

Community Development

Introduction

Probably the most dramatic impact on community development and urban growth in Baja California Sur is migration. In-migration from foreign tourists, ex-patriates, and seasonal visitors, mainly from the U.S. and Canada, is accelerating the growth rate and bringing cultural changes to many urban areas in the state. This surge in tourism-related economic growth is also bringing a second type of migration to the state – workers from other parts of Mexico seeking a better economic future. Not all of these migrants flock to the coast for construction and tourism services jobs, however; migrant workers also labor in the fertile valleys near Todos Santos and in Comondú for up to eight months of the year.

In Baja California Sur, migrants accounted for less than 1% of the total population in the 1950s; in the 1960s, this rose to 6.7%, to 11.8% in the 1970s; and to 21.6% in the 1980s. In 1992, 30.5% of the state population consisted of migrants. Today, Baja California Sur has neither the public infrastructure nor the capacity to absorb and serve all migrant laborers coming to the state. Illiteracy has increased in the state, and large slums and shantytowns have sprung up in San José del Cabo, Cabo San Lucas, Loreto, and La Paz, increasing the pressure on the state to meet demands for public utilities, education and health services.¹

Overall, the state calculates the arrival of between 20,000 and 25,000 workers and their families during the high seasons – roughly 5% of its population. In 2004, the Agricultural Day Workers Service Program (PROAJAG) of the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL) estimated a total of between 28,000-30,000 agricultural day-workers in the state. Of these, PROAJAG works in twenty-seven locations (crop fields located in the municipalities of La Paz and Mulegé, and communities of day-workers living in the valleys of Vizcaíno and Santo Domingo), reaching about half to two-thirds of this needy population.

Indigenous workers comprise an unknown portion of the migrant population although the National Commission for Human Rights calculates that there are some 3,468 speakers of indigenous languages in the state (almost one percent of the population). Thirty-two indigenous languages were identified, with the highest concentration of speakers in La Paz and Mulegé.² Education and labor relations are severely affected by this language barrier, further isolating this transient population.

Key Findings

Attention to communities for social services is correlated to their proximity to the state highway network. The network of paved highways increases accessibility, and thus, the distance from this network affects the ability of social service providers, government officials, and nongovernmental organizations to attend to community needs on a regular basis. For example, in the areas in the mountains and valleys of Los Cabos and La Paz, the need for resources is greater in localities ranging from 6 – 20 km (3.7 – 12.4 miles) away from the highway than in localities ranging from 0 – 5 km (0 – 3.1 miles) away. Localities that are up to 120 km (74.6 miles) from the road are severely limited in their development options.³

The state government has identified water scarcity and increased demand as a statewide problem, as 18% of the most important aquifers are already overexploited. The main problems include the deterioration in the quality of underground water (saline intrusion and pollution), the insufficiency of water management infrastructure for replenishing the aquifers, insufficient enforcement of laws and regulatory policies governing resource use, and underutilization of seawater as an alternative water source.⁴

The Comisión Nacional de Agua (CNA)'s state manager, Mr. Lorenzo Arrillaga, points to infrastructure improvements as a necessary solution, but consumers at the municipal level must be willing to pay for them. Mr. Arrillaga reported debts in each municipality as: 4,000,000 pesos (approximately US\$378,340) in Mulegé, 2,000,000 pesos (approximately US\$189,170) in Loreto, 4,500,000 pesos (approximately US\$425,633) in Comondú, and eleven million pesos (approximately US\$1,040,435) in La Paz. Only Los Cabos had no outstanding debts. If these debts were cleared, the funds could be channeled into water management infrastructure, for which the CNA would contribute 50% of the cost.⁵

1. Housing and urban planning issues

Baja California Sur is experiencing a housing deficit – the result of lack of land available for building lots at reasonable prices, the shortage of funds to address urban zoning, and the insufficiency of loans to obtain a decent dwelling.⁶ State and municipal urban development plans need to be updated and the Housing Institute of Baja California Sur (INVI) needs to be better coordinated with the federal

Saving and Subsidy for Progressive Housing Program (VivAh). At the present time, VivAh's investment in Baja California Sur is less than other states with similar populations.

Private companies have been invited to participate by entering into agreements with the property owners to sell vacant lots to INVI. INVI has a "build-it-yourself" program to release federal financing, using services of technical experts to negotiate the INVI debt, as well as programs that promote access to credit. In addition, the state is considering creating a "land bank" for houses and lots, accompanied by technical services provided by companies that construct low-cost housing.⁷

For existing housing, Baja California Sur exceeds the national average with regard to dwellings with sewer, water, and electricity connections. Of the 105,229 dwellings recorded in Baja California Sur by the INEGI census in 2000, 89.34% of dwellings presently have sanitation services, including 85.77% with running water and 79.27% with drainage. Only 2% of residents in the state do not have any services at all.⁸ As of 2003, 96% of the population has electricity, putting the state above the national mean of 93%.⁹ The proportion of dwellings with floors and roofs made of solid, durable materials is also above the national average. However, the state has a greater proportion of dwellings with roofs made of light, makeshift materials, which is problematic during hurricane season.¹⁰

Recent migration to urban areas has led to uncontrolled settlements on the outskirts, creating dangerous social and health conditions, principally in Los Cabos. Similar problems are beginning to emerge in Loreto which has only begun to experience increases in the level of urban development.

In La Paz, the uncontrolled growth comes from the strong attraction of migrant population to the capital. The resulting disorderly expansion is mainly in areas unsuitable for human habitation, including arroyos and flood plains, generating not only a negative impact on the environment and on living conditions but also creating otherwise preventable public safety risks to those ultimately living in these squatter settlements.¹¹

As migration continues, pressure for additional land, especially in coastal areas is increasing, particularly in La Paz, Loreto and Los Cabos. This situation is problematic as it increases the demand for property, often resulting in conflicts over ownership of communal and private parcels of land.¹² The state delegate of the Land Ownership Regularization Commission (CORETT), Pedro Aguilar, commented that CORETT operates the *Suelo Libre*, or "Free Soil," program throughout Baja California Sur. The program creates land reserves for urban growth by expropriating the lands of *ejido* communities, with the consent of the *ejidatarios*, converting them

into federal lands, and regularizing them by giving deeds to the owners.¹³

"Alternative Futures" projects in La Paz and Loreto

Led by Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, in collaboration with the University of Arizona, UABCS, San Diego State University, CIBNOR, and Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the Alternative Futures research projects evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of different development scenarios in La Paz and Loreto, using a timeframe of 10-25 years. Special consideration was given to the impacts that urban development would have on the natural environment, especially on each city's hydrological system.

The main goal of the two Alternative Futures studies, was to assist local/regional decision-makers with their economic projections, land-use planning, and infrastructure investments for La Paz and Loreto, since otherwise "...there is the risk of damaging its economy, hydrology and environment and its landscape on which it depends."¹⁴ Sufficient drinking water, public access to beaches and shores, increases in per capita income and the regional economy, and protection of marine and terrestrial ecosystems were some of the objectives that civic and elected leaders identified as important factors to future urban development in these areas.

The La Paz mayor at the time of the report's release, Victor Guluarte, said that the project "will help create a more attractive city, which will benefit local trade."¹⁵ In La Paz, the study was carried out in 2004 with UABCS, emphasizing municipal water and sewer infrastructure, as well as public amenities, such as the *malecón*, Balandra Beach, El Mogote, and the historic core of the city. These issues continue to drive civic participation in La Paz as local citizens and elected officials weigh the pros and cons of future large-scale resort development, municipal treatment facilities, and expanded tourism.

In Loreto, a proposed urban development plan for the city provided the context for the Alternative Futures research in 2005. With five academic partners from the U.S. and Mexico, the Harvard team focused on groundwater resources, tourism, real estate, and visual corridors to the islands and the mountains. Desalination emerged as a key predictor of any future population growth, as the city's available water supplies will not sustain a population beyond 30,000 people. Therefore, impacts on energy use, marine resources, and existing residents must be considered before further growth is contemplated. Local citizens have become increasingly engaged in this discussion.

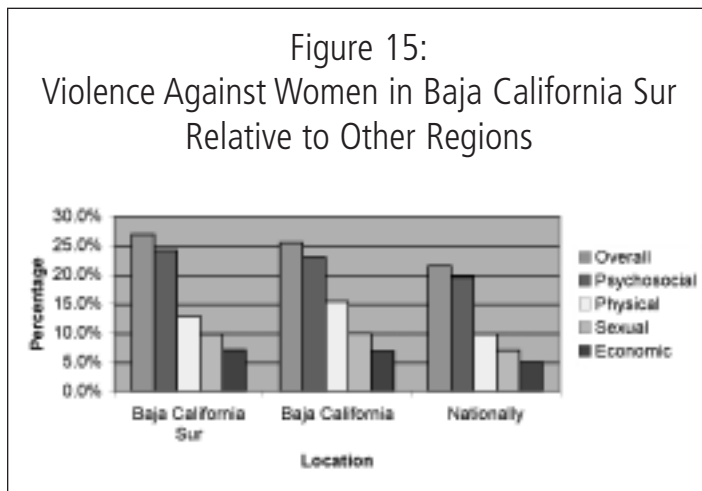
2. Domestic Violence

According to the Deputy General Attorney's Office, one of the main causes of violence against women and minors is the rise in alcohol and drug addiction in Baja California Sur. In addition to physical violence, psychological abuse is increasingly common. Also on the rise is violence against young women, which commonly occurs during dating.

According to data from the National Survey on Violence against Women (ENVI) 2003, Baja California Sur's rate of domestic violence (26.9%) is much higher than the national mean (21.5%). Domestic violence in this context is defined as psychological, physical, economic or sexual violence by the victim's fiancé, spouse, or companion. This situation is even more serious than in Baja California, which records a rate of 25.5%.¹⁶

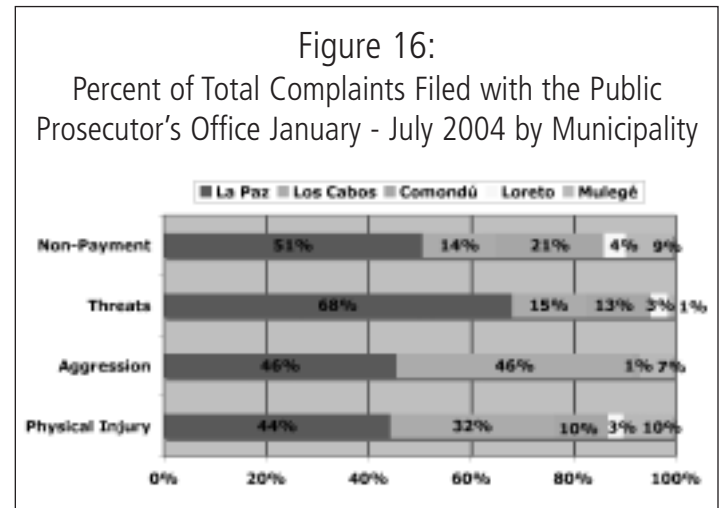
Psycho-social violence, or emotional battery, is defined as humiliation, contempt in front of others, jealousy, blows or kicks to objects or furniture, destruction of belongings, threats of blows, threats with a sharp weapon or firearm, and threats of killing directed against women, men or underage children. Physical violence occurs when a person intentionally pushed, pulled, twisted an arm, punched or slapped, kicked, or beat with a stick, belt or other household object. Sexual violence is defined as demanding sexual relations, threatening to go with other women if sexual relations did not occur, or using physical violence to have sexual relations. Economic violence occurs when a partner controls all access to money, or uses the victim's belongings against their wishes.

The following graph shows violence against women by category:



During the first half of 2004, there was a slight increase in the percentages of complaints for physical injury and aggression in comparison to the total percentages recorded

for 2003. On the basis of these records, it is clear that physical injury and aggression are the principal forms of domestic violence against women and minors, followed by the non-payment of family assistance obligations.



3. Prisons and prisoner re-entry issues

Baja California Sur's prison infrastructure is overburdened. For example, in 1998, the rehabilitation center (CERESO) of La Paz showed an excess population of 50%; with construction and remodeling, this was reduced to 33%. A little under half of the inmates of state penitentiaries are under federal jurisdiction, and of those less than 60% have sentences. The funds sent by the federal Ministry of Interior for their maintenance are entirely insufficient.¹⁷ In 2003, according to the Ministry of Interior, the five CERESOs in Baja California Sur have a total capacity for 896 prisoners. Of the 410 minors in the system, 23.6% are repeat offenders (29.7% fewer than in 2002).¹⁸

Robbery is the most reported crime, hovering between 43% in 1998 and 40% of the crimes investigated by the public prosecutor's office in 2003. Minor offenses, such as property damage, and injuries, such as sexual assault, are next with between 12-25% of the reported cases. Violent crime is a very small percentage of cases, with homicides at just 0.5% of all reported crimes for 1998, 2002, and 2003.

4. Public places

Although the state has an abundance of natural protected areas that provide the visual backdrop for most of Baja California Sur's largest cities, these areas are largely inaccessible because of their rugged terrain, harsh conditions (heat, lack of water, and wind), as well as a lack of infrastructure to visit them (transportation, interpretive trails, and rangers). Public beaches are also popular with the state's residents, but private tourism-related facilities, such as hotels, golf courses, and marinas, compete for

these prime locations, and often restrict public access.

The town square is still the nexus for most public activities, even if it is not very large. Dances, concerts, and *lotería* games are common during the evenings and weekends. Most coastal communities also have a *malecón*, a seaside walkway for strolling families and couples, although they are often the first target during hurricanes or other natural disasters, taking years to repair.



There is a distinct lack of sports and recreational facilities around the state that serve the needs of the young population. This is critical for combating obesity, as well as providing organized, after-school activities for schoolchildren. Without community centers, sports fields, tennis and basketball courts, and gymnasiums, the young are turning to drugs and alcohol. Sports Promotional Councils have been suggested to encourage more civic participation in creating these public amenities.

5. Attention to the elderly population

One of every 20 Mexicans nationwide is in the 65 and over age group, growing to one of every eight inhabitants by the year 2030. This will represent a challenge for the pension system, and will draw attention to the emerging patterns of mortality, formerly characterized by infectious and contagious illnesses, but increasingly dominated by chronic, degenerative complaints.¹⁹ The ISSSTE in Baja California Sur provides social security and services for a total of 16,299 individuals whose ages range between 50 and 75. The “Aging Successfully” program gives the elderly special counseling on how to improve their nutritional habits, as well as how to preserve their quality of life over 55.

This population contains a substantial part of the nation’s experience and knowledge, yet this braintrust is often under-utilized because of misconceptions about an individual’s ability to work and contribute after retirement. This social

expectation has led to a tendency toward loss of self-esteem, as well as exclusion and segregation of the elderly, resulting in discrimination and labor restrictions toward the elderly. Consequently, employment opportunities appropriate to their circumstances, experience and skills are limited, straining income and self-sufficiency.²⁰

Faced with this situation, the state government is working to build a system of training and transmission of knowledge from the elderly to the young, through schools, community service clubs, culture, sport, and other fields of social activity. A state system of incentives and compensations for the over-sixties is envisioned that will enable them to earn a decent income and give them open access to social security (ranging from health services to cultural programs).²¹

6. Addressing the needs of the disabled

Very little has been done with regard to the infrastructure that is needed to provide adequate access for the disabled in Baja California Sur. As in many countries, the physically and mentally challenged population is cared for by family, rarely educated, and has little social interaction beyond their immediate neighborhood. A recent increase in the number of suicides among the disabled community due to a lack of adequate mobility and rehabilitation equipment (such as crutches, wheelchairs, neck braces, canes, prosthetics, etc.) reflects this disconnect with society.

With job training programs in place, transportation, and infrastructure improvements, these individuals could be contributing to household income as well as their own sense of well-being. Since 2003, U.S.-based organizations have been slowly introducing orthopedic equipment, assistive technology, adaptive playgrounds, and ramps in La Paz and Cabo San Lucas municipalities to begin the process of bringing recreation, schools, clinics, and other community facilities to the disabled.²²

7. Addressing rural community needs

On the basis of information supplied by the twenty-five *ejido* authorities interviewed,²³ ten (40%) stated that the *ejido* population has a good quality of life, 56% fair, and only one *ejido* considered it poor. However, despite substantive progress with basic utilities (water and electricity), local authorities and the state government are faced with the inability to provide *ejidos* with more services.

Most *ejidos* have problems with alcohol and drug addiction. Sixty-eight percent consider alcoholism a problem, and 64% acknowledge increased drug use. In all cases, the younger population (between eighteen and thirty years of age) is the target, with marijuana, cocaine, and crystal meth as the main drugs in use. The absence of leisure activities and

sports facilities, and the lack of sports promotion, as well as the relative isolation and scattering of the localities and migration are considered to be the main causes of addiction.

Trash and pollution are also major rural issues. The majority of *ejidos* have no sewer systems; in others the system is unfinished or does not cover the entire population. In fact, *ejidos* use septic tanks or latrines; the latter are often open-air. Lack of garbage service is an issue for most *ejidos*. Most *ejidos* have no landfill, and all have open-air garbage dumps. Many of the inhabitants deposit their garbage outside of the dumps; many burn their trash at home. The great majority of these *ejidos* have no regular garbage pickup service, restricting their ability to deposit large items, like cars.

8. Civic Engagement

Recent changes to the Mexican federal transparency laws to allow greater access to formerly confidential documents have accelerated civic participation in Baja California Sur. In addition, U.S. and Canadian ex-patriates are forming organizations that mirror the vibrant civil society network in those countries, providing a new model for Mexican public participation.

Neighborhood committees, urban and rural organization councils, social welfare committees, and beneficiaries' committees are just some of the emerging civic-government advisory groups in Baja California Sur. New nonprofits in almost every sector – health, education, environment, community development, arts and culture – seek board members and volunteers to lend their expertise and networks.

However, as the state's larger cities continue to expand due to in-migration and natural population growth, civic and quality of life issues struggle for prioritization. Temporary and permanent agricultural workers are forced to focus on maintaining basic needs that are not provided by their employers, such as adequate housing and medical care. These workers are disenfranchised from regional values and civic pride, affecting their political and social decision-making for themselves and the next generation.

9. Stray Dogs

There are approximately 32,000 dogs without owners in the state. These animals are a serious problem, particularly in rural areas, since they can become wild and potentially dangerous. In the urban environment, dog feces are deposited in public thoroughfares, causing serious health concerns from parasites. There is no system to control these animals, although several nonprofits are beginning to organize animal shelters, as well as spaying and neutering programs in the cities. No municipality has a dog pound.²⁴In the case of the city of La Paz, for example, stray dogs, rip up garbage bags and scatter the contents, causing pollution.

Needs by Municipality

1. Comondú

In the municipality of Comondú, the cities and towns have no planned urban development, and are not involved with processes of regulation, conservation, improvement or growth of population centers. In the absence of an up-to-date set of regulations, shantytowns proliferate, even in vulnerable areas (areas prone to flooding for example). Without a plan in place, the coverage of basic services in cities such as Constitución, Insurgentes and Villa Morelos is at risk because of under-investment in infrastructure. In addition, the ports of San Carlos, Adolfo López Mateos, Alcatraz, Cortés and San Juanico, as well as rural areas, should have an urban development plan in place. Puerto San Carlos, a deep-water port, is experiencing higher population growth than the rest of the municipality, and the lack of an urban development plan threatens its wealth of marine species, as well as its industry, tourism, and port installations (through which agricultural production leaves).²⁵

2. La Paz

The migration of temporary workers into Baja California Sur, created by the lack of job opportunities in their home communities, has complicated the municipal services that are available in the state capital. Water and sewer



infrastructure needs to be upgraded. Investments in land-use planning point to a lack of services to outlying communities in the city of La Paz that must be corrected before future growth can proceed.

The insufficiency of public transportation leads to the irrational use of private vehicles. The municipal government has not made capital investments in modernized public vehicles, nor have they studied the problem, despite a growing and diffuse population base. Therefore, it is necessary to promote studies on the road system and transportation for the authorities to discuss and, if appropriate, authorize new spending for this purpose.

Security is also an issue, with more gated communities emerging in the municipality. Parallel to this, there is a mistrust of the police, which is manifested in fewer reports of offenses and the lack of follow-up when they are filed. Neighborhood watches could be one opportunity for reducing low-level crimes.

Despite efforts to create sports areas, the lack of support for sports and recreation continues to be a problem in La Paz. This gap is linked to increases in drug and alcohol addiction, especially among young people, as well as prostitution. Municipal attention to sports and recreational facilities and programs is needed, as well as nonprofit involvement in programming.



3. Loreto

Urban planning problems in the city of Loreto derive fundamentally from a recent population boom, low-income and temporary workforce housing needs, the lack of budget to provide basic utilities to new human settlements, and building in high-risk areas, such as hurricane-prone areas and steep slopes.²⁶

Public housing constructed by the government for low-income families is inadequate – only 45 square yards for each home. A minimum size of 60 square yards with another 120 square yards of grass or open space would alleviate crowding and increase the quality of life for impoverished residents.²⁷

Tourism and second-home development has increased land speculation in Loreto. This limits the ability of the local population to buy housing, especially considering the financial constraints on mortgages and access to credit within the Mexican banking system. The high costs of capital and the limited buying power of the population do not encourage affordable home building, creating a housing shortage as well as shantytowns.²⁸

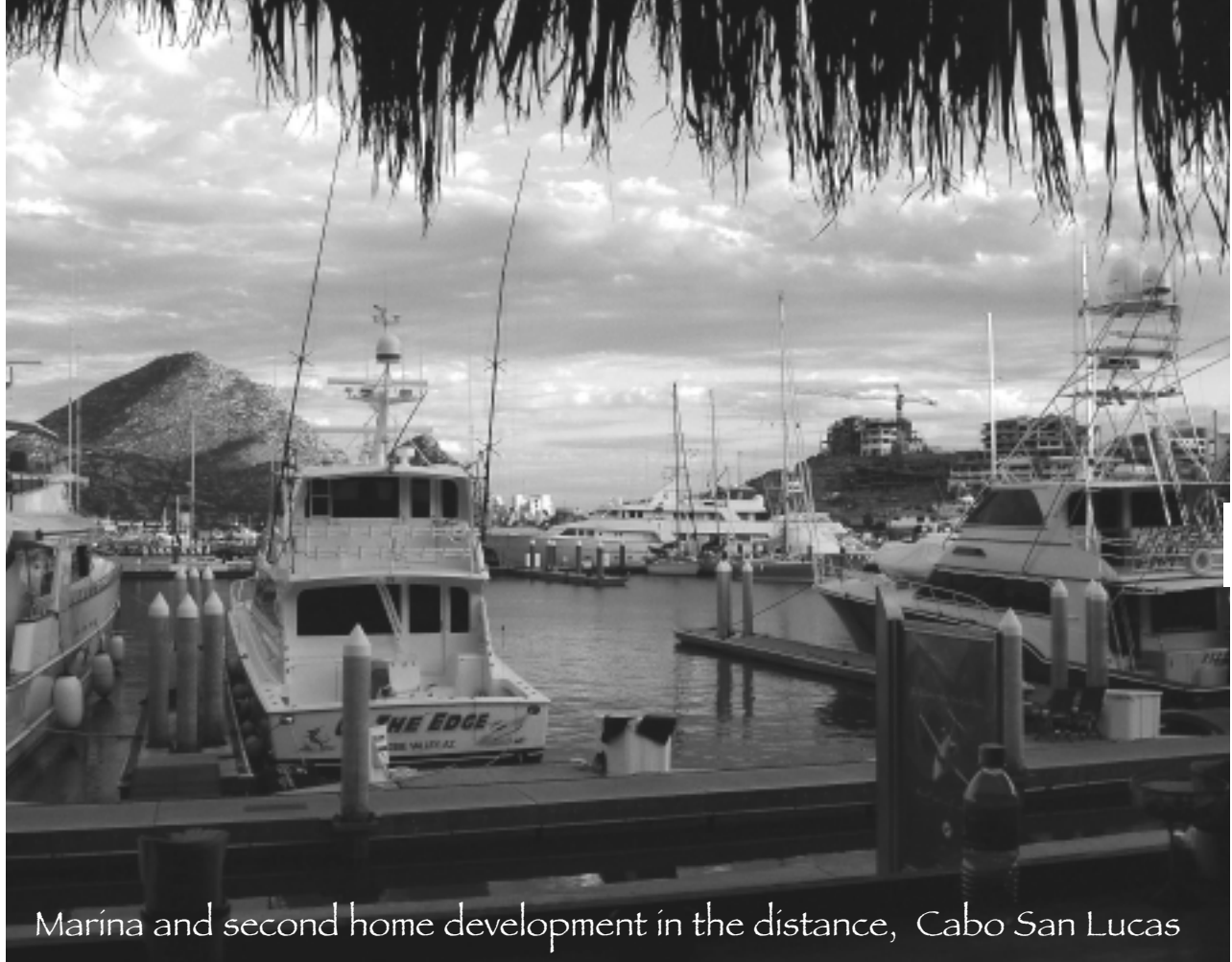
The deficiency in street lighting must be resolved as soon as possible, since the growth of temporary and low-income neighborhoods that have little regular police protection is leading to an increase in vandalism. In 2002, twenty new street lamps were purchased for one *colonia*, benefiting a total of 1,200 people, in addition to the provision and installation of lighting with branches and underground cable in a main avenue.

The conservation and maintenance of rural roads, which stretch across around 125 miles (the 98 miles of federal highway are maintained by the government), is a major operational expense for the municipality of Loreto.²⁹ As mentioned above, this directly affects access to service provision from state agencies and nonprofits.

4. Los Cabos

The municipality of Los Cabos experienced a 9.7% population growth between 1995-2000, rising from 27,111 permanent inhabitants to 34,438. In fact, San José del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas' combined growth rate was 56.3% higher than the national average and one of the highest in the country. This high population growth rate derived from constant and accelerated migration and is leading to problems such as unsustainable water use, land tenure conflicts, and unplanned shantytowns.³⁰ The Urban Development Plan for San José del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas should be updated, including a provision to renew the urban center of Cabo San Lucas.

Public utilities are lacking throughout the municipality, although electricity is generally available to most areas. Three of the four administrative districts of the municipality (Santiago, Miraflores and La Ribera) have no sewer system, while in the high-growth areas of Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo, a high number of drinking water users (15,807 of 28,091) do not have drainage (figures are as of May 2002).



Marina and second home development in the distance, Cabo San Lucas

Benefits, such as parks and recreational facilities, are an essential part of creating a sustainable community. Open space and recreational areas are not considered economically viable and, therefore, are low on the municipal priority list. Neighborhood committees that work directly with municipal authorities and elected officials could work to prioritize these community benefits and allocate funds accordingly from the taxes available.

The shortfalls in road surfacing is also growing (75% of the streets are unpaved), as well as in sidewalks and street lighting.³¹ The municipality should create a trust to construct and administer urban public parking lots, which could be a funding source for road paving.³² Finally, the municipality needs to design a Master Plan for the Municipal System of Roads and transportation for the Los Cabos corridor, as well as for Cabo del Este.³³

5. Mulegé

Designing urban development plans for the cities in Mulegé municipality, particularly those included in the large-scale tourism project, “Mar de Cortés,” should be a top priority. In Villa Alberto Alvarado Arámburo, Guerrero Negro, and Bahía Asunción, high immigration (4,000 agricultural

day laborers are imported to work in produce-exporting companies annually) requires a land-use plan that can accommodate permanent residents from this population. The municipal authority must strengthen the public safety system by training and equipping the police.³⁴

As the North Pacific Region does not belong to the state electricity generating network,³⁵ it is necessary to introduce new technologies, such as wind power, solar energy, and energy based on tides and water motion.³⁶ With regard to drinking water, Comisión Federal de Electricidad studies point out that the water-bearing strata in the valley of El Vizcaíno are in the process of becoming exhausted. It will be necessary to build modern desalinization plants with reverse osmosis technology and better collection systems, including brackish wells.

On the public services front, the lack of adequate and sufficient sewer systems is evident, as is the need for a wastewater treatment plant. Sewage often overflows through grates (a source of infection), and sewers open directly into the sea. There is also no sanitary landfill, though there is an open-air garbage dump. It is also necessary to define suitable areas for waste disposal from squid processing plants.