

## Branding La Jolla

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### Discover Phase

La Jolla is an affluent coastal neighborhood within the city of San Diego. Geographically, La Jolla is home to rugged seaside cliffs, white sandy beaches, and steep hills.

Per 2019 estimates by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), La Jolla has a population of 43,071 people. These populations are split into households averaging 2.39 people in size. The population is approximately 69.8% white, 12.7% hispanic, 11.6% Asian, and 1.7% Black. The remaining 4.2% of the population are described as American Indian, Pacific Islander, multiracial, or "other." This population has a median income of \$116,151. The high income places The median age is 40.4 years old ([SANDAG](#)).

These can be compared to citywide statistics for San Diego, also provided by SANDAG. Per 2019 estimates, the city of San Diego has a population of 1,420,571 with a median income of \$83,543 and median age of 36.0. Furthermore, the ethnic background of San Diego is 43.1% white, 28.6% hispanic, 17.4% Asian, and 6.3% Black. The remaining 4.6% of the population are described as American Indian, Pacific Islander, multiracial, or "other." The mere 3% of San Diego's population that resides in La Jolla is, on average, older, wealthier, and whiter than other regions in the city ([SANDAG](#)).

Based on 2020 Election Data, La Jolla is currently majority Democrat-leaning. This is reflected in their presidential election record (about 70% of La Jollans voted for Joe Biden). Furthermore, their city council district vote was sent to two Democrats in the runoff, further reinforcing the idea of their Democratic background ([San Diego Union Tribune](#)). It should be noted, however, that La Jolla has been home to multiple notable Republicans, including Mitt Romney and [unsuccessful nominee to be Ambassador to the Bahamas](#) Doug Manchester ([LA Times](#), [Cottages Gardens](#)).

Academically, La Jolla is the home to the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) and the Scripps Institute of Oceanography. These institutions have been home to no fewer than 16 Nobel laureates ([University of California](#)). Furthermore, La Jolla also houses the Salk Research Institute, named for its founder, Jonas Salk, who developed one of the first effective polio vaccines ([Salk Institute](#)).

As an arts district, La Jolla runs the gamut in visual and performing arts. The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD) has works by major names, such as Jasper Johns and Mark Rothko, in its permanent collection; the MCASD is currently under renovation ([MCASD](#)). The La Jolla Playhouse is a hotbed for new plays, having sent 33 works to Broadway and earned 38 Tony Awards ([La Jolla Playhouse](#)). The La Jolla Music Society, including its brand-new performing arts center, performers from around the world and across genres every year ([La Jolla Music Society](#)). In terms of public art, the Murals of La Jolla project and UCSD's Stuart Collection of sculpture present plenty of opportunities for residents and tourists alike to see art around the community ([Murals of La Jolla](#); [Stuart Collection](#)).

As a classic SoCal town, La Jolla is also steeped in beach culture. Windansea Beach is one of the most storied surf spots in Southern California, having been a site for development in surfing and early surfboard shaping; the beach even went on to be featured in the works of Andy Warhol and Tom Wolfe ([La Jolla Light](#); [San Diego Reader](#)). La Jolla Shores, beyond being a popular tourist site, is the shorefront for the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club, Scripps Pier

(affiliated with the aforementioned Institute), and surf spots along the way ([La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club](#); [Scripps Pier](#)). Additionally, La Jolla's waters are largely ecological preserves, which promotes the local ecosystem ([UCSD](#)). La Jolla Cove is one key example of this, with the Children's Pool being a near-guaranteed lounging spot for local seals ([sandiego.com](#)).

Nearby competitors include other regions within San Diego County, Orange County, and Los Angeles County. The city of San Diego uses a well-defined public style guide, last updated July 2017. The details of this style guide are heavily inspired by local geography, the ocean, and unity of the community. The city uses an emblem based on two fonts: Merriweather Bold and Sifonn Basic. This can be reduced to a lettermark/combination mark. The logo is available in full color, four color, two color, one color, and black-and-white variations. Outside of the logo, official typefaces are Merriweather and Open Sans. The primary color palette is based on the ocean and warm sunsets, with a dominant blue, complementary gold, and supporting neutral tones. The secondary color palette includes variations on these colors. Six suggested pairings (sub-palettes) exist for use in different scenarios: sea, summer, sunset, sunrise, classic, and urban. Beyond this, guidelines exist for maps, charts, and graphs, among other common data presentation formats ([City of San Diego](#)).

Another competitor is the city of Santa Monica in Los Angeles County. As best as I can tell, they have no publicly-available brand book, so any assessment of their branding comes from what is available on their website. Their website displays a combination mark in the header, including a pictorial mark with a simple road, sun, and mountain. All fonts displayed seem to belong to the same geometric sans serif family. The primary palette appears to be a mix of blues, white, and dark grey. Icons appear in these colors as well. Secondary palettes are less clear, but seem to include a light grey, a pink, a dark red, and a green ([City of Santa Monica](#)).

Malibu (also in Los Angeles) can also be reasonably described as a comparable city — at least according to Netflix set designers ([Hooked on Houses](#)). Like Santa Monica, there does not seem to be a publicly-available design guide for Malibu, so all descriptions come from their website. The city uses a high-contrast sans serif font and a different, neo-grotesque (or potentially geometric) sans-serif font on all aspects of their website. Their primary color palette is far from apparent, but dark orange and several shades of blue seem apparent. The logo, if any, seems to be a word mark using both fonts ([City of Malibu](#)).

Briefly speaking with/surveying several residents of La Jolla, they have little consensus or discussion of La Jolla's branding. Only two examples of branding were discussed: those provided by the La Jolla Merchants Association and advertisements for new arts events, such as performances as the La Jolla Music Society ([La Jolla Merchants Association](#)). These tend to include relatively flat designs with brightly-saturated colors, but little unifies them beyond that. In short, La Jolla has almost no unified branding or citywide official branding thus far (La Jolla Merchants Association). This is more deeply expressed by those who live further away from the central village of La Jolla, who identify more with UCSD (which has its own branding to deal with) or who might not identify at all with the branding ([Survey Data](#)).

## **Define Phase**

To accurately determine what the branding design must reflect, we must determine what the community itself represents. From this, we can use three basic personas extrapolated from

research, determine values presented by competitor cities, and address the problems in the community.

The first persona to appeal to is the affluent (but not hyper-rich), white suburban adult. These people are typically in their 30s to 50s. They may live in a number of regions within La Jolla, although many will live near the beach or in relatively secluded areas of the hills. These people likely have young children in the local school system and likely frequent the “Village” (main commercial area) of La Jolla. They likely feel catered to by existing branding — assuming they are aware of its existence.

The second persona to appeal to is the university-affiliated person. This person, assuming they live in La Jolla at all, often lives near UCSD, placing them toward the borders of La Jolla. These people primarily include professors and administrators, meaning they have a vast range of ages. This group might also include graduate students. While it might be good to cater to undergraduates in some sense, they are less likely to stay in the area long-term. This persona reflects the academic side of the community. They might also feel disconnected from La Jolla as a town, either due to specific allegiance with UCSD or due to lack of local catering to their neighborhood as part of the community.

The third persona to appeal to is the tourist. Many locals don’t like tourists, but tourism is still an important part of the economy. This includes much of the beach community and hospitality industry. Their financial background will be somewhat more varied than mere residents, and the industry should reflect that. Really, what they want in La Jolla is a unique, beautiful place that they might go to relax and spend time on the coast.

La Jolla’s branding needs to unify the community. It currently seems to be mostly merchant-supported at the current stage, but this excludes some community members. To fully unify the community, the residents must be prioritized while still making the area appealing to outsiders. This is a tricky balance. In theory, this is best achieved by emphasizing the best-regarded aspects of the community.

Defining a character of the community is difficult. Emphasizing only the white, wealthy members of the community could be disastrous; although the region has above-average median income and is predominantly white, serving only these communities in branding will only reinforce long-standing systemic issues present in both America in general and La Jolla in particular ([American Jewish History](#)). One way to attempt to overcome this is by noting the creative changes in the region. UCSD and the Village have both increased the presence of public art in recent years, emphasizing the importance of art uniting people in the area. Furthermore, public art allows the town to invite people from outside La Jolla to assert some influence in the community, which could aid in levelling any disparities inherently present.

Beyond art, the cities of San Diego, Santa Monica, and Malibu all share a marine, beach-inspired branding morale. This is reflected in both their logos and their color palettes. It makes sense that these regions emphasize the ocean; La Jolla should do no different. From the Village’s surf culture to UCSD/Scripps’ heavy emphasis on marine science to tourists’ desire to visit the beach and see marine life, centering the ocean is a no-brainer.

That being said, using the ocean might be too obvious a trope. It will be difficult, but essential, to do so in a way that sets La Jolla apart from competitors.

## **“How Might We” Statement**

La Jolla has to face issues of interpersonal disparities and community rifts. That being said, it certainly has the means to do so. Doing so can, in turn, establish a well-defined culture that local institutions can market to tourists. Like all good design projects, this must be defined by a “how might we” statement:

How might we unify all branches of La Jolla’s residents to establish a better-defined, more equitable local culture?

## **Develop Phase**

The brand voice is going to have to center around the key elements of the culture discussed above. To recap, this requires appealing to both locals and tourists. The two general personas for locals are wealthy or upper-middle class adults and UCSD faculty; these two categories might not be mutually exclusive. The recurring themes that appeal to both of these groups include the marine geography of La Jolla and the artistic work cultivated in the region.

The specifics of elements that appeal to these two groups might vary slightly. UCSD’s marine ties are academic; they reflect the long-standing history of the Scripps Institute of Oceanography and the research conducted there. The appeal of the ocean to non-academic locals is more recreational. The beach is a place to relax, to socialize, to surf, to exercise, to see wildlife, to escape summer heat, and much more. Fortunately, this appeal still applies to UCSD employees, so there might be a slight lean towards the recreational beach mindset.

Fortunately, the beach is also a big draw to tourists who might visit La Jolla. This means that the beach would be a great centering point for the branding. The presence of Scripps is just a bonus here. Although tourists might not care about local academia, academia is a way to make La Jolla distinct from other beach-centric competitor cities.

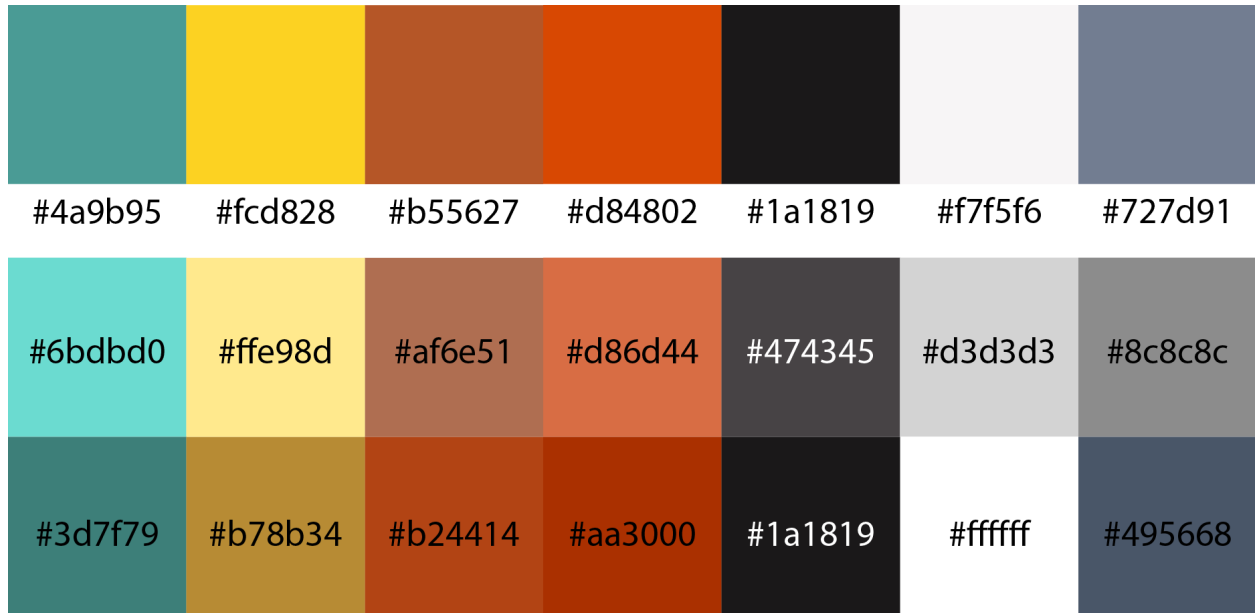
With the beach as a natural element and Scripps introducing a scientific element, it seems natural to try to round out the concepts by emphasizing the art culture. This might not be a popular tourist draw, but it seems to be popular among the locals and provides a good opportunity to add an extra idea into the mix.

The first step here is brainstorming basic imagery. An easy way to incorporate the ocean is to look at marine animals. This provides a different perspective from competitor cities, who focus more directly on geography and human activity than wildlife. This also incorporates elements of the ocean that might be studied by researchers.

The two most essential animals seen around La Jolla are seals and seagulls. Seals are arguably more intriguing and cuter, so they might present a good logo-production opportunity. Seagulls are ubiquitous but often seen as a nuisance; that being said, they might help with a unique, locally-inspired color palette. I also briefly considered kelp as a color motif inspiration, as that is essential to the region’s oceanography, but it also might have less appeal to other personas explored.

Starting off with a rough primary color palette might be a good idea. I have chosen a yellow, red, black, white, and grey based on a seagull, then added a greenish-blue to represent the ocean and a reddish-brown to reflect the seal and the terrain. This results in a primary color palette to that of Santa Monica. The secondary color palette (the lower partition of the image) uses a method similar to that used by San Diego, wherein the secondary palette is based on

color variations of the primary palette.



This palette might change, but it's a good jumping off point.

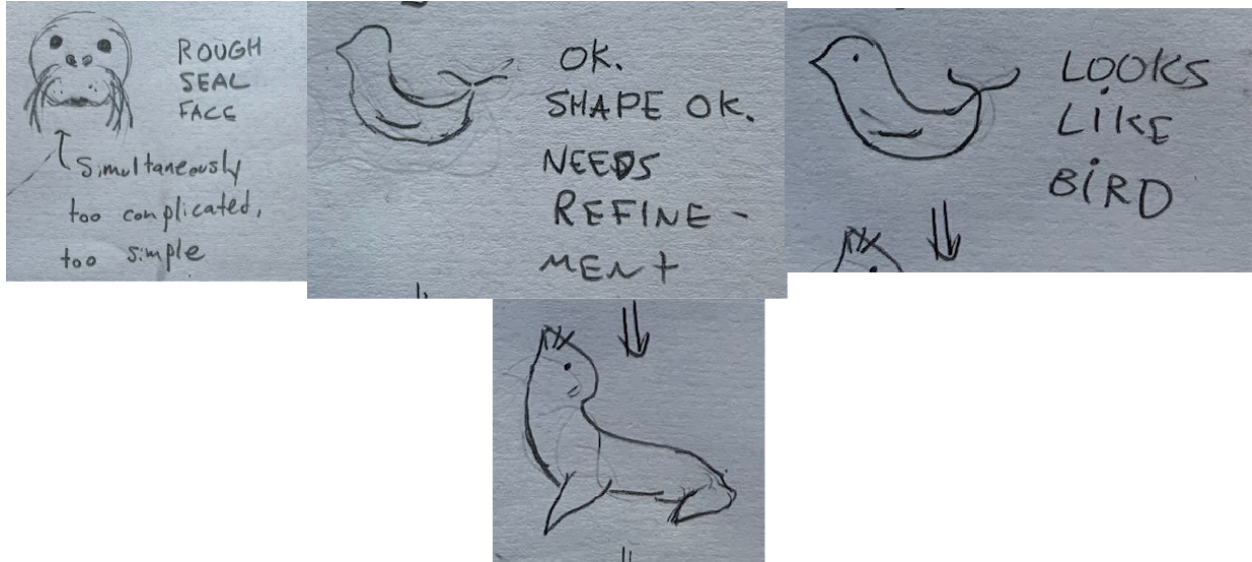
From here, typography might be useful. I will implement a modernist approach to this, as it helps reinforce the artistic community La Jolla hopes to cultivate. For this approach, 2-3 key fonts are selected.

My display font, for headers, will be Novante. It's a modern serif font, which helps establish a sleek and sophisticated look. This is effective because it combines the prestige of UCSD with the often high-class atmosphere of La Jolla.

My workhorse font, for large bodies of text, will be Raleway Regular. I wanted to choose a geometric sans font for the workhorse, as it is versatile and fits into large blocks of text quite cleanly. I will also include Raleway Regular Italic and Raleway bold for use, when appropriate. It also pairs well with Novante.

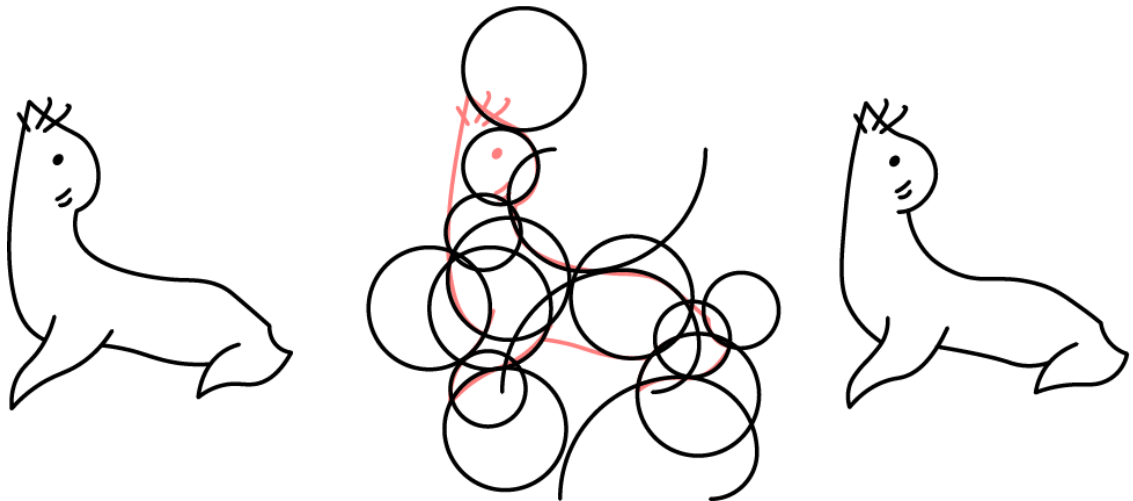
I have decided to forego an accent font, as it is not generally relevant for city-based graphic design.

Next, a logo seems in place. Despite La Jolla's older-than-average demographic, I still want to emphasize it as a hub for the arts. Therefore, maintaining a modern feel will be essential. I still like the idea of using a seal, so I started with a few concept sketches on paper:



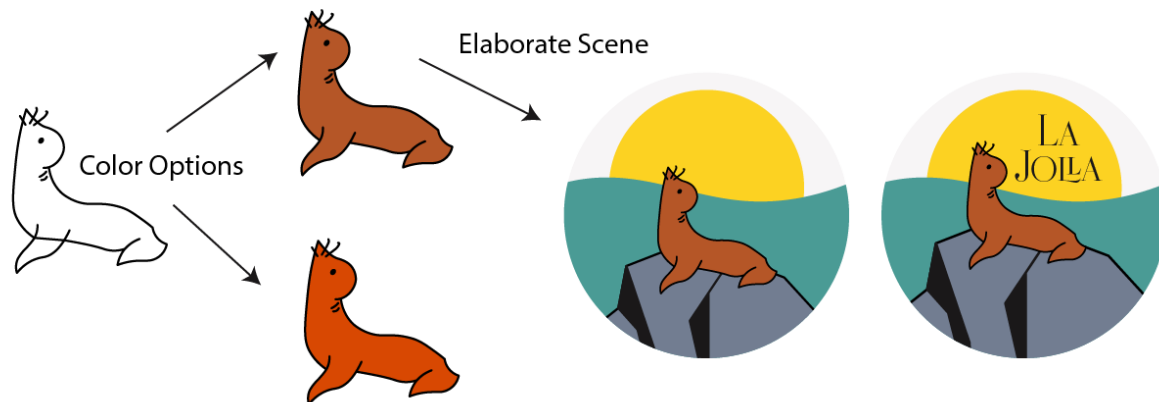
Hand-Drawn Logo Iterations

After choosing a profile-based, minimalistic seal design, I moved into refining it. To do this, I used Golden Ratio spirals and circles to adjust proportions, then smoothed the lines between them to account for visual balancing:



Illustrator Logo Iterations

The changes here are subtle, but overall contribute to a more balanced overall shape. The next step is to apply the color palette to appropriately shade the logo.



Logo with Color, Scenery, and Text Added

I tried both the red and brown options for shading the seal, but the brown felt more natural. In adding color, I found that the seal alone cannot fully reflect the vibrance of La Jolla. In order to better capture the desired elements of La Jolla, I added a basic scene to the logo. This also presents an opportunity to add text, reinforcing that the logo is, in fact, for La Jolla.

Next, I wanted to make sure that a monotone variation of this logo worked. In doing so, I also opted to include a four-color variation of the logo, for simplified future printing. I opted to include a slightly darker grey in the monotone version, as this helps include better contrast for the black-and-white logo.

Next should be iconography. It's kind of hard to tell what kinds of icons should be included for a city's branding, so my set is totally arbitrary. Some good ones to include might be for maps. I'll include icons for beaches, schools, shopping, parks, restaurants, restrooms, museums, transit, and post offices. To keep the identity and style uniform with the logo, I wanted to use a few key elements. I used a circular clipping mask, much like the logo. Next, I wanted to continue the combination of outlined/figure ground elements in my icons. After that, I decided to keep the "squiggle" of the horizon from my original logo, as to keep some semblance of a unified geometry; this constraint also helped me come up with ideas for the icons. Finally, I stuck with the primary color palette, as this helped center the feel. There was little sketching here, I just went into Illustrator with the ideas mostly fully formed.

Turning the established motifs into patterns or additional artwork was somewhat difficult. Nothing about them shouts "pattern," but that doesn't mean auxiliary designs aren't available; I just had to look a little bit closer to see them.

Just as in the icons, I used the gentle curve of the wave in the logo for some of my patterning. When paired with the display font and the color palette, it allows for some beautiful city poster designs.

## Deliver phase

My final products highlight an artistic simplicity, a slight fashionable flair, and a town united by the ocean. La Jolla is a hard place to wholly encompass, so I'm not sure I can ever really unify it; instead, I can note what everybody in La Jolla can love. We can all appreciate the beach, the food, and the animals. When we get down to our base elements, we have to remember what we love about the place we live.



Icons

In blending figure ground and outlined elements throughout the work, I hoped to blend traditional and modern elements of La Jolla's culture. This delicate balance was a recurring theme. Balancing the commodity of the commercial with the curiosity of the academic, the young with the old, and the simple with the complex is never an easy task, but I hope that I was able to achieve it here.

This theme balance is further reflected by two key elements of the design packet. First is the choice of fonts; both have modern overall compositions matched by formal, traditional details. Second is the motif of the wave; the wave illustrates the slippery high and lows of the equilibria.



# NOVANTE

This typeface is for headlines, logos, and other significant brand labels. It should be scaled as fit for each application.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

1234567890

# Raleway

This typeface family is for body copy and headlines. The standard size for body copy is 11 point. Regular should be used as the default. Regular italic and regular bold are only acceptable in grammatically-set circumstances.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

1234567890



Full color



Four Color  
(no sky shading)



Black and White

Color Variations