



Downtown San Diego Clean & Safe

Media Update

Tuesday, September 13, 2016



Comic-Con Trash Seven Times More Than Normal

By: City News Service | July 27, 2016



<http://www.kpbs.org/news/2016/jul/27/comic-con-trash-seven-times-more-than-normal/>

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The **Downtown San Diego Partnership** reported Wednesday that workers on the organization's Clean & Safe team emptied around 6,720 bags of trash from Wednesday to Sunday — seven times more than a normal five-day period.

The bags contained 25 tons of refuse, about two times more than average, according to the partnership.

"Clean & Safe works 365 days a year, 24 hours a day to keep downtown beautiful for residents and visitors," said Alonso Vivas, who directs team operations. "When Comic-Con International descends on downtown, our goals remain the same, but our workload certainly increases."

The team also logged 1,035 graffiti removal responses, about five times more than average, and picked up 25,310 fliers, posters and stickers, around 22 times more than average.

According to the partnership, the Clean and & Safe team generally removes 13 tons of trash and collects 930 bags of trash during a five-day period. During that amount of time, they also normally remove graffiti 190 times and get rid of 1,150 fliers, stickers and posters.

The team also provides safety patrols and escorts throughout downtown.



San Diego Comic-Con Draws Record Crowds, Trash

By: Southern California Patch Staff | July 27, 2016



<http://patch.com/california/san-diego/san-diego-comic-con-draws-record-crowds-trash>

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KPBS Radio, 89.5 FM: Morning Edition

Thursday, July 28, 2016 | 7:15am



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Doug Manchester: My Thoughts on San Diego's Downtown Bayfront

By 'Papa' Doug Manchester | July 28, 2016



<http://timesofsandiego.com/opinion/2016/07/28/doug-manchester-my-thoughts-on-san-diegos-downtown-bayfront/>

I have spent most of my life in America's Finest City and have had the wonderful fortune of contributing to downtown San Diego's beautiful skyline and iconic Bayfront district. Great cities have great downtowns, and over the past several decades San Diego has made tremendous progress in building a downtown culture with the Gaslamp and Little Italy districts, Petco Park and the superstructure that surrounds it, and the ongoing revitalization of our world-class waterfront.

Personally I am proud to have developed the Manchester Hyatt, Marriott, revitalize the "Kiss" statue and help bring the USS Midway to the waterfront. Today, this distinguished aircraft carrier is one of San Diego's largest destinations attracting 1.4 million visitors a year.

The Downtown San Diego Partnership has stated that our downtown is an incredible asset and economic engine for the entire San Diego Region. Comprising less than one tenth of one percent of the region's land area, downtown generates 2 percent of the region's sales tax revenue, 3 percent of the property tax revenue, and a full 28 percent of the region's transient occupancy tax. These revenues are shared within the region to the benefit of all.

We have also witnessed a strong migration of residents to our downtown district. The San Diego region is expected to grow exponentially over the next 40 years. We'll need to accommodate an additional 1.3 million residents, 400,000 housing units, and 500,000 jobs—and all of the basic services that come with a growing economy. Much of this growth will occur in the downtown area.

Therefore, the more residential we build, the more talent we attract, and the more companies that move back to downtown San Diego. This yields more opportunity for mixed-use developments, Class A office space, hotels and public open space in which we can truly take advantage of a city in which to live, work and play.

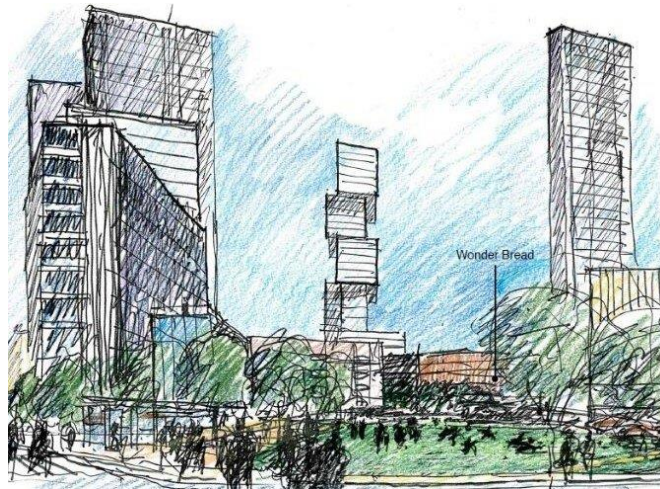
Of course, there is always more work that needs to be done. We need to have the Civic Plaza and Civic Theatre redeveloped, Horton plaza reimaged, and new city council offices 750-feet tall. In addition, Seaport Village is due for redevelopment and the Manchester Pacific Gateway project will help to redefine the city skyline, clean up eight blighted city blocks, and extend the waterfront to the downtown community. This will be iconic and one of San Diego's largest private real estate redevelopments as far as office, hotel and retail.

My goal as a developer is to have a positive influence on the western waterfront and integrate my vision with the San Diego Port Authority in finalizing the North Embarcadero Visionary Plan, improving public amenities, adding parks, museums, parking, arts and culture. I believe we have the responsibility to ensure that the bay district remains the most beautiful, accessible and enjoyable in the world, and I am humbled and honored to have an integral part of achieving this vision. I look forward to continuing to watch the success and growth of downtown San Diego and what it will evolve to for years to come.

The San Diego Union-Tribune.

East Village South: Non-Stadium Plan Revealed

July 29, 2016



<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2016/jul/29/east-village-plan/>

As the Chargers' \$1.8 billion stadium-convention center heads toward the November ballot, an alternate vision will be presented Saturday for downtown's East Village.

The so-called "East Village South Focus Plan" envisions apartment towers, high-tech start-ups, innovation-economy office compounds, new parks and plazas and maybe a convention annex or arena.

"It's a long-term plan," said downtown architect Rob Quigley, designer of the Central Library and outspoken critic of the stadium proposal because of its potentially negative impact on surrounding properties and East Village life. "Our attempt is to try to create a very thoughtful, solid plan that accommodates lots of uses. We believe it will be market driven. The idea is to get multiple developers versus one developer doing everything."

The presentation will be held at 10 a.m. at the Central Library and is free and open to the public.

Developed over the last few months by a team of volunteer architects and planners, with input from developers and the general public, the site could include more than 4.5 million square feet of development — enough to build:

- 3,114 apartments and condos
- 1.1 million square feet of offices
- 300,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space
- 350,000 square feet of meeting space, flexible enough to host conventions, academic classrooms and community events.

The cost at \$400 per square foot: \$1.8 billion, nearly identical to the Chargers' price tag.

The new plan lacks a private sponsor, like the NFL and Chargers, willing to underwrite \$650 million, or \$1.15 billion from a proposed increase in the hotel room taxes — the key sources for the stadium-convention complex.

On the other hand, the alternative plan could generate a projected \$55.2 million in annual state and local taxes from the same site, far more than a public sports facility would. The alternate also speaks of producing 5,590 permanent jobs paying as much as \$447 million a year.

The concept began its gestation last fall when the Chargers seemed on their way out of town to a new stadium in Los Angeles.

Two community workshops were held at the NewSchool of Architecture and Design to gauge community preferences and then Quigley and other volunteer architects pulled out their pencils and sketched out various possibilities. University of San Diego real estate economics professor Norm Miller had one of his classes generate financial projections.

"This document is no more than a framework for implementing the community vision and will need to be vetted and completed by professional planners at Civic San Diego (the downtown planning agency) through a public process," the plan says.

But already it has drawn some interest from Mayor Kevin Faulconer, who was briefed most recently last week by Quigley and NewSchool professor Mike Stepner, a former long-time city planner and city architect.

"He was being very poker-faced about it," Quigley said.

Faulconer also has taken no position so far on the Chargers' plan.

Kris Michell, president and CEO of the Downtown San Diego Partnership business group, was briefed this week.

"She was very pragmatic," he said. "How is it going to happen, how do you put a mechanism in place to allow this to be implemented."

She also inquired if there's room for an 18,000-seat sports arena, such as was recently proposed and rejected by the port district for the Seaport Village redevelopment site.

Historically, downtowns around the country, including San Diego, have relied on big "catalytic" projects — convention centers, stadiums, shopping centers, mass transit — to jump start new development.

Proponents of the Chargers stadium said their project could have the same spinoff effect as Petco Park a decade ago.

But Quigley's group, facetiously called "East Village People," is worried that the stadium would impose a giant, little-used sports facility onto the downtown grid and forestall other opportunities their plan envisions, especially high-paying startup tech jobs suited to the urban-minded millennials filling downtown apartments and brew pubs. Currently, about 70 percent of working residents commute out of downtown to jobs in North County and elsewhere.

“That doesn’t work, that’s not sustainable,” said developer David Malmuth who previewed the focus plan Friday at Quigley’s office, around the corner from the Central Library.

The plan obviously is DOA if voters approve the Chargers plan. But if that goes down to defeat, the coast is clear for another route to East Village’s future.

East Village planners say the first phase would focus on Tailgate Park, the parking lot serving Petco Park.

The city would seek a master developer to buy the property, install underground parking and build “Library Park.” The developer then would be free to build the first structure, planned at the moment as 157,000 square feet for an unspecified use at 14th Street and K streets.

Three other sites at Park Boulevard and Imperial Avenue would be sold off for 850,000 square feet of unspecified development — or a convention center annex or arena.

Seven years later, the second phase would tackle the MTS bus yard to the east through a similar process: A mix of high-rise residential towers and low-rise office buildings with big floor plates favored by high-tech, collaboration-minded tech startup companies.

The chosen developers would cover the \$200 million cost of the land, enough to relocate the MTS facility, and recoup their investment by constructing one of the buildings and selling the remaining sites to others.

Key to the overall plan is the preservation of view corridors, inclusion of parks and plazas, and a link to Barrio Logan signaled by an obelisk or other dramatic piece of public art where 14th Street makes a sharp turn into Newton Avenue. That spot is being dubbed “El Nudillo” or “The Knuckle.” Another link to a neighboring community, Sherman Heights, would be accomplished by building a lid or cover over Interstate 5 between Island Avenue and J Street.

The plan acknowledges the continuing problem of homelessness in East Village and proposes including affordable housing units in residential projects and connecting them to support services.

“Ignoring homelessness during the planning process simply pushes the problem to the next neighborhood,” the plan says.

One other element in the plan would focus on educational institutions beyond the schools and colleges already present downtown. However, proponents do not count on UC San Diego to suddenly open a big downtown quad as an adjunct to its Torrey Pines Mesa home campus.

“You start with a small presence, test it out and find out what works,” Malmuth said. “Ultimately it’s the institution that decides it’s in their interest to be downtown.”

UCSD Extension has already announced a partnership with the Downtown San Diego Partnership to scheduled classes at the partnership’s offices. Whether that morphs into something bigger remains to be seen.



Summer in the City

By Kris Michell | August 5, 2016



<http://sandiegodowntownnews.com/summer-in-the-city/>

There's nothing quite like summertime in San Diego. From the 2016 MLB All-Star Game at Petco Park, to the world-renowned Comic-Con International to San Diego Symphony's Summer Pops on the Embarcadero, there's been a little something for everyone this summer. Here's a quick recap of several of this season's most exciting happenings:

Have you met FRED?

To provide more efficient and sustainable transit options Civic San Diego and the Downtown San Diego Partnership (DSDP) later this month will launch the new "Free Ride Everywhere Downtown" or "FRED" circulator program.

The new program, funded by Downtown parking meter revenues, features five-passenger, all-electric vehicles that are designed to augment existing transportation options and make short trips within Downtown's eight neighborhoods easier.

The initial launch includes 15 vehicles with the fleet expected to grow to 20 within the first year.

Users will be able to request a pick up via a mobile app called The Free Ride. They're free to the public thanks to dedicated funding from Civic San Diego — which manages the Downtown Community Parking District — and private sponsorships. FRED shuttles will operate seven days per week.

Collaboratory for Downtown Innovation

With more than 110 tech startups — and counting — we know that Downtown San Diego is the innovation economy's next frontier.

That's why in July the UC San Diego Extension and the DSDP announced an exciting two-year initiative designed to support and strengthen Downtown's growing tech ecosystem.

CDI will offer a variety of programs to help entrepreneurs develop the networks critical for future growth as well as provide business support and workforce training. Operating out of the DSDP office, CDI will serve as a hub for a variety of programs, including:

Ideas forum: Develop a series of roundtables to connect Downtown tech entrepreneurs with researchers and scientists at UCSD and on the Torrey Pines Mesa.

Talent accelerator: Leverage UCSD Extension's robust certificate and pre-college offerings to provide a variety of education and training programs, with a special focus on providing computer science and information technology skills to youth in underserved communities.

Entrepreneur exchange: Offer a wide range of entrepreneurship support and incubation activities including skills development workshops and pre-accelerator programs.

We must do everything to connect the know-how at UCSD and on the Torrey Pine Mesa to help grow Downtown's emerging tech ecosystem. CDI is the first step in strengthening that connection with the entire community and the region's larger economic goals.

Clean & Safe team tackles Comic-Con cleanup with superhero power

Once again, Comic-Con International 2016 was incredibly successful, attracting a record 135,000 attendees and visitors to Downtown San Diego.

The steady stream of superheroes, guests and attractions brought plenty of additional work for the DSDP's Clean & Safe team. They provided round-the-clock safety and maintenance services, tackling an average of nine times their typical workload to ensure Downtown San Diego remained at its best on behalf of the 11,000 property owners it represents.

During this year's Comic-Con, Clean & Safe Ambassadors:

- Removed 25 tons of trash (about two times more than average)
- Pulled 6,720 bags of trash (about seven times more than average)
- Removed graffiti 1,035 times (about five times more than average)
- Picked up 25,310 flyers, posters and stickers (about 22 times more than average)

To put it in perspective, the Clean and & Safe team generally removes 13 tons of trash and collects 930 bags of trash during a five-day period. Clean & Safe also removes graffiti 190 times and gets rid of 1,150 flyers, stickers and posters during a typical five-day period.

On behalf of the Downtown Partnership, I am thrilled to be able to share all of this news with the Downtown community. Our organization works tirelessly to make Downtown San Diego a vibrant, exciting, safe, and enjoyable place – not just in the summertime, but all year long.

—Kris Michell is the president and CEO of the Downtown San Diego Partnership, a non-profit, member-based organization that serves as the leading advocate for the revitalization and economic health of Downtown. To learn more about the Downtown Partnership and the Clean & Safe program, visit downtownsandiego.org.

The San Diego Union-Tribune.

'FRED': Downtown Free Shuttle Launching Tuesday

By Roger Showley | August 8, 2016



<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2016/aug/08/downtown-shuttle-free/>

If getting around downtown bums you out, call FRED.

The ad-funded free ride-hailing service, Free Ride Everywhere Downtown, will launch at 11:30 a.m., Tuesday led by Mayor Kevin Faulconer at Horton Plaza Park.

Operated by New York-based Free Ride, the all-electric, open-air vehicles will cruise downtown from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays and later on weekends.

You can either stand at a corner and wave down one of the distinctive blue, five-passenger cars or download an app via the company website, thefreeride.com/fred, and request a driver. The goal is to pick you up within eight minutes — and alleviate the anxiety of finding a parking place.

Free Ride, which operates in 10 cities in four states, had already been serving downtown with five vehicles. It was chosen from a variety of applicants to run a shuttle system sought by Civic San Diego, the city's downtown development agency. **The Downtown San Diego Partnership** business group also has been involved.

"San Diego has taken very much the front seat and focus of our company," said Free Ride co-founder James Mirras. "We think it's going to be looked at around the country. We're really trying to hit a home run to drive that innovative service ... and make it the best we possibly can."

CivicSD set aside \$500,000 initially from downtown parking meter revenue to cover \$200,000 for 10 new vehicles and \$300,000 in storage, charging stations and start-up personnel costs. Up to \$2 million over five years has been earmarked for the program with the possibility of more if needed.

The downtown parking district gets nearly \$2 million annually from its share of parking meters to spend on various construction and maintenance projects.

Mirras said 15 drivers have been hired so far. They will earn \$14.66 per hour, including benefits, in accordance with the city's living wage ordinance. The company covers its costs and makes a profit by selling advertising on the inside and outside of each vehicle.

Gary Smith, president of the Downtown Residents Group and a member of the downtown parking district board, said the service will primarily serve residents, workers and visitors who can leave their cars for the day or night and use the shuttle for short trips.

He guessed that car trips within downtown may drop as much as 25 percent over the next five years if the shuttle is successful.



Free Shuttle System to Launch in Downtown San Diego

By: Monica Garske | August 9, 2016



<http://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/Free-Shuttle-System-to-Launch-in-Downtown-San-Diego-FRED-389615062.html>

City leaders will announce the launch Tuesday of a free shuttle system for downtown San Diego, which will, at first, consist of 15 five-person electric vehicles.

The program – dubbed “Free Ride Everywhere Downtown” or “FRED” – is aimed at providing more efficient and sustainable transit options in the busy downtown area. The five-passenger electric vehicles in the FRED fleet will make short trips within downtown neighborhoods. That fleet is expected to grow to 20 vehicles within the first year of the program.

The program, according to the City of San Diego, will initially be funded by downtown parking meter revenues and is a collaborative project from Civic San Diego and the **Downtown San Diego Partnership**.

San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer will discuss FRED in detail at a news conference Tuesday morning, accompanied by Civic San Diego president Reese A. Jarrett and Kris Michell, president and CEO of the Downtown San Diego Partnership.

Fittingly, the mayor, Jarrett and Michell are expected to arrive at the news conference in FRED vehicles. The City of San Diego said this shuttle program is the first of its size in a major metropolitan city.

Check back for details and updates on this story later today.



Downtown San Diego Partnership, Civic San Diego Team Up to Launch Downtown Circulator Program

Press Conference | Tuesday, August 9, 2016



To provide more efficient and sustainable transit options in San Diego, Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer, Civic San Diego and the Downtown San Diego Partnership announced the launch of the new “Free Ride Everywhere Downtown” or “FRED” circulator program.

“We are excited to bring this new free transportation option to the mix of available ways to navigate Downtown,” said Kris Michell, president of the Downtown San Diego Partnership. “Downtown is already a dynamic environment for businesses and residents alike. This new service will only add to the quality of life that makes our urban center a dynamic place to live, work and play.”



4th Annual *We Care & Give Back* Week of Service

August 12, 2016



<https://www.facebook.com/ABC10News/videos/1195077077201439/>

As part of Intuit's 4th annual *We Care & Give Back* Week of service, the Intuit team joined the Downtown Partnership and the Padres Volunteer team to paint lamp posts and trash cans around Downtown.

Taste of Downtown on September 15th, from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

August 15, 2016

<https://fb101.com/2016/08/taste-downtown-september-15th-2016/>

Downtown San Diego is fast becoming known for its incredible food, bustling nightlife, and diverse culture. With so many options for your next meal out, it can be daunting to pick just one – but on Thursday, September 15th, from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., you don't have to! The Taste of Downtown, sponsored by Makers Quarter, offers you the chance to sample bites from 40 different restaurants throughout the Gaslamp Quarter, East Village, and the Downtown Core. For those 21 and up, Blue Chair Bay Rum will be shaking up cocktails at several restaurants to accompany their tasty offerings. Please visit DowntownSanDiego.org for a list of participating restaurants!

For just \$30 in advance (and \$35 day-of), you are invited to Find Your Tasty Moment with friends, family, and loved ones as you experience first-hand why Downtown San Diego is known for its scrumptious food offerings! Taste your way through tried-and-true favorites and new restaurants you've been meaning to try with no commitment to one restaurant or menu.

Current Participating Restaurants (New restaurants added daily on downtownsandiego.org):

GASLAMP

- Blush Ice Bar
- Coyote Ugly
- Don Chido
- Le Parfait
- Lotus Thai Downtown
- Rockin Baja Lobster
- Rustic Root
- Searsucker
- The Field Irish Pub

- The Local
- Tin Roof
- Whiskey Girl

EAST VILLAGE

- Blind Burro
- Bub's @ the Ballpark
- ChillBox
- Cute Cakes
- Knotty Barrel

- The Deck at Moonshine Flats

CORE

- Donut Bar
- Sixth Avenue Bistro
- Tender Greens

HEADQUARTERS

- Seasons 52

Get your tickets early to Taste of Downtown – you'll want to finish this dish down to the last bite! For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit www.downtownsandiego.org or call McFarlane Promotions, Inc. directly at 619.233.5008. Proceeds benefit the Downtown San Diego Partnership, a non-profit organization committed to the success of San Diego's vibrant and world-class urban center.

ABOUT DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO PARTNERSHIP: The Downtown San Diego Partnership is a non-profit, member-based organization that serves as the leading advocate for the revitalization and economic health of Downtown San Diego. To learn more about the Downtown Partnership, visit www.downtownsandiego.org.

ABOUT MAKERS QUARTER: Makers Quarter is a neighborhood within downtown San Diego's East Village distinguished by its creative ethos, local artists and makers. Home to the popular outdoor community venues, SILO and SMARTS Farm, and leaders of San Diego's innovation economy, including FabLab San Diego, Urban Discovery Academy, and Fuse Integration. Makers Quarter offers a creative environment that inspires entrepreneurs to challenge convention and achieve new heights. www.makersquarter.com



Gentrifying East Village Is Also Seeing a Large Spike in Homelessness

By Lisa Halverstadt | August 16, 2016



<http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/all-narratives/homelessness/gentrifying-east-village-is-also-seeing-a-large-spike-in-homelessness/>

Dozens of tents and packed shopping carts line sidewalks and underpasses in gentrifying East Village. Homeless men and women, some of who have lived here for years and others more recently, gather for impromptu meals and overnight encampments.

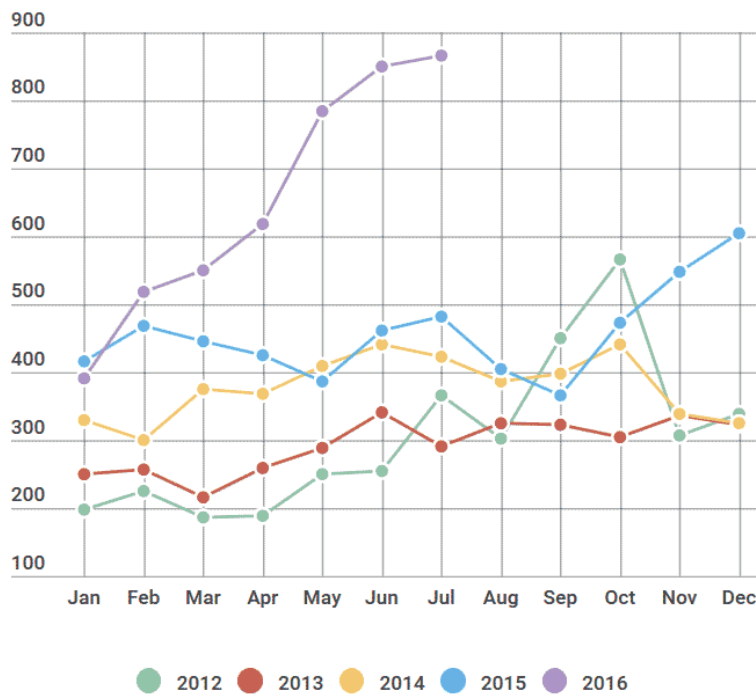
Meanwhile, residents with often new condos and businesses look on, overwhelmed and unsure what to do. Many of them are new to the neighborhood, too.

Welcome to East Village, the front line of San Diego's homelessness crisis.

Street homelessness is up countywide but the problem is growing at a particularly rapid clip here. The neighborhood's homeless population has spiked nearly 80 percent – from about 480 to more than 865 – in the last year alone, according to a downtown business group's monthly count.

Here's a look at how much the unsheltered homeless population has grown in East Village in recent years – and how much this year's growth is outstripping past trends.

Rising Street Homelessness in East Village



Source: Downtown San Diego Partnership

Local leaders and nonprofits that serve the homeless are reluctant to point to any single reason for the upsurge in homelessness in East Village. The neighborhood's long had a large homeless population. They say there are likely a number of reasons – everything from a dearth of affordable housing to stagnant wages and much more.

Tent cities are increasingly popping up, along with residential towers and new businesses.

The tent cities are emerging under overpasses like this one.

They're also striking around Neil Good Day Center, a facility operated by nearby Father Joe's Villages where homeless folks can get their mail and access other services.

There's a permanence to these makeshift settlements that's struck even longtime San Diego homeless services workers like Bernie Miles.

"People have just put the tents up and said, 'This is my spot,'" said Miles, who supervises workers who try to connect downtown homeless folks with services at North Park-based Episcopal Community Services.

Those tent cities could be helping fuel what appears to be a massive uptick in homelessness on East Village streets. Groups like the Downtown San Diego Partnership count each tent as housing two people when they tabulate the number of homeless downtown.

The tent cities are particularly dense in the area near Father Joe's Villages' St. Vincent de Paul campus on Imperial Avenue.

Indeed, last month the Downtown Partnership recorded that more than two-thirds of the population who live on East Village streets settled in southeastern East Village, the corner of the neighborhood that's home to that campus and other homeless services.

Ruth Bruland, chief program officer at Father Joe's Villages, said she's troubled by what she sees as she walks in the area and drives to work.

"I'm in the industry, if you will, and it's shocking," Bruland said. "We are hamsters in a hamster wheel trying to make things happen for people and open up doors where they can exit homelessness, and here it is, growing around us like it is."

Bruland and other East Village homeless providers confront wait lists in their shelter programs and struggles finding housing for clients already enrolled in them.

They wish they could do more – and more quickly.

East Village resident and business groups do, too.

"It's getting worse by the minute," said Robert Weichelt, an East Village Residents Group board member.

The real estate broker said some residents overwhelmed by growing encampments and panhandling are considering moving out of the neighborhood. He recently helped one young couple move.

The residents group recently circulated a report urging the city to take immediate steps to address the growing problem.

Homeless folks who live in East Village also feel pressure.

Steve Hillard, who's lived on the streets of East Village for years, told me earlier this year he's sensed a change in the last year.

"They don't want us to be downtown," he said.

Hillard is one of several homeless folks who told me they're concerned with the city's handling of encampment sweeps conducted weekly since March. The city has said the operations are meant to clean up the streets, not displace homeless people.

Hillard didn't see them that way.

"I'm already being punished for being out here," he said. "I wish they would be more respectful."

I haven't run into Hillard since the city installed these rocks under an Imperial Avenue overpass but I can't imagine he's pleased with them, either.

The city claimed this spring that it installed these rocks along a common route to Petco Park in East Village following complaints from Sherman Heights residents. But VOSD contributor Kelly Davis later found that the city's former ballpark administrator actually took the lead and aimed to discourage encampments in advance of the All-Star Game.

David Gapp, another East Village Residents Group board member, defended the rock garden. He said East Village and Sherman Heights residents are concerned for their safety and sometimes can't use sidewalks in the area because they're covered with tents.

Gapp emphasized that he's long felt compassion toward homeless folks but said he's watched fights break out and some others have chased him and his wife. "The rest of the city probably has no idea what's going on," Gapp said.

Despite the unsafe conditions – including for homeless people – people continue to arrive in East Village, some from other parts of San Diego and some from outside the area.

Last week, I met Debra Hawkins, a homeless Army veteran who took a bus from Imperial Valley to San Diego.

Hawkins said a homeless couple suggested she head to East Village to seek help after she landed in San Diego, distraught after losing her suitcase. Hawkins said she's checked in at Rachel's Women's Shelter daily in hopes of securing a bed.

"Do you think I like being out here?" she said. "No, I don't."

Spencer Sharp, who said he's been homeless in East Village for about a year and a half, had a different story. I caught up with him under this makeshift shelter near the Day Center.

Sharp, an admitted addict, acknowledged he appreciates easy access to drugs in the East Village area, though he said he'd find them elsewhere, too.

Sharp doesn't want to remain on the street indefinitely, yet he said he's grown comfortable with it. Others I've talked to – including Hillard – feel the same. Living on the street is a better option than programs or shelter beds they've been offered, they said. They don't like the rules or don't feel confident they'd mesh with the others already there. Or they're concerned about spending the limited cash they have on rent.

In East Village, they can easily take a shower and get a meal – whether from a service provider like Father Joe's or from a church group – without entering a program.

And they've gotten to know many of the people who live on the streets around them, even if they don't always feel safe.

"I know most everybody," Sharp said. "Everybody knows me."

The San Diego Union-Tribune.

Downtown Construction Near Record Levels

By Roger Showley and Daniel Wheaton | August 16, 2016



<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2016/aug/16/downtown-construction-update/>

If the crop of construction cranes downtown signals boom times are back, take a look at Civic San Diego's latest count.

The downtown planning agency reports 27 projects under construction with many more approved or planned.

"Looking back historically, it's probably close to our busiest time," said Brad Richter, assistant vice president for planning.

However, he said, applications for new projects are not as strong as last year.

"We're not sure if there's an actual slowdown and a reassessment of supply coming on board ... or not," Richter said.

He said residential projects remain "pretty strong" but he has not yet seen any major shift from apartments to for-sale condos.

Historically, office construction was the biggest category in downtown development but in recent years, that category has seen very little interest.

Richard Gonor, executive vice president at the JLL commercial real estate brokerage, said a number of office developers are interested in starting projects but they are to land big leasing deals before breaking ground.

“We’ve definitely seen a pickup in office demand,” he said, but most interest has come from small startups that usually commit to only three- to five-year leases for space within the next nine months.

To start construction on a major office building, developers typically need to attract established “credit-worthy” tenants willing to sign 10-year leases and will wait 18 to 24 months before they can move in.

Meanwhile, the best space downtown is spoken for and interest is shifting to so-called “Class B” buildings that are typically older and less well located than “Class A” buildings.

Gonor is one of the brokers on one of those Class B buildings, the Hamilton Fine Foods building at Sixth Avenue and C Street. Built in 1928, the historically designated site with an exterior frieze of fruit and vegetables is getting a new roof and elevator. Gonor said he has heard from restaurants and co-work office users.

Kris Michell, president and CEO of the Downtown San Diego Partnership business group, acknowledged that speculative office development has yet to take place. But she said a large, unnamed company is thinking of moving downtown into as much as 300,000 square feet of new space — more than enough to justify a new building.

“Just the fact that we are in discussions I think is very good,” she said.

On the residential front, the newest building to be completed is another historic property. The former Hotel Churchill at Eighth and C, owned by the San Diego Housing Commission, is reopening as an affordable apartment project for veterans, foster youth and ex-convicts facing possible homelessness.

Project manager Colin Miller said last-minute details are being attended to before the first residents move in over the next few days.

According to CivicSD’s project update, the active projects include 4,401 apartments and condos; 1,081 hotel rooms; 174,000 square feet of retail; and 777,000 square feet of government space — the new state courthouse and a bayside new city fire station.

Nine projects are expected to be completed this year, including the 317-room Pendry Hotel in the Gaslamp Quarter, the 480-unit Rey apartment project on B Street and the 21,000-square-foot Airborne San Diego parachute simulation ride at 14th Street and Imperial Avenue. That total compares with 10 completions last year and, of 23 in 2004, the highest since 2001.

There are also 29 projects approved but not yet under construction and 12 awaiting approval.

The running total from 2001 through mid-2016 includes 15,593 residential units, 4,447 hotel rooms, 1 million square feet of retail space, 1.2 million square feet of office space and 7,303 public parking spaces.



The Human Chain of Homelessness

By Ron Donoho | August 17, 2016



<http://sdcitybeat.com/article-17715-The-human-chain-of-homelessness.html>

If you believe any chain is only as strong as its weakest link then you should be concerned about the plight of our homeless population. There were more than 8,700 in San Diego at last count—a number that only includes those who surveyors could find on Jan. 29, 2016, for the official Point in Time Count. Not every local canyon could be combed; the men, women and children who are homeless and couch surfing with friends were not included. Our numbers could easily be double what was reported, maybe even more. Compared to similar official counting efforts, though, San Diego ranks fourth in the country in number of homeless—behind New York, Los Angeles and Seattle.

Our homeless community is unquestionably the most vulnerable in the linked chain of human existence. And that's a primary motivating force behind San Diego Homeless Awareness Day (Aug. 17). About two dozen media outlets in the city have allied to focus cameras, airwaves, newspaper pages and web space on the same issue on the same day. It's unprecedented in San Diego and borrows from a similar effort implemented in June in San Francisco. CityBeat is proud to be an organizing sponsor of the local coalition.

So who are those people out there living in tents set up on city sidewalks? Contrary to one line of thought they're not all lazy deadbeats and/or alcoholics and drug fiends. That's not to say some don't possess those traits or addictions. But who can judge with one glance whether a man or woman became homeless because they are drug addled, or became drug addled because they are homeless?

If you think high standing in society offers immunity to homelessness, think again. Ask Laurie Black. Her late husband was a successful developer; she was the daughter-in-law of the owner of the Hotel del Coronado. Black was a port commissioner, aide to a Congresswoman and head of the **Downtown San Diego Partnership**. Her late brother, Brian, was a paranoid schizophrenic who heard voices in his head and went homeless for stretches of time.

Here's a previously unreported personal note: Several years ago I found myself on the precipice. It culminated after a series of events relating to job loss, bad economy, the end of a relationship and a previous financial obligation. I moved into an East Village single-room-occupancy apartment. No, I never slept outdoors. From my SRO window, however, I could gaze out onto the street and plainly see the next rung down on the ladder of descent.

By happenstance, I recently drove through East Village on the same day Pastor James Merino made his return to doing street feedings. Recall he previously reported the San Diego Police Department threatened to "bring the hammer down" on his San Diego Dream Center organization if it carried out its ministerial mission downtown in July, while Major League Baseball's All-Star Game was going on.

Fearful the SDPD might harass or even arrest his volunteers, The Dream Center sat out the whole month of July. Merino claims the stoppage caused his ministry to lose a major funder.

But on Aug. 10, here is Merino once again. He and his team set up tables on Island Avenue between 15th and 16th streets and are giving out wrapped sandwiches and other dinner foods, as well as clothes, shoes and printed materials advertising counseling and services that can help lead to permanent housing.

Merino tells me his lawyer, Scott Dreher, prepared a lawsuit against the city for threatening to shut them down. Dreher later confirms he met with Assistant City Attorney Dan Bamberg. Dreher says the two hashed out a resolution in an "adult conversation" that did not lead to filing the lawsuit.

Merino says he wanted reassurance that feeding people on the street is legal. He wants it in writing, but Dreher says he and Bamberg shook hands and settled the suit.

The following statement, though, was emailed to CityBeat from City Attorney Spokesperson Gerry Braun: "San Diego does not have an ordinance prohibiting the distribution of food to the needy. It did so until 2014, but no prosecutions under it were brought by this office."

Braun adds: "The City Attorney's Office has received two [San Diego Municipal Code section] 54.0122 cases from SDPD since the current city attorney took office in 2008, and neither involved free food distribution.... SDMC 54.0122 was amended in 2014 to address issues concerning food trucks. As a result of those changes it no longer prohibits free distribution of food."

That's welcome news to caring individuals like Merino, and to other faith-based and do-gooder groups. But giving out food is a temporary solution— not a long-range cure. A plan to build and distribute tiny homes made of wood, for example, is also a well-intentioned but temporary solution. The argument is that tiny homes are a distraction from the long-range solution.

But the long-range solutions from local government are a long time coming.

“I’ve been doing this for 30 years,” says Alpha Project founder and CEO Bob McElroy. He has indeed been a longtime and oftentimes brash fixture in the homeless community. McElroy has a football player’s build and recently underwent a knee replacement surgery. But that hasn’t slowed him from having a hand in nearly every outreach program run by Alpha Project. The newest, crowning achievement is Alpha Square, a 204-unit permanent supportive housing high-rise on Market Street in East Village.

“I started running this all out of my pocket,” McElroy says of Alpha Project. “I’ve been on every task force and every mayor’s subcommittee. I’ve worked with every mayor and city councilperson—for 30 years. I’m still here in the street because that’s what I love to do. And everything that’s encapsulated in the housing-first system is right here in Alpha Square. We have a psychiatric case manager and a full-time nurse from the county. We have computer labs. And a nurturing environment.”

McElroy pivots to note that what the city has done to manage homelessness for at least the past 30 years has not changed. He calls it herding. “What the city is doing doesn’t work. The cops are mandated to respond to calls,” he says. “So they get a bunch of calls and move everybody over to Imperial [Ave.]. Then when everybody over at Imperial gets pissed off, then they move ’em over to National [Ave.]. We herd people from one neighborhood to another because there’s no place for people to go.”

McElroy wants to build a large Central Intake facility where people can get access to services while they wait for permanent housing (homeless advocate Michael McConnell, who shares a passion for solving homelessness, disagrees with this approach).

But despite suggestions and solutions offered by concerned advocates and activists, there exists a fundamental disconnect with local government.

Mayor Kevin Faulconer’s spokesperson has long insisted the mayor is spending more money on homelessness than ever and is committed to the housing-first approach.

“I’ve known Kevin forever,” says McElroy. “He doesn’t call me and I’m not calling anybody. They know where I am. And they’ve know what our plan has been for 15 years...I’ve told all the power brokers, the big shot money guys downtown that they need to stop funding [political] campaigns of people that aren’t going to do something about this.”

Who are the power brokers McElroy is referring to? “Big-time property owners. Tourism industry. Chamber industry.”

Lacking voice and an ability to make campaign contributions to candidates who would push for affordable and low-cost housing, the homeless continue to just be bounced from place to place. McElroy calls it herding, McConnell refers to it as “Whack-AMole” enforcement.

Sherman Heights got a taste of the Whack-A-Mole effect after the city installed sharp rocks under a bridge bordering downtown. It was intended to discourage people from sleeping there, but led to a decision by some homeless folks to move into Sherman Heights. Hillcrest believes it is now seeing a surge of homeless individuals who have been displaced by downtown encampment sweeps.

Sigh. Ignoring the fixes already on the table for drastically reducing homelessness is maddening.

The wildly successful results of Project 25 (which is still in practice at Father Joe’s St Vincent de Paul Villages) show that if you take the repeat offenders off the street—those who are continually picked up

and processed by the police and for ambulance and hospital service—and give them housing and attend to their individual health and mental needs... they stay off the street at a significantly higher rate. And housing them costs taxpayers substantially less than continually plucking them off the street.

These are the dots that need to be connected in political circles. Awareness isn't enough; action has to be taken. If not, the chain will break. And someone you know could easily slip through the cracks while the herd is senselessly being marched from one corner to the next.



Serving the Homeless Isn't a 9-to-5 Job

By Andy Kopp | August 17, 2016



<http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/topics/opinion/serving-homeless-isnt-9-5-job/>

About five months ago, I was getting a haircut in East Village when the stylists started talking about a man outside who was digging around in the bushes near one of their cars. I looked up just as he laid down on the edge of the sidewalk.

My wife and I moved into the neighborhood nearly five years ago. On any given day, I'd estimate there are easily 250 homeless people who fall asleep on the streets within a five-block radius of our place. So this seemed neither rare, nor urgent. Nonetheless, I told my hairdresser I'd check it out.

I went outside and found a young man who was malnourished and on drugs. He had rolled off the sidewalk, becoming wedged in between the curb and the front tire of the car. Approaching him slowly, I asked if he needed help, though, it was obvious he did. He looked up at me, weeping, and only asked if he could use my cell phone.

Between that phone call and when I left him about three hours later, we held out for any shelter to answer their phone to let me know there was a bed for him. None answered. We tried the non-emergency line of the San Diego Police Department hoping to get guidance from the Homeless Outreach Team. Our call was never answered.

When I called 911, I was told that an ambulance could not be sent unless I could determine whether the young man was a medical or psychological emergency. How could I know? We held out for a regular patrol car to be dispatched, only to be later told there weren't enough and that the one previously assigned had been rerouted to a different incident – we were told a second would be on the way. It never came.

In the end, he was coming down from his high as private security chased him off from public space, berating him for eating in front of a 7-Eleven.

The young man insisted that he appreciated my help, but he eventually told me he was moving on. The shame I felt, both personally and as a citizen unable to get him the help I was told would be there for those who seek it, stays with me. Every time I told him there was a way to help – that it was just another phone call away – I was made a liar.

The problem is not that services don't exist – you can grab the [Downtown San Diego Partnership's](#) homeless services contact card, which includes a long list of homeless service provider contacts from just about every one of the organization's Clean & Safe team member patrolling the streets. But when services like shelters are desperately understaffed at night, or when the Homeless Outreach Team only runs a daytime shift – and nobody, anywhere, answers – they may as well not. That has to change.

We can start by acknowledging that solving homelessness is not a nine-to-five job, and in doing so, ask the city to provide the necessary resources to the SDPD for expanding the Homeless Outreach Team. People who live on the streets, and those who want to help them, need to know that help is there any time of the day or night. Right now, when you call the Homeless Outreach Team number, you are asked to leave a voicemail and there's no information about how long it might be before someone will call you back. Calling the number leaves you feeling hopeless.

It would also be helpful if the city did a better job of getting the word out about the existence of the Homeless Outreach Team so people who want to help someone who's homeless know what number to call and exactly what kind of resources the team can provide once they show up.

With round-the-clock interaction, the Homeless Outreach Team members can learn the dynamics of the individual pockets of our local homeless communities. They'll come to recognize faces, and their faces will in turn be recognized. They can learn to determine when personality differences may lead to an argument, when an argument may lead to an altercation – or worse. As they become a constant but unintimidating presence, they may come to be trusted arbiters of conflicts, able to de-escalate tensions before more drastic measures are required from patrol dispatches.

And if our concern for crime within the homeless population is genuine, then more presence should have at least some deterring effect. Contact and interaction by Homeless Outreach Team members needs to be a 24-hour-a-day operation – both for those officers we're asking to do an increasingly difficult job, as well as the population they're best trained to serve.

Asking our service providers to tackle this problem without better methods and greater resources shortchanges the greater difference they could be making for our most vulnerable population. The broader community – and especially our homeless citizens – cannot afford that failure.



Portland Loo in East Village Attracting Crime, Neighbors Say

By Megan Tevrizian and Lynn Walsh | August 18, 2016



http://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/Portland_Loo_in_East_Village_Attracting_Crime_Neighbors_Say-390511262.html

San Diego Police officers have responded to the intersection that's home to the Portland Loo, 20 percent more often than before the free, 24-hour restroom was installed, data shows.

Installed in January 2015, the Portland Loo located on the north-west corner of Park Blvd and Market Street in San Diego's East Village is the second and only remaining of its kind in the City. The first, was located near the intersection of 14th and L Streets but was shut down six months after it was installed. San Diego officials said it became a magnet for crime and homelessness.

Now, neighbors say the same issues associated with San Diego's original Portland Loo, are happening at the one in East Village.

Shelli Evers lives in East Village and is on the homeowners' association board of Park Boulevard East. She says she often sees more than one person leaving the loo at the same time, "often stoned or seemingly under the influence of drugs."

Evers has lived in East Village since 2009. She says she's noticed a spike in homelessness since the Portland Loo was installed last year and fears for her safety when she walks her two dogs in the

neighborhood. More than once, she says, she's been stalked by transients loitering by her condo complex.

"It's terrifying not knowing how strong the person's commitment is to stalking to me," she said.

When Evers asked SDPD what she should do to ensure her safety, she says they recommended she walk her dogs with a taser in hand.

The Portland Loo is a real toilet, with running water and better ventilation than port-a-potties. It's funded through tax dollars, open to the public and free to use.

Using data obtained through the California Public Records Act, NBC 7 Investigates tracked the number of times SDPD officers responded to the intersection where the East Village Portland Loo is located.

Since being installed, the data shows the total number of calls for service have gone up by 20 percent. The number of battery and disturbing the peace with violence reports have almost doubled and the number of psychiatric holds (5150s) have nearly tripled.

Click [here](#) or look below to see a comparison of calls for service before the Loo was installed and with it installed.

"It's the perfect place for drug users to go and shoot up or do whatever they do, and then come around the area and cause problems," says Chris Sohaey.

Sohaey is a real estate investor who owns property on Park Boulevard and Market Street. He says his tenants complain regularly of seeing feces at their front door.

East Village resident Sarah Watkins told NBC 7 Investigation similar stories. She says the area has become filthy, with defecation and trash. She's also noticed an increase in crime.

"I've seen and reported sexual acts on the streets too," she said.

Sohaey has complained about the Portland Loo to the City of San Diego, SDPD, the city's Parks and Recreation Department and the **Downtown Partnership's Clean and Safe Program**. According to Sohaey, there's a lot of finger pointing.

"I've exhausted almost all of my efforts in trying," Sohay said. "I have about a 30 page document of emails that I've tried to address with the Mayor."

NBC 7 Investigates reached out to the SDPD, the City of San Diego and the Clean and Safe Program. None of the agencies responded.

Sohaey, along with Evers and Watkins, say they would like the Portland Loo removed.

As of right now, there is no plan in place to remove it.



A Decade Later, San Diego's Living Wage Law Quiets Critics

By Joe Yerardi & Chris Young | September 6, 2016



<http://www.kpbs.org/news/2016/sep/06/decade-later-san-diegos-living-wage-law-quiets-crit/>

Two years ago, the paychecks Jose Partida brought home to support his family were barely enough to make ends meet. The landscape company he worked for at the time paid him about \$11 per hour, without paid vacation or health benefits.

But life has since improved for the 28-year-old father of two. He now works for a different landscape company, one that does lots of business with the city of San Diego.

Partida is the beneficiary of a decade-old law that requires city contractors to pay their employees living wages for work they perform on the taxpayers' dime. He is one of roughly 3,900 city contract workers currently earning nearly \$15 an hour, including health benefits, and receiving paid vacation.

"I live better," said Partida, who does irrigation work on city properties for Landscapes USA. "I don't have any pressures. ... Before it wasn't like that."

The city's living wage law initially faced strong opposition from business groups, who argued that requiring pay well above the minimum wage would kill jobs and put employers out of business. But San Diego's experience over the past decade appears to have silenced those critics.

In fact, many employers report that the law has been good for workers and for business. Experts who study living wages say the overall success of such laws has helped pave the way for the movement to increase minimum wages in cities nationwide, including San Diego.

Workers rights advocates and city officials hope San Diego's new minimum wage law, which went into effect in July, will have a similar positive effect on workers, businesses and the local economy. But the degree to which the law succeeds will largely depend on how aggressively the city enforces it.

If the budget is any indication, strong enforcement of the new law is unlikely. An *inews* source review of the city's experience policing the living wage suggests that its plans to rely on complaints to enforce the minimum wage law may not be enough to keep employers honest.

Businesses in San Diego have a track record of failing to follow wage laws, whether intentionally or not. And given that low-wage workers are often afraid to file complaints against their employers, workers rights advocates say it's critical that the city make active policing of its latest wage law a top priority.

"If you look at the lessons learned from the living wage enforcement, the picture is very clear that you do have to do some proactive enforcement in order to ensure that employers feel the obligation to comply," said Clare Crawford, executive director of the Center on Policy Initiatives, a local nonprofit organization that advocates for low-income families. "You really need the city to make sure those employees are protected beyond just waiting for complaints."

A popular law

The living wage currently pays \$12.21 per hour in cash wages, plus \$2.45 per hour in health benefits, and offers workers up to 10 paid vacation days. It covers landscapers, janitors, security guards and a variety of other full-time, part-time and seasonal service employees who work for companies that do business with the city.

Many employees at Qualcomm Stadium, Petco Park, the Convention Center and other city facilities earn the living wage. Earlier this year, the city added paramedics and other medical workers to the list of city contractors covered by the law.

As its name suggests, the living wage is intended to help workers do more than just get by — it's meant to lift them out of poverty. At least that's what the City Council intended when it passed the law in dramatic fashion on April 12, 2005.

For nearly six hours before the vote — the outcome of which was uncertain until the very end — opponents and supporters of the measure packed the auditorium of Golden Hall for heated testimony.

Advocates for low-wage workers hailed the ordinance as a way to achieve economic justice ("the living wage is a human right," one woman said), while many business leaders assailed it as a government mandate that would kill jobs, cripple businesses and spell disaster for the city's already dismal finances ("it will literally shut our doors down," one business manager said).

In the end, the City Council voted 5-4 to approve the living wage. Cheers erupted when City Councilman Tony Young — widely believed to be the swing vote — announced his support for the measure. As the applause died down, however, Young stressed that he wanted to reserve the right to rescind the ordinance if the gloom and doom predicted by opponents of the living wage came true.

Ten years later, many say it hasn't.

"It turned out to be really popular," said Laurie Coskey, CEO of United Way of San Diego County and a faith leader who fought for passage of the living wage ordinance. "There weren't any of the doomsday repercussions that were anticipated."

The living wage got the city out of the business of paying its contract workers low wages that advocates say kept workers and their families living in poverty. And raising the wage floor allowed contractors to bid on city contracts on the basis of service quality, rather than how little they paid their workers.

But the law applies to only a small fraction of workers in San Diego.

Some businesses with lots of city contracts employ dozens of workers who earn the living wage, but other businesses only pay living wage rates for the handful of hours a week one of their employees works on a city contract.

"I have nothing bad to say about (the living wage)," said Mike Salceanu, operations manager at Landscapes USA, which employs about 35 workers who landscape city properties. "We have much better retention, and with retention comes increased quality of service."

Additionally, he said, the living wage helps motivate his staff who work on private contracts.

"All of the employees want to be assigned to a city contract because it's better benefits, better pay, better stability in their work," Salceanu said. "We made it into a kind of a reward program."

Other employers have reported similar benefits in annual reports filed with the city. In 2009, the first year the city asked employers for feedback on the living wage, 41 percent reported that paying the living wage improved their quality of service, while the same percentage said it reduced turnover and absenteeism.

The Downtown San Diego Partnership is one of the city's newest — and biggest — living wage employers. The nonprofit's Clean and Safe program, which employs workers to sweep sidewalks, trim trees and remove graffiti downtown, recently signed its first city contract covered by the law.

"We definitely noticed an increase in morale," said Bahija Hamraz, executive director of Clean and Safe. "We are experiencing better retention. And we're able to attract employees more effectively than we did in the past, so we're more competitive."

The downside, Hamraz added, is that the budget increase caused by the living wage has stalled hiring a bit. She said the nonprofit had hoped to hire more employees when it renewed the contract, but the added costs have prevented that so far.

Still, "I think it's a net plus," she said. "You have a more productive team, with better morale and also an ability to retain a team, which all translates into cost savings."

Aztec Landscaping was among the first set of participants in the city's program. Since the law went into effect in 2006, it's held 210 living wage contracts, more than any other firm, according to an *inews* source analysis.

Aztec's vice president, Rafael Aguilar, agreed that the living wage law has benefited his workers, but "it did kill jobs," too. Positions he had to cut after the law went into effect have never been restored, he said.

Despite such complaints, business leaders who were once strongly against the living wage law are no longer criticizing it publicly. A spokeswoman for the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, which led the fight against the law in 2005, declined an interview request for this story. "We are going to pass," she wrote in an email.

To date, more than 130 cities have adopted living wage laws nationwide. Economics experts have been studying their impacts on workers and businesses ever since Baltimore passed the first one back in 1994.

For the most part, researchers say, the experiences of many workers and businesses in San Diego appear to reflect broader research about living wage laws in cities across the country. While studies have found the laws result in modest job losses and increased costs, researchers have generally concluded that they help stabilize the lives of low-income families — allowing them to pay down debt, see a dentist or quit a second job — and improve the performance of businesses.

Experts say the overall success of living wage laws helped give birth to the minimum wage movement sweeping the nation. As David Fairris, professor emeritus at the University of California, Riverside, put it: “The living wage movement showed that ... it didn’t all go to hell in a handbasket.”

Enforcement lessons

In June, San Diego voters overwhelmingly approved a ballot measure to raise the minimum wage and provide workers in the city with paid sick days. The law, which went into effect in July, added 50 cents to the minimum wage, raising it to \$10.50 an hour.

The city’s minimum wage will jump to \$11.50 next year, but its gradual increases will eventually be eclipsed by the state’s minimum wage, which will reach \$15 per hour by the year 2022.

The question now facing San Diego is how it will enforce the new wage mandate. City officials acknowledge it won’t be easy, but workers rights advocates say the city could learn important lessons from its decade of experience policing the living wage.

Since the living wage law went into effect, the city has recovered on workers’ behalf about \$594,000 in unpaid wages from city contractors through complaint investigations and compliance reviews.

To date, workers have filed more than 60 formal complaints against their employers, alleging a wide variety of living wage violations, including unpaid wages and unpaid leave. An *inewssource* analysis showed the city confirmed violations in 52 percent of the complaints and required employers to pay a total of \$408,000 in back pay.

The city has recouped an additional \$186,000 for workers through proactive enforcement. A separate *inewssource* analysis showed the city has conducted more than 70 compliance reviews since the law went into effect in 2006, roughly 43 percent of which resulted in violations. Last fiscal year, more than half of the compliance reviews found violations.

Employers subjected to audits have been cited for failing to pay living wages and failing to compensate workers for vacation, among other violations. Some violations have been minor, but others have been substantial.

Last year, for example, a city audit of three contracts held by Ace Parking found multiple living wage violations, requiring back pay totaling more than \$72,000, the highest amount paid as a result of a compliance review.

The parking services company, which declined an interview request, failed to pay required wages, offer paid leave and maintain proper records, among other violations. The city has paid Ace Parking more than \$45 million in living wage contracts, more than any other contractor.

In 2010, the city permanently banned J.L. Krueger Landscape Services from bidding on city contracts after an audit found some of the same violations.

In both cases, the companies were found to have violated a fundamental requirement of the law, which records show many employers have ignored: They failed to inform employees of their rights under the living wage law.

Enforcement “needed to be proactive,” said former state Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins, who led the effort to pass the living wage in 2005 when she was on the San Diego City Council. “You need to shine the light.”

Workers advocates have largely praised the city’s efforts to enforce the living wage law, but they say a lack of funding has limited the scope of its work. The enforcement office is run by just three full-time employees who are tasked with sifting through payroll records and interviewing employees in order to detect violations.

In fiscal year 2015, the city proactively reviewed 22 percent of its active living wage contracts. That’s a lower audit rate than the city of Los Angeles, which reviewed 28 percent of its living wage contracts.

Three years earlier, San Diego didn’t conduct any compliance reviews because its skeleton staff was busy investigating an unusually high number of complaints.

Some business owners say the limited proactive enforcement is a problem. In 2010, security contractor Elite Show Services filed a complaint with the city, alleging that some of its competitors working for the Convention Center had “snubbed their noses” at the living wage law. The company requested that the City Council “take immediate action to follow through on (living wage) enforcement ... so that the playing field for all companies is leveled.”

Records indicate that the city found no violations.

“It’s good for them to do (compliance reviews),” said Aguilar of Aztec Landscaping, which has been subjected to three audits. “It weeds out people that are trying to do shady business.”

Workers advocates agree. They stress that the high violation rates found through complaints and compliance reviews suggest the need for more proactive enforcement — something they hope will be prioritized as the city starts to monitor its newest wage law.

“People will make mistakes, people will try to cheat, people will just not know,” said Donald Cohen, the former executive director of the Center on Policy Initiatives, who helped craft the city’s living wage law. “If you’re not out there being proactive, then our worst selves can come out.”

Minimum wage connection

If a lack of funding has hampered enforcement of the living wage law, it’s likely to pose a much greater obstacle for minimum wage enforcement.

The city has budgeted \$400,000 to administer and enforce the new minimum wage law in fiscal year 2017. That’s only about \$3,000 more than it has allocated for enforcing the living wage law. In other words, the city plans to spend almost as much money to police a law that covers 172,000 low-wage workers citywide as it does to enforce a law that applies to fewer than 4,000 city contract workers.

The city is still in the early stages of creating a program to enforce the minimum wage law. In August, the City Council passed an enforcement ordinance that subjects employers to civil penalties of up to \$1,000 per violation and creates an office with the power to review payroll records and interview workers.

The city plans to rely on complaints to monitor compliance.

“They did not build into the ordinance a requirement to do proactive enforcement,” said Crawford of the Center on Policy Initiatives. “We see that as one of the weaknesses.”

Mayor Kevin Faulconer opposed the minimum wage increase. A spokesman for his office declined an interview request for this story.

City Councilman Todd Gloria, who led the effort to raise the minimum wage, said he understands the importance of compliance reviews. While the new law doesn’t explicitly mandate proactive policing, he said it allows for audits to be a part of the city’s enforcement repertoire.

“It’s my intention that that tool is at the disposal of the enforcement office,” said Gloria, who plans to further discuss minimum wage enforcement during a Sept. 14 Budget Committee hearing. “It cannot simply be just a complaint-driven process because too often too many people are not going to feel empowered to come forward.”

Gloria said the city plans to follow the lead of other cities that have enforced minimum wage ordinances, prioritizing education outreach and cooperation between the city, the state Labor Commissioner’s Office and local community groups.

“We should be in an educational role right now,” Gloria said, noting that his office has already received calls from workers claiming they weren’t being paid the new minimum wage. “Are we getting notices to employers? Are we working with nonprofit partners in neighborhoods that can help us spread the word?”

But eventually, Gloria said the city will have to take stock of its enforcement efforts.

“We’re going to really have to start looking at the metrics,” he said. “If the council saw that there were no proactive (compliance reviews), they’d have to ask why we’re spending the money we’re spending on the enforcement office and whether or not we’re getting our money’s worth.”