

2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

2.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The City of National City is located in the southwestern portion of San Diego County, California. National City is bordered by San Diego to the north and east, Chula Vista to the south, and San Diego Bay to the west. National City encompasses 9.2 square miles, of which 1.7 square miles is water. Interstate 5 (I-5) and Interstate 805 (I-805) cross the City from north to south, and State Route 54 (SR-54) traverses the southern edge (see Figure 2.1-1).

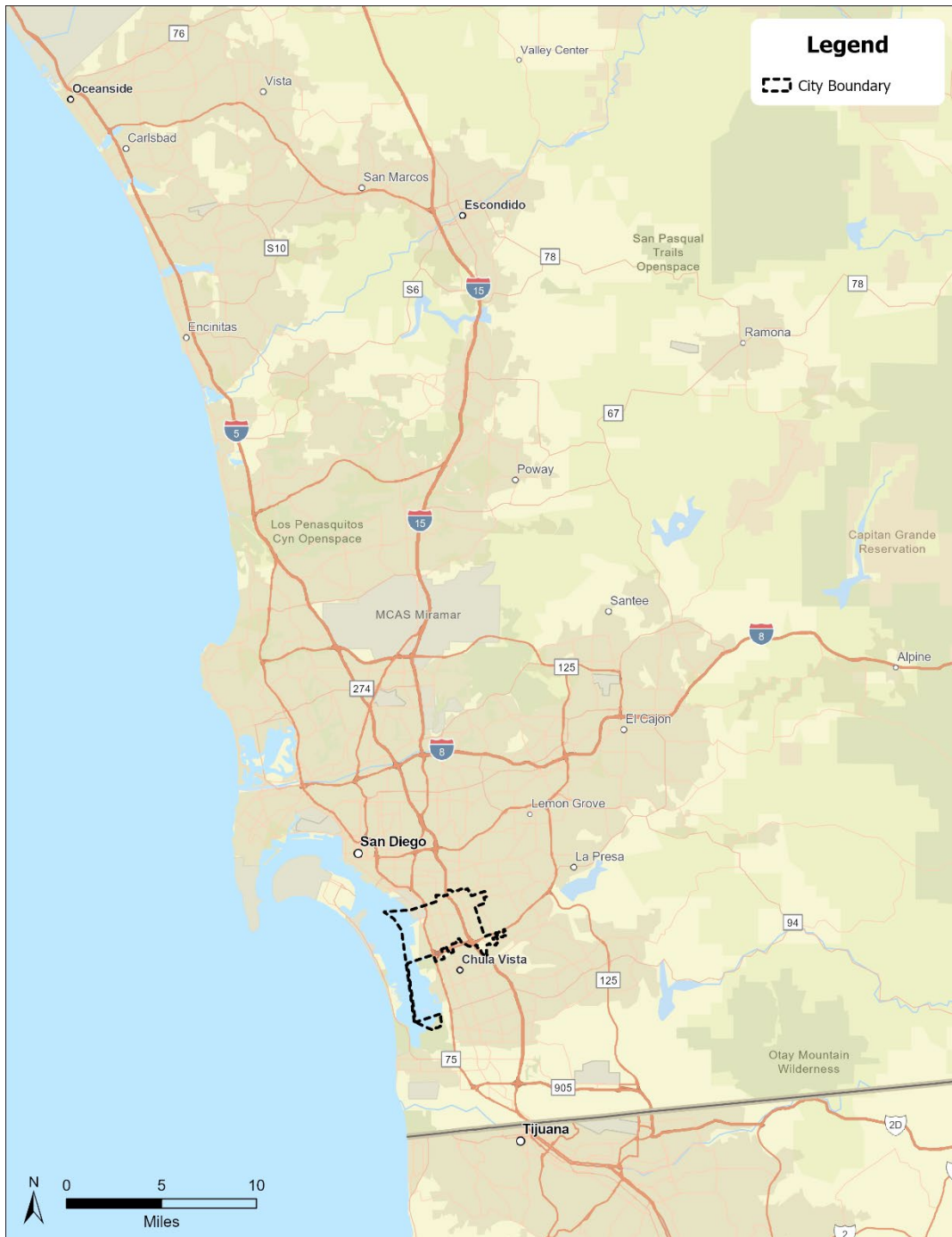
National City lies within close proximity of the San Diego Bay, the United States–Mexico border, downtown San Diego, and other south bay communities. Although no airports are located within the Planning Area, there are three airports near National City: the San Diego International Airport at Lindbergh Field, the Naval Air Station North Island in Coronado, and Brown Field Municipal Airport south of the Planning Area in the Otay Mesa community.

Much of the land within National City to the west of I-5 is outside the jurisdiction of the City and is under the control of the San Diego Unified Port District or U.S. Department of Defense (U.S. Navy). The National City Marine Terminal, under the ownership of the Unified Port of San Diego (Port), is the most advanced vehicle import and export facility on the West Coast, processing more than 270,000 vehicles annually. The Port’s marine terminals are vital components of the San Diego region’s working waterfront. National City’s waterfront extends 3 miles along San Diego Bay and is part of the largest U.S. Navy installation on the West Coast.¹

The proposed Focused General Plan Update (FGPU) is effective citywide and includes the annexation of three parcels within the Lincoln Acres unincorporated community in 2019 into the City boundaries.

¹ National City, About National City, <https://www.nationalcityca.gov/government/police/about-us/about-national-city>

Figure 2.1-1 Regional Location



Source: SANGIS, County Boundary, October 2022. <https://rdw.sandag.org/Account/gisdview?dir=Jurisdiction>

2.2 PLANNING CONTEXT

The State of California encourages cities and counties to look beyond their borders during general plan development and update processes and to consider a “Planning Area” that extends beyond the municipal limits. Accordingly, the Planning Area for the proposed FGPU extends beyond the City’s limits to include the Sphere of Influence (SOI) (refer to Figure 2.2-1 , below).

Typically, an SOI is the area immediately outside city limits where development is likely to occur because of the proximity of existing services such as roads, water, sewer, police, and fire. Since there is no other land outside of the SOI within the Planning Area boundary, because all of the other land surrounding National City is located within the city limits of Chula Vista or San Diego, the City’s SOI only additionally encompasses the unincorporated island portion of San Diego County known as Lincoln Acres. While the City does not have regulatory power over the unincorporated portion of the Planning Area, including it in the Planning Area signals that National City recognizes the impact that development within this area has on the future of the City. The unincorporated portion of the Planning Area will remain under the jurisdiction of San Diego County unless and until such time as it is annexed into the City of National City.

The land most recently (2019) annexed into the National City boundary includes the following (Figure 2.2-2):

- 0.23 acres of unincorporated territory consisting of two vacant parcels along Sweetwater Road in the Lincoln Acres community (Assessor’s Parcel Number [APN]: 563-252-23 and 563-252-28)²
- 49.5 acres of a right-of-way area under the I-805/SR-54 freeway interchange (APN: 563-330-41)

2.3 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2.3.1 Aesthetics

The visual character of the Planning Area is typical of surrounding cities and contains several aesthetic resources such as scenic vistas of San Diego Bay and mountains to the east, cohesive residential neighborhoods, and a vibrant, pedestrian-scale downtown. Existing neighborhoods are predominantly residential, while many districts contain a mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial uses. National City is the second oldest city in San Diego County and has maintained many of its historic neighborhoods and structures, which date back to the late 1880s.

As part of the 2011 CLUU, the Planning Area has been divided into 13 geographic areas, each with a unique character and distinctive land use pattern.³ The visual characteristics of each of these areas have not significantly changed since the 2011 CLUU.

² San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission, Agenda Report 7a Public Hearing, December 2, 2019
<https://www.sdlafco.org/home/showpublisheddocument/4676/637102834232470000>

³ National City, Comprehensive Land Use Update (CLUU) Draft EIR, Chapter 4.1 Aesthetics, 2011,
<https://www.nationalcityca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/4458/636090627169130000>

Figure 2.2-1 Planning Area

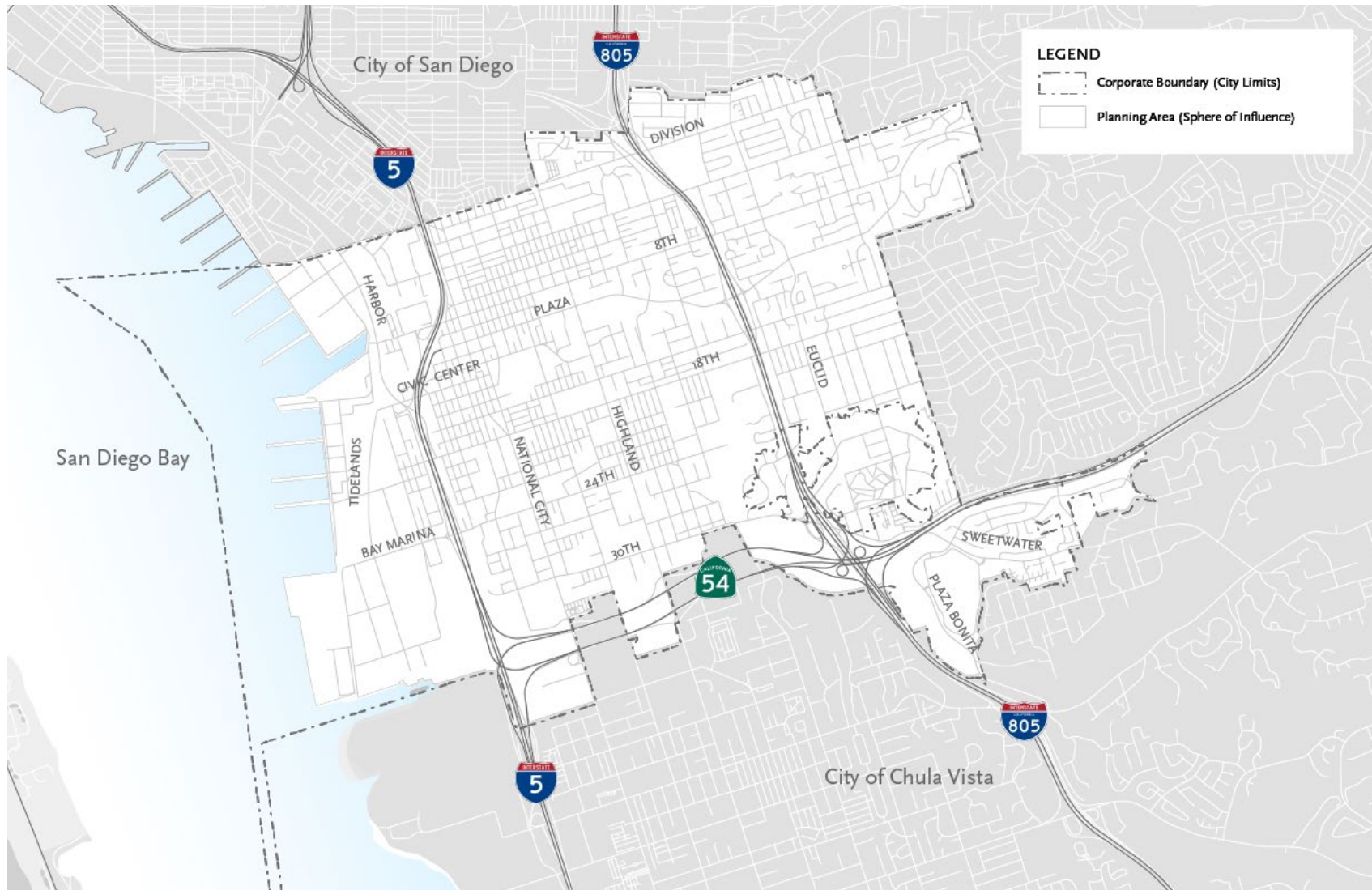
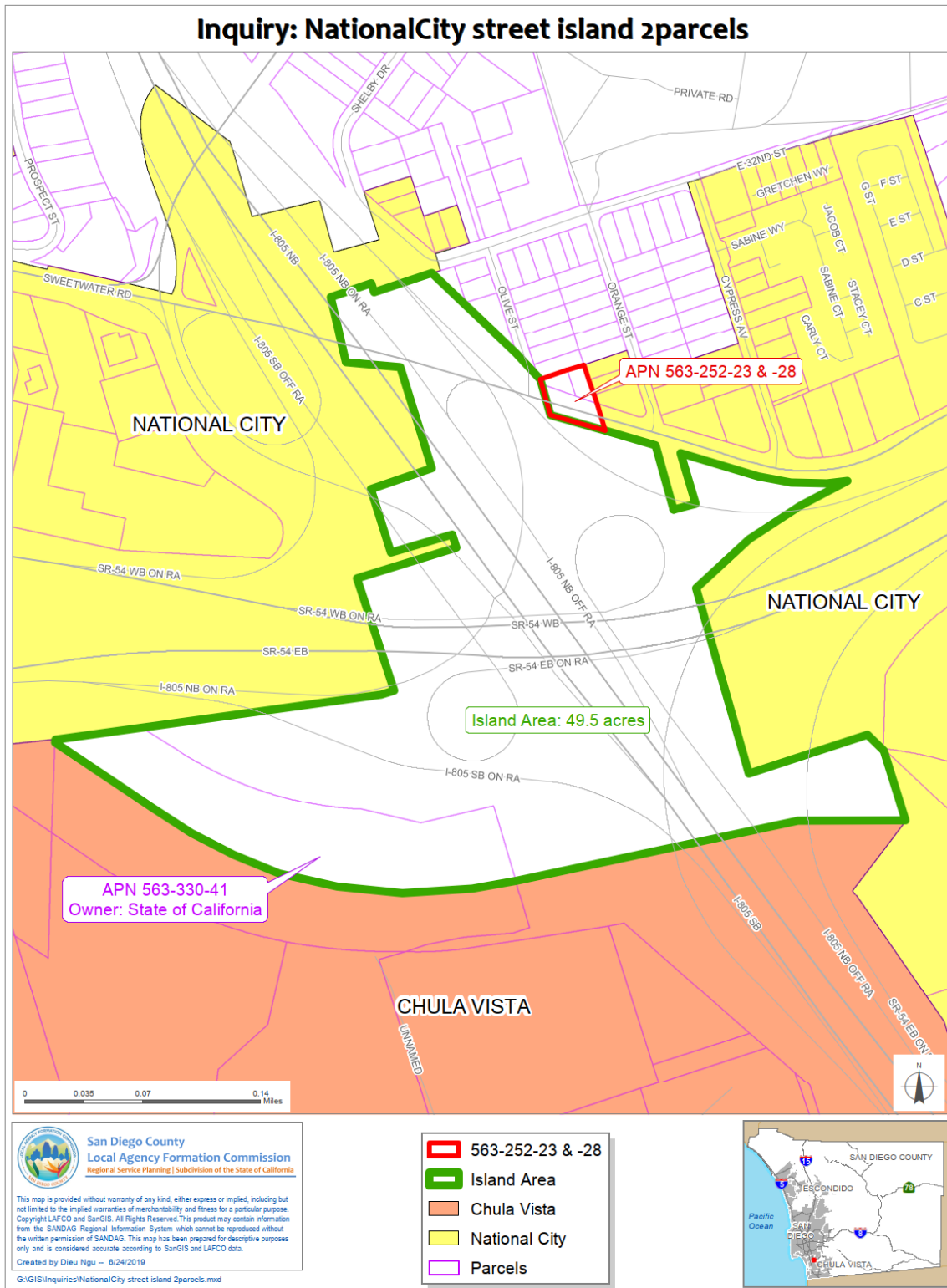


Figure 2.2-2 Land Annexed into National City



2.3.2 Air Quality

National City is in the San Diego Air Basin, which lies in the southwest corner of California and comprises the entire San Diego region. The nearest air quality monitoring stations are located in Chula Vista (CVA) and in downtown San Diego at the Sherman Elementary School.⁴ Monitoring data at the San Diego – Sherman Elementary School station showed acceptable levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) for the years 2019 through 2021. The State and federal 8-hour ozone standard was exceeded once in 2019 and three times in 2020. The federal standard for particulate matter less than or equal to 2.5 microns in diameter (PM_{2.5}) was exceeded twice in 2020. Sources of air pollution in the Planning Area are primarily on-road vehicles. I-5 and I-805 cross the Planning Area from north to south, and SR-54 traverses the southern edge of the town. Emissions from stationary sources and motor vehicles form secondary particles that contribute to levels of particulate matter less than or equal to 10 microns in diameter (PM₁₀) in many areas. Air quality in the San Diego Air Basin is impacted not only by local emissions but also by pollutants transported from other areas—in particular, ozone (O₃) and ozone precursor emissions transported from the South Coast Air Basin and Mexico.

In addition to transportation sources, there are more than 160 stationary sources in National City that operate under permits approved by the San Diego Air Pollution Control District.⁵ These sources include emergency generators, boilers, gas stations, and automotive repair facilities that are common in many cities. Additional sources unique to National City are a number of marine coating operations and a cement terminal silo system. Heavy industrial activities occur at the Naval Base San Diego, located about a mile northwest of the City limits.

2.3.3 Hydrology and Water Quality

Groundwater within the Planning Area occurs mainly within in two aquifers composed of alluvial deposits, the Lower and Middle Sweetwater Basins, and in the San Diego Formation, an aquifer composed of consolidated sediment. Surface waters include the Sweetwater River, Seventh Street Channel, and Paradise Creek, which run through National City and flow into the San Diego Bay. The area of the Sweetwater River that is tidally influenced is known as the Sweetwater River Estuary and is located in the southern edge of the Planning Area on the border of National City and Chula Vista.

2.3.4 Land Use

National City's boundary encompasses approximately 9.2 square miles, of which approximately 7.5 square miles (81.7 percent) consists of land area and 1.7 square miles (18.3 percent) consists of water bodies such as the San Diego Bay. Residential land uses constitute the largest use (26.4 percent, or 1,635 acres) and Transportation, Communications, and Utilities are the next largest use (22.4 percent or 1,389 acres). A detailed breakdown of existing land uses is included in Chapter 4.6 Land Use and Appendix 13.B.1 Land Use Element Update.

Also within the Planning Area are military land uses, including Naval Base San Diego, the Army National Guard (located at 303 Palm Avenue), and the U.S. Government Navy Department (1717 Sweetwater Road). These areas are controlled by the U.S. military.

Three separate agencies control land within National City's Coastal Zone: the San Diego Unified Port District, the U.S. Navy, and the City of National City. The land controlled by the Port District is included in the Port Master Plan, which is undergoing a comprehensive update. Federal lands under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Navy are under the jurisdiction of the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act, which states that military lands shall comply with coastal planning to the extent that national security is not imperiled. The Coastal Zone area over which National City retains jurisdiction totals approximately 575 acres and is bounded by the U.S. Navy lands to the north and the Chula Vista

⁴ Note: The Downtown site was shut down in 2016 and relocated to Sherman Elementary School. Monitoring resumed in mid-2019. SDACPD, 2020 Network Assessment 2015-2019, <https://www.sdapcd.org/content/dam/sdapcd/documents/monitoring/2020-Network-Assessment.pdf>
⁵ San Diego County, Air Pollution Equipment Permits, <https://data.sandiegocounty.gov/Environment/Air-Pollution-Equipment-Permits/33xy-2ab9/data>

Bayfront to the south. The City has an adopted Local Coastal Program (LCP) for this area; development in the Coastal Zone must comply with the LCP as well as the General Plan.

As noted previously, the land within the Lincoln Acres community is under jurisdiction of the County of San Diego.

2.3.5 Noise

I-5, I-805, and SR-54 are the most prevalent sources of traffic noise and affect distant land uses. Major arterials characterized by substantial traffic-generated noise include National City Boulevard, Highland Avenue, Euclid Avenue, Division Street, Plaza Boulevard, Civic Center Drive, 18th Street, Bay Marina/Mile of Cars Way, and 30th Street/Sweetwater Road. Major stationary noise sources include service commercial uses such as automotive repair facilities, wrecking yards, tire installation centers, car washes, transfer yards, and loading docks and are found at various locations throughout the Planning Area, many of which are located along the waterfront and within Port- and Navy-controlled parcels. Commercial and military aircraft are additional sources of noise within the Planning Area.

2.3.6 Public Services

2.3.6.1 Fire

National City's Fire Department provides fire protection and emergency medical services in the City, and the Lower Sweetwater Fire Protection District covers the unincorporated area of Lincoln Acres. There are two fire stations serving the Planning Area; Station 34 is located at 343 East 16th Street, and Station 31 is located at 2333 Euclid Avenue in unincorporated Lincoln Acres. The administration office is located at 1243 National City Boulevard. The Fire Department is composed of three divisions (Administration, Fire Prevention, and Operations) that provide fire control, emergency medical service, rescue, and fire prevention and education.

2.3.6.2 Police

Responsibilities of the National City Police Department (NCPD) include law enforcement, street patrol, traffic and parking enforcement, and investigations. The NCPD has one police station located at 1200 National City Boulevard.

2.3.6.3 Schools

There are three public school districts that serve the Planning Area: National School District (NSD), Chula Vista Elementary School District (CVESD), and Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD). There are 10 elementary schools in the NSD;⁶ 44 elementary schools in the CVESD,⁷ which serves southwest San Diego County; and 15 high schools, 13 middle schools, four adult schools, and five alternative schools in the SUHSD.⁸ Within the National City boundaries, the NSD has 10 public schools offering grades K-6, with one location offering preschool. The SUHSD has four campuses in National City, including its founding and namesake school, Sweetwater High, offering instruction primarily in grades 7 through 12. National City Middle School and Granger Junior High offer secondary instruction, and National City Adult School offers high school equivalency and continuing education. Additionally, the Southwestern College's Higher Education Center and South County Regional Education Center are also located within the City.⁹

2.3.6.4 Parks

The City of National City has six public parks, one public plaza, and a nine-hole public golf course under its jurisdiction. Pepper Park and the adjacent boat launch/aquatic center, operated by the Unified Port District, along with a portion of the County's Sweetwater Regional Park, also lie within the City limits

⁶ National School District, Schools Directory, <https://www.nsd.us/domain/84>, Accessed June 20, 2022

⁷ Chula Vista Elementary School District, School Directory, <https://www.cvesd.org/schools/school-directory>

⁸ Sweetwater Union High School District, About Us, <https://www.sweetwaterschools.org/about-suhsd/>, Accessed June 20, 2022

⁹ National City, Community, Schools and Colleges, <https://www.cvesd.org/schools/school-directory>, Accessed September 20, 2022

but are not under the City's jurisdiction. In sum, there are approximately 119 acres of parkland (excluding the golf course) located within the City limits. This equates to 1.9 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. One additional park, Lincoln Acres County Park, lies outside the City limits but within the Planning Area.

2.3.6.5 Libraries

The Planning Area is served by two libraries, the City of National City Public Library and the San Diego County Lincoln Acres Branch Library.

2.3.7 Transportation

This section summarizes the existing conditions of the transportation network in National City, as described in more detail (with figures) in the updated Transportation Element (see Appendix 13.B.2).

2.3.7.1 Pedestrian

National City is made up of multi-modal communities with high rates of pedestrian activity. From 2013 through 2019, National City installed 16.9 miles of new sidewalk and installed and/or upgraded 675 curb ramps for compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

2.3.7.2 Bicycle

From 2013 through 2019, the City has constructed approximately 12 miles of new bicycle facilities. In addition to the local serving bikeways, the Planning Area also contains two regional bikeways: the Bayshore Bikeway and the Sweetwater River Bikeway. The Bayshore Bikeway is a 26-mile regional bicycle route that encircles San Diego Bay and passes through the Planning Area along Harbor Drive and Tidelands Avenue and provides a link to the nearby cities of San Diego, Coronado, Imperial Beach, and Chula Vista. This route also provides an alternative transportation option to many industrial and military job sites. The Sweetwater River Bikeway is located along the southern border of National City with segments in Chula Vista. It runs parallel with the Sweetwater River Flood Control Channel. It is approximately 1.7 miles long and varies between 8 and 10 feet in width. It connects to the Bayshore Bikeway at the Sweetwater Channel near the Gordy Shields Bridge.

2.3.7.3 Transit

Residents of National City rely more on public transportation than other commuters throughout San Diego County. Of the estimated 25,531 working residents of the City, 6.9 percent commute to work using public transit, compared to the County's average of 3.4 percent. The Planning Area's urban core is well served by multi-modal transportation options that allow for local and regional trips to be made without a car.

National City is served by a regional transit system operated by the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS). There are 10 bus routes running through the Planning Area, with a total of 205 bus stops. Additionally, the Planning Area includes two MTS Trolley stations, which are located on the Blue Line Trolley running from Old Town and Downtown San Diego to the United States–Mexico border. The 8th Street Trolley Station is located near the intersection of 8th Street and Harbor Drive, and the 24th Street Trolley Station is located near the intersection of 22nd Street and Wilson Avenue.¹⁰

2.3.7.4 Vehicle

The Planning Area currently has approximately 110 miles of paved streets and 90 signalized intersections. The existing roadway system generally follows a traditional grid pattern. The main regional freeway facilities through the Planning Area are I-5, I-805, and SR-54. Both I-5 and I-805 provide north-south movement, while SR-54 is an east-west corridor.

The Planning Area has approximately 14 major arterial roadways providing circulation across the Planning Area and to major destination points throughout the region. These streets are typically four

¹⁰ National City, Transportation Element Update, See Appendix 13.B.2.

lanes and spaced at half-mile intervals. Additionally, the Planning Area is served by approximately 31 collector roadways that operate as local conduits to take users in and out of neighborhoods and business districts onto the arterial routes. These are generally two-lane roads with signalized intersections.

2.3.7.5 Truck Routes

Demand for truck movements is primarily driven by activities relating to the Port of San Diego, Naval Base San Diego, and the shipyard building businesses along Harbor Drive. These facilities serve as key origins and destinations for truck freight. National City has designated trucking routes originating mainly from the National City Marine Terminal and linking to regional highways. The truck routes through National City are classified as either “primary” or “alternate” routes. Primary routes are generally described as the most direct routes to freeways and are used for regional delivery. Multiple Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET) corridors also pass through the Planning Area to connect to the working waterfront. STRAHNET is a system of roads deemed necessary for emergency mobilization and peace-time movement of heavy armor, fuel, ammunition, repair parts, food, and other commodities to support U.S. military operations.

These routes are shown in Figure T-16 Routes and STRAHNET Corridors in the updated Transportation Element (see Appendix 13.B.2).

2.3.8 Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The community-wide inventory of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions includes emissions from activities taking place within the City limits. However, for the purpose of the Climate Action Plan (CAP), the inventory excludes the jurisdictional boundaries of the Navy and Port of San Diego, over which the City does not have regulatory authority. GHG emission sectors in this inventory include residential, commercial/industrial, transportation, solid waste, and water/wastewater. As shown in Table 2.3-1, National City’s 2018 community GHG emissions totaled in 518,263 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO_{2e}) or 2.9 MTCO_{2e} per capita. The sector with the greatest contribution to global climate change was transportation, accounting for 58.7 percent of the City’s total GHG emissions, or 304,070 MTCO_{2e}. Commercial energy source emissions contributed to 29.7 percent of the City’s overall emissions, or 153,238 MTCO_{2e}. In comparison, National City’s 2005 community-wide GHG emissions from the adopted CAP totaled 550,714 MTCO_{2e}, or 9.9 MTCO_{2e} per capita. Transportation accounted for 359,029 MTCO_{2e} (65 percent), and commercial emissions accounted for 139,029 (25.2 percent).

Table 2.3-1 Community-Wide Emissions Inventory (2018)

Sector	MTCO _{2e}	Percentage of Total (%)
Transportation	304,070	59
Commercial/Industrial	153,738	30
Residential	48,872	9
Solid Waste	104,920	2
Water and Waste-Water	1,091	0.2
Total	518,263	100.0%

Source: National City, Climate Action Plan, Table CAP-3: Community-wide Emissions Inventory (2018), May 2022 (See Appendix 13.B.6)

2.3.9 Tribal Cultural Resources

In 2020, local tribes were consulted under Assembly Bill 52 and Senate Bill 18 (see Appendix 13.C.10). No responses were received. No reservations exist within the Planning Area.

The tribes were sent the Notice of Preparation for the Supplemental Program Environmental Impact Report in March 2022. No requests for consultation were received.

To confirm that no additional tribes needed to be notified, an updated 2022 Local Government Tribal Consultation List was requested for the Planning Area was completed (see Appendix 13.C.11). Compared to the 2020 list, it was determined no additional contacts needed to be notified.

In addition, a Sacred Lands File Search request was made to the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) in 2022. The NAHC responded on November 22, 2022, that sacred lands may be present within the Planning Area (see Appendix 13.C.11). As no consultation requests were received by the City after the first two notices, no additional notifications were sent out.