

**The Public can join the CCBD Board Meeting via the following options**

- Join Zoom Meeting
  - <https://zoom.us/j/96214702408?pwd=YzZBWmRBWDIPTFVtK2FqRlI0bVA3dz09>
  - Meeting ID: 962 1470 2408
  - Passcode: hWA2J1 CCBD
- Special Meeting packet can be found at <https://downtownsandiego.org/build-your-business/bid/>

**8:30am CALL MEETING TO ORDER | Greg Block**

- Non-Agenda Public Comment
- Board Members Roll Call

**LETTER OF SUPPORT | Greg Block**

- In support of the Downtown Homelessness Initiative | **ACTION**

**CONCLUSION | Greg Block**

- Agenda Public Comment

**ADJOURN | Greg Block**

<insert org logos>

January xx, 2021

The Honorable Nathan Fletcher  
Chair, County Board of Supervisors  
County of San Diego  
1600 Pacific Beach Drive, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
San Diego, CA 92101

The Honorable Todd Gloria  
Mayor  
City of San Diego  
202 C Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
San Diego, CA 92101

***Downtown Homelessness***

Dear Chair Fletcher & Mayor Gloria:

We are writing to you on behalf of Downtown's small businesses, hospitality and restaurant industries, and as representatives of our nonprofit sector, service providers, affordable housing developers, essential workers, and residents. As we work together to reimagine the future of our urban core in the wake of COVID-19, we are cautiously optimistic that Downtown will re-emerge as an economically prosperous and culturally vibrant urban center amid a tech boom and flourishing blue economy. This will create better opportunities for the entire region in various ways ranging from quality jobs, more housing options, and a stronger tax base to support all of our communities. Unfortunately, Downtown continues to be greatly impacted by homelessness, those suffering from severe behavioral health issues, and those who use homelessness as a guise for criminal activity. This impacts not only the lives of our unsheltered population but also poses a severe threat to public safety, public health, environmental health, and economic recovery efforts at a time where many businesses are clinging to survival.

We applaud you for your commitment to the Housing First model and support recent efforts to bolster development and operate additional supportive housing elements; however, much more needs to be done to address the unique set of challenges we face Downtown. We are reaching out in the spirit of collaboration to ensure we restore confidence in our Downtown and encourage your consideration of the following, to stem the volume of incidents that many in the Downtown community encounter daily.

On behalf of our residents, businesses, and workforce, we ask that you implement the following recommendations:

- 1. Conduct government-funded outreach fairly, focusing on the areas of greatest need:** The deployment of City, County, San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC), and Regional Task Force on the Homeless (RTFH) outreach workers and contracted vendors should be data-driven, ensuring the areas of greatest need receive the most

resources. Criteria should include the number of unhoused individuals and behavioral health-related calls for service. This will ensure that outreach workers are not being deployed arbitrarily (i.e. by City Council District or resigned to the unincorporated area).

- 2. Emphasize collaboration:** “Operation Shelter to Home” resulted in a remarkable level of communication across agencies and service providers that has served as a model across the state and nation during the pandemic. This same spirit of collaboration is being fostered, Downtown, to ensure outreach is being conducted efficiently. Monthly coordination meetings should be expanded to include the City, Regional Task Force on the Homeless (RTFH), San Diego Housing Commission, County Behavioral Health Services, and providers servicing Downtown and the surrounding areas (i.e. Downtown Partnership, PATH San Diego, National Alliance on Mental Illness San Diego). This will ensure that outreach is being conducted efficiently and will allow for client handoffs between entities specializing in the most appropriate services for any given circumstance. For instance, many outreach workers are not equipped to respond to the level of behavioral health-related incidents, extreme mental distress and intoxication they encounter too frequently. With a greater County Behavioral Health Services presence, outreach workers will be better trained in de-escalation tactics and will have a point of contact on the ground to hand clients off to in a stable way.
- 3. Deploy and triage crisis response units in Downtown:** In recent months, incidents related to drug use, intoxication, and extreme mental distress have exploded. The City, in conjunction with County Behavioral Health Services, are in discussions around the development of crisis response teams. As part of this development, a triage system for residents and business owners to report individuals in distress should be incorporated. Currently, only 911, 211, and phone numbers for the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) non-emergency and the Downtown San Diego Partnership Clean & Safe dispatch exist as 24/7 hotlines readily available to Downtown stakeholders; however, none of these options elicits an appropriate response to the unique needs of individuals in crisis. Bringing more specialized teams online with a dedicated number or the ability to triage from 911 will allow for more individuals to get the help they need. Until a new number is created or integration with 911 is possible, we recommend using Clean and Safe’s hotline as a pilot. Additionally, Clean and Safe ambassadors are in the field 24/7 and can easily report individuals in crisis before they become a danger to themselves or others.
- 4. Expand the definition of “gravely disabled,” and employ conservatorship as permissible under California state law:** As noted above, we have seen a sharp increase in behavioral health-related incidents, drug use, and intoxication to the point where individuals are a danger to themselves and others. These individuals often will not accept services or do not possess the cognitive ability to accept services. California law allows for the use of conservatorship once an individual has been placed on eight temporary, involuntary psychiatric holds (5150) in one year. Although we would argue the threshold of eight occurrences is too high, we have yet to see an accurate accounting as to whether conservatorship is being employed at all under existing state law. Additionally, we have seen no evidence that law enforcement is tracking 5150 holds by individual or sharing this data across other

agencies. Instead, many individuals in dire need of care are permitted to die a slow death on the street, while others consume vital civic resources like SDPD, Fire-Rescue, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), in addition to hospital stays, which further constrains our healthcare system. Individuals are often held for treatment and observation before being discharged and left to repeat this cycle all over again. In addition to greater accountability as far as tracking 5150 calls per individual and ensuring that conservatorship is being used to help individuals in need, we would ask that you direct the City and County Government Affairs Department to advocate for the expansion of “gravely disabled,” at the state level, to include serial instances of intoxication and drug use. Until we see a greater investment in psychiatric care facilities and the will to forcibly take sick individuals and place them into care, we will continue to see loss of life and the proliferation of psychosis on our streets.

- 5. Maintain funding for programs vital to the cleanliness and safety of Downtown:** The City’s “Clean SD” program, which focuses on illegal dumping and trash pickup, is responsible for the removal of thousands of tons of garbage and large items in our streets and sidewalks such as couches and refrigerators. In a down budget year, we know that some difficult decisions lie on the horizon. We urge you to maintain funding for Clean SD so that our streets, sidewalks, and parks remain free from debris. Additionally, SDPD’s Neighborhood Policing Division provides a vital service to Downtown in the form of community-oriented policing and Homeless Outreach Team services. Neighborhood Policing’s progressive enforcement and proven successful programs like the Serial Inebriate Program provide critical alternatives to the criminal justice system for individuals who have committed lower-level offenses.
- 6. Enforce aggressive and threatening behavior, including violence, vandalism, substance abuse, and drug sales:** In recent months, COVID-19 has reduced jail capacity, resulting in the release of incarcerated individuals and emboldening those who use homelessness as a guise for criminal activity. Homelessness is not a crime; however, some prey on the homeless community, often committing crimes without fear of retribution. We urge you to promptly offer vaccinations for inmates and employees at local jail facilities and direct SDPD and the Sheriff Department to enforce all criminal acts. We also urge the City Attorney and District Attorney to jointly focus on prosecuting crimes, including those who most egregiously violated our laws during which time criminals were not being incarcerated.
- 7. Ensure the safe release of inmates:** Existing law authorizes a County sheriff to discharge inmates at any time during one’s last day of confinement. By ensuring that the majority of discharges are done during daytime hours and providing access to available transportation, rehabilitation, social services, and housing resources upon release, we can better address the pipeline between incarceration and homelessness.
- 8. Emphasize incentivizing the creation of more Single Room Occupancy Hotels (SRO) and microunits:** We recognize the importance of minimizing adverse impacts on the housing supply; however, the current SRO Ordinance does nothing to incentivize the creation of new units and, instead, often complicates redevelopment. By creating attractive incentives for the development of more SROs and microunits, we could take the pressure off of converting the existing stock and change the paradigm to

bring more units online. We urge you to incorporate the Downtown San Diego Partnership's recommendation letter, entitled: *Downtown Stakeholders Input – Single Room Occupancy Hotel Ordinance Amendments (November 10, 2020)*, as the San Diego Housing Commission works to revise the existing ordinance.

- 9. Facilitate the safe deployment of public restrooms:** In 2015, the San Diego County Grand Jury issued “The Ongoing Need for Downtown Public Restrooms.” The City and County have since deployed portable restrooms and handwashing stations; however, these restrooms are often used for illicit purposes, namely drug use, drug sales, and prostitution. While additional public restrooms are greatly needed, all restrooms must include a robust security element to ensure they are being used appropriately. As the restroom supply ramps up, so too should penalties for public urination and defecation.
- 10. Ensure each neighborhood and city does their fair share:** Downtown harbors the vast majority of homeless shelters and resources. Unless otherwise supported by the entities herein, any new temporary bridge shelters, treatment centers, day centers, needle exchanges, or applicable facilities should be located in communities, incorporated and unincorporated, at a rate commensurable with the additions in Downtown. Please use us as a resource in this endeavor.

The threats posed by our housing crisis, climate change, and mass unemployment can be alleviated by harnessing Downtown’s reputation as an easily-developable, world-renowned place to live, visit, and do business, all along major transit corridors. However, behavioral health challenges and criminal activity, Downtown, have reached a breaking point and threaten to drive our once prosperous industries elsewhere. Without intervention, we will be unable to continue to attract business, visitors, patrons, and investment in the economic and civic center of our region.

We hope you will consider these recommendations.

Sincerely,



Betsy Brennan  
President & CEO  
Downtown San Diego Partnership

SDTA x  
CRA x  
HMA\_

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cc: Hon. Stephen Whitburn, City Council, District Three  
Tamera Kohler, Chief Executive Officer, Regional Task Force on the Homeless  
Rick Gentry, President & CEO, San Diego Housing Commission

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