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## **COALITION UNVEILS NEW, VIBRANT CIVIC CENTER VISION FOR DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO**

*Coalition Led by Downtown San Diego Partnership, Prebys Foundation, U3 Advisors, and San Diego Community College District Presents Plan to Transform Downtown into a Cultural Hub*

**SAN DIEGO** – May 6, 2025 – At the inaugural WAVES Festival, San Diego County's newest ideas and experiences festival, the Downtown San Diego Partnership and the Prebys Foundation unveiled a bold new vision for the Civic Center, developed in collaboration with nationally recognized urban planning firm U3 Advisors and more than 20 local organizations. Over the past year, the coalition gathered extensive community input, including feedback from San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria, the San Diego City Council, and key Downtown stakeholders.

This bold new direction reimagines the heart of Downtown San Diego as a vibrant, welcoming, cultural crossroads — a place where arts, education, civic life, and diverse housing come together to create a thriving urban neighborhood.

"For too long, San Diego's Civic Center has not lived up to its potential as a dynamic public space," said **Betsy Brennan, President & CEO of the Downtown San Diego Partnership**. "Today we take what we have learned through months of stakeholder outreach, the previous work of the City of San Diego, and the historical interest in what is possible for this space as momentum to turn the page. Together, we are inviting the community to imagine a connected, vibrant heart of Downtown that will serve as an economic and cultural catalyst for the entire region. When we lean into creating fresh and relevant space rooted in design and function truly tailored for the location, then people have more ability to gather, linger, and live, and we continue to create a San Diego that even more San Diegans can enjoy and hopefully fall in love with one visit at a time."

Guided by extensive community input and building on [Mayor Gloria's Civic Center Revitalization Committee](#), the vision focuses on four core priorities:

- **Culture and Education:** Introducing new learning spaces, performing arts venues, and community hubs anchored by institutions like the San Diego Community College District.
- **More Housing for San Diego:** Creating a range of housing options for teachers, students, and artists to ensure Downtown is home for a diverse range of San Diegans.
- **Iconic Public Spaces:** Designing a 3-acre Civic Plaza programmed year-round for concerts, night markets, and community events.
- **A True Downtown Neighborhood:** Childcare centers, grocery stores, dog runs, and retail and restaurants that will breathe life into the Civic Center at all hours.

"This vision will reestablish Downtown as the vital heart of San Diego," **said Grant Oliphant, CEO of Prebys Foundation.** "By reconnecting people to civic life through arts, culture, education, and housing, we are creating a place where everyone feels they belong. A stronger Downtown will mean a stronger, more resilient San Diego for generations to come."

The group seeks to activate the Civic Center spaces later this year, with phased development unfolding over the next several years to allow flexibility and community-driven momentum.

"San Diegans deserve a downtown that fuels community, creativity, and opportunity," **said Omar Blaik, CEO of U3 Advisors.** "Our job was to listen, to learn, and to help shape a future that feels rooted in what San Diegans value most. This is not just a vision; it's a platform for civic life to flourish."

"We applaud the vision presented today at the Waves Conference. It offers a path for an engaging and dynamic civic core by incorporating education, art, and culture as core elements," **said Carol Wallace, President and CEO of San Diego Theatres.** "It recognizes their centrality to the lifeblood of a vital, engaging, and contemporary Downtown where San Diegans can live, work, and play." San Diego Theatres manages, markets, and operates the Civic Theatre and the historic Balboa Theatre.

In keeping with the vision's strong educational component, the San Diego Community College District has stepped forward as a champion to establish new learning spaces and cultural programming.

"Our students represent the future of San Diego and we are excited to explore the prospect of anchoring part of that future at the Civic Center," **said Gregory Smith, Chancellor of the San Diego Community College District.** "An investment in Downtown's revitalization is an

extraordinary opportunity to advance our mission to uplift the lives of our students, our communities, and the city of San Diego through higher education in a dynamic new city center."

Prebys Foundation has already demonstrated its commitment to this transformation through strategic investments including support for the Depot Arts District via UC San Diego and the recent acquisition of the 401 B St. building to further catalyze Downtown's revitalization.

The Downtown San Diego Partnership and Prebys Foundation are leading a growing coalition of civic, nonprofit, business, and educational leaders to move the vision forward. The coalition includes Mayor Gloria and the City of San Diego; the Asian Business Association of San Diego; the Downtown San Diego Partnership; Gafcon; IATSE; La Jolla MJ Management; LUCE et Studio; Manpower West; Parks California; Prebys Foundation; the San Diego Community College District; the San Diego County Building and Construction Trades Council; the San Diego County Water Authority; the San Diego Municipal Employees Association; the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce; the San Diego Regional EDC; the San Diego Symphony; San Diego Theatres; the San Diego Tourism Authority; the University of California, San Diego; and the YMCA of San Diego County.

The update on the Civic Center vision offered at the WAVES Festival is intended to spark more conversation around its specific details and next steps, including a phased implementation plan and the potential formation of a special purpose entity to help guide that work.

"As this effort moves from planning to action, we are seeking additional champions who share our belief in the Civic Center's potential," said **Brennan**. "By sharing this vision now, we want to enlist more individuals and organizations to see themselves in the future of this critical effort and join us."

For more information and updates on the Civic Center Vision and to indicate your interest in being a partner in its implementation, visit [downtownsandiego.org/downtown-civic-center](https://downtownsandiego.org/downtown-civic-center).

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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, enhanced services, and community investment. It also serves as the managing organization for several special districts including the Property and Business Improvement District, otherwise known as the Clean & Safe program, which provides enhanced services to more than 285 blocks of Downtown. For more information, visit [downtownsandiego.org](https://downtownsandiego.org).*

**Prebys Foundation** is the largest independent private foundation in San Diego County, a dynamic tri-national region that spans the communities of San Diego, Tijuana, and the Kumeyaay Nation. Prebys works to build a more vibrant and equitable future for all who call this region home. Through investments in transformative institutions, ideas, and individuals, Prebys seeks to expand opportunity and well-being — ensuring more people are financially secure, healthy, empowered, and connected. Learn more at [prebysfdn.org](http://prebysfdn.org).

**U3 Advisors** is a nationally recognized consulting firm that provides real estate and economic development solutions to communities and anchor institutions – colleges and universities, medical centers, foundations, and nonprofit and civic organizations. U3 Advisors' core practice is focused on serving local leaders and cities during the planning, pre-development and implementation phases of catalytic real estate development projects. For more information, visit [U3Advisors.com](http://U3Advisors.com).