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For Immediate Release

The San Diego Foundation Releases *Parks for Everyone* Report
Despite vast green space in San Diego, residents do not have equal access.

Contact:

Vince Heald, Beck Ellman Heald
858-453-9600
vheald@behmedia.com

Anna-Marie Rooney, The San Diego Foundation
(619) 814-1305
heather@sdfoundation.org

San Diego, CA – The San Diego Foundation has released its *Parks for Everyone* report that highlights the disparities that exist in the San Diego region with respect to access to green space. The report, spearheaded by The City Project and The San Diego Foundation, uses geographic, demographic, and economic data to map and assess the overall accessibility of the region's green space. In addition, the report examines the equity of green space access by analyzing whether certain groups of people, based on income level, race or ethnicity, have more or less access to these resources.

According to Robert Garcia, President and Counsel for The City Project, the maps in the *Parks for Everyone* report plot green space in relation to population. The study included 18 incorporated cities in San Diego County, unincorporated areas of San Diego County, the 17 federally-recognized Native American tribal nations within the geographic boundaries of the county.

"The San Diego region is home to a wealth of green space, as well as a large and diverse population," said Garcia. He noted that "green space" refers to all parks, natural open spaces, beaches, playing fields, trails, and recreational facilities. "From our coastline to our deserts and everything in between, the region's broad range of geography presents a wide variety of recreational opportunities."

Garcia emphasized that the presence of green space alone, however, is not enough. In order to truly benefit from these resources, San Diego residents must have access to green space. Many factors, including the proximity of the green space to population centers, the location of natural geographic features, whether or not the green space can be reached without a car, whether or not a park is safe or perceived as safe by local residents, and the planning process for the development of urban parks, impact the accessibility of these resources.

“Our green space is our quality of life,” said Bob Kelly, president and CEO of The San Diego Foundation. “In addition to its intrinsic value, green space provides many important benefits to San Diego residents and to the natural environment. It is a venue for physical activity, which plays a vital role in combating obesity and its associated medical complications and improving overall physical health. Our beautiful parks and recreational areas are treasured jewels that locals and visitors enjoy.”

“The Foundation has a long history of supporting community efforts to protect natural areas and parks,” noted Emily Young, Senior Director of The Foundation’s Environment Program. “This report will help to inform our future work to enhance access to these areas.” The *Parks for Everyone* report noted that physical activity also promotes social development, encourages healthy lifestyle choices, positively impacts students’ academic performance, and contributes to psychological well-being. Additionally, green space provides economic benefits to the San Diego region in the form of increased property values and through the revenue generated by visiting and using green space. It also offers important environmental benefits, such as helping to combat climate change, storm water absorption, air and water pollution reduction, and providing habitat for animals and plants.

“The report helps build awareness on the benefits to outdoor recreation and diversity of open spaces within our community,” said Myrian Solis Coronel, community relations administrator for Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI).

According to SANDAG, approximately 45 percent of the total land area of the San Diego region is green space. Unfortunately, not all San Diegans have equal access to these green spaces. Seth Strongin, The City Project’s Policy and Research Manager, explained an area is said to be “park-poor” if there are fewer than three acres of green space for every thousand residents. “Income-poor” is defined as areas where the median household income is at or below \$47,959.

“Many communities in the San Diego region are considered park-poor even though the region as a whole is park-rich,” said Strongin.

“Fortunately, there is hope,” said Kelly. “Opportunities exist to create new green space and improve access to existing green spaces within the San Diego region.” He noted that the *Parks for Everyone* report identifies several exciting projects that are

already underway, with many of these projects happening in park-poor areas, and new opportunities for providing access to the region's existing green spaces are still out there.

“A common thread through these projects is the involvement of coalitions of stakeholders of concerned citizens, community groups, planners, funders, and government authorities,” Kelly said. “This report is a call to action for each of these stakeholders to continue their work and to expand their scope to include issues of access.”

Kelly added, “The people of San Diego clearly recognize the importance and value of green space. But the presence of green space is only part of the equation. It is imperative that all San Diegans are equally able to access these green spaces. Equitable green access throughout the San Diego region is required in order to ensure livability and quality of life for all.”

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About The San Diego Foundation

Founded in 1975, The San Diego Foundation enhances the community by working with individuals, businesses and organizations to establish charitable funds. Grants from these funds support charitable groups and programs working to improve the quality of life in San Diego County and beyond. For additional information, please visit The San Diego Foundation at www.sdfoundation.org.