

Almost one in five trips made in the San Diego region is someone going to or from work, even with more people working remotely than ever before.¹ Employment Centers play a significant role in our understanding of how people live and work in the San Diego region as we plan more ways for people to commute. Employment Centers are areas with high densities of employment.

This InfoBits offers an overview of Employment Centers 2.0,² with interactive data dashboards available on our [Open Data Portal](#) (ODP) that enable analyses by Employment Center, jurisdiction, and tiers. There are four tiers of Employment Centers, based on the number of employees that work there. The 91 Employment Centers cover 447 square miles or 11% of the County but represent over 3/4 (78%) of the region's jobs.



What do we know about our largest Employment Centers?

There are three Employment Centers in the region with more than 100,000 workers: Sorrento Valley (East/West), Kearny Mesa (East/West), and Downtown. These centers represent 19% of the region's jobs (399,775). The most common wage and salary³ industry types in Tier 1 include business services (27%), finance, insurance and real estate (10%), government (9%), healthcare (8%), and manufacturing (6%). Employment sector types may influence how people choose to get to work, their ability to work from home, and also how many non-employee visits there may be to that center.

Employment Centers by Jurisdiction

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Number of Centers	3	15	14	59
Percent of Region's Jobs	18.7%	25.7%	12.7%	20.8%
Qualifying Number of Employees	100,000 or more	25,000 to 99,999	15,000 to 24,999	2,000 to 14,999

About SANDAG InfoBits

SANDAG serves as the region's clearinghouse for information and data. InfoBits publish timely, relevant information to the public while providing context on complex issues facing the region.

Did you know?



78% of the region's jobs are located within Employment Centers, even though they only represent 11% of the region geographically



Around one in every five employees traveling to the Downtown Employment Center take transit



Business services and healthcare are two industry types that are among the most common in all four tiers

¹ San Diego County Transportation Study: Wave 1 (2022) Technical Memorandum

² In addition to updating all the data sources used in Employment Centers 1.0, this 2.0 version also includes data on non-wage and salary employees, the ability to work remotely, military bases and tribal gaming facilities, as well travel commute patterns to different community planning areas for the City of San Diego.

³ Wage and salary jobs are ones where the employer generally withholds taxes for the employee and pays into unemployment insurance for the workers. Non-wage and salary jobs include those where workers are self-employed, work a "gig" job, or are contractual workers.

Sorrento Valley: With 8% of the region's jobs, Sorrento Valley is our largest Employment Center, employing almost 170,000 people. This Center's employees earn a higher average income (\$119,056), compared to Kearny Mesa, Downtown and the region overall (\$72,066). Over three-quarters (78%) of these employees drive solo to get to work, with an average commute during peak periods of around 14 miles that takes just over a half hour (34 minutes). In comparison, the 6% who take transit to this Employment Center travel further on average (almost 18 miles) and their commute takes 73 minutes.

Kearny Mesa: Kearny Mesa is our second-largest Employment Center, with almost 126,000 employees. Compared to the other Tier 1 Employment Centers, Kearny Mesa has the smallest number of residents living there (seven employees for every resident, compared to three for Sorrento Valley, and two for Downtown), the smallest percentage that live and work there (1%, compared to 4% for the other two Tier 1 Centers), and the smallest percentage who can work remotely (29%). The most common commute for employees in this center is coming from Chula Vista (10%).

Downtown: With almost 105,000 employees, the Downtown Employment Center is the densest of the top three, with over 40,000 employees per square mile (compared to 11,000 for Sorrento Valley and 17,000 for Kearny Mesa). Interestingly, while this center had the lowest ratio of employees to residents, only 4% of individuals who live in this center also work there, suggesting a high demand for commutes into and out of the center. Downtown Center employees are more likely than others to use transit to get to their jobs (21%), reflecting how the availability of light rail and Rapid buses, as well as the cost of parking, can influence travel decisions.

To better serve this Employment Center, the draft 2025 Regional Plan initial network includes new rail service (Purple Line); enhancements to local bus and COASTER service; new Rapid and Express bus routes; and managed lanes on I-5 and I-805 to give carpool and bus priority on freeway corridors and provide more reliable connections for transit and drivers accessing this Employment Center.

With the adoption of a new Community Plan,⁴ this Employment Center (and Mobility Hub) will be supported as part of the draft 2025 Regional Plan with a new rail connection (Purple Line); new Rapid bus services; new microtransit, including flexible fleets and circulators; and managed lanes on the I-805, SR 163, and SR 52.

To help employees and others get to this Employment Center, the draft 2025 Regional Plan will build upon these current transit services, further enhancing COASTER, Trolley, local bus, and Rapid bus. In addition, a new streetcar line will connect Downtown with areas circling Balboa Park.



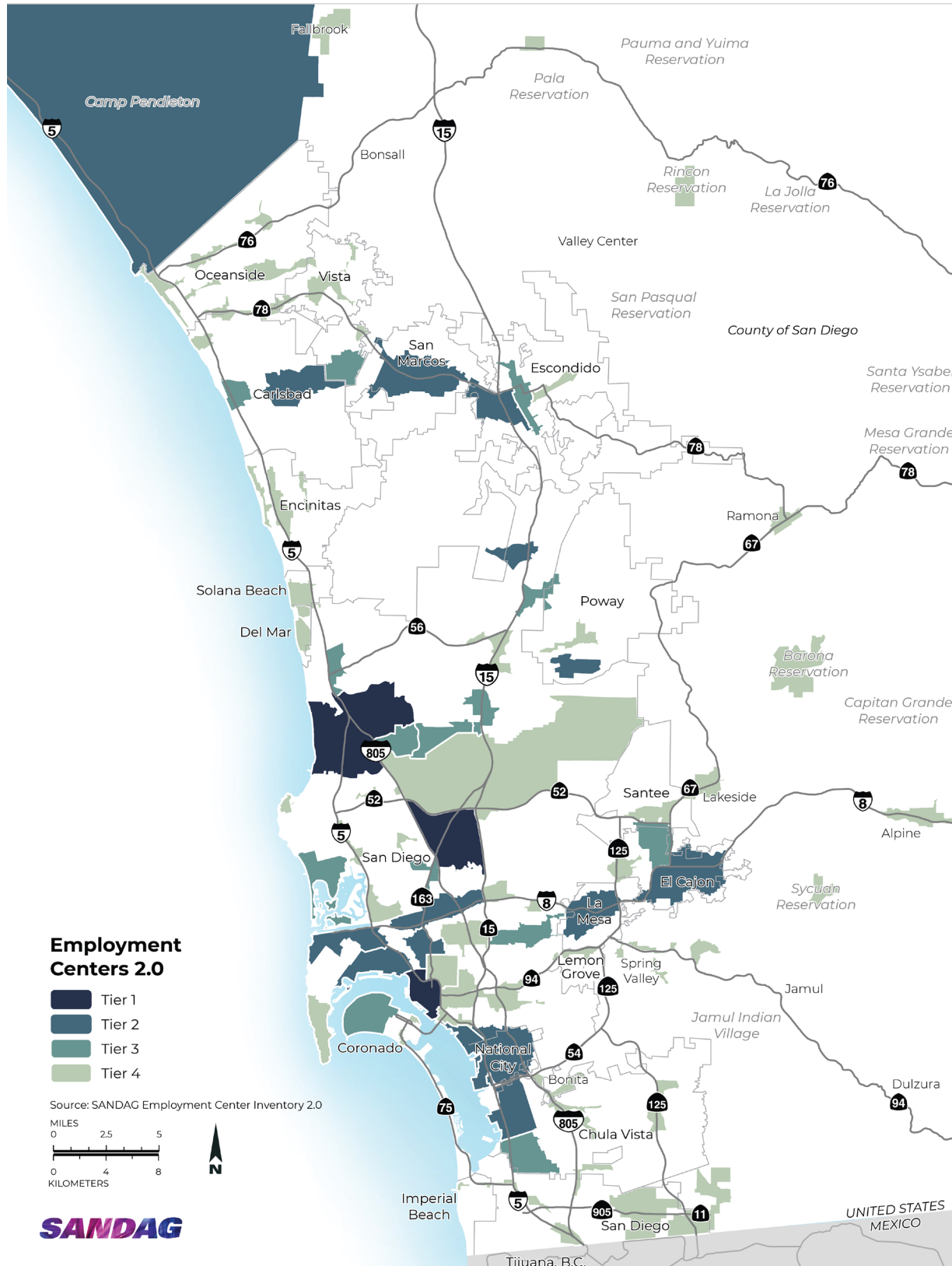
Tier 1

Employment Center: Employees

Sorrento Valley: 169,067 • Kearny Mesa: 125,841 • Downtown: 104,867

⁴ In November 2020, the City of San Diego adopted the Kearny Mesa Community Plan that balances land use needs for employment areas with villages and neighborhoods for a growing workforce. Planned land use within Kearny Mesa supports employment and commercial activity and introduces residential areas through the urban employment village designations. This new land use designation allows for a variety of commercial uses and encourages residential use at both medium and high densities in combination with employment as the primary use.

Employment Centers by Tier



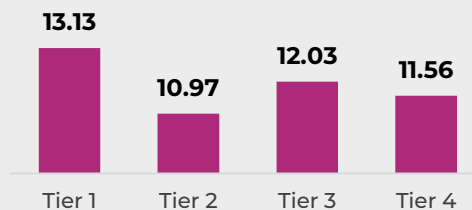
What do we know about Tier 2 Employment Centers?

The region has 15 Tier 2 Employment Centers with 25,000 to 100,000 employees. The almost 551,000 jobs in this tier represent 26% of the region's employment, an even greater percentage than that of Tier 1. While healthcare and business services are common industry sectors in Tier 1 and Tier 2 Centers, the military is the top wage and salary sector in this tier (with the inclusion of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Naval Base San Diego, and San Diego Bayfront); manufacturing and retail round out the top five.

Employees in Tier 2 when compared to Tier 1 have:

- » Lower mean salary, on average
- » Are more likely to live and work in the same center
- » Are less likely to be able to telecommute
- » For those that drive to work, have a shorter commute in terms of the distance traveled and time traveled if by car
- » Less likely to take transit

Figure 1: Average miles traveled by employees to Employment Center during peak period



What do we know about Tier 3 Employment Centers?

There are 14 Tier 3 Employment Centers in the region that have 15,000 to 24,999 employees. These 272,218 jobs represent 13% of those in the region. The most common types of wage and salary industries in this sector are similar to Tier 2 (business services, healthcare, manufacturing, and retail), but also include food services. Employees in this tier have slightly higher mean incomes, compared to Tier 2, are more likely to drive alone to work than Tiers 1 and 2, and are less likely to use transit.



What do we know about Tier 4 Employment Centers?

With a total of 59 total centers, the Tier 4 employment center has 445,522 employees, representing 21% of the region's employment. These centers have 2,000 to 14,999 employees, with the most common wage and salary industry sectors including retail, food, healthcare, business services, and government. This is the only tier where retail is the most common, which suggests these centers can be considered an Attraction Center (places that attract people for reasons other than work) and Employment Center.

For employees in Tiers 2, 3, and 4, new and enhanced Rapid routes will provide connections throughout the region, complemented by Flexible Fleets that will connect to transit and serve short trips within each community; enhancements to the existing Trolley, SPRINTER, and COASTER will help provide a convenient and reliable rail option; and Managed Lanes throughout the region will give carpool and bus priority on highway corridors and provide more reliable connections for transit and drivers.

Tier 2

Employment Center: Employees

- Mission Valley: 62,636
- Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton: 48,714
- Carlsbad Palomar Airport: 47,049
- San Marcos Civic Center: 39,991
- Naval Base San Diego: 37,736
- Ocean Beach: 35,351
- El Cajon: 34,610
- San Diego Bayfront: 34,291
- National City: 33,546
- Escondido Palomar: 31,833
- West Bernardo: 31,528
- Hillcrest: 30,730
- La Mesa: 29,411
- Chula Vista Northwest: 27,223
- Scripps Poway: 25,989

Tier 3

- Miramar: 24,833
- Pacific Beach: 24,613
- Carmel Valley: 23,294
- El Cajon Gillespie Field: 23,079
- Vista Tech Park: 20,912
- Chula Vista Southwest: 20,675
- Scripps Ranch: 19,764
- Rancho Bernardo: 18,727
- Carlsbad State Beach: 17,508
- Escondido Centre City: 16,770
- Mid-City: 15,782
- Naval Air Station North Island: 15,727
- Carroll Canyon: 15,487
- Linda Vista: 15,047

Tier 4

- University of San Diego: 14,887
- University Heights: 14,481
- Mission Gorge: 14,296
- Chula Vista Eastlake: 13,599
- Rancho Penasquitos: 13,362
- Solana Beach: 13,336
- San Diego State University: 13,204
- Santee: 12,841
- Otay Mesa East: 12,736
- Oceanside, Rancho Del Oro: 12,531
- La Jolla: 12,042
- Balboa Park/Navy Medical Center: 11,240
- Oceanside Civic Center: 11,009
- Marine Corps Air Station Miramar: 10,747
- Encinitas Beach: 10,285
- Encanto: 10,263

Figure 2: Key Findings of Employment Centers by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Percent employees live/work	Wage & salary		Average miles traveled
		Top jobs	Percent jobs	
Carlsbad	15%	Business Services	14%	11
Chula Vista	30%	Healthcare	13%	10
Coronado	12%	Military	43%	12
Del Mar	4%	Food	20%	16
El Cajon	16%	Healthcare	12%	10
Encinitas	16%	Healthcare	12%	13
Escondido	25%	Retail	12%	11
Imperial Beach	17%	Military	21%	11
La Mesa	8%	Healthcare	23%	10
Lemon Grove	7%	Healthcare	14%	9
National City	11%	Military	27%	9
Oceanside	29%	Healthcare	10%	9
Poway	9%	Manufacturing	21%	15
San Diego	48%	Business Services	17%	12
San Marcos	14%	Education	14%	10
Santee	12%	Construction	14%	12
Solana Beach	5%	Business Services	22%	15
Vista	17%	Manufacturing	17%	9
Unincorporated	31%	Military	18%	13

Tier 4 continued

Employment Center: Employees

- San Ysidro: 9,825
- Vista Village: 9,785
- Sweetwater: 9,427
- El Camino: 9,212
- Encinitas La Costa: 8,713
- Carlsbad Village: 8,549
- Oceanside Tri-City: 8,500
- Lemon Grove: 8,427
- Morena Boulevard: 8,306
- Escondido Midway: 7,983
- Otay Mesa Brown Field: 7,393
- Poway: 7,322
- Imperial Beach-Nestor: 7,112
- Fallbrook: 7,111
- Naval Base Point Loma: 6,721
- Coronado: 6,599
- Encinitas - I-5 Eastward: 6,516
- Spring Valley: 6,351
- Logan Heights: 6,188
- Lakeside: 5,605
- Normal Heights: 5,430
- Barrio Logan: 5,337
- Oceanside, San Luis Rey Mission: 5,165
- Chula Vista Otay: 5,076
- Ramona: 4,907
- University City: 4,873
- Chula Vista: Sunbow: 4,485
- Golden Hill: 4,468
- Barona Resort and Casino: 4,399
- Clairemont: 4,317
- Jamacha: 4,011
- Oceanside, Oceanside Blvd: 3,811
- Sycuan Casino Resort: 3,738
- Del Mar: 3,649
- Oceanside, Old Grove: 3,297
- Vista Guajome: 3,273
- Viejas Casino and Resort: 3,196
- Lake Murray: 3,044
- Pala Casino Spa Resort: 2,854
- Harrah's Resort: 2,616
- Alpine: 2,599
- Vista Sycamore: 2,400
- Del Mar Fairgrounds: 2,073

Takeaways

- » Using data to understand better where people work and live can help us plan and implement transportation options for the different needs of our diverse region.
- » As the region changes over time with an aging population, more remote work, and longer workforce participation rates, understanding how land use and transportation options align are necessary to create thriving communities for everyone.
- » Ongoing analysis of big data and original data to understand both Employment Centers, but also activity centers will be an integral part of the 2025 Regional Plan process.
- » Additional analysis and comparisons of Employment Centers 1.0 to 2.0 is forthcoming.

What information is available on the ODP?

Employees/Jobs:

Number, education level, age, mean wage, share of regional labor income, percent who live and work in the center, ability to work remotely, industry sector, where they travel from, mode of transportation and travel distance and time (for peak periods), distance by auto any time

Residents/Housing Units:

Number, median age, median household income, race, age

Other:

Percent of the region's employees, land area

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