its iron bars, concrete walls and blighted surroundings are an unsightly disgrace to our regional dignity.”¹⁹ The Chairman of the City of San Diego Planning Commission has also said about this crossing, “The border entrance is a very seedy kind of place. There is no elegance to it. When you cross the border into Mexico, you feel like you are going into a second rate place. And it really shouldn’t be.”²⁰

Virtually everyone agrees that San Ysidro’s image must change. For one, it is an affront to the community that so many negative facilities-- immigrant policing, freeways, Federal buildings, fences-- are located here. For another, it erodes both the local economic base, as well as the regional economy to not have a better organized land use system, and a port facility with the best possible infrastructure planning.²¹

Today, the border crossing space consists of a chaotic juxtaposition of land uses: warehouses, parking lots, factories, retail stores, an immigration detention facility for illegal border crossers, freeways, residential neighborhoods, commercial strips and commercial centers, open space for wetlands and flood control, and privately owned farms. One of the biggest challenges will be to create a plan that allows for circulation and economic development while not compromising the needs for immigration control and surveillance of smugglers. For the international customs and border patrol

¹⁹ Juan Vargas, “A Link, Not a Barrier, at the Border,” *San Diego Union Tribune*, Opinion essay. January 10, 1999.

²⁰ Mark Steele, cited in Lawrence Herzog, “A New Tijuana Needs a New Image,” Opnion essay, *San Diego Union Tribune*, March 1, 1998, G-4.

²¹ See Steven Erie, “Toward a Trade Infrastructure Strategy for the San Diego/Tijuana Region” Briefing Paper, San Diego Dialogue (San Diego, 1999).

community, larger populations and higher urban densities represent potential obstacles to efficient transnational law enforcement.

Thus the key question becomes: how to redesign San Ysidro's border crossing zone to achieve the following: 1) lower levels of traffic, noise, air pollution to mitigate the international crossing's impact on the community; 2) better traffic circulation (vehicular, pedestrian) with more pedestrian spaces; 3) higher levels of public safety; 4) a land use and urban design plan that improves the potential for commercial and economic prosperity; 5) the continued ability for border monitoring agencies (INS, Customs, Border Patrol, etc.) to carry out their duties in an efficient manner; 6) a more positive image for the community, driven by less visual pollution, better signage, maintenance of public spaces. The bottom line is that better environmental, transport and land use planning will make the sub-region into the international gateway it can become in the 21st century.

What is called for is a comprehensive urban design planning approach to the San Ysidro international border crossing area. Recent history suggests that both local government and the private sector are beginning to recognize this. In 1987, the City of San Diego invited the American Institute of Architects to bring a team of consultants in to carry out a planning and design study of San Ysidro. The resulting "R/UDAT" (Regional Urban Design Assistance Team) report called for improving the quality of the San Ysidro community as a place to live, by compensating the community for its role in facilitating the regional benefits of the international border crossing. It further recognized the importance of improving the design of San Ysidro's southern edge, along the border, suggesting the creation of an international gateway for commerce, tourism and exhibitions west of the present vehicle border crossing.²² In 1989, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) created its first advisory committee on border related activities. Among its projects are included joint land use mapping of the border area, including the use of GIS information. In 1992, the County of San Diego's Department of Transborder Affairs carried out a study of "The Need for New Border Crossings," in which it emphasized the problems of the San Ysidro crossing-- including congestion and a conflict between drug interdiction and the efficient flow of commerce. The report called for better mass transit connections around the San Ysidro crossing area, and the creation of a bi-national authority and task force.²³ Perhaps one limitation in this study was its emphasis on creating other border crossings over seriously rethinking the San Ysidro facility and its surrounding community. The City of San Diego's community plan for San Ysidro, revised in 1995, also recognized the crucial role of the "international gateway". It emphasized a number of problems already mentioned: lack of places for cultural exchange near the border, few good restaurants, no restrooms, shortage of parking, transient uses (money exchange, insurance) that interrupt the flow of commerce, no signage for temporary visitors, and the lack of a well defined entrance to the community.²⁴ Finally, in an important study of border land use, the City of San Diego completed a report in 1997 which argued that the San Ysidro-Tijuana port of entry was "chaotic, dysfunctional and intimidating," and went on to propose better traffic and land use planning as an immediate priority for the city.²⁵

²² American Institute of Architects, *Adelante San Ysidro*, R/UDAT (San Diego, 1987).

²³ County of San Diego, Department of Transborder Affairs, *The Need for New Border Crossings* (San Diego, 1992)

²⁴ City of San Diego Planning Department, *San Ysidro Community Plan* (San Diego, 1995).

²⁵ City of San Diego, City Manager's Office. "Preparation of Binational Plan for Area of Influence of San Diego-Tijuana Port of Entry," *Report to the Land Use and Housing Subcommittee* (San Diego, 1997).

Recent Projects

There are a number of important projects that are on line or under discussion. All of these will have an impact on the future of the San Ysidro Port of Entry zone, and its surrounding community. Further, they are part of the future of the international gateway functions of the San Ysidro POE, and thus will have an impact on the economic development of San Diego and its role in the city's connection to the global economy via NAFTA. Thus one must recognize that while these projects represent land use changes and infrastructure developments, taken together the transformation of San Ysidro will have much larger regional impacts.

1) *International Gateway of the Americas project.*

In 1997, a private development firm, Land Grant Development introduced a proposal to develop the "International Gateway of the Americas" project, a retail, office, cultural center and public space development project that would locate to the west of the Virginia Ave/El Chaparral crossing. The project states that the site is disconnected both from the San Ysidro town core (by the freeways and trolley line) and from the Zone Norte section of Tijuana (due to the border crossing, river and Ensenada highway). The initial idea was to create a complex of mixed and retail uses, a public plaza, a landmark pedestrian bridged linked to a new pedestrian crossing at Virginia Ave., a World Trade Center, a market facility, and links to the existing trolley, as well as across the border to Revolution Ave.²⁶ Prior to this, the project had begun as a 500,000 square foot shopping center-- "Marketplace at the Border." The larger project requires substantial interfacing with local, regional and international planning processes, and will necessarily require flexibility. For example, the Mexican government and the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) favor the use of Virginia Ave./El Chaparral for a southbound vehicle entry from the U.S.. Thus the Gateway project has moved its pedestrian crossing, originally planned for Virginia Ave., one block to the west, to Louisiana Ave.²⁷

This project was endorsed by the City of San Diego Land Use and Housing Committee, and formally endorsed by the City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency in 1998. Its evolution has not been conflict-free. Writing in the *San Diego Union Tribune*, in the fall of 1998, State Assemblywoman Denise Ducheny harshly criticized the project, claiming it was not favored by the San Ysidro community, conflicted with other local projects, and might have adverse economic impacts on surrounding communities.²⁸ A few months later, City Councilman Juan Vargas responded to Ducheny's critique in another editorial essay, arguing that the Gateway project would be more than a retail development, it would "elevate the profile of an entire region."²⁹

2. *Intermodal Transportation Center.*

The Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB) is developing a new transit complex to replace the existing trolley station at San Ysidro. That station has long suffered from poor circulation patterns and confusion among competing transit users (autos, pedestrians, trolley riders, taxis, buses,

²⁶ Land Grant Development, *International Gateway of the Americas*, Project Proposal. (San Diego, 1997).

²⁷ Interview, Sam Marasco, October, 1999.

²⁸ Denise Ducheny, "A Bad Idea for the Border Region," *San Diego Union Tribune*, Opinion essay, November 20, 1998. b-11.

²⁹ Juan Vargas, "A Link, Not a Barrier, at the Border," *op cit*.

etc.) around the facility. According to the preliminary engineering report on the new transport center, the main goals of the project include: a) limit the movement of private vehicles from the trolley, bus and taxi zones; b) create a pedestrian plaza space; c) separate boarding areas for public and private transit; d) minimize walking, by providing clear and direct access between different modes of transit.³⁰ Ultimately, MTDB officials envision an interface with a Tijuana light rail system across the border. This system is in the early planning stages. When it does come on line, MTDB would like to see a jointly organized ticketing system between the Mexican and the San Diegan trolleys.

3. *Southbound pedestrian crossing east of San Ysidro POE.*

MTDB, in conjunction with the Mexican government, would assist the transit center by the addition of a new pedestrian southbound crossing east of the existing U.S. Customs building (adjacent to rail tracks); this crossing would allow pedestrians to board the Tijuana trolley or simply enter Mexico by foot from the east side of the freeway, without having to cross the bridge and enter through the existing pedestrian gate on the west side of the freeway.

4. *Virginia Ave./El Chaparral Southbound Vehicle Entry*

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is moving forward with a plan to design a new southbound non commercial vehicle entry at Virginia Ave., east of the current San Ysidro POE. The purpose of the new entry into Tijuana would be to improve northbound access at the San Ysidro POE, which is currently saturated. The GSA, working with Customs and the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) would eventually shut down 5- 6 lanes of southbound entry at San Ysidro. The U.S. and Mexican governments would then develop 5-6 additional lanes of northbound crossing lanes at the San Ysidro POE.

According to the GSA feasibility study of the Virginia Ave. crossing idea, the initial problem in developing this project is to meet the needs of all the institutional actors operating here: U.S. Customs, INS, Department of Agriculture, CALTRANS, City of San Diego, on the U.S. side, as well as the Mexican government, which has its own plans for El Chaparral. Of the various scenarios for possible use of Virginia Ave., including a northbound route, a southbound route on both GSA and privately owned property, or a southbound route on GSA property only, the last option is the one acceptable to the Mexican government.³¹ Thus, the development of the Virginia Ave./El Chaparral corridor into a southbound vehicular entry from the U.S. side, appears to be the favored direction for this project. It would, of course, involve realignment of southbound I-5, and construction of a new freeway segment to serve the proposed southbound entry.

5. *Duty Free Center, at San Ysidro*, in the parking area adjacent to southbound pedestrian entry, west of the freeway. This 15,000 square foot retail facility has already been approved by the City of San Diego. It will allow traffic to flow through Camiones Way, utilize the duty free shopping area, and continue circulation south into Mexico. The designers for the Center suggest their design plan will facilitate a pedestrian oriented experience, by screening the parking space from the store.³²

³⁰ Estrada Land Planning, *The San Ysidro Intermodal Transportation Center: Preliminary Engineering Report* (MTDB, 1998).

³¹ SOHA Engineers, *Virginia Ave. Border Crossing Feasibility Study*. (San Diego, 1998).

³² Martinez, Cutri and McArdle, *UETA Duty Free*. Design Prospectus.(San Diego, 1999).

Urban development plans and competing interests.

A central premise of this report is that the future reorganization of the San Ysidro POE and surrounding “International Gateway” zone should emphasize the connection between land use planning and economic development. In other words, although the security, monitoring, and facility planning efforts of the Federal government (INS, Customs, GSA) are vital to the international border crossing area, they no longer should represent the defining feature of the border crossing zone. Instead, this planning area needs to enhance its status as a destination zone in its own right, a place tourists, visitors, and south bay residents will come to, WHETHER OR NOT THEY CROSS THE BORDER INTO MEXICO. In order to achieve this, a number of steps needs to be taken:³³

- a) develop competitive commercial uses that can attract outsiders (restaurants, markets, artisan stands, etc.
- b) create a hotel zone with better quality hotels for visitors
- c) improve the overall image of the border crossing zone through the use of landscape buffers, murals, street improvements, new public spaces
- d) use urban design strategies to improve the pedestrian quality of the space around the border crossing, including San Ysidro Blvd., access points to the west side of the freeway, and the international commerce zone west of the freeway.
- e) improve the circulation of transit for different types of users
- f) add cultural festivals, entertainment, and other activities to celebrate San Ysidro as a unique place
- g) tone down the impact of transient uses around the border crossing; restrict the number and location of currency exchange houses, and Mexican insurance stands.
- h) Consider consolidating all Mexican insurance sales into a small district with a few buildings.³⁴

What we find in San Ysidro is a set of different land users with competing interests in the outcome of San Ysidro’s revitalization: they include: 1) U.S. government agencies charged with the duty of protecting the national sovereignty of the U.S., monitoring the flow of people and goods, and regulating the facilities near the boundary (INS, Customs, Border Patrol, GSA, DEA); 2) local merchants in San Ysidro and vicinity

³³ Some of these steps are described in City of San Diego Planning Department, *San Ysidro Community Plan* (1995)

³⁴ The problem of the “underground economy” in San Ysidro is discussed in detail in *the San Ysidro Community Plan*. Since 1981, fluctuations in the value of the Mexican peso have led to the creation of some 300 *Casas de Cambio*. Aside from the possibility of attracting illegal money transactions (money laundering for narcotics smugglers, for example), the exchange houses, as well as Mexican insurance vendors, tend to bring transient auto users through the community, adding to its negative image as a “pass through” space. Further, the illegal solicitation of immigrant workers (often referred to as “wildcatting”) crossing here adds more uncertainty and chaos to the zone. A comprehensive plan is needed to bring order to the location of facilities, the flow of users, and the nature of permitted activities.

(South Bay Economic Development Agency, etc.); 3) investors and the City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency (Land Grant Development, etc.); 4) residents of San Ysidro represented by various groups such as the San Ysidro Planning group; 5) transportation agencies (CALTRANS, MTDB); 6) the Mexican government; 7) residents and consumers in Mexico

The problem is that these different groups may have conflicting interests. These include:

*--transport improvements, growth and tourism may compete with the “quality of life” demands of the community. For example the San Ysidro community has protested the addition of a freeway connection to a new Virginia Ave. southbound crossing because this would inject yet another freeway corridor cutting through and fragmenting the community.*³⁵

*--transport improvements compete with each other. For example, MTDB (Metropolitan Transit Development Board) has stated its opposition to a pedestrian crossing at Virginia Ave. , since that would compete with its goal of attracting more pedestrians to use the new Intermodal Transport Center.*³⁶

*--more growth and densification conflicts with the security goals of INS, Customs, etc. Both the INS and especially Customs have made clear their hesitation about supporting new pedestrian crossings.*³⁷

--better security may involve changing the way some businesses operate

-- improving the image of San Ysidro may threaten long term businesses. Security consultants, peso exchange houses, and even insurance companies thrive on their ability to function on relatively low rent properties. Redevelopment in San Ysidro could threaten their future.

-- adding new core areas of economic activity may threaten existing zones of activity, such as the lower San Ysidro Blvd. area, or the older central business district of San Ysidro. The perception by some traditional businesses along San Ysidro Blvd. is that the development of the International Gateway project might diminish their business.

-- transport changes (from one mode to another) could negatively impact some existing commercial activities that depend upon “drive by” consumers. Automobile-oriented businesses in downtown San Ysidro and along the boulevard, are concerned that increased use of the trolley (instead of autos) might hurt their business.

³⁵ See for example, SANDAG, *Virginia Ave. Border Crossing Feasibility Study: Public Comments* (San Diego: San Diego Association of Governments, 1996)

³⁶ See P&D Consultants, Inc., *Virginia Ave. Border Crossing Feasibility Study: Technical Reports*. (San Diego: SANDAG, 1996).

³⁷ SANDAG, *op.cit.*

-- changes in location, transport, and land use may have adverse impacts on Mexican merchants or users.

-- land use plans on the San Diego side of the border may negatively impact the plans of the Mexican government.

The Mexican Connection

One of the major uncertainties in the future development of the San Ysidro border gateway zone lies in its connection to Mexico. Clearly, whatever occurs at the San Ysidro junction ought to be directly tied to corresponding land use, design and regional development configurations across the border in Tijuana. The experience over the last three decades attests to the reality that in San Diego, as well as elsewhere along the frontier, cross-border planning is easy to speak about, but difficult to implement. The reasons for this are many, but include:

1) Mexico-U.S. national/ cultural contrasts

The Mexico-U.S. border region brings together not only a plethora of government agencies at the federal, state and local levels, but two very different cultures-- Mexico and the United States-- with distinct values and philosophies about cities, land development and the environment. Equally important, the border brings together nations at very different stages of economic development. The United States is a world economic power, while Mexico is a developing nation with a long history of economic dependence on the U.S. At the border, Mexico's dependence is underscored by the two most important border phenomena of our times: immigration and assembly plants (maquiladoras). Both are driven by the opportunities the border created, either for illegal workers crossing to the north, or for cheap labor enclaves which bring multi-national capital to the region. One must always be aware of these basic economic asymmetries that lie at the core of the U.S.-Mexico border relations.

2) Different political systems

Perhaps the biggest differences lie in the area of politics and governance. The U.S. has traditionally been the more decentralized federated government. Now Mexico is rapidly moving toward devolution of power to states and municipalities, although this process will take several decades to complete. In the past the U.S. government has favored a civil service, merit-driven organization of managers, while in Mexico the management system was more tied to political affiliations. This too will soon change in the post-NAFTA era. Meanwhile, both nations have vastly dissimilar legal systems, with the U.S. system derived from British common law, and the Mexican one from Napoleonic codes. The countries actual laws vary in terms of individual rights, property, land use law, business law, etc. Notions of private rights and "public interest," vital to such areas as land use, property, and environmental law remain distinct on either side of the border.

3) Language, culture, and power.

More recent studies have suggested a number of general and specific barriers to cooperation. General barriers might include language, culture, initiative and politics³⁸. Many public officials from El Paso to San Diego lament their inability to speak Spanish. Even when officials do actually speak both languages, there are still problems in understanding the nuances of meaning and tone in face to face interaction. Mexican officials have expressed the opinion that their U.S. counterparts do not really understand Mexican culture, and this may cause them to cling to a proud kind of nationalism in dealing across the border. Further, U.S. officials must always be aware of the differences in power, wealth and development that underscore Mexican-U.S. relations. These differences have in the past led to what many observers called a lack of initiative on both sides in moving beyond informal discussions to real policy-making. For many years, there was a consensus of agreement about common goals, but no real substantive implementation of change. This is changing in the 1990's with the jolt given to the border by NAFTA, and the recognition of the inevitability of change.

These differences won't likely continue to have the same influence on cross-border cooperation they had in the past. However, a recent anecdotal survey of some U.S. border officials suggests that cooperation is still plagued by the obstacles of the recent past. From Brownsville to San Diego, border government officials and observers continue to worry about the lack of interaction with their Mexican counterparts. Most of the biggest concerns were expressed at the local level,³⁹ as for example, one Imperial County official who said "We've tried in the past years to set up meetings with planning officials in Mexico. But we haven't had success. Administrations in Mexico change every six years, and we can't seem to keep things going." Another official in California stated: "We still only include our side of the border on our planning maps." Yet another local planning official on the California border said "I used to talk regularly with people in Mexico. But they are all political appointments, and they move on. I haven't had much contact lately." In Naco, Arizona, one local businessman stated that "There's really not anything here to work out with Mexico." In Arizona, a prominent business and management consultant commented: "At this point our interaction with Mexico is somewhat limited, but our goal is to promote cross-border dialogue." A Mexican professor in El Paso stated that there is no formal mechanism for cross-border planning in El Paso-Ciudad Juarez partly because "El Paso doesn't believe it really needs Juarez to survive."

The above makes it clear that there is still much to be accomplished. Yet, almost all of the local officials surveyed regularly meet with their Mexican counterparts, and are very anxious to promote cross-border cooperation. As one administrator in the County of San Diego stated "For people in our district, it's a cross-border culture." This same official made an important point that is echoed by all of the U.S. and Mexican officials we spoke with: the best form of interaction currently is informal. Said the San Diego official "Most of our interaction is informal. We all know each other. That's what works best for us."

Studies have shown that the best interactions are usually informal and face to face, one on one. This seems to work much better than written or telephone communication. Many innovative, local and informal arrangements, in the form of task forces and the like, have been successful in familiarizing all parties with local issues, and implementing projects. The categories of successful informal work include planning, construction and maintenance of international bridges, joint health and air quality

³⁸M. Saint Germaine, "Problems and Opportunities for Cooperation Among Public Managers on the U.S.-Mexico Border," unpublished paper, (San Antonio, 1994)

³⁹ All of the quotes in this paragraph are drawn from: Lawrence A. Herzog "Crossborder Planning and Cooperation," *Border Institute Briefing Paper*, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency/Southwest Center for Environmental Research and Cooperation (San Diego, 1998)

monitoring, technical assistance, emergency management, fire control services, tourism promotion, cross-border education and cultural activities. One problem faced in the area of bi-national land use planning lies in the divergent objectives of planning, different regulations and codes and other tools on either side of the border, and the traditional divisions in the location of authority over planning decisions. Many of these differences can likely be mitigated in the future by better anticipation and understanding in advance of these contrasts, a luxury that previous generations of planners did not have.

In a more practical sense, cross-border cooperation often is mediated in the physical space of the actual border crossings, since it is here that all of the people, capital, goods and technology that fuels the border economy must pass. This brings us back to the importance of our current focus on the San Ysidro/Tijuana border crossing zone.

Tijuana's Border Crossing Zone

We have mainly focused attention in this report on the San Diego side of the border. More needs to be done to address the connection of San Ysidro's border crossing land use and development with the Mexican side of the border. For example, the following facts are relevant:

- Tijuana's border crossing is much more vital to its downtown/central business district, which lies only a few hundred yards from the port of entry.
- For Tijuana, the density of residential and commercial activity around the border crossing area is far greater.
- Tijuana's concerns about the future of the San Ysidro/Tijuana crossing revolve around a number of key infrastructure projects: the connection to the light rail transit; the heavy rail, or so-called NAFTA train, the Virginia Ave./El Chapparal new border crossing; a pedestrian bridge at "Puente de las Americas" connecting with the International Gateway project; the existing border gate (*garita*). The Mexican agencies involved with planning and managing this sub-region include: the Ministry of Development and Social Ecology (SEDESOL), the Commission on Evaluation and National Goods (CABIN), the Committee on Tijuana Development (CDT), and the Municipality of Tijuana, and Municipal Planning Institute (IMPLAN).

Local geography

Generally, one can subdivide the Tijuana side of the border crossing zone into several zones:

a) *Zona norte*. The westernmost portion of the border crossing zone on Tijuana's side of the border the "Zona Norte," traditionally what urbanists call a "zone of discard," a neighborhood adjacent (north) to downtown Tijuana, housing some of the less desirable activities, from cheap hotels (for migrants waiting to cross into the U.S.), to "red light district" bars, and illicit street activities. The future of the border crossing zone will have to address how this neighborhood, which includes many 1920's tourism era nightclubs and bars, will change under the conditions of making the cross-border zone into a tourism destination, as well as a retail and entertainment center for residents of the twin-city region.

b) *Transition space from river to Revolution Ave./downtown*. This space is a triangle formed by the Rio Tijuana (which is channelized here), Revolution Ave., and 2nd Ave., which is the main western axis

point into downtown Tijuana. The northern tip of this triangle touches the border. This is a sub-area that will be significantly affected by the Virginia Ave. southbound freeway addition. It is also an area with considerable economic potential, as hundreds of thousands of pedestrian tourist visitors pass through it on their way toward Revolution Ave. and downtown.

c) *Pedestrian bridge across the river/ Viva Tijuana.* This area is the first space across the border exclusively designed for tourist visitors. It includes the pedestrian bridge and a major retail development called Viva Tijuana. The pedestrian bridge facilitates access to downtown across the channelized river, which is quite wide and deep here. From the bridge, users have an impressive view across the river zone and into downtown. However, poor design elements make the bridge an isolated and dangerous place. Unlimited access, and lack of surveillance underneath the bridge attracts transients, litter, unsanitary spontaneous outdoor latrines, graffiti and a general feeling of poor safety. Some areas are poorly lit at night. Built about a decade ago, Viva Tijuana consists of several outdoor plazas surrounded by two story buildings housing tourist goods shops, cantinas, nightclubs and restaurants. It's strategic location in the path of foot traffic en route to the Avenida Revolucion shopping district guarantees some consumer business. However, a weak commitment to good public space design has severely limited business, leading to a very high ratio of vacancies, and the feeling that Viva Tijuana is generally not a destination.

d) *El Chaparral.* This is the former Mexican inspection zone for trucks south of the Virginia Ave. crossing on the U.S. side. Two Mexican agencies-- CABIN and CDT-- are preparing proposals for this zone. The proposals basically interlock with the idea of a southbound vehicle crossing at Virginia Ave., with connections in Tijuana to the highway to downtown and the River Zone. The plans also call for commercial expansion and redevelopment in and around the El Chaparral area.

e) *Immediate border entry zone.* This area is the first space the border crossing encounters upon entering Mexico from San Ysidro. It consists of a long walled corridor leading from the pedestrian entry along the highway, and then opening out onto a parking lot filled with taxis and taxi stands, street vendors, and tourists. Much like sections of San Ysidro, the lack of signage and landmarks makes it somewhat visually confusing to visitors, while the array of activities, people, and noise can also be intimidating.

What is clear from this overview of land use dynamics on the Tijuana side of the border crossing is that Tijuana faces some of the same development issues as San Ysidro: a) the potential for greater economic development if the border zone becomes a destination; b) the need to balance security with economic development; c) the need for better public spaces. One of the big differences however, is that Tijuana's border zone is virtually part of its larger downtown business district, whereas San Diego's downtown is 12 miles away, and even San Ysidro's modest sized business district lies over a mile from the border. This sets up slightly different kinds of priorities for the two nations' immediate border zones, although, in the end, such priorities may not be that divergent. In fact, there may be complementarity, as the San Ysidro zone's economic development is hardly a zero sum game-- it can be part of the larger economic success of Tijuana, and the south bay area of San Diego.

CONCLUSION: WHAT ARE THE MAIN URBAN DEVELOPMENT ISSUES?

The future development and reconfiguration of San Ysidro's international crossing zone is more than a neighborhood land use and urban design problem. Because this gateway houses the largest flow of cross-border travellers in North America (some 15 million passenger vehicles per year, carrying over 33 million vehicles, plus over 7 million pedestrians per year⁴⁰), its possibilities as a catalyst for local and regional economic development are enormous. In urban retail marketing, proximity to high density flows of pedestrians and vehicles is considered a primary locational and facility siting strategy. Indeed, real estate values in most business districts have often risen around the "Peak Land Value Intersection" (PLVI), the point of maximum travel accessibility and human interaction. Clearly, the City of San Diego, and the community of San Ysidro have, thus far, been unable to harness this idea in crafting a community economic development approach.

Changes in the configuration and development of the San Ysidro port of entry and surrounding zone will not merely benefit the local community, but could have multiplier effects throughout the south bay and south county sub-region, and even be felt as far as the City of San Diego. A well designed and well planned San Ysidro gateway could ignite a regional reconfiguration and the distribution of wealth. As San Ysidro becomes a destination in itself, more tourists and local residents may simply come to the border, and not necessarily cross it. Like Old Town in San Diego, San Ysidro, and the surrounding south bay, could become a surrogate for a "Mexican"/border cultural experience, where consumers would feel comfortable coming to the border, without having to deal with the perceived inconveniences of crossing into Tijuana. While previous studies of San Ysidro's economic potential have mentioned the economic potential of tourism development, one can argue that this potential has been underestimated. For example a major study of the San Ysidro economy in the 1980's buried the tourism and visitor potential in a larger model that cast a much wider development net, covering commercial development for Mexican nationals and local residents.⁴¹ However, if pedestrian bridges and other new infrastructure make it easier to cross back and forth into Tijuana, the "border urban village" would benefit the economies of both sides.

Given the potential for significant economic development in the community, the south bay, and the San Diego region, the issues that remain to be addressed at the San Ysidro Port of Entry and the surrounding international crossing zone, include the following:

1. *Economic development vs. traditional border monitoring.* The two very different sets of land users and development actors in the border crossing zone (business vs. federal government surveillance) are headed toward a collision of interests. Whether this collision is destructive remains to be seen. The key question is: can the border crossing zone be completely transformed into a tourism/visitor destination area, while preserving the security functions of the INS, Customs, Border Patrol, etc. One scenario is a medium

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Customs, *Passenger and Vehicle Counts*, San Ysidro Border Inspection Station, 1999 data.

⁴¹ See R/UDAT Briefing Book, "Summary of San Ysidro Community Economic Revitalization Study" (San Diego, 1987).

to long term relocation of any Federal buildings or activities that are not absolutely essential to the San Ysidro gate location.

2. Transportation: access, modes, locations Obviously, transportation infrastructure is essential to the future economic development of the sub-region. One point that has been made in a number of studies of the border crossing is that its absolute dependence on the automobile needs to be toned down over the next two or three decades. The flow of automobiles already overwhelms the border crossing, and causes a range of negative externalities-- including air pollution, congestion, noise and confusion. Mass transit must be brought to the region, in the form of light rail, and perhaps high tech bus lines. More room needs to be created for pedestrian travel. Some specific problems that need to be addressed:

- a. Tijuana needs to develop a light rail transit line. How will this be connected across the border to the San Diego light rail system?
- b. If the International Gateway development (proposed by Land Grant Development) proceeds on the west side of I-5, will the trolley line be extended over or under the freeway to serve this important new activity center?
- c. How will pedestrian move from the main border zone to the new development on the west side of freeway?
- d. How will the International Gateway project connect across border to Tijuana?
- e. How many pedestrian cross-border access points will there be in the international crossing zone, and where will they be located?

3. Land use/urban design/sense of place The problem of San Ysidro is, in the end, one of fragmented land use and urban design. As stated earlier, the border zone area, in particular, suffers from transient and negative land uses (currency exchange houses, insurance sales) which attract too many automobiles, as well as underground activities (money laundering, smuggling, etc.). Many retail spaces limit their sales to Mexican nationals, which, given Mexico's shifting economy, has meant drastic reductions in business when Mexico's economy struggles. Movement through the border zone is confusing, due to lack of signage, and a coherent urban design plan to guide users. The San Ysidro Community Plan's recommendation of three distinct sub-areas: Grand Central Station, Transitional International Business, and Future Business makes sense, in that it begins to reorganize the zone through a spatial logic. A number of other questions remain:

- a. The City of San Diego has approved a duty free facility at Camiones Way, just west of I-5. How will this project's status change if the southbound freeway entry to Mexico is moved to Virginia Ave.?
- b. If the International Gateway project moves forward soon, it alters the order of change suggested in the Community Plan (where that area would be developed after changes are made at first, the "Grand Central Station" and second, the area along San Ysidro Blvd. to the north). This may not be a negative development, but the City should at least address this change of order in its planning approach.

c. In general, the great urban design problem of San Ysidro lies in the poor quality of its public spaces-- around the border crossing, there is a lack of places for people to meet and mingle, along the primary streets like San Ysidro Blvd., there is virtually no significant public life due to mainly negative streetscape design; there are too few parks and public plazas. How is the City of San Diego going to address this problem?

d. Cross-border land use planning/design. Are there mismatches between neighboring cross-border land uses or urban design patterns? Can these be mitigated?

4. *Environment* Obviously changes in land use and urban development will have significant impacts on the physical environment. These impacts are beyond the scope of this report, but steps must be taken to address these changes. Some changes will, of course, be positive, such as a decrease in air pollution resulting from better mass transit options. Obviously, new development and growth will impact the adjacent Tia Juana River wildlife estuary. Steps need to be taken to explore these and other impacts and what can be done to minimize them.