



**AS SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY** prepares to celebrate 100 years of its storied Aztec football program this fall, the school is unveiling a stunning new home for San Diego State football: Bashor Field at Snapdragon Stadium.

A centerpiece of SDSU's ambitious Mission Valley expansion, Snapdragon Stadium is a state-of-the-art, \$310 million, 35,000-capacity stadium that will not only provide Aztec players and fans a fabulous new venue, but also serve as a broader hub for San Diego sports, culture and entertainment. The Mission Valley project broke ground in August 2020, with many other additions set to be completed in the coming years. The opening will serve as a catalyst for the rest of the project to begin welcoming the city of San Diego into the university's expanded campus.

"It's a transformational project for not only SDSU, but also for the San Diego community," said Derek Grice, Executive Associate Athletic Director for Mission Valley Development.

According to SDSU Director of Athletics John David Wicker, the university's Mission Valley campus will soon become home to a sprawling innovation district and residential area that will encircle the stadium and truly weaving it into the fabric of the city.

"The stadium sits on a 166-acre parcel where we will build 1.6 million square feet of an innovation district and campus, and 4,600 residential units," Wicker said. "At any one time you can have 10,000 to 15,000 people on that site based on who is working or who is living there."

The project will generate an estimated \$3.1 billion in economic impact and provide 17,000 jobs annually. Also, the expansion of SDSU's main campus will enable the university to increase its student population by 15,000.

Snapdragon Stadium — the centerpiece of the Mission Valley project — will officially open Sept. 3 for San Diego State football's opener against the University of Arizona.

"The Snapdragon Stadium project allowed the combined team of JMI Sports and Legends to deliver expertise, experience and exceptional results for a project that will have a profound impact on the athletic department and the university. Throughout the entire project, we worked closely with the university and athletics leadership to ensure the stadium delivered upon their vision and business objectives, while also helping assure the project was delivered on time and on budget. We have been privileged to play a role in a project that will change SDSU forever," said Erik Judson, CEO of JMI Sports.

#### HOME-FIELD ADVANTAGE

Aztec football has been without a true home stadium since 1967, when the team played in the historic Aztec Bowl. Since then, SDSU shared Qualcomm Stadium with the San Diego Chargers until 2016, with the university ending its time at the stadium in 2019 to play their 2020 and 2021 home games more than two hours south at Dignity Health Sports Park, home of the LA Galaxy.

Qualcomm had a capacity of more than 70,000, which, despite a voracious and engaged SDSU fanbase, made it feel "cavernous," Wicker said.

"There just wasn't a whole lot of feel to the game because the crowd just never really got that loud," Wicker said. "It was such a big building. You put 30,000 people in that 70,000-seat stadium, it's hard to make a lot of noise."

Snapdragon Stadium's capacity of 35,000, with the ability to expand to seat an addi-

tional 5,000 fans will help bring the Aztec faithful closer to the action and create a more intimate home-field environment.

"We think it is going to be an incredibly intense venue," said Steve Chung, Design Director at Gensler Sports, which handled the architectural duties for Snapdragon Stadium.

San Diego State players will enter the stadium through a player tunnel, which leads to the field through the Field Club, and spills onto the field at the 50-yard line. Premium fans in the Field Club will witness the buildup to the kickoff in an experience like no other.

"If you're in the Field Club, you get to cheer the team on as they run onto the field. I can't wait to see the smiles on their faces as they come take the field, that electric crowd that's going to be there," Wicker said.

In partnering with Fortune 500 company Qualcomm once again as the naming-rights partner for Snapdragon Stadium, has ensure that their new home will feature access to top-level technology throughout.

"We will have cutting-edge technology in the building — that's part of our naming rights deal — so we're spending some of that naming rights money with Qualcomm and Snapdragon on this technology so they can continue bringing fun and unique things to the stadium that will resonate with our fans and make our gameday experience that much better," Wicker said.

Michael Behan, the COO of Collegiate partnerships at Legends, echoed the same excitement.



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"We are very excited for the fans to experience Snapdragon Stadium for the first time on Sept. 3. The fan experience, notably the technology integration, unique seating experiences, hospitality offerings and overall authenticity to San Diego and Southern California will create an unmatched experience in collegiate athletics."

# HIGH-LEVEL **PREMIUM SEATING**

Unlike most college football stadiums, which designate their premium seating high above the action in the stadium, Snapdragon has centralized most of its seating close to the bottom level to bring fans closer to the action.

"Now, premium seat holders feel like they're engaged in the game, they're part of the game," Wicker said.

According to Wicker, this was also part of a broader seating strategy, which looked to reverse the phenomenon in previous stadiums of fans feeling disconnected from the game due to stadium size and construction.

Stadium designers approached this problem in a few ways, the first of which was simply designing a stadium that perfectly met SDSU's needs in terms of capacity. Secondly, the stadium was engineered to have steep seating bowls that elevate fans higher, rather than moving them further away from the action. "Probably 90% of the new stadium fits in what was the lower-level seating in the old building," Wicker said. "People have no idea how much better the viewing experience is going to be for games at the stadium."

Another small, though important detail about seating at Snapdragon Stadium, is that every seat in the stadium will have a chairback — a luxury usually only afforded in professional football stadiums, but that stadium designers felt was a necessary addition to the project.

The west side of the stadium was designed to be as steep as it could be to make all the seats in the stadium as valuable as possible and help build a loud, proud homefield atmosphere.

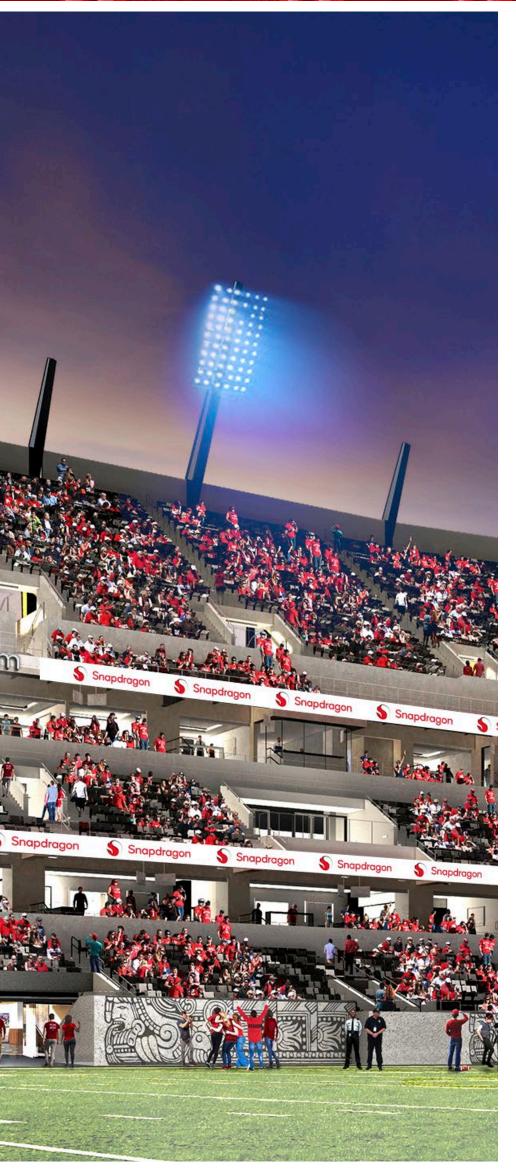
"San Diego is the community of communities — it's made up of neighborhoods," Grice said. "We wanted to embody that in the building."

#### SAFE-STANDING STUDENT SECTION

An innovative aspect of the gameday experience at Snapdragon Stadium will be the design of the student section. Banking on the intensity that other SDSU student sections — like Aztec basketball's 'The Show' — bring to their fandom, Snapdragon's student section will feature a 'safestanding' design, which consists of unassigned seating, encouraging fans to stand and be a part



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of the action as they cheer on the Aztecs. The rows are steep, and each will have a guardrail.

Designers drew on the growing popularity of this style in Major League Soccer (MLS) stadiums like Banc of California Stadium in Los Angeles, which Gensler also designed.

"We think they are ready for an environment that acknowledges that they are an incredibly intense student body in terms of the way they want to watch sports," Chung said. "I think it's really going to impact the student athletic fan culture in an amazing way. The fact that there's no assigned seating allows everyone to really be together, to cheer together and to enjoy the game together."

Chung said this feature also makes Snapdragon Stadium the perfect venue for a future MLS team to compete in, something Wicker says SDSU is interested in pursuing. San Diego Wave FC, the city's premier NWSL franchise, will play in Snapdragon Stadium Sept. 17 and attempt to break the single-game attendance record for the NWSL in their match against Angel City FC.

SDSU's men's and women's soccer programs will also each play one match in the stadium this year along with the San Diego Legion rugby team. Additionally, the women's lacrosse team will take the field in the school's new home as well. But that's not all the lacrosse to be featured in the stadium. Next summer the 2023 World Lacrosse Championships will be played at Snapdragon also.

"It's great to be sharing the new state-of-the-art stadium, which was designed with rugby matches in mind. Snapdragon Stadium's premium facilities, in addition to the full-size, international rugby test match-quality playing surface, will ensure we deliver an unrivaled game day experience for our loyal Legion fan base. Teams from all around the world would love to play here. It was great to see the transformation from the ground up and be a part of this journey. We are very excited and couldn't think of a better place for the San Diego Legion to be playing rugby," said Danny Lee, Head Coach of the San Diego Legion.

## FIRST-CLASS ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

Top-of-the-line facilities have historically played a large role in helping recruit top talent, with programs on the cutting edge attracting big names across sports. Snapdragon Stadium will be one of the newest and most innovative stadiums in college football, and SDSU staff believe it will help the university attract the best players in the country, positioning the Aztecs atop the standings for years to come.

"We're already seeing that pay off some with recruiting," Wicker said. "It's important to have great facilities, but from a financial standpoint, the new revenue that we're going to see — that's going to help us support our student athletes as well."

Senior linebacker Caden McDonald doubled down on that idea at the Mountain West media day in July.

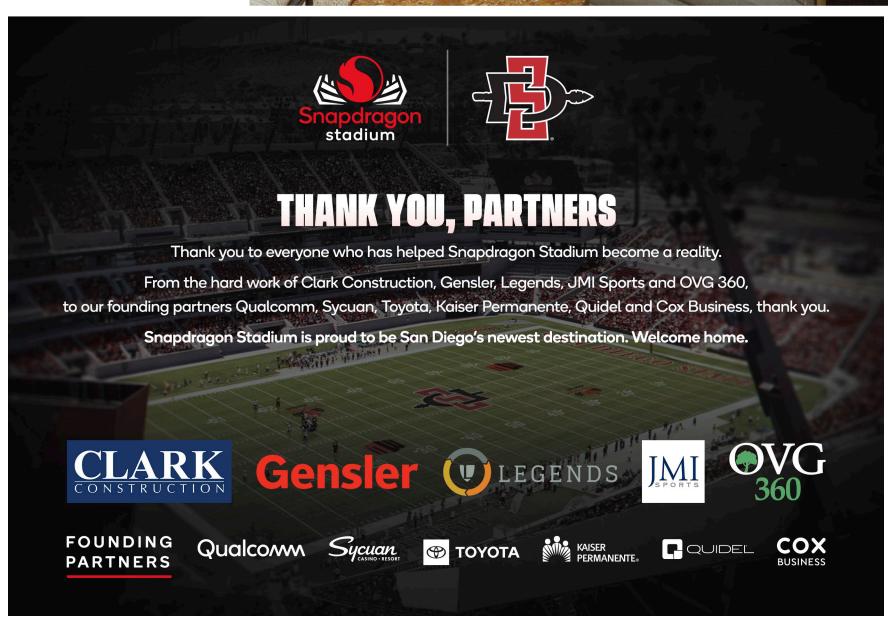
"It's going to take us over to the next level," McDonald said of the effect Snapdragon will have on the future of Aztec football. "The stadium was the last piece of the puzzle."

#### MORE THAN JUST A STADIUM

While SDSU aimed to create a world-class venue to watch football, they also tasked stadium designers with making Snapdragon Stadium a venue that could integrate seamlessly into the needs of the university and the greater San Diego area, on top of its duties as a football stadium.

"It was the mission of the university to ensure that this was more than just a football building," Chung said. "For us, it was about really clever and thought-







ful planning to ensure all the premium spaces were aligned in a way where you could have events of all scales and sizes that would appreciate that level of design, spaces that are intended for social interaction, spaces that are intended for presentations, and spaces that are intended for connection and gathering."

Chung said Gensler was drawn to the project in part because of the opportunity to design a building that was just as much a football stadium as it was an integrated piece of the university campus — a unique challenge with exciting possibilities.

"Gone are the days where people just want to sit for three hours and watch a football game," Grice said. "People want to experience everything gameday has to offer, and so we took that to heart when we built Snapdragon. We wanted to create an amazing gameday experience ... but we also wanted to create an experience where every time you come back, there's something different."

### **CONCESSION GARDENS**

SDSU first partnered with eight local eateries and San Diego staples including Batch & Box, Best Pizza & Brew, Cali BBQ, The Crack Shack, Everbowl, Gaglione Brothers, Hodad's and The Taco Stand as concession partners for Snapdragon Stadium, and then recently added Sandbar San Diego.

The idea was to bring iconic San Diego food vendors to the stadium to contribute to an authentically San Diego experience, while also catering to fans whose gameday experience may be less centered around football, even opening the stadium for food sales throughout the week.

"Creating the garden areas, creating our club spaces and our other unique areas within the stadium that can be utilized for social networking events, farmers markets, banquets and coaches' luncheons, jazz concerts, you name it — we believe that we've created a space that fits everybody," Wicker said.

#### MUSIC AND PERFOMANCE

Snapdragon Stadium will serve as a cultural hub for San Diego, with the facility capable of hosting any number of events, like concerts. On Oct. 22, the stadium will play host to Jimmy Buffett and the Coral Reefer Band for its inaugural concert as part of Buffett's Life on the Flip Side Redux Tour 2022. The concert will also feature special guest Jason Mraz.

"OVG360 is proud to partner with San Diego State University as we prepare to open Snapdragon Stadium. As positive disruptors in live entertainment and hospitality, we look forward to continuing to use our energy, expertise, resources, and industry partners to create a new gameday experience for SDSU student athletes, the student body, alums, and the surrounding community. We are also invested in ensuring this incredible new venue's success on the national stage. The excitement is palpable in anticipation of opening the doors in September. Our onsite team, led by General Manager Adam Millar, continues to do a tremendous job preparing Snapdragon Stadium for its grand opening. We aim to create a new and exciting live entertainment destination here in San Diego that will draw crowds from across Southern California," said Greg O'Dell, President of Venue Management at OVG360.



# SERVING SAN DIEGO, **365 DAYS A YEAR**

One aspect essential to SDSU in developing Snapdragon Stadium was that it would be built in a way that it would never waste its value by sitting idle. SDSU Director of Athletics John David Wicker plans to engage with many different entities to always keep Snapdragon full and buzzing.

"I joke with people, but I'm halfway serious — I want it busy 365 days a year," Wicker said. "We're bringing soccer, we're going to bring more concerts, we're going to bring rugby, we're going to bring dirt shows. We're going to have all these events that come to the stadium and all these different folks in the community now have a reason to come to San Diego State's campus to enjoy an event in what is a spectacular stadium."

Unlike many other locales, that is truly possible in San Diego. The beautiful climate of Southern California is one of SDSU's many attractions, but it also allowed for stadium designers to be creative with the way they used space.

"We believe that we've designed a building that will be embraced by the city and the community," Chung said. "And that's because we put so much thought into how it could be used during football games and every other day of the year. That's what creates a beloved venue and that's what we're most looking forward to."

#### SYCUAN PIERS:

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EMBODIED

Snapdragon's signature feature, designed to evoke the many piers that reach out across

the coastline of Southern California, is the Sycuan Piers. The three piers, located in the southwest corner of the stadium, mean that fans won't have to choose between an amazing spectator experience and the ability to mingle with fellow fans — they can have both. The Sycuan Piers extend out over the field, evoking the same sensation of looking out over the ocean as fans take in top-notch football.

"They can feel all the atmosphere, they can enjoy the parts of being a college football fan that we maybe don't talk about enough — reconnecting generationally with all the friends that love Aztec football as much as they have over the decades," Chung said. "The piers offer them an opportunity to have those conversations, to see how each other is doing but then take just a couple steps over the drink rail and watch every down if you want to."

The inspiration for the Sycuan Piers came from the larger notion that San Diego is a city built on the ability to be outside throughout the entire year due to its mild climate — something that guided Snapdragon Stadium architects' design choices.

"You're talking about a city where people can be outdoors all the time," Chung said. "That lent us so much flexibility and so many great opportunities to do these indoor/outdoor spaces for everyone. That ranges from the general ticket holder to premium ticket holders of all kinds and people who are visiting from the campus for non-football events."

#### MISSION VALLEY

The Mission Valley project will bring the city a stadium that operates year-round and will be considered a community asset, alongside increased residential access and affordable housing, retail space and an innovation district which will allow SDSU to continue to expand its reach as an institution of higher learning.

"When you add all those things together, raising the academic profile, elevating our athletic

department and creating all of that support for the San Diego community, I think it's a once-in-a-lifetime project," Grice said. "The stadium itself, although it's a major piece of this project—it is just a piece. For SDSU Mission Valley to be truly a special place, we envision that it has to work harmoniously with its surroundings and provide an enhanced experience for the area around it."

According to Grice, in keeping with their ambitious goal of having the stadium busy throughout the entire year, SDSU is planning 30 to 40 fully ticked events throughout the year, the majority of which will not be directly associated with the university. That meant the stadium had to be designed to suit everyone.

"We wanted to create a building that was multipurpose, that embodies the community of San Diego, and felt like home," Grice said.

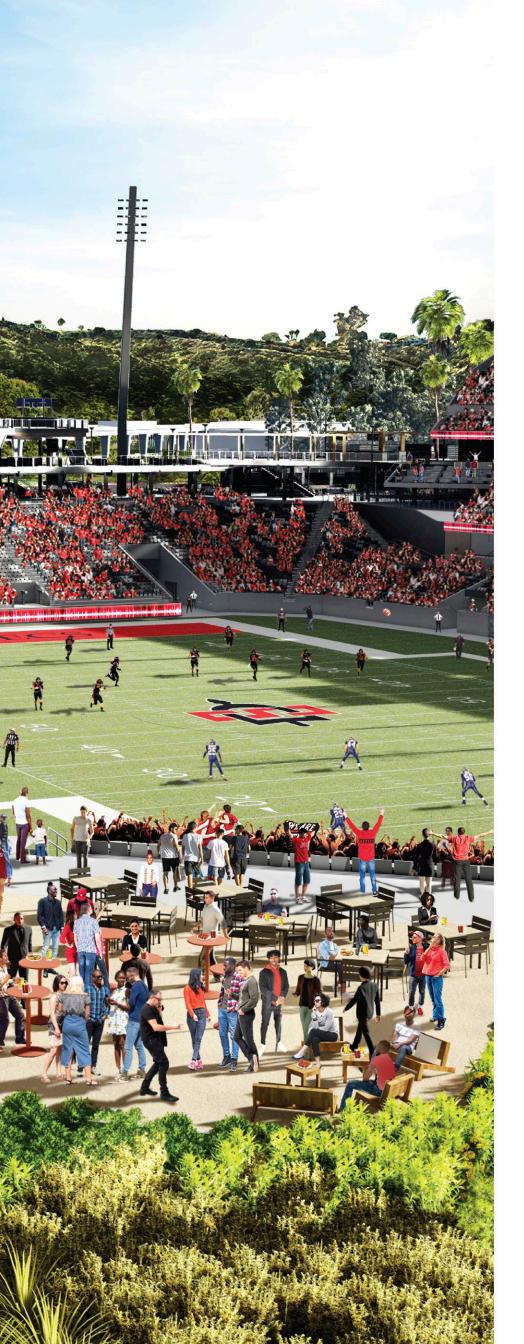
Grice said members of the SDSU football team toured the facility earlier this year. For a program, which has competed at a high level without a true home for so long, getting to step on the field was priceless.

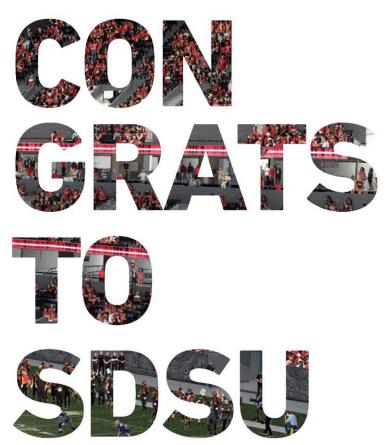
"To see the look on their faces was probably one of the best days of my career," Grice said. "As a team, we've worked so hard to create an amazing stadium experience, not only for our student athletes but also for our fans and to get that type of reaction is validation of a lot of hard work. Our hope is that we've created something that creates a sense of pride for our student athletes."

While the Mission Valley project is about so much more than just football, Wicker said he is excited for the years of work turning Snapdragon Stadium from a dream into a reality to finally pay off for Aztec fans, players, and alumni.

"Right before kickoff, I'll be standing down in the player tunnel as they run out onto the field," Wicker said. "I can't wait to see the smiles on their faces as they come out to the electric crowd that's going to be there."







# on the opening of Snapdragon Stadium.



Legends and JMI are proud to have partnered on delivering college football's most innovative new stadium.







TRANSFORMING THE FAN EXPERIENCE