

San Diego Newsline

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

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COUNTY

More than 300 County Employees Take Part in Point in Time Count



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County homeless outreach workers Darren Hessler and Mayra Fernandez Garcia walk San Diego County talking with people experiencing homeless often but today things are different.

It is four in the morning, and they are joined by more than 300 other County employees and hundreds of community volunteers as part of the annual We All Count, Point in Time Count .

The annual event is coordinated by the Regional Task Force on Homelessness and provides a one-day count of the number of people experiencing homelessness in San Diego County, including those in emergency shelters and safe parking lots.

The information from the Point in Time surveys is used to apply for federal and state funding to help people experiencing homelessness and implement solutions on how to best serve them.

The count is held in the early morning hours. Dozens of teams spread out in all parts of the County before people are up and moving.

Hessler and Fernandez Garcia with the County Office of Homeless Solutions and Mercedes Irazoqui, a Human Services Specialist with County Self-Sufficiency Services make up a Downtown San Diego team today. Equipped with a printed map, the survey on a phone app form, and gift cards, the team first walks up to a man in a sleeping bag laid on a rug outside an office building.

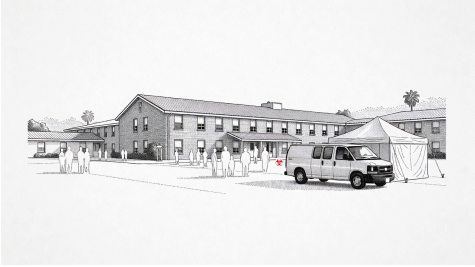
“Some of the people we talked to today have been homeless for more than five, eight, 10 years,” said Hessler. “We hear a lot of their stories for what caused their homelessness. Sometimes it can be that they lost a loved one, they lost their home or they lost their job. Just simple things that can happen to anybody, it is not necessarily that they have substance abuse or mental health issues.”

By sunrise, after engaging with about 30 people, the team has made their way to the Embarcadero area. People are packing up their sleeping mats and blankets. One man is interviewed as he gets ready to mount his bicycle and head to his next location.

People who were not interested in taking the survey are still counted in the app and their location is noted.

The County has multiple programs in place to help connect people to the services they need, including finding a stable place to live. People can find more information online from the Office of Homeless Solutions or by calling 2-1-1.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 30, 2025



Illustration

COUNTY

TB Exposure Reported at Palomar High School

The County’s Tuberculosis Control Program is working in close collaboration with the Sweetwater Union High School District to notify students, employees, and contractors potentially exposed to tuberculosis (TB) at Palomar High School during the 2023-2024 school year.

The school is located at 480 Palomar St, Chula Vista, CA 91911. The dates of potential exposure are from Feb. 24 to June 5, 2024. The diagnosis of tuberculosis can be difficult to establish, and people with TB may be sick for many months before they are diagnosed. As such, periods of exposure can be long. Although months have passed since the exposures occurred, there are still meaningful opportunities to protect the health of persons who were exposed.

TB is an airborne disease that is transmitted from person-to-person through inhalation of the bacteria from the air. The bacteria are spread when someone sick with TB coughs, speaks, sings or breathes. People with frequent and prolonged indoor exposure to a person who is sick with TB should get tested.

Effective treatments are available to cure people who are sick from active TB. It is especially important for people with symptoms of active TB and those who are immunocompromised to see a medical provider to rule out active TB disease and to discuss treatment.

“Symptoms of active TB include

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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TB Exposure Reported at Palomar High School

persistent cough, fever, night sweats, and unexplained weight loss,” said Ankita Kadakia, M.D., County Interim Public Health Officer. “Most people who become infected after exposure to tuberculosis do not get sick right away. This is called latent TB infection. Some who become infected with tuberculosis will become ill in the future, sometimes even years later, if their latent TB infection is not treated. For people who think they may have been exposed, blood tests and skin tests are an effective way to determine an infection.”

People who test positive for TB but don’t have symptoms of an active disease should get a chest x-ray and talk to a medical provider, as they most likely have a latent TB infection. People in this situation are infected with TB, but the infection is essentially dormant or “sleeping.” Taking medicines for latent TB infection can cure the infection and keep these people from getting sick later.

The number of people diagnosed with active TB in San Diego County had decreased since the early 1990s when more than 400 cases were reported annually. After decades of declining, TB cases have begun to rise since 2020.

In 2020, there were 193 TB cases, 201 in 2021 and 208 in 2022. In 2023, a total of 243 people were reported with active TB disease in San Diego County. The 17 percent increase in 2023 brought the County back to pre-pandemic levels.

An estimated 175,000 people in San Diego County have latent TB infection. Of these, 5 to 10 percent may develop active TB disease at some point in their lifetime if they go without preventive treatment.

People who would like more information on this potential exposure should call the County Tuberculosis

Control Program at (619) 692-8621.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 31, 2025

COUNTY
County Confirms Commitment to Emergency Preparedness

The Board of Supervisors received an update from County safety officials on the County’s commitment to emergency preparedness and response efforts.

Since 2003, the County has invested nearly \$1 billion to strengthen preparedness and disaster response capabilities. These investments include firefighters, fire equipment, helicopters, hazardous materials management and flood control enhancements, and upgrades to alert and warning systems.

“Every season is wildfire season in San Diego,” said County Chief Administrative Officer Ebony Shelton. “County government has a critical responsibility to prepare for the next catastrophic incident and respond when the moment strikes to save lives.”

Officials emphasized the importance of multi-agency collaboration, working with cities, special districts, safety agencies, and community organizations to plan, set policies, and strengthen emergency resources.

The County’s Office of Emergency Services takes an “all-hazards approach” to emergency planning and preparedness that considers the range of disasters that may impact the region.

“Our office is responsible for helping communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and other emergencies,” said Emergency Services Director Jeff Toney.

When a major disaster occurs, the County Emergency Operations Center activates to coordinate response efforts, bringing together fire, law enforcement, public works, and health agencies.

Partner organizations like 2-1-1 San Diego, the Red Cross, school districts, and utility companies also provide support.

During an emergency, providing the community with timely and accurate information is critical, especially during an evacuation. Emergency Services and the Unified Disaster Council, which includes the County and all 18 incorporated cities, have invested in multiple technologies to bolster the region’s preparedness and response capabilities.

In 2024, the County implemented the Genasys Protect evacuation management system to allow first responders to manage evacuation zones more effectively. So far in 2025, the technology has played a key role in safely evacuating residents from wildfires in the County and the City of San Diego.

Following the 2003 fires, San Diego County recognized the need for a coordinated approach to wildfire protection, leading to the County’s partnership with Cal Fire in 2005 and the formation of San Diego County Fire in 2008. This partnership has significantly enhanced fire protection capabilities.

“With 20 agencies consolidating into one and massive investments by the County, we have transformed a vision into one of the largest fire protection agencies in the state,” said County Fire/CAL FIRE San Diego Chief Tony Mecham.

County Fire now operates 39 fire stations, five fire camps, and two aviation facilities, supported by over 1,100 personnel, including firefighters, emergency medical services, and community risk reduction staff. With over 100 operational vehicles, including 12 aerial firefighting resources, the County is equipped to respond rapidly to wildfires.

Investments in technology, such as over 150 real-time monitoring cameras, allow for efficient wildfire detection and response, especially

during significant events like the Lilac and Border 2 Fires.

Additionally, the County’s community risk reduction program equips residents with tools to reduce wildfire risks, including vegetation management, creating defensible space, home hardening, and clearing key evacuation roads.

The County also ensures rapid air response through a shared helicopter fleet with the Sheriff’s Office, which has received substantial investments to enhance safety and firefighting efforts.

The Sheriff’s Emergency Services Division includes several units that play critical roles in disaster response: the Special Enforcement Detail, Crisis Negotiation Team, Canine Unit, Bomb Arson Unit, and ASTREA (Aerial Support to Regional Agencies). The Emergency Planning Detail (EPD) leads law enforcement’s response to wildfires and disasters and represents the Sheriff’s Office on the County’s evacuation committee.

In recent years, EPD has helped implement the Hi-Lo siren system , which warns communities when they need to evacuate due to immediate danger, and oversaw the switch from the grid evacuation maps to the Genasys Protect software, which has helped improve evacuation and repopulation processes.

During a fire, the Sheriff’s Office plays a key role in supporting fire and emergency services partners by ensuring the evacuations of impacted areas, protecting right of ways during an evacuation and keeping properties safe from looters.

“If you receive an evacuation order, there is an immediate threat to your life and you need to leave right now,” said Captain Ted Greenawald. “If you receive an evacuation warning, it means there is an impending danger to your life or property, and you should start packing what you need for your family and pets.”

Deputies are trained and equipped with fire gear,

participating in joint exercises with fire agencies. The decision to evacuate is made by Sheriff’s incident command based on the severity of the threat and the number of people affected.

ASTREA, the Sheriff’s aviation unit, responds to fire emergencies with aerial support, performing water drops and rescues. In 2024, ASTREA conducted over 6,400 missions, including 301 fire responses and 287 rescues. The fleet consists of eight helicopters, 13 pilots, and other support staff.

During an emergency, several other County departments provide critical support including:

Animal Services: Teaches pet preparedness; performs animal evacuations; provides emergency shelter for small and large animals

Health and Human Services Agency: Provides behavioral health support, public health and medical resources; help register for safety net programs

Environmental Health and Quality: Identifies hazardous materials and incident response; inspects emergency shelters

Public Works: Inspects channels, culverts and drains; clears roads of downed trees, mud and snow; conducts flood and erosion control measures

County employees also provide support during an emergency through the Ready Disaster Service Worker Program. Employees are assigned to teams and trained to perform roles such as a 2-1-1 phone operator, emergency operations center support, local assistance center worker or emergency shelter worker.

To stay prepared for a disaster, County residents are encouraged to do the following:

Register your phone for emergency alerts

Make an evacuation go-kit and a shelter-in-place go-kit

County of San Diego news release · Jan 30, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

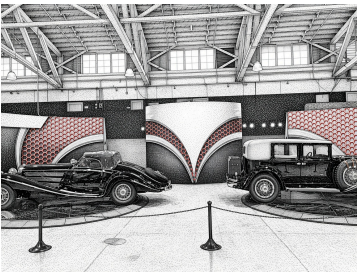


Illustration from a photo by Alan Islas · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

BUSINESS
Member Spotlight: San Diego Automotive Museum

Located in the heart of Balboa

Park, the San Diego Automotive Museum celebrates the artistry, history, and innovation of the automotive world. Through captivating exhibits, community events, and transformative educational programs, we foster a culture of connection and belonging that unites car enthusiasts and the community across generations.

Our award-winning IGNITE Academy is changing the lives of underserved San

Diego youth with hands-on technical training, mentorship, and pathways to high-paying careers in the automotive industry and beyond. From monthly workshops on brake installation, car detailing, and tire maintenance to lessons in financial literacy and resume creation, students gain valuable skills and confidence. Partnering with 26 local businesses, we place qualified students in internships and apprenticeships,

creating a pipeline of talent for industries in need and setting students up for lasting career success.

For San Diego’s business leaders, partnering with the Museum is a chance to make a tangible impact while connecting with a passionate community. By sponsoring or underwriting our events, you’ll help us preserve automotive history, empower local youth, and strengthen our city’s vibrant car culture.

Upcoming opportunities include our Shifting Gears Rally on March 29 and Cruising for Drivers Golf Tournament on May 19—two exciting platforms to showcase your brand and values while supporting a great cause.

Looking for another way to drive change? Your dream car awaits in our 2025 sweepstakes. Enter today for a chance to win a Porsche Taycan RWD with

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BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

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Member Spotlight: San Diego Automotive Museum

Performance Package or \$90,000 in cash. Visit sdautomuseum.org/win to see Official Rules and use promo code SDCHAMBER to receive 25% more entries ! Proceeds directly support the Museum, including our educational programs and exhibits.

For sponsorships, underwriting opportunities, or to discuss how your business can collaborate with San Diego Automotive Museum, contact Caitlin Fahey, Director of Development, at Caitlin@sdautomuseum.org or 619-398-0302. Together, we can drive innovation,

education, and connection across our community. www.sdautomuseum.org

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Jan 29, 2025

BUSINESS

2025 State Legislative Outlook

We may only be a few weeks into the new year, but the California legislature has already begun introducing bills for the 2025 session. As we look forward to the 2025 legislative session, we can expect a mix of policy priorities that both continue some efforts from the Assembly, Senate, and the Governor during 2024, and new priorities.

The cost of living and the

cost of doing business are growing issues in California. We can expect legislators to bring forth policies to lower the cost of living, from housing to job creation. The Chamber will focus on policy efforts that help reduce the cost of establishing and operating businesses across California, including opposing overly burdensome regulations which affect the ability of California's industries to thrive.

AI and tech innovation will continue to be a hot-button issue for the state, from potential regulations impacting autonomous vehicles to public harm testing of AI products. San Diego is a hub for technology and innovation, and the Chamber will

continue to advocate for policies that bolster the innovation economy and against regulations that would stymie the industry as a whole.

Public safety will also continue to be a topic of debate in the legislature. While the Senate and Assembly passed theft bill packages last year, voters spoke clearly in support of Prop 36, which took effect last month. The Chamber was a strong supporter of the bill package and Prop 36 and will continue to advocate for public safety that allows San Diego's businesses to thrive.

Electrification and zero emission efforts are also at the table. While CARB recently dropped their waiver

request for their Advanced Clean Fleets rule from the EPA, we expect California to continue to position itself as a leader in clean energy policy. Chamber staff will continue to monitor the evolving dialogue between the state and the federal government on this issue, and will continue to advocate for regulations that truly take into consideration the economic realities of our region.

More to come from our policy team in the next few months! In the meantime, we hope you can join us in Sacramento next week as we elevate our region's priorities with state officials.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Jan 24, 2025

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



300+ county workers to count the homeless.

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

California Policy Center Calls for Scrapping 10 Key Water Rules to Boost Supply and End Scarcity Approach

The organization argues that California should prioritize adaptation and abundance over rationing in response to wildfires and climate concerns.

In the wake of the Los Angeles wildfires, Californians face a pivotal choice on how to address both the fires and the broader climate challenges often linked to them, according to the author of a California Policy Center newsletter.

The author writes that one path involves restricting usage and concentrating populations in ever-denser city areas. The alternative, which the author strongly favors, focuses on adapting and progressing by rebuilding communities in the wildland-urban interface.

California already features the nation's highest urban density levels even though just 5 percent of its land is developed, the author notes. The author argues that pursuing sustainable abundance represents the sole route to true resilience, equity and affordability.

Restoring lost balance will demand an entirely fresh legislative program and overhaul of government agency goals, the author states. This shift should give economic growth and property rights equal weight alongside environmental aims.

Seeking input from specialists on concrete actions to reverse two decades of scarcity-focused policies, the author received extensive recommendations too detailed for brief summary. The author plans to share them over coming weeks, covering water rules, land use, approvals, power and general infrastructure.

This week's contribution comes from an expert in water rights deeply aware of damage from the state's scarcity emphasis. The author presents the expert's list of ten state water laws and regulations that should be eliminated.

First on the list is the Bay-Delta Plan for the San Joaquin River. The expert reports that long-established irrigation districts must allocate 40 percent of river flows to support one type of salmon, despite lacking proof that this helps fish populations.

Evidence that introduced bass, placed in the system by the Department of Water Resources during the 1960s,

prey on these salmon has been disregarded, according to the expert. The expert adds that a federal process exists for overturning the plan since the Environmental Protection Agency must sign off on it, yet approval remains pending.

The second item targets Water Code section 1058.5, which permits the State Water Board to seize authority over locally managed and self-funded water systems in droughts. The expert notes the board exercised this power in 2014-15 and 2021-22, issuing frequent directives based on flawed data.

Courts overturned the earlier actions and granted legal costs to challengers, the expert writes, while current disputes drag on with the board claiming objectors are engaging in harassment.

Third involves the broadened wetlands definition adopted by the State Water Board in 2019 to address changes in federal waters rules. The expert says the board improperly altered a water quality plan to oversee all state waters rather than just federal ones.

After a judge ordered the definition withdrawn, the board evaded the ruling by inserting it into the Ocean Plan, according to the expert.

The fourth concerns biological opinions issued in late 2024 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for long-term operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project. These continue pushing for lower flows in the Sacramento, Stanislaus and additional rivers to safeguard species, the expert explains.

Fifth is the "30 by 30" initiative from Governor Newsom's October 2020 Executive Order N-8220, aiming to protect 30 percent of lands and coastal waters by 2030. The expert questions its legal basis, reach and effectiveness.

Number six addresses SB 1157, which takes effect in January 2025 and establishes State Water Board oversight of urban water providers with specific usage limits and conservation mandates. The expert warns that some utilities must slash consumption by more than 30 percent in the next 16 years under this complex, costly top-down system that overrides community-based approaches.

Seventh targets the August 2022 California's Water Supply Strategy from Governor Newsom, which highlights recycling, desalination and stormwater projects but emphasizes expanded regulation instead of direct project funding. The expert recommends redirecting it to support local efforts

while reducing oversight.

Eighth is Fish and Wildlife Code Section 5937, requiring dams to release enough water to sustain fish downstream. The expert says environmental plaintiffs have applied it too widely to restrict water diversion, storage and power generation.

Ninth involves the salmon doubling target from the Central Valley Improvement Act and the 2006 Water Quality Control Plan. The expert describes these benchmarks as unrealistic, noting they heavily influence Delta flow requirements.

Finally, the expert criticizes protections for striped bass, a non-native predator managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for sport fishing. These measures allow bass to consume native salmon, thereby driving stricter flow rules, the expert argues.

While acknowledging this list represents only part of valuable expert input, the author concludes that repealing these ten measures would significantly help restore plentiful water to farmers and cities. Yet far more changes will be required to restore affordability across the state.

The author promises additional recommendations in future installments.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Jan 31, 2025

COMMENTARY

Mismanagement of Fire and Water Contributed to LA Wildfires

Powerful Santa Ana winds can overwhelm even the best efforts, but symbolic climate policies, neglected fuel reduction, empty reservoirs, water rationing, overcrowded forests, and regulatory barriers left the state less resilient.

As more is learned about the Los Angeles-area wildfires, assigning blame requires caution. When Santa Ana winds sweep down from the eastern deserts at up to 100 MPH, they can turn canyons into blast furnaces, and even the best preparations may not be enough against such low-probability, high-consequence events.

Yet the biggest ideas from the state's politicians after previous fires have been symbolic. After the 2020 fires, Governor Gavin Newsom issued an executive order banning the sale of gasoline-powered cars starting in 2035. After fires in 2023, Attorney General Rob Bonta filed a lawsuit against five major oil companies accusing them of misleading the public about

the climate harm of fossil fuels.

If the state is truly facing a climate crisis, more should be done to prepare for whatever nature brings. And if diversity is meant to erase group discrimination, hiring and promotion should be based on individual qualifications rather than demographic categories. That would remove any speculation that leaders at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power or the LA Fire Department were chosen for reasons other than competence.

The large-scale response saved thousands of homes and hundreds of lives, but much more could have been done. For years, top management at those agencies should have been pressing the state, counties, and cities to clear fuel from canyons. Once the Santa Ana winds were forecast, more aggressive steps should have been taken to position tankers and engines in advance, and the fire chief should have requested help from other areas immediately.

In a wealthy, innovative state and city, more should have been done to adopt new tools such as nontoxic fire retardants or machines to remove overgrown vegetation. The LA Fire Department chief should have required more thorough tree trimming around power lines or their relocation underground in at-risk neighborhoods, along with state support to cover the expense.

Systemic problems have accumulated over many years. The Santa Ynez reservoir, which could have provided 300 acre-feet of water to hydrants that went dry in Pacific Palisades, has been out of service since February 2024 for cover repairs. This highlights both bureaucratic shortcomings and broader questions of water supply.

The claim that there is not enough water is untrue. Urban water use in the state was 7.5 million acre-feet in 1985, rose to nearly 10 million acre-feet in 2007, and has returned to 7.5 million acre-feet in 2023 even though the population grew from 26 million to nearly 40 million. Ninety-four percent of residents live in urban areas and have managed with the same volume of water despite 65 percent more people.

This conservation is notable but leaves every part of the delivery system with no extra capacity. When fires require rapid refilling of tanks and reservoirs, the additional pumps and pipes are unavailable. Maintaining surplus storage, treatment, and

distribution capacity in an arid megacity is necessary for resilience against fires and other disruptions, yet Sacramento emphasizes rationing while bureaucracies focus on pensions and other spending.

The only significant reservoir constructed in the state in the last 50 years is the 800,000 acre-foot Diamond Valley Lake finished in 2000. The main remaining proposal is the 1.5 million acre-foot Sites Reservoir, which has been stalled for years by lawsuits, redesigns, and negotiations.

In 2014 voters approved Proposition 1 by a 67 percent margin, providing \$7.12 billion for reservoir expansions and new storage. Only the Sites project is still under consideration; the others were dropped because of litigation and increasing cost projections. State legislators are now advancing SB 1157 and similar measures to enforce permanent rationing on households and businesses, including two meters per property, an indoor limit of 42 gallons per person per day, and negotiated outdoor allowances. The effort is projected to cost \$7 billion to conserve about 440,000 acre-feet per year.

Farmers have also been subject to sharp cuts. Between 1967 and 2000 they received their full contracted State Water Project deliveries in all but seven years, mostly during two severe droughts. From 2001 through 2024 they received full deliveries only once, in 2005. Annual precipitation records since 1895 show no declining trend, and the driest year was 1923.

Water deliveries south have been curtailed for two decades, with increasing severity, to allow more flow through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta in hopes of helping endangered salmon and smelt. There is no sign the strategy is succeeding. A major reason for the species' decline is predation by non-native bass, whose population has surged since their introduction in the 1870s. One 2013 analysis described the Delta as 'California's big bass lake.'

Similar constraints apply to forests. Timber harvest has dropped from a peak of 6 billion board-feet per year in the 1950s to 1.5 billion today. Aggressive fire suppression has allowed tree and undergrowth density to reach two to six times the natural level, stressing ecosystems for light, nutrients, and water.

These patterns reflect a consistent preference for limiting supply across water,

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COMMENTARY (CONTINUED)

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Mismanagement of Fire and Water Contributed to LA Wildfires

timber, and housing. Only 5 percent of the state's land is urbanized, with an average density of nearly 5,000 people per square mile. Adding 10 million residents in suburban development on quarter-acre lots, with additional space for supporting infrastructure, would require about 1,953

square miles and raise the urban share from 5 percent to roughly 6.2 percent.

After the fires, the state can persist with rationing, regulatory barriers, and subsidies that increase costs, or shift toward practical investments in storage and conveyance, measured timber management to improve forest health and lower rebuilding expenses, combined habitat and hatchery work to support fish populations while increasing deliveries to farms and cities,

adjusted fishing rules for bass, and faster permitting for unsubsidized home construction on open land.

Rebuilding faces high costs. State law requires new single-family homes to incorporate solar panels, interior fire sprinklers, an EV charger circuit, and numerous detailed specifications for water heaters, HVAC, and lighting. Construction expenses before permits and fees can exceed \$500 per square foot.

The state's FAIR plan, created after insurers began exiting because regulators blocked adequate rates, has reserves of about \$385 million while estimated fire damages surpass \$250 billion, placing the program near bankruptcy. Hillside residents must ultimately decide whether to abandon rebuilt neighborhoods to natural vegetation and wildlife or to reconstruct with greater resilience.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Jan 31, 2025

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

County Works to Close Digital Divide for Schools in Unincorporated Area

In San Diego County’s unincorporated areas, there are many schools where high-speed internet is unavailable or unaffordable. The County is working to reduce the digital gap and has awarded \$600,000 to the San Diego County Office of Education.

This funding will bring high-speed broadband service to 900 students in the Warner, San Pasqual and Vallecitos school districts in the unincorporated areas:

\$479,000 awarded to Warner Unified School District to provide fiber at three school sites.

\$73,000 awarded to San Pasqual Union School District to provide fiber to K-8 students.

\$48,000 awarded to Vallecitos Elementary School District to provide fiber to students.

This funding came from County funds designated for broadband in 2021. San Diego County Office of Education selected the schools to distribute awards to build high-speed internet capacity. Prioritizing the most in-need areas is in line with the County’s Comprehensive Broadband Plan .

Access to high-speed internet is crucial for children’s education. This initiative aims to bridge the digital divide and provide equal access to educational resources. This access enables students to take part in tech-driven learning environments for future success.

“Ensuring students have access to reliable internet is a key step in supporting their academic achievement and

fostering opportunities for growth within the community,” said Dahvia Lynch, general manager of the County’s Land Use and Environment Group leading broadband efforts for the County.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 5, 2025

COUNTY

Spirit Fund Helps Injured Dog

A 2-year-old Belgian Malinois named Eagle found her spirit again, after a County Animal Services officer came upon the injured dog while out on an unrelated investigation.

Animal Services Lt. N. Harrington noticed Eagle with an open, necrotic wound on her right hind leg. Eagle’s owner was uncooperative in getting Eagle veterinary care or surrendering her, resulting in a court-ordered seizure to allow Animal Services to get Eagle immediate veterinary attention. Unfortunately, the medical team was unable to save her leg, and a costly surgery was her only chance.

County Animal Services dipped into its Spirit Fund to pay for Eagle’s surgery.

“She’s almost all healed and she’s doing great,” said Harrington. Eagle is not yet available for adoption, but Harrington is hopeful she will be soon.

Since her surgery, Eagle’s demeanor has completely changed, the lieutenant said. She is more open to interactions with people.

Without emergency veterinary care funds, animals like Eagle would likely have to be euthanized to alleviate suffering.

County Animal Services established the Spirit Medical Fund in July 2008, after people around the County donated to help a 10-week-old puppy who had been rescued

with severe injuries caused by a beating. Shelter staff named the puppy Spirit because, despite her extensive injuries, her spirit was not broken, and she was still a loving dog. Spirit was adopted by a caring family, but the love for her and other animals continues.

So many donations had come in for Spirit that the remaining money was used to help other animals in need, like a puppy found in a dumpster bin with his ears cut off and a dog that was relinquished because the owner couldn’t afford medical care for a broken limb.

You can help animals like Eagle, through adoption, fostering or donating to the Spirit Medical Fund . All donations are tax deductible and can be made online , scroll down to the Donations section, or in person or mail with a check made payable to County Animal Services” and “Donation for Spirit Fund” in the memo field of the check.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 4, 2025

COUNTY

Affordable Housing Campus Opens; Second on County Surplus Property

A grand opening celebration for 79 new affordable housing units was held today in the Clairemont Mesa neighborhood. The Paul Downey Senior Residence is located at 5255 Mt. Etna Drive, just off Genesee Avenue.

It is the first of four new buildings and designated for low-income seniors and families. It also is the second affordable complex to open on County surplus property .

The Paul Downey Senior Residence features five studio apartments, 73 one-bedroom apartments and a manager’s

unit. An adjacent Senior Wellness Center will offer supportive services for residents and the local senior community, who are part of the fastest growing population in the county.

“Housing is health, and that is especially true for our seniors. An affordable home is essential for stability and self-sufficiency in our aging community,” said Kimberly Giardina, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for the County Health and Human Services Agency. “That’s why the County is investing record amounts of funding in building and preserving affordable housing .”

The central location for the new housing means residents will be in walking distance to grocery stores, restaurants, retail, public transportation, medical facilities, schools and parks.

The County invest ed \$ 1 5 mill ion in funding for the Mt Etna Campus along with the parcel of land valued at \$42 million . Once complete, the campus will consist of two senior bui lding s and a pair of family buildings . Combined they will add 404 new affordable homes to the area by s pring 2026 .

All four phases of the Mt. Etna campus are being developed by Chelsea Investment Corp with supportive services provided by Serving Seniors . The project is a testament to the success of public private partnerships.

Learn more about the Mt Etna interest list.

Since 2017, the County has invested more than \$314 million into affordable housing, using excess land, its Innovative Housing Trust Fund, and other state, federal, and local funding sources administered by the County. Those funds have

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helped open doors to over 2,500 homes, 1,800 new units just for seniors, with 3,100 more on the way.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 30, 2025

COUNTY

Medical Examiner Seeks Public’s Help Identifying Jane Doe

The San Diego County Medical Examiner’s Office is seeking the public’s help in identifying a woman who was found unresponsive on Jan. 10, 2025, at approximately 11 p.m. in the parking lot of Palomar Street MTS Station in Chula Vista.

The woman was transported to Scripps Mercy Hospital Chula Vista where her death was pronounced a short time later, the Medical Examiner’s Office said.

Despite extensive efforts, investigators have not been able to identify the woman and are asking for the public’s help in case they may recognize her unique tattoos or her description.

The Medical Examiner describes her as Hispanic or biracial, between the ages of 18 and 25 years old, approximately 5 feet 1 inches tall, and 166 pounds.

She had wavy black hair and brown eyes. She had several unique tattoos including a rose on the outer corner of the left eye, “Samantha” on the right rib cage, the outline of a heart on the right chest, and a money bag on the right ring finger.

Anyone who believes they may know the woman’s identity is asked to contact the Medical Examiner’s Investigations Unit at (858) 694-2905. The case number is 2025-00128.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 30, 2025

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MORE NEWS

Downtown, City & County

COUNTY
County Breaks Ground on Mira Mesa Epicentre Renovation

County officials and community members broke ground Wednesday on a project to revitalize the Mira Mesa Epicentre as a County-operated community center.

The County will rebuild

and operate a portion of the property located at 8450 Mira Mesa Boulevard as an open recreation center for youth.

Designed with community input, features will include a multifunctional pickleball and basketball court, a community garden, open lawn area, rentable community space, music room, game room, practice kitchen, and

flexible study and work areas.

The new center will offer innovative youth and inter-generational programming, recreation and entertainment opportunities, improve access to public services and increase public safety in the Mira Mesa community.

The facility will also serve as the home for the County’s

SD Nights – short for Safe Destination Nights – which provides safe places throughout the county where teens can go for youth-centered activities during critical hours.

The County’s Department of Parks and Recreation gathered community input and engaged residents, businesses and other stakeholders about their needs for the

facility. This feedback helped to shape the design and types of features planned for this location.

Construction will begin next month for completion in Fall of 2026. For more information about the project, visit sdparks.org.

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