San Diego County Rental Report 2026

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Figures current as of August 2026

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Key Findings

- **Realty Management Group has completed zero evictions across its managed San Diego County portfolio since 2005.** Situations that reach the notice stage are resolved before court-ordered removal.
- **Properties managed by RMG in San Diego County lease in an average of 13 days**, compared to a national average of 30 to 41 days.
- **Tenants who vacated RMG-managed properties stayed an average of 39 months** — roughly a year longer than the national average of approximately 27 months.
- **Owners remain with RMG an average of 48.6 months**, a measure rarely published anywhere in the property management industry.
- **Portfolio occupancy stands at 98.9%**, against an industry range of roughly 93 to 94%.
- **99.4% of rent across the RMG portfolio is paid on time.**
- **Mission Valley records the longest average tenancy of any RMG market at 49 months**, while Santee and Mission Valley tie for the fastest lease-up at 6 days.

Methodology

This report draws on Realty Management Group's own managed portfolio — 400+ residential units across San Diego County. It is not a survey of the San Diego rental market as a whole, and it does not claim to be. Figures describe properties under RMG management and should be read as operator data, not market data.

Market rent figures are drawn from RentCast and are identified separately throughout.

Reporting period. Operating metrics reflect the RMG portfolio as of August 2026. The eviction figure is reported since 2005 and is identified throughout as a since-inception measure rather than a current-period one.

Definitions.

Days to lease — the interval from the date a property is listed to the date a lease is signed.

Average tenancy — the full duration from lease start to move-out, calculated across tenants who have vacated. Tenants currently in place are excluded, as their tenancies are ongoing and would understate the figure.

Occupancy — the share of managed units occupied.

On-time rent — the share of rent received by the due date.

Owner retention — the average length of the management relationship with property owners.

Completed evictions — unlawful detainer actions resulting in a court-ordered removal. Notices served and matters resolved prior to completion are not counted.

Scope. County-wide figures cover the full portfolio of 400+ units. City-level sections cover the five markets where RMG's managed unit count supports a breakdown, together representing 160 units. Additional markets will be reported in future editions as portfolio depth allows.

Comparison figures are drawn from published industry sources and are cited where used. Industry and RMG figures are never combined into a single average.

This is the first annual edition. It establishes a baseline. Year-over-year comparisons will appear in subsequent editions.

County Overview

Metric	RMG portfolio	Industry comparison
Units under management	400+	—
Average days to lease	13	30–41
Average tenancy (vacated)	39 months	~27 months
Occupancy	98.9%	~93–94%
On-time rent	99.4%	—
Owner retention	48.6 months	—

Completed evictions since 2005	0	—

Two figures in this table have no meaningful industry comparison, and their absence is itself worth noting. On-time rent collection and owner retention are not widely published by property management companies or by industry trackers. Owner retention in particular — how long a property owner keeps the same manager — is among the more direct measures of whether a management relationship is working, and it is almost never disclosed.

City Data

El Cajon

44 units under management.

Metric	El Cajon	Industry
Average days to lease	13	30–41
Average tenancy (vacated)	37 months	~27 months
On-time rent	99.2%	—
Occupancy	95.5%	~93–94%

Market rent (RentCast, August 2026)

ZIP	Average rent	Year-over-year
92019	$2,810	+2.9%
92020	$2,420	+5.7%
92021	$2,390	−3.2%

El Cajon is RMG's largest managed market and shows the widest internal spread of any city in this report. The three ZIP codes move independently — 92020 rose 5.7% over the year while 92021 fell 3.2% — a divergence of nearly nine points within a single city. Owners pricing against a citywide El Cajon average will misprice in one direction or the other depending on which side of the city they own.

El Cajon also carries the lowest occupancy of RMG's five reported markets at 95.5%, though it remains above the industry range.

El Cajon has no local rent control ordinance. State law governs. [El Cajon property management →]

La Mesa

39 units under management.

Metric	La Mesa	Industry
Average days to lease	9	30–41
Average tenancy (vacated)	41 months	~27 months
On-time rent	99.4%	—
Occupancy	100%	~93–94%

Market rent (RentCast, August 2026)

Citywide average across 91941 and 91942: **$2,750**, up 1.5% year over year.

Unit type	Average rent
Studio	$1,870
1 bedroom	$2,360
2 bedroom	$2,900
3 bedroom	$3,880
4 bedroom	$5,050

La Mesa posts full occupancy alongside a 9-day average lease-up and 41-month average tenancy — the strongest combined performance among RMG's larger markets. The 1.5% annual rent movement is the most stable of the five cities reported, with no ZIP-level divergence of the kind seen in El Cajon or Chula Vista.

The jump from 2-bedroom to 3-bedroom is the steepest in the La Mesa ladder at roughly $980, a wider gap than the equivalent step in Santee or Mission Valley.

La Mesa has no local rent control ordinance. State law governs. La Mesa property management →

Chula Vista

29 units under management.

Metric	Chula Vista	Industry
Average days to lease	11	30–41
Average tenancy (vacated)	37 months	~27 months
On-time rent	99.2%	—
Occupancy	98.9%	~93–94%

Market rent (RentCast, August 2026)

ZIP	Average rent	Year-over-year
91910	$2,670	0%
91911	$2,830	−1.0%
91913	$3,610	−0.6%
91914	$4,640	+0.7%
91915	$3,530	−3.3%

Chula Vista has the widest rent range of any city in this report — nearly $2,000 between 91911 and 91914. It is effectively several distinct rental markets under one city name, and a single "Chula Vista average" is close to meaningless for pricing purposes.

Four of five ZIP codes were flat or declining over the year. 91914 was the only one to rise, and only by 0.7%.

Chula Vista is one of two RMG markets with a local ordinance in addition to state law. The Residential Tenant Protection Ordinance (CVMC 9.65) adds just-cause requirements, relocation assistance for no-fault terminations, a requirement to notify the City within three business days of a no-fault termination, and a substantial-remodel minimum of $40 per square foot. Owners must comply with both state and city requirements. Chula Vista property management →

Santee

19 units under management.

Metric	Santee	Industry
Average days to lease	6	30–41
Average tenancy (vacated)	42 months	~27 months
On-time rent	99.6%	—
Occupancy	100%	~93–94%

Market rent (RentCast, August 2026)

Citywide average, 92071: **$2,960**, up 0.7% year over year.

Unit type	Average rent
Studio	$1,580
1 bedroom	$2,160
2 bedroom	$2,750
3 bedroom	$3,760
4 bedroom	$5,080

Santee posts the highest on-time rent rate in the RMG portfolio at 99.6%, full occupancy, and a 6-day average lease-up — the fastest in the portfolio alongside Mission Valley.

Santee's smaller unit types price below the county pattern — its studio at $1,580 is the lowest of any city reported here — while its 4-bedroom at $5,080 sits near the top. The spread from studio to 4-bedroom is the widest proportionally of the five markets, which suggests family-sized housing carries a distinct premium in this submarket.

Santee has no local rent control ordinance. State law governs. Santee property management →

Mission Valley

29 units under management.

Metric	Mission Valley	Industry
Average days to lease	6	30–41
Average tenancy (vacated)	49 months	~27 months
On-time rent	99.1%	—
Occupancy	100%	~93–94%

Market rent (RentCast, August 2026)

Average, 92108: **$3,280**, down 1.2% year over year.

Unit type	Average rent
Studio	$2,340
1 bedroom	$2,760
2 bedroom	$3,510
3 bedroom	$4,810
4 bedroom	$5,420

Mission Valley records the longest average tenancy in the RMG portfolio at 49 months — more than four years, and roughly 22 months above the national average. It pairs that with the fastest lease-up in the portfolio at 6 days and full occupancy.

It is also the county's most expensive market among those reported, with a studio at $2,340 exceeding what a 1-bedroom commands in La Mesa or Santee. Rents declined 1.2% over the year, the second-largest decline of any market covered.

Mission Valley sits inside the City of San Diego and carries the strictest tenant protections of any RMG market. Under San Diego Municipal Code §§98.0701–98.0709, just-cause protections begin on day one of tenancy rather than after twelve months. No-fault relocation assistance is two months' rent, or three months for tenants aged 62 or older or with disabilities, payable within 15 days. Owners must notify the San Diego Housing Commission of both at-fault and no-fault terminations. The City of San Diego does not impose a local rent cap; state law governs rent increases. Mission Valley property management →

What the City Data Shows

Lease-up speed varies by more than double across RMG markets. Santee and Mission Valley average 6 days; El Cajon averages 13. Every market is well inside the 30-to-41-day industry range, but the internal spread is real and matters for vacancy planning.

Tenancy length does not track with rent level. Mission Valley is the most expensive market covered and has the longest tenancies at 49 months. Santee is mid-priced and second-longest at 42. El Cajon and Chula Vista, at opposite ends of the price range, both average 37. Higher rent does not predict shorter stays.

Citywide rent averages conceal more than they reveal in the larger cities. Chula Vista spans nearly $2,000 between its lowest and highest ZIP. El Cajon's three ZIPs moved in opposite directions over the same twelve months. Any pricing decision made from a citywide figure in these two markets is being made from a number that describes no actual neighborhood.

Rent growth has largely stalled across the county. Of the eleven ZIP-level figures in this report, four declined, one was flat, and the largest increase was 5.7% in El Cajon's 92020. Owners budgeting on continued appreciation should account for a flatter market than recent years.

Regulatory Context for San Diego County Owners

Rent increase limits

For properties covered by AB 1482, the maximum allowable increase is **8.2%** — 5% plus 3.2% CPI — from **August 1, 2026 through July 31, 2027**.

The CPI component uses the Bureau of Labor Statistics figure for the San Diego–Carlsbad metropolitan area for the twelve months ending **March 2026**. California's statute references April, but no April figure is published for San Diego, so the March-to-March measure applies as the specified fallback.

California requires at least 30 days' written notice for increases of 10% or less.

Security deposits

Since **July 1, 2024**, under AB 12, the maximum security deposit is **one month's rent** for most landlords, furnished or unfurnished. A limited exception permits up to two months for qualifying small landlords who own no more than two residential properties totaling four or fewer units.

Deposits must be returned within 21 days of move-out with an itemized statement.

Deposit documentation

AB 2801 requires timestamped photographic documentation at move-in and move-out to support deposit deductions.

Local ordinances

Most San Diego County jurisdictions are governed by state law alone. Two RMG markets are exceptions:

Chula Vista — CVMC 9.65 adds just-cause requirements, no-fault relocation assistance, three-business-day City notification following a no-fault termination, and a $40-per-square-foot minimum for substantial remodel. A notice served without the required City notification is invalid. State and city requirements both apply; relocation benefits under each cannot be combined.

City of San Diego, including Mission Valley — SDMC §§98.0701–98.0709 applies just-cause protections from day one of tenancy, requires relocation assistance of two months' rent for no-fault terminations (three months for tenants 62 or older or with disabilities) paid within 15 days, and requires notification of the San Diego Housing Commission for both at-fault and no-fault terminations.

El Cajon, La Mesa, and Santee have no local rent control ordinance.

Ordinances change. Verify current requirements before serving any notice.

Citing This Report

Press, researchers, property owners, and industry participants may cite these figures with attribution.

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For data questions, methodology detail, or interview requests, contact info@choosermg.com.

About Realty Management Group

Realty Management Group manages 400+ residential units across San Diego County, including El Cajon, La Mesa, Chula Vista, Santee, and Mission Valley. RMG operates on a flat-fee model — $199 per month for one to three units, $179 per unit per month for four to sixteen — with no leasing fees, renewal fees, or maintenance markups.

Broker Scott Engle has been licensed since 2003 and has completed more than 1,000 real estate transactions. RMG operates under California DRE Corporation License #02075336; Scott Engle holds DRE License #01332676. Both are verifiable through the California Department of Real Estate public license lookup.

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Sources: RMG operating figures reflect internal management data across managed units, 2026. Market rent data: RentCast, August 2026. Industry comparison figures: RentCafe 2025 and Apartment List 2026 time-to-lease; single-family rental occupancy approximately 94.4% as of September 2025; national average tenancy approximately 27 months.