

Interior Designers

Labor Market Analysis: San Diego County

December 2025

Summary

NEW PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION?	EVIDENCE OF A SUPPLY GAP?	AT OR ABOVE THE LIVING WAGE?	EXPECTED LEVEL OF EDUCATION
 Proceed with Caution	 	 	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree
SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM MODIFICATION?	NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS THAT PROVIDE TRAINING	NUMBER OF ANNUAL JOB OPENINGS	<input type="checkbox"/> Associate Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Some College or Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> HS Diploma or Equivalent <input type="checkbox"/> Less Than a HS Diploma <input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship
 	<p>LOW</p> 	<p>HIGH</p> 	

The San Diego & Imperial Center of Excellence (COE) developed this brief to assist the region's community colleges with strategic planning and program development. According to available data, *Interior Designers* in San Diego County have a labor market demand of 111 annual job openings (while average demand for a single occupation in San Diego County is 289 annual job openings), and four institutions supply 81 awards for this occupation, suggesting that there is a supply gap in the labor market. Entry-level wages are below the living wage. This brief recommends that the colleges proceed with caution when developing a new program and supports a program modification because although there is a high number of annual job openings and a supply gap, entry-level wages are below the living wage. The colleges should also note that the expected level of education is a bachelor's degree

Introduction

This report provides labor market information in San Diego County for the following occupational code in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)¹ system:

Interior Designers (SOC 27-1025): Plan, design, and furnish the internal space of rooms or buildings. Design interior environments or create physical layouts that are practical, aesthetic, and conducive to the intended purposes. May specialize in a particular field, style, or phase of interior design. Sample reported job titles include:

- Decorating Consultant
- Interior Decorator
- Certified Kitchen Designer
- Registered Interior Designer
- Interior Design Coordinator
- Interior Design Consultant
- Designer
- Commercial Interior Designer
- Color and Materials Designer

Projected Occupational Demand

Between 2024 and 2029, *Interior Designers* are projected to increase by 71 net jobs or seven percent (Exhibit 1). Employers in San Diego County will need to hire 111 workers annually to fill new jobs and backfill jobs due to attrition caused by turnover and retirement, for example.

Exhibit 1: Number of Jobs for Interior Designers (2024-2029)²

Occupational Title	2024 Jobs	2029 Jobs	2024 - 2029 Net Jobs Change	2024 - 2029 % Net Jobs Change	Annual Job Openings (Demand)
Interior Designers	1,036	1,107	71	7%	111

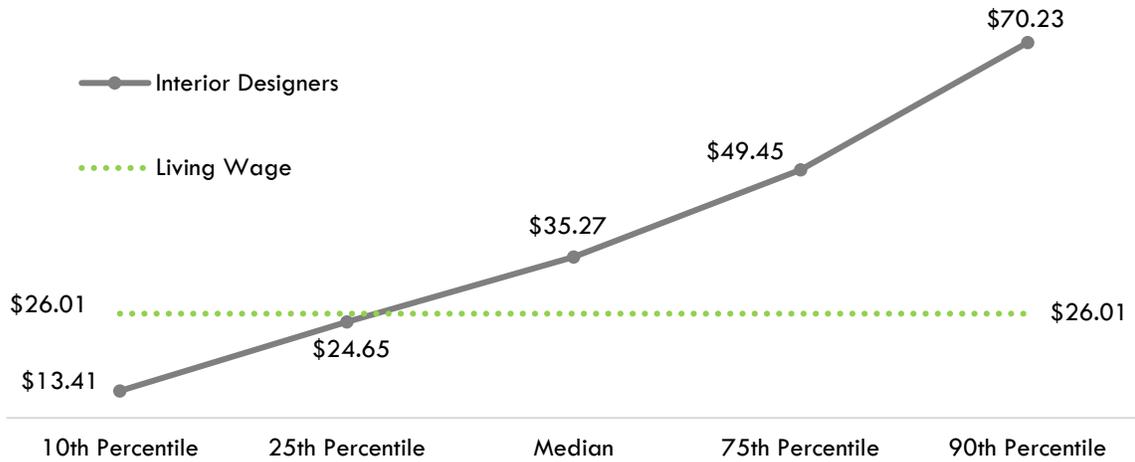
¹ The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is used by federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating or disseminating data. <https://www.bls.gov/soc/>.

² Lightcast 2025.04; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

Earnings

According to traditional³ labor market information (LMI), *Interior Designers* had until recently entry-level hourly earnings of \$24.65—or \$51,272 annual salary⁴; this is less than the living wage for a single adult in San Diego County, which is \$26.01 per hour (Exhibit 2).⁵

Exhibit 2: Hourly Earnings⁶ for *Interior Designers* in San Diego County⁷



In online job postings, employers advertised between \$24 to \$26 per hour between January 1, 2022 and December 30, 2024 for *Interior Designers* in San Diego County (Exhibit 3).⁸ This suggests that, in recent years, employers have increased wages compared to what is reported in traditional labor market information.

Exhibit 3: Entry-Level Advertised Salaries in Online Job Postings for *Interior Designers* in San Diego County (2022-2024)*



*Hourly wages are rounded to the nearest dollar amount.

³ Traditional LMI is generally historical data captured by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) or the California Employment Development Department (EDD). It does not account for recent technological, economic, or legislative changes that may affect labor market demand and wages.

⁴ Annualized salaries assume a full-time position with 2,080 hours. Multiplying the hourly wage with 2,080 yields the annual salary.

⁵ Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. (2024). The self-sufficiency standard for California 2024. selfsufficiencystandard.org/California.

⁶ 10th and 25th percentiles could be considered entry-level wages, and 75th and 90th percentiles could be considered experienced wages for individuals who may have been in the occupation longer, received more training than others, etc.

⁷ Lightcast 2025.04; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

⁸ Lightcast 2025.04; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

Expected Level of Education

According to traditional LMI (data reported to EDD and BLS), *Interior Designers* have a national educational attainment of a [bachelor's degree](#) (Exhibit 4).⁹

Exhibit 4: National Educational Attainment for *Interior Designers*¹⁰

Occupational Title	Typical Entry-Level Education
Interior Designers	Bachelor's degree

Similarly, online job postings between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2024 in San Diego County had a [bachelor's degree](#) as the most requested educational requirement for *Interior Designers*; however, employers also expected the following certifications (Exhibit 5).¹¹

Exhibit 5: Top Certifications for *Interior Designers* in San Diego County in Online Job Postings (2022-2024)¹²

1. National Council For Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ)
2. LEED Accredited Professional (AP)
3. Certified Interior Designer
4. Security Clearance
5. Architecture License

Educational Supply

Educational supply for an occupation can be estimated by analyzing the number of awards in related Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) or Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes. There is [one](#) TOP code and [one](#) CIP code related to *Interior Designers* (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6: Related TOP and CIP Codes for *Interior Designers*¹³

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title
TOP 1302.00	Interior Design and Merchandising
CIP 50.0408	Interior Design

⁹ Lightcast 2025.04; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

¹⁰ Lightcast 2025.04; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

¹¹ Lightcast 2025.04; "Job Posting Analytics." 2021-2023.

¹² Lightcast 2025.04; "Job Posting Analytics." 2021-2023.

¹³ This brief uses a conservative estimate of program supply and only calculates awards from the TOP code listed in Exhibit 6.

According to TOP data, two community colleges supply San Diego County with awards for this occupation, Palomar College and San Diego Mesa College. According to CIP data, two non-community-college institutions supply the region with awards, Design Institute of San Diego and Newschool of Architecture and Design (Exhibit 7).

**Exhibit 7: Number of Awards (Certificates and Degrees) Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions
(Program Year 2020-21 Through Program Year 2023-24 Average)**

TOP6 or CIP Code	TOP6 or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Other Educational Institutions 3-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY20-21 to PY22-23)	Total Average Supply (PY20-21 to PY23-24)
1302.00	Interior Design and Merchandising	45	0	45
	Palomar	23	0	
	• Associate degree	10	0	
	• Cert 30 < 60 units	13	0	
	San Diego Mesa	22	0	
	• Associate degree	14	0	
	• Cert 30 < 60 units	8	0	
50.0408	Interior Design	0	36	36
	Design Institute of San Diego	0	21	
	• Master's degree	0	20	
	• Bachelor's degree	0	1	
	Newschool of Architecture and Design	0	15	
	• Bachelor's degree	0	15	
			Total	81

Demand vs. Supply

Comparing labor demand (annual openings) with labor supply¹⁴ suggests that there is a **supply gap** for this occupation in San Diego County, with **111** annual openings and **81** awards. Comparatively, there are **1,332** annual openings in California and **756** awards, suggesting that there is a supply gap across the state¹⁵ (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8: Labor Demand (Annual Openings) Compared with Labor Supply (Average Annual Awards)

	Demand (Annual Openings)	Supply (Total Annual Average Supply)	Supply Gap or Oversupply
San Diego	111	81	30
California	1,332	756	576

Please note: This is a basic analysis of supply and demand of labor. The data does not include workers currently in the labor force who could fill these positions or workers who are not captured by publicly available data. This data should be used to discuss the potential gaps or oversupply of workers; however, it should not be the only basis for determining whether or not a program should be developed.

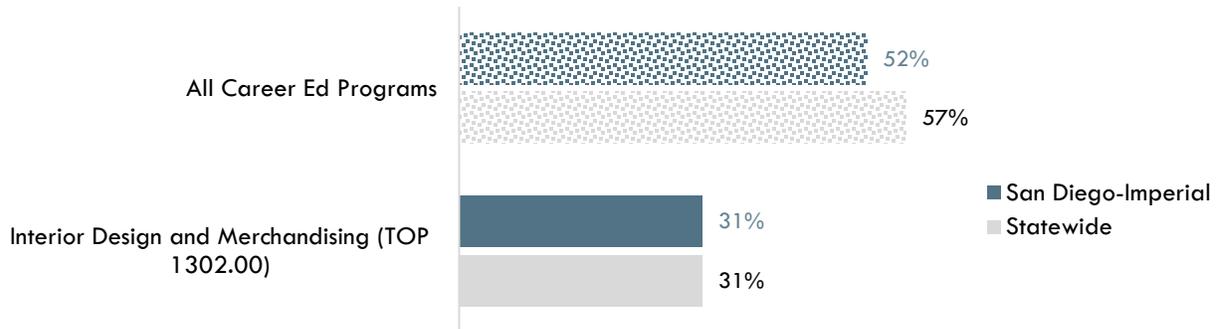
¹⁴ Labor supply can be found from two different sources: EMSI or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart. EMSI uses CIP codes while MIS uses TOP codes. Different coding systems result in differences in the supply numbers.

¹⁵ "Supply and Demand," Centers of Excellence Student Outcomes, coecc.net/our-resources.

Student Outcomes and Regional Comparisons

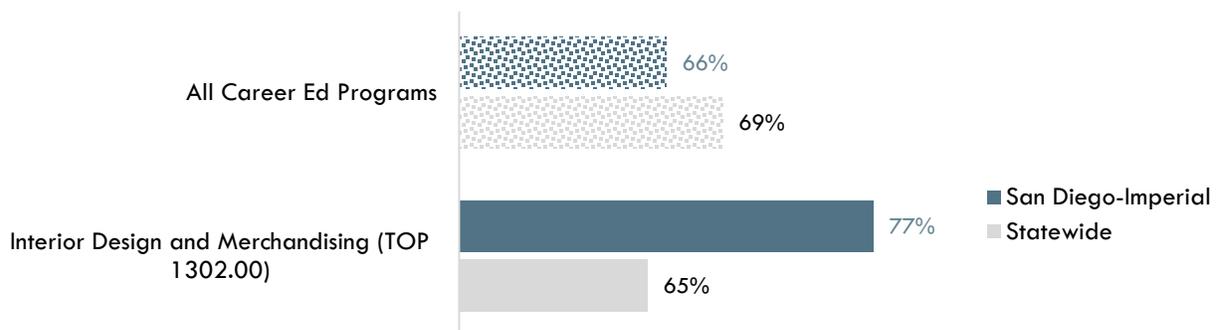
According to the California Community Colleges DataVista, 31% of students in the San Diego-Imperial region earned a living wage after completing an Interior Design and Merchandising (TOP 1302.00) program, compared to 31% statewide and 47% of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 9).¹⁶

Exhibit 9: Percentage of Students Who Earned a Living Wage After Completing an Interior Design and Merchandising (TOP 1302.00) Program, PY2022-23¹⁷



According to the California Community Colleges DataVista, 77% of students in the San Diego-Imperial region obtained a job closely related to their field of study after completing an Interior Design and Merchandising (TOP 1302.00) program, compared to 65% statewide and 47% of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 10).¹⁸

Exhibit 10: Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study After Completing an Interior Design and Merchandising (TOP 1302.00) Program, PY2021-22¹⁹



¹⁶ "California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program," California Community Colleges, calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx.

¹⁷ Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2020-21. Among completers and skills builders who exited, the percentage of students who attained a living wage.

¹⁸ "California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program," California Community Colleges, calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx.

¹⁹ Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2019-20. Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study: Among students who responded to the CTEOS, the percentage reporting employment in the same or similar field as their program of study.

Employers

Between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2024, the top five employers in San Diego County for *Interior Designers* were [The Home Depot](#), [La-Z-Boy](#), [GPAC](#), [Dunn-Edwards Corporation](#), and [Gensler](#) based on online job postings (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 4: Top Employers for *Interior Designers* in San Diego County²⁰

Top Employers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Home Depot • La-Z-Boy • GPAC • Dunn-Edwards Corporation • Gensler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WSP Global • RH • Woodbridge Interiors • LPA • RQ Construction

Skills

Exhibit 12 lists the top specialized, soft, and software skills that appeared in online job postings between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2024.

Exhibit 5: Top Skills for *Interior Designers* in San Diego County²¹

Specialized Skills	Soft Skills	Software Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interior Design • AutoCAD • Project Management • Autodesk Revit • SketchUp • Space Planning • Adobe Photoshop • Purchasing • Construction • Showrooms • Furniture Fixtures And Equipment • Renovation • Adobe Creative Suite • Rendering • Building Codes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Sales • Presentations • Customer Service • Detail Oriented • Research • Organizational Skills • Planning • Coordinating • Multitasking • Management • Writing • Time Management • Leadership • Self-Motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AutoCAD • Autodesk Revit • SketchUp • Adobe Photoshop • Microsoft Office • Microsoft Excel • Adobe Creative Suite • Microsoft PowerPoint • Adobe InDesign

²⁰ Lightcast 2025.04; "Job Posting Analytics." 2021-2023.

²¹ Lightcast 2025.04; "Job Posting Analytics." 2021-2023.

Prepared by:

Tina Ngo Bartel, Executive Director (tngobartel@miracosta.edu)

John Edwards, Research Analyst (jedwards@miracosta.edu)

San Diego & Imperial Center of Excellence



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL

Important Disclaimers

All representations included in this report have been produced from primary research and/or secondary review of publicly and/or privately available data and/or research reports. This study examines the most recent data available at the time of the analysis; however, data sets are updated regularly and may not be consistent with previous reports. Efforts have been made to qualify and validate the accuracy of the data and the report findings; however, neither the Centers of Excellence for Labor Market Research (COE), COE host district, nor California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office are responsible for the applications or decisions made by individuals and/or organizations based on this study or its recommendations.