

San Diego Newsline

Downtown San Diego news — the budget, public safety, business, and the civic life of America's Finest City

WHAT'S NEWS

DOWNTOWN

Business & Civic Leaders
Launch Downtown Safety Plan

COUNTY

Starting Saturday, 39 Vote
Centers Open for November
Presidential General Election

COUNTY

Board Approves New
Playground Makeover in
Lakeside

BUSINESS

Chamber Leads Largest
Binational Delegation to
Mexico City

INSIDE

Downtown, City & County —
2
Business — 2
Cartoon — 3
Commentary — 4

DOWNTOWN

Business & Civic Leaders Launch Downtown Safety Plan



Illustration

On September 23 rd , a coalition of Downtown residents and businesses announced an action plan to reduce crime, improve public safety, and enhance cleanliness in San Diego’s urban core.

The Downtown San Diego Partnership organized a coalition of stakeholders to renew an aligned focus on what is needed for Downtown to be successful. Despite significant steps forward made by coalition efforts in 2022, this progress has not resolved the challenges to the current experience of Downtown for residents, employees, and visitors. Therefore, the Downtown Partnership solicited further feedback from property owners, residents, and businesses to align our collective voices around a new five-point Downtown Safety Plan , which includes:

Implement Policy and Programs to Address Crime and the Unclean and Unpleasant Pedestrian Experience, Especially in the Dusk and Overnight Hours

Deploy Dedicated Resources to Address the Behavioral Health Episodes, Rampant Drug Use, and Drug Sales on Downtown Sidewalks

Implement Funding Resources to Address the Out-of-Control Behavioral Health Crisis

Ensure State Policy is Enforced and Adjudicated

Achieve a More Realized Clean and Safe Downtown Experience

Chamber Executive Vice

President & COO Jessica Anderson stood in support at the press conference on the 23 rd where the new plan was announced, and was joined by Mayor Todd Gloria, Councilmember Stephen Whitburn, the Downtown San Diego Partnership, SDPD , and local downtown business owners and residents.

Chamber Executive Director of Public Affairs Justine Murray participated in a meeting hosted by the Downtown San Diego Partnership focusing on the City of San Diego’s role in the new plan, and was joined by other business organizations, trade organizations, and downtown stakeholders. The Chamber will continue to support the partnership’s efforts, as a clean and safe downtown is not just crucial to the economic vitality of the downtown area, but is crucial for the economic vitality of our entire region.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news
release · Oct 29, 2024



Illustration from a photo by Edward O'Connor (hober) ·
Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0

COUNTY

Starting Saturday, 39 Vote Centers Open for November Presidential General Election

You don’t have to wait until Election
Day to vote in person. Voters can take

advantage of early voting at 39 vote centers starting Saturday, Oct. 26. The centers are located around the county and will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

On Saturday, Nov. 2, over 200 vote centers will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Nov. 4. On the final day of voting, Nov. 5, all vote centers will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

If you plan to vote in person, be prepared. Read your voter information pamphlet and mark your selections on the sample ballot in advance. When you go inside the voting booth at the vote center, you can refer to your choices on the sample ballot to conveniently mark your selections on your official ballot.

You can visit any vote center in the county. Find a location near you at [sdvote.com](#).

Vote centers have replaced polling places and provide more services . You can:

Vote in person or drop off a mail-in ballot

Vote using an accessible ballot marking device

Receive assistance and voting materials in multiple languages

Register to vote or update your voter registration and vote on the same day

Voters can use a touch screen to make their selections on ballot marking devices . When finished, the voter will print out the official ballot, review it, place it in a secrecy sleeve, and hand it to a poll worker to insert it in the ballot box to be counted at the Registrar’s office. The ballot marking device does not store, tabulate or count any votes.

Remember that campaigning or electioneering within 100 feet of a vote center or official ballot drop box is not allowed. This includes the visible display or audible dissemination of information that advocates for or against any candidate, measure, or proposition on the ballot. Additionally,

Continued on page 2

DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Starting Saturday, 39
Vote Centers Open for
November Presidential
General Election

an individual may not circulate any petitions, including those for initiatives, referenda, recall or candidate nominations.

Don't delay! With a significant number of contests on the ballot, the voting process may take longer than usual. The Registrar's office recommends using early voting options to avoid long lines.

Vote in person at any vote center around the county.

Or drop off your ballot sealed inside its return envelope at an official drop box.

To vote from home, sign and date your return envelope, seal your completed ballot inside and return it by mail promptly to make sure it arrives at the

Registrar's office before Nov. 5.

To drop off your ballot, seal it inside its return envelope and return it to one of the Registrar's 150 official ballot drop boxes . The secure stand-alone boxes feature the Registrar's logo along with the County seal and are labeled "Official Ballot Drop Box."

Find one close to you through the Registrar's locator map , your voter information pamphlet or online at sdvote.com . Most of these drop boxes are available 24/7. The rest depend on the hours of operation of the location. Check each location's hours of operation before heading out to return your ballot. All will close at 8 p.m., Nov. 5.

The sooner the Registrar's office receives your ballot, the sooner it is processed for the first release of election night results.

If you already returned

your mail ballot, you can confirm when it was received by the Registrar's office at sdvote.com or you can track it through the U.S. Postal Service by signing up for "Where's My Ballot? ".

Learn more about voting in the November Presidential General Election at sdvote.com , or call (858) 565-5800 or toll free at (800) 696-0136.

County of San Diego news release · Oct 25, 2024

COUNTY

Board Approves New
Playground Makeover
in Lakeside

The County Board of Supervisors approved the replacement of a playground at Cactus County Park in Lakeside this week, clearing the way toward hiring a contractor to begin construction.

The Department of Parks and Recreation operates more than 100 playground

facilities throughout the county that promote health and wellness for youth across the region.

The County reviews its inventory and looks for playgrounds that have reached the end of their useful life. Some playgrounds are more than 40 years old. The County prioritizes the oldest and most used playgrounds and replaces them.

Cactus County Park is a 59-acre park located in Lakeside that offers a trail for hikers and equestrians, softball fields, baseball Pony field for youth ages 12-16, an airstrip for radio-controlled airplanes and a BMX track.

The project will replace the existing 15-year-old preschool playground with new playground equipment, shade structure and add a new playground for children ages 2-5.

The new baseball-themed playground will provide a

new play area for preschool children that exceed ADA requirements, increasing access for children of all abilities.

Other improvements include new fencing for the ballfields, restoration of the dugouts and converting the boardroom to a snack bar.

This project is community-driven and was requested by the Lakeside Community Planning Group last month with a vote in favor of this project 11 to 1 (with 1 abstention).

Construction costs for playground equipment are estimated at \$580,000. The remaining \$1.17 million in project funding will be used for design and construction management.

The project construction is expected to begin in Summer 2025 and be completed in Fall 2025.

County of San Diego news release · Oct 24, 2024

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



Illustration from a photo by Joe Mabel · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

BUSINESS

Chamber Leads
Largest Binational
Delegation to Mexico
City

A delegation of more than 120 business and community leaders from San Diego and Baja California – including Mayor Todd Gloria, San Diego County Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Nora Vargas, and Tijuana Mayor Ismael Burgueño- traveled to Mexico City to champion economic and political ties between the U.S. and Mexico, and advance regional priorities to make the CaliBaja the best place to live and work. The trip took place October 20 – 23, 2024.

View Binational Delegation to CDMX Photo Album Here

This year, our region had an opportunity to meet with cabinet members and federal officials from the new administration who took office along with President Claudia Sheinbaum just two weeks before our visit. Hearing from new officials about their vision for the next six years and bringing forward our region's priorities allows our region to continue to advance initiatives, infrastructure, policies and projects that help our business and community thrive.

The trip agenda covered diverse priorities that are critical to CaliBaja's prosperity, from border efficiency to water management and infrastructure, Mexico's energy policies, and economic development and trade opportunities through USMCA.

During our water management and infrastructure session, delegates extended our appreciation to the Mexican Federal Government for the near completion of the rehabilitation of the main water treatment plant in Tijuana (San Antonio de los Buenos) which will help significantly reduce transboundary flows impacting the Tijuana River Valley and is expected to be completed by December of this year and reaching full operational capacity in March 2025.

Other conversations covered border efficiency which is vital to integrated supply chains that have become a huge economic engine on both sides of the border and that showcase what the U.S. and Mexico can accomplish as trade partners.

Undersecretary of Trade at the Ministry of Economy, Luis Rosendo Gonzalez, shared with delegates a vision to change from a globalization point of view to shortening supply chains while also promoting incentive programs and facilitating permit processing, which has already begun to attract big

investment projects.

Delegates also had in-depth conversations about multi-sector and cross-border collaboration to strengthen the tourism industry and attract global visitors, leveraging important international events such as Tianguis Turístico which will take place in Baja for the first time next spring, as well as the FIFA World Cup in 2026 and Los Angeles Olympics in 2028.

Additionally, Roberto Velasco, who was recently ratified as Chief Officer for North America at the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, reassured his commitment to follow up with Mexican Federal agencies on facilitating the energy transition, increase trade under the USMCA revision, continue reducing the introduction of Fentanyl in North America, and advance other Minute 328 projects and further push for technological advancements at our ports of entries.

A pressing issue, and an ongoing priority for the Chambers, continues to be ensuring border efficiency through technology and infrastructure that can facilitate trade and travel across the U.S.-Mexico border. Delegates heard about investments coming to our region such as nonintrusive high technology to support border technology and improve our border's efficiency in the Mexican side. SANDAG CEO Mario Orso also addressed the next steps in the construction of

Otay II, which the Chamber continues to advocate and support resources for, including the need for intelligent transportation systems (in progress).

Delegates were hosted by the Senate's Commission of Foreign Affairs – Northern Border for an annual meeting that has become a cornerstone of the trip. The group also heard from other Congressmembers including former Presidential Candidate and now Senator Ricardo A n a ya , about economic development in the border region, clean energy opportunities and incorporating th ese effort s under the USMCA agreement. Senat ors shared a commitment to promote Mexico as the top nearshoring destination in Latin America, to continue d collaboration with the Chamber to advance shared priorities and ensure our northern border's economic prosperity and global competitiveness.

Speaking of bringing investments to our region, the International & Public Affairs team stayed in Mexico City a few extra days after the Chamber's agenda concluded to join the ProBaja delegation visiting embassies and trade offices to promote, attract, and increase foreign investment in our Cali-Baja region. The group met with the Australia, New Zealand and Mexico Business Council (ANZMEX), the Embassies of Germany and Quebec, and the Economic and Cultural Office of Taipei, among

others, strengthening diplomatic ties and fostering relationships with companies who are looking into relocating to the US/MX border region. This is the fourth year in a row that the Chamber collaborates with ProBaja in such efforts, joined by representatives from the Secretariat of Economy and Innovation and the Tijuana, Mexicali, Ensenada, and Tecate EDCs.

Here's what our regional leaders shared about the 18 th Annual Binational Delegation to Mexico City:

“Creating this unique opportunity for dialogue with the leadership in Mexico City, especially the new presidential administration, is critical to advancing our binational region,” said Jerry Sanders, President and CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce . “With this large, diverse group of leaders from across Cali-Baja, we're demonstrating our continued commitment to collaboration. It really helps move the needle on issues when you bring everyone together in one room to show who is impacted and why it matters to their business and community.”

“I'm meeting with leaders in Mexico City to urge action on the cross-border pollution impacting the Tijuana River Valley,” said Mayor Todd Gloria . “I want to thank the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce for organizing this delegation, which allows us to speak with a unified

Continued on page 3

BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Chamber Leads Largest Binational Delegation to Mexico City

regional voice, build on the progress we’ve made, and advance critical priorities. Together, we’re building a stronger binational region.”

“The annual visit that the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce leads to Mexico City gives our region a unique opportunity to strengthen ties with the Mexican government, promote our priorities as a single Cali-Baja region and showcase collaborative bilateral strength between Mexico and the U.S. It is an honor for the Consulate of Mexico in San Diego to be part of this binational delegation and introduce our region to the new administration, bring forward our initiatives and represent the cross-border community in a very important moment for the future of bilateral relationships” said Ambassador Alicia Kerber-Palma Consul General of Mexico in San Diego.

“The California-Baja California region plays a vital role in maintaining crucial cultural and commercial ties between California, the U.S. and Mexico,” said California State Transportation Agency Secretary Toks Omishakin . “Enhancing this critical partnership allows us to continue to advance transportation policies and projects that will help border communities thrive today and into the future.”

“Mexico is more than just our neighbor—it’s a vital cultural and economic partner,” said Chairwoman Nora Vargas of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and SANDAG . “I’m honored to join the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, the Mayor, and this esteemed delegation in strengthening growth, innovation, and prosperity across our binational community. Together, we’re unlocking immense opportunities for trade, investment, and mutual benefit, enriching lives on both sides of the border. By combining our talents, resources, and shared

innovative spirit, we’re building vibrant, resilient communities that thrive together.”

“It is fundamental for this administration to maintain direct communication and cooperation between diverse public and private stakeholders on both sides of the border, and to work together on challenges that the mega region faces which impact economic development, environment, infrastructure, and migration,” said Tijuana Mayor Ismael Burgueño.

“The Tijuana River Valley’s ongoing pollution crisis is more than just an environmental challenge; it’s a pressing public health and economic issue for both sides of the border. This bi-national delegation to Mexico City offers us a critical opportunity to strengthen partnerships, secure investments, and align infrastructure efforts to benefit our entire region,” said Imperial Beach Mayor Paloma Aguirre. “By addressing transboundary pollution, improving border

efficiency, and supporting sustainable economic growth, we can build a future where communities in the Cali-Baja region thrive. Our region’s strength lies in collaboration, and with the right investments, we will protect our shared environment and unlock new opportunities for prosperity.”

The delegation represented a diverse mix of regional leaders, industry organizations, and elected officials from both sides of the border including:

Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Nora Vargas

Baja Congresswoman Erika Santana and Jalisco Congresswoman Nadia Sepúlveda .

Toks Omishakin, Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency

San Diego City Councilmembers Marni Von Wilpert and Vivian Moreno

Chula Vista City Councilmember Carolina Chavez

Ambassador Alicia Kerber-Palma Consul General of Mexico in San Diego

Baja State Representatives Eligio Valencia and Daylin Garcia .

Our trip to Mexico City generated significant media coverage, with over 100 mentions across various platforms, reaching an audience of over 477 million. This proves the widespread interest in the economic and cross-border initiatives the Chamber advocated for. Major domestic national outlets such as Yahoo , MSN , and NewsNation featured the trip, alongside robust local coverage in San Diego and Tijuana . Televisa traveled with the delegation sharing continual updates from meetings and interviews with delegates and speakers. View the Televisa coverage here . This extensive media presence highlights the importance of the binational collaboration as well as our relationships ’ impact on our region’s economic development .

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Oct 29, 2024

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



Priority: Fancy swingset
THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Voters Should Demand Financial Transparency Before Approving New Local Taxes and Bonds

The California Policy Center argues that more than two dozen cities, counties and school districts seeking over \$118 million in new annual taxes plus \$48.9 million in bonds have not released their required 2023 financial audits.

As Californians prepare to vote on a wave of local tax increases and government bonds, the California Policy Center is urging voters to first demand basic financial accountability from the governments asking for more money.

According to the Center, more than two dozen cities, counties and school districts have placed new taxes or bonds on the ballot even though they have not yet released their Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports for 2023. These ACFRs provide a full picture of revenues, expenditures, assets, liabilities and overall financial health.

The Center argues that these jurisdictions are seeking more than \$118 million in new annual taxes plus \$48.9 million in bonds while their most recent audits remain missing. Without current financial statements, the Center argues, voters cannot make informed decisions about whether additional taxes or borrowing are truly necessary.

Specific examples highlighted by the Center include Humboldt County, which is asking voters to approve a 1 percent transactions and use tax expected to raise \$24 million per year. The city of Woodland in Yolo County is seeking a similar tax that will cost taxpayers \$132 million over eight years. Neither jurisdiction has filed its 2023 ACFR, the Center notes.

School districts are also part of the pattern. The

Center points to Siskiyou Union High School District, which wants voters to authorize a \$22 million general obligation bond to renovate outdated school infrastructure. Repayment would come from a property tax assessment of \$29 per \$100,000 of assessed value. Yet this district, too, has not released its annual audit.

The California Policy Center warns that the state’s combined state and local government debt now approaches \$1.6 trillion, roughly half of California’s gross domestic product. The Center says many municipalities are effectively underwater due to growing pension obligations, an aging population, disappointing investment returns and aggressive demands from public sector unions.

Instead of addressing underlying spending problems, the Center argues, local governments too often resort to tax hikes or new borrowing as short-term patches. Pew Trusts reports that California cities and towns issued about \$7 billion in pension obligation bonds across 2020 and 2021; the Center notes that the Government Finance Officers Association cautions against such bonds because they add more debt for taxpayers to repay.

This election also features Proposition 2, which would authorize up to \$10 billion in statewide bonds for K-12 school facilities, along with as many as 267 local school bond measures. Before approving any of these, the Center says voters should press elected officials with pointed questions about current financial position, alternatives to new taxes, impacts on fixed-income residents and low-income families, and whether the measures address structural problems such as unfunded pension liabilities.

To help citizens and local leaders evaluate these issues, the Center points to its recently released Municipal Finance Triage Guide and a

new interactive Local Fiscal Health Dashboard that grades jurisdictions on 10 key fiscal metrics. The organization also maintains a list of governments that have not yet submitted their 2023 ACFRs and a chart showing which of those have tax and bond measures on the current ballot.

Andrew Davenport, a Policy & Research Associate with the California Policy Center, concludes that managing a sustainable budget is one of the most important duties of local elected officials. Asking voters to cover shortfalls year after year means those representatives are not doing their job. Prudent taxpayers should remember that at the polls.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Oct 25, 2024

COMMENTARY

Edward Ring Warns Democratic Leaders and Unions Seek to Dismantle Remaining Voter Tax Protections

In a National Review piece, the California Policy Center co-founder argues that courts and legislative ballot measures are undermining what is left of Proposition 13.

California’s entrenched political powers seek to make it virtually impossible for residents to restrain taxation and spending, according to Edward Ring.

In an analysis published by National Review, Ring characterizes the run-up to the November 2024 election as a battle between grassroots activists and businesses desperate to stop new taxes, on one side, and public-sector unions and their allied politicians—who believe there can never be enough tax revenue—on the other.

The conflict arose after activists and industry groups successfully qualified the Taxpayer Protection and Government Accountability Act for the ballot. Ring says the measure had game-changing potential on par

with the landmark 1978 Proposition 13.

Approved by 65 percent of voters, Proposition 13 limited annual property-tax increases to 2 percent, required a two-thirds legislative vote to raise non-property taxes, and mandated two-thirds voter approval for new local taxes. Ring notes that these provisions severely curtailed officials’ ability to raise taxes but have been gradually eroded by later initiatives, laws, and court decisions.

The Taxpayer Protection and Government Accountability Act sought to close those loopholes and restore the original safeguards of Proposition 13. In response, Governor Gavin Newsom asked the California Supreme Court to remove it from the ballot, claiming it would “hamper state and local government’s ability to pay for key services provided to taxpayers, from trash collection to public safety.”

The court—with six of seven justices appointed by Democratic governors—sided with Newsom and removed the initiative from the ballot before voters could decide, Ring reports. He argues that if the same court had existed in 1978, even Proposition 13 might never have reached the ballot.

Ring explains that the only way to overturn a successful citizen initiative in California is through a competing measure. Taking advantage of the fact that the legislature can place initiatives on the ballot without collecting signatures, the Democratic supermajority responded with two counter-measures.

One would expand a loophole created in 2000 when the California Teachers Association lowered the voter threshold for school-construction bonds to 55 percent. The new proposal would extend that 55-percent threshold to “housing projects and public infrastructure,” a term that Ring says has become so broad that virtually any bond

measure could pass with only a 55-percent majority.

The second initiative, slated for November 2026, carries the convoluted title “California Vote Requirements for Initiatives Requiring Supermajority Votes Amendment.” It would require that any citizen initiative proposing higher voter-approval thresholds—such as two-thirds for new taxes—must itself receive approval by that same supermajority.

Ring warns that this change, which would take effect with only a simple majority, would make it impossible for anti-tax initiatives to succeed. Opponents would face the multimillion-dollar task of qualifying an initiative and then securing not just a majority but the exact supermajority they are trying to establish.

Ring expects Democrats to spend tens of millions campaigning for these measures. If approved, he argues, voters would no longer have the option of reining in government spending or preventing endless tax increases.

Ring argues that an entrenched regime that runs on cronyism, combined with an eviscerated initiative process, would leave taxpayers without options, all while leaders lecture about “protecting our democracy.”

Ring concludes that if these initiatives pass, Californians may forget about ever reining in government spending or preventing endless tax increases.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Oct 24, 2024

ABOUT THIS PAPER

San Diego Newsline covers downtown San Diego first — City Hall, the Gaslamp Quarter, East Village, Little Italy, Barrio Logan and the waterfront — and the county around it. Every item names its source; read the originals and our standards at sandiegonewsline.com.

MORE NEWS

COUNTY

Keep the Flu Away from You

The winter months are quickly approaching and so is peak season for influenza. Now is the time to protect yourself and your family from the flu.

Every year, millions of Americans get sick from the flu. Some of the most

vulnerable die. Here in San Diego, from fiscal year 2022-2024, an average of 20,381 people got sick from the flu each year and 54 people died.

A flu vaccine is the best defense against getting sick the virus and is especially important for people who are at high risk of complications from the flu. A flu shot is recommended to anyone six

months of age and up. Last fiscal year, over 1,050,000 San Diegans received their flu shot.

The County provides flu vaccines at Public Health Centers throughout the region. Each year in October and November, the County also hosts flu events to bring the flu vaccine into local communities. The event is

called a flu point of dispensing, or POD, and can provide up to 200 doses of flu vaccines in one day.

There are three additional flu PODS over the next several weeks. Anyone wanting to get immunized can walk in without an appointment and get the flu shot cost free.

Wednesday, Oct. 30,

Downtown, City & County

Northgate Market 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., 1058 3 rd Chula Vista

Tuesday, Nov. 5, Southeastern Live Well Center, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 5101 Market St.

Wednesday, Nov. 13, Mission Valley Library 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., 2123 Fenton Parkway

County of San Diego news release · Oct 28, 2024