



## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **DOWNTOWN AND REGIONAL LEADERS OUTLINE PLAN FOR ACTION TO ADDRESS INCREASING DOWNTOWN HOMELESSNESS**

*Recent Spike in Downtown Unsheltered and Encampment Count Underscores Need for Expanded Shelter, Services*

**SAN DIEGO – Sept. 2** – The Downtown San Diego Partnership is working with regional leaders to identify and implement measures to direct resources, personnel, and outreach to the population of unhoused people in Downtown, which spiked in August to more than 1,600 unsheltered people and more than 450 tent encampments.

The August count is a 9% increase compared to the second-highest month of the calendar year, which was recorded in April 2022. The monthly count has been conducted since 2012 and serves as a record for the need in San Diego’s urban center.

For over a year, the Downtown Partnership has advocated for the deployment of resources to address homelessness in a coordinated, compassionate, and data-driven way.

“The need in Downtown is great and it doesn’t take reading this monthly report to know this is true,” said Betsy Brennan, President & CEO of the Downtown San Diego Partnership. “Every week, we are working with unhoused clients directly to learn about their needs and we hear about the experiences of residents, business-owners, and our workforce and the suffering they’re witnessing on our streets and sidewalks. While housing will always be the end goal, the Downtown Partnership is calling for a sustained, coordinated outreach effort – like those implemented in Downtown in the past – to connect our unhoused neighbors to resources, safety, and shelter.”

“This increase doesn’t come as a surprise from the data we collect every day and what outreach teams are seeing and reporting,” Tamera Kohler, CEO of the Regional Task Force on the Homelessness, said. “We are seeing too many people experiencing homelessness for the first time and many in their later years, too many families, and far too many suffering from multiple health needs. The rapidly increasing rent costs and cost of living currently are affecting more and more people on limited income or living

paycheck to paycheck. Unfortunately, maintaining housing isn't always achievable. The RTFH is currently in the process of applying for an unprecedented amount of federal and state funds, which will be dedicated especially to addressing those without shelter. Bringing targeted and specialized outreach teams focused on housing, increasing resources and more housing options dedicated for those without shelter, and prioritizing those with severe health needs and vulnerability. We must work together to reduce the suffering on the streets."

City and County leaders also shared their commitments to take new steps and continue their collaborative approach. The need for additional housing and shelter availability continue to be identified as critical to creating long-term change.

"Supporting our unhoused population is one of my top priorities -- no one should be living on the streets, it is unsafe and inhumane," said Supervisor Nora Vargas, Vice Chair, San Diego County Board of Supervisors. "We have to make government work for all not just some, and I am committed to continue the work of connecting people to services and putting them on the path to permanent housing. As a county we are investing in behavioral health services, creating innovative housing transition solutions, and working with local nonprofits to address this crisis. I am fully dedicated to continue partnering with our local cities, business, organizations, and communities to find real solutions to address this crisis that has been impacting our region for far too long."

"The crisis on the streets is directly tied to the news that San Diego is now the least affordable housing market in the nation. Too many people struggle to pay the rent, and more and more people are winding up homeless," said District 3 Councilmember Stephen Whitburn. "I secured funding in this year's budget specifically to address the significant homelessness downtown, and I will continue fighting every day for more affordable housing, rental assistance, and shelter beds until everyone is off the streets."

With the leadership of Councilmember Stephen Whitburn, the City Council, and the Mayor, the City allocated \$1 million toward enhancing outreach in the Downtown area as part of this year's budget. As part of its efforts to provide coordinated outreach City-wide, the City of San Diego will continue to move forward with week-long, multi-agency outreach efforts in Downtown planned for the week of Sept. 28 and during the months of October and November. The City plans to expedite the hiring of full-time outreach staff dedicated to Downtown to complement both the planned coordinated outreach efforts and the work already being done by service providers to connect with our unhoused neighbors.

"Homelessness is one of the most pressing issues facing our community, impacting not only our unhoused neighbors but also our residents as well as visitors to San Diego," said Julie Coker, President and CEO of the San Diego Tourism Authority. "We know our elected officials understand the magnitude of the crisis and applaud them for increasing outreach and mental health resources so we can help people off the streets and into housing."

"We all know we need more housing. We need more diverse, quality shelter options – like the Safe Villages request for proposals underway by the San Diego Housing Commission. As those resources are built and planned, this is an encouraging step forward to show our unhoused neighbors and everyone in Downtown that we know this is unacceptable. And that we can work together as a community to make a difference," said Brennan.

The Downtown Partnership continues to advocate for the following priorities regarding the homelessness crisis:

- Expanding shelter capacity
- Adding safe non-congregate shelter options
- Increasing outreach with professionals trained to assist those with behavioral health or substance abuse needs
- Deploying resources in a coordinated, compassionate, and data-driven way

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*The **Downtown San Diego Partnership** is a nonprofit organization that serves as the principal voice and driving force behind the economic and cultural prosperity of Downtown San Diego through membership, advocacy and public services. It also serves as the managing organization for several special districts including the Clean & Safe program that provide essential public services in the 275 blocks of Downtown. For more information, visit [downtownsandiego.org](http://downtownsandiego.org).*