

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

County Launches Programs to Help Small Businesses



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Small local businesses and non-profits will soon get a boost when it comes to doing business with the County. Two new pilot programs designed to overcome barriers were launched on Tuesday.

The programs are part of the County’s overarching goal to direct 25% of its \$2.2 billion annual contract spending toward small businesses , a move that would potentially keep about \$550 million per year in the region.

The County went to non-profits, small businesses, economic development and business support advocates for feedback on how to attract more small businesses. The pilot programs address some of the more common obstacles.

The County is partnering with Founders First Community Development Corporation (Founders First CDC) to help small businesses with bonding and/or insurance requirements, and bookkeeping assistance.

The Bonding and Underwriting Insurance for Local Development (BUILD) program will offer direct support and financial resources to small businesses and non-profits that typically can’t afford those requirements.

The Compliance, Operations and Readiness Education (CORE) program aims to prevent labor violations and promote fair business practices by providing expert-led administrative and bookkeeping assistance.

Both the BUILD and CORE pilot programs expect to support more

than 100 small businesses and nonprofits over the next year.

The programs are designed to offer hands-on support so local entrepreneurs can grow their businesses, create jobs and compete for new opportunities.

To attract more small businesses, the County Board of Supervisors voted on Aug. 26 to make sweeping policy changes to its purchasing and contracting system. The changes:

Raised the small local business preference from 5% to 15%, meaning a proposed bid price will be evaluated as if it were up to 15% cheaper, helping them better compete with larger companies

Expanded the use of simpler methods, such as Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) instead of Requests for Proposals. RFQs typically take about half the time to complete, speeding up the process

Formally recognized disadvantaged business enterprises

Expanded the definition of small businesses from those with state certifications to include:

Veteran-owned and disabled veteran-owned businesses

Businesses with other small business certificates

Businesses that are not yet State certified but meet the state certification definition

A new business category was also added called Social Equity Enterprises (SEEs). These organizations try to advance equity

by addressing economic, social and environmental disparities.

The Board’s policy changes will go into effect on Sept. 25.

For more information about applying for the CORE and BUILD programs, visit the County’s Economic Development and Government Affairs website .

For general information on how to do business with the County, visit Purchasing and Contracting .

County of San Diego news release · Sep 3, 2025

COUNTY

Evaluation, Performance, Analytics Office Releases New Strategic Plan

The County’s Office of Evaluation, Performance and Analytics has released a new plan listing 18 questions that will guide the County’s evaluation of important programs and services, ranging from homelessness to climate, public safety, and physical and mental health.

The County created the office, also known as OEPA, in 2021 to strengthen countywide use of research, data and evaluation to inform County leaders and help improve programs, services and policies.

The “Annual Strategic Research Plan 2025” states that the 18 “learning agenda” questions are the core of the plan that will steer the office’s evaluations of the County’s long-term, high priority issues over the next two to five years.

Because the questions address broad complex questions, the plan states evaluation will often require multiple assessments over several years. The office intends to update the plan each year.

The plan and the questions were developed by OEPA with input from

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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Evaluation, Performance, Analytics Office Releases New Strategic Plan

most of the County’s 50-plus departments and offices, a cross-departmental strategic team and the public.

The plan’s 18 questions line up with the County of San Diego’s five Strategic Initiatives: Community, Empower, Equity, Justice and Sustainability.

Some of the Learning Agenda questions include:

How can the County most effectively prevent and reduce homelessness?

What strategies are most effective in reducing social isolation and promoting mental well-being for subgroups experiencing the highest levels of social isolation?

How can the County’s procurement process foster equitable economic development?

How can the County use alternatives to incarceration approaches to reduce the number of people involved in the justice system?

How do the collaborative efforts of law enforcement, social services, public health and community organizations reduce gun violence in San Diego County?

What effect do behavioral health crisis interventions have on law enforcement resources and client outcomes?

What climate action measures will produce the most return on investment for greenhouse gas reductions, improved air quality, green jobs and increased equity?

How does the County foster trust between residents and County government?

People can see and read the full plan on the Office of Evaluation, Performance and Analytics’ webpage .

County of San Diego news release · Sep 3, 2025

COUNTY

County Reopens East County Safe Parking Site After Renovations

The County’s safe parking site on North Magnolia Avenue in El Cajon reopens tonight for families and individuals experiencing homelessness in need of overnight parking.

The Safe Parking program provides support and services for people who are unsheltered and have a vehicle. Participation is limited to individuals and families referred to the program by the County’s homeless outreach team.

The Magnolia site has 16 secure parking spaces where people can sleep in their vehicles, have access to bathrooms, showers, meals, case management and housing navigation support to help participants find more permanent housing.

It provides employment, health and social services resources as well as flexible funding to help remove any barriers to housing.

In 2024, the Magnolia site closed to undergo a \$3 million renovation. Portable toilets were replaced by permanent bathrooms and shower facilities and the picnic area was upgraded. The meeting space was improved and a new area was added for dogs.

Manolia is the first safe parking program in East County. Since opening, it has served nearly 200 participants, including 41 children and 48 seniors. Half of its participants have exited the program and moved on to more stable housing options.

“There was no resource out of touch, and there were resources I had no idea that were available,” says Nikki Kerscy, a former safe parking participant. “Now I’m employed, I have my own apartment, I’m off the system. It works.”

Before Magnolia opened in 2022, the site was part of a large homeless encampment that spread below the overpass and spilled into the street.

Dreams for Change, a local homeless service provider, is contracted by the County to operate the program. Dreams for Change also handles two other safe parking programs for the County, Grantville and Bancroft, providing an additional 47 safe parking spaces.

Magnolia opens nightly at 5:30 p.m. and participants must leave the following morning by 7 a.m. Security is onsite 24-hours a day, 7 days a week and people experiencing homelessness can remain enrolled in the program as long as needed, until a more permanent housing solution is secured.

The Magnolia, Bancroft and Grantville Safe Parking programs are all part of the County’s broader efforts to expand emergency housing options for people experiencing homelessness in the unincorporated communities.

Learn more about programs and resources on the County’s Office of Homeless Solutions website.

County of San Diego news release · Aug 29, 2025

COUNTY

Hundreds of Pets Find Homes During Clear the Shelters Month

This August, hundreds of pets found forever homes during the Clear the Shelters campaign at San Diego County Animal Services’ Bonita and Carlsbad shelters.

In total, 441 animals were adopted — including 234 dogs, 204 cats and three other animals.

Bonita Shelter: 318 total, 165 dogs, 150 cats, 3 birds

Carlsbad Shelter: 123 total, 69 dogs, 54 cats

“Every adoption is a new beginning, not just for the

animal but for the family who welcomed them,” said County Animal Services Director Vaughn Maurice. “We are grateful to our staff, volunteers and the community for making this month such a success.”

Clear the Shelters is a nationwide initiative led by NBC and Telemundo stations. Since its launch in 2015, the campaign has helped more than 1 million pets find homes. This year’s campaign came at a critical time, with shelters near capacity across the country.

While finding animals their forever home is the heart of Clear the Shelters, there are many other ways to support the pets in our care:

The Spirit Fund : Donations provide free, often life-saving veterinary care for sick or injured shelter pets.

Fostering : Giving animals a temporary home allows them to adjust to life outside the shelter, build confidence, and become fully ready for adoption.

Volunteering : Our volunteers help shelter animals in many ways — walking dogs, providing play and social interactions with all types of pets, cleaning living areas, making treats, and more — all to give animals the care and attention they need to find their forever homes.

County Animal Services promotes the humane and responsible care of pets while serving the unincorporated areas of San Diego County. The department collaborates with more than 300 rescue partners, provides daily care for shelter animals, and responds to calls of stray, injured, or at-risk pets.

For more information on adopting, fostering, volunteering, or donating, visit the County Animal Services website.

County of San Diego news release · Sep 2, 2025

COUNTY

Teens Get Say on New County Library

The best way to design a space for teens at the new Casa de Oro Library? Ask them!

Teenagers are getting a chance to share what they want in the way of colors and other design aspects.

The County broke ground on the new library in the Casa de Oro neighborhood last February. The new facility will be double the size of the current leased facility.

The 12,000 square-foot space will feature the teen area, a 2,000 square-foot community room, a children’s area, patio space and a Friends of the Library bookstore. The opening is scheduled for spring 2026.

This isn’t the first time young people have been asked for input on a library. They shared ideas for the teen space at the Lakeside Library before it opened in March 2023. In fact, residents in the surrounding areas were asked for their feedback too.

The County looks for community involvement when considering several building projects. In addition to the libraries, other examples include the up and coming Jacumba Fire Station, the completed Ramona Community Resource Center , and the now open Southeastern Live Well Center .

Community engagement is at the center of everything the County does. The public can give their feedback on a wide variety of projects ranging from legislative priorities and business contracting to emergency planning and neurodiversity.

For more information on community engagement, visit Engage San Diego County .

County of San Diego news release · Aug 28, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



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BUSINESS

From the Desk of Veronica Perondi – September 2025

The National Community Leadership Collaborative recently shared results from a survey collected from ten

years of alumni across ten leadership organizations. It reaffirms what many of us already know: community leadership programs change lives and they change communities.

97% gained information that helped them better understand the issues impacting their community

91% diversified their network by building relationships with classmates and other leaders in their community

89% believe their participation in the program

benefits their community

85% grew their confidence to drive positive change in their community

77% grew their ability to communicate with people across differences

71% have become active in new or deeper ways in their community (board service, volunteerism, running for public office, and other types of civic or philanthropic engagement)

69% learned skills that helped them be more effective in formal and

informal leadership roles

At a time when division feels increasingly normalized and budget cuts are forcing many organizations to make hard choices, these results are a reminder: investing in leadership – especially community leadership – is not a luxury. It’s a necessity. And programs like LEAD are proof.

Community leadership programs exist in nearly every city across the country, united in their missions to connect, educate and prepare people to make a difference

in their communities. I recently attended the Legacy and Community Champions panel hosted by the Burnham Center for Community Advancement that featured a conversation across generations. One panelist was asked what makes a good leader. Part of the answer was a willingness and desire to keep learning.

That desire to learn is evident in our incoming Impact 2026 cohort, which started their journey this past Friday. This marks our 46 th

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BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

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From the Desk of Veronica Perondi – September 2025
cohort and you can meet the newest class here .

Community and leadership may be broad concepts, but community leadership is a distinct and vital practice. At the end of the day, we are all humans seeking connections, seeking meaning and looking for ways to make a difference. An that is what drives lasting, positive change.

Next week we celebrate those who’ve turned this idea

into action at our 23 rd annual Visionary Awards . If it’s not already on your calendar, I hope you’ll join us to celebrate.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Sep 1, 2025

BUSINESS
Meeting with CBP Commissioner Rodney Scott

Last week, the Chamber met with recently appointed CBP Commissioner Rodney Scott alongside some of our partners including the Small Business Development Center. Our business

community elevated ongoing priorities such as advancing border efficiency, continued investment in technology, and fully staffing our air, sea, and land ports of entry. Board members Eduardo “Lalo” Acosta, VP of R.L. Jones Customs Brokers, and Ernesto Bravo, President, TECMA West Division, stressed the need for clear and timely communication on tariff implementation which impact local businesses of all sizes and across industries. The Chamber is part of monthly stakeholder meetings with

CBP Director of Field Operations for San Diego Sidney Aki and team, and we appreciate our partnership and communication channels which help inform our outreach efforts.

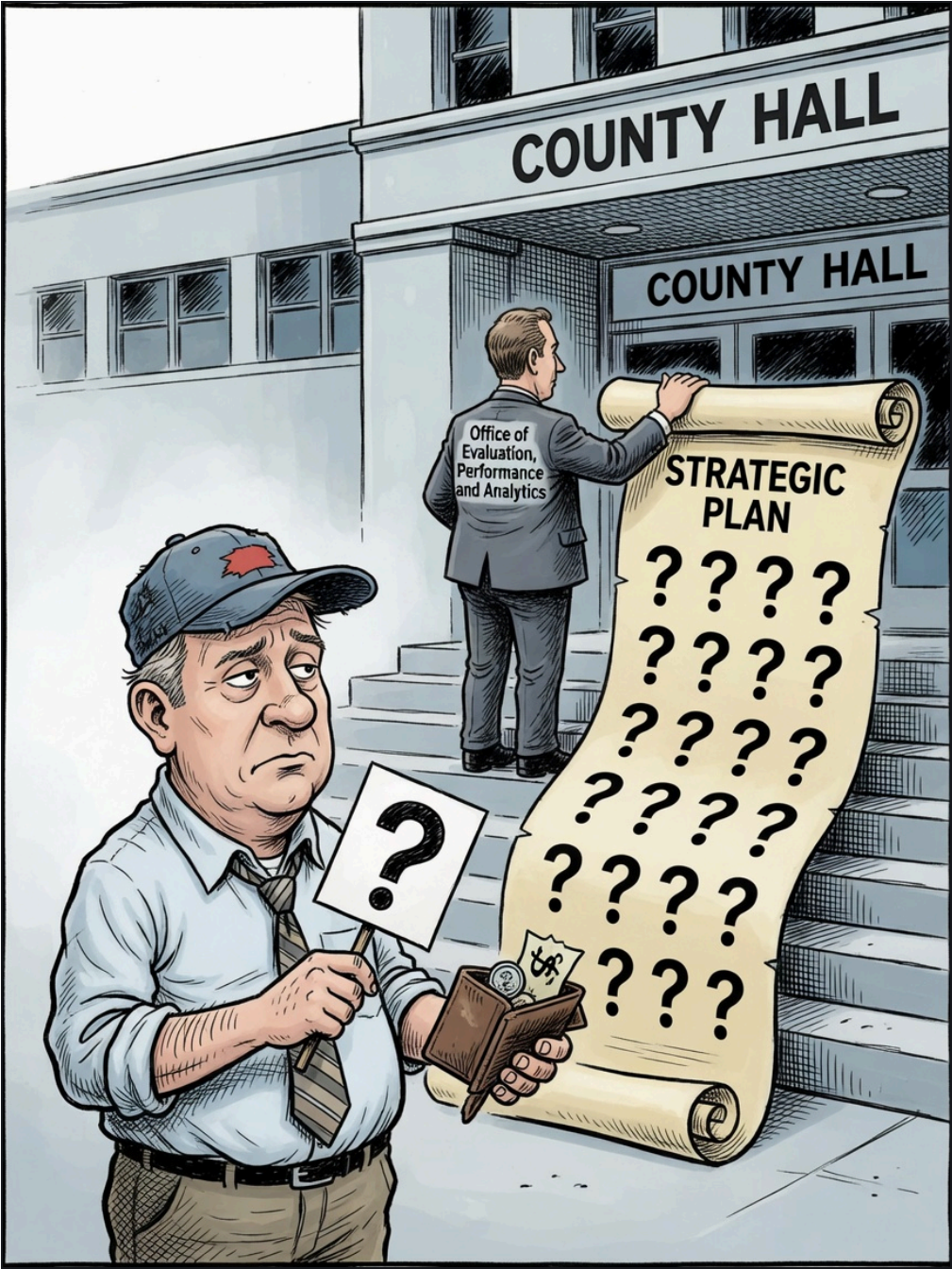
This past month, tariffs were implemented to over 90 countries ranging from 10% to much higher. Some countries like South Korea, the European Union, and Japan have reached trade deals with the U.S. yet have not been fully exempt from tariffs. Other countries like Mexico and China were able to negotiate a 90-day

extension to further negotiate trade deals that benefit both parties. Canada, on the other hand, was one of the first to receive tariffs on non-USMCA goods, while still working with the federal administration on a trade deal. Chamber President and CEO, Chris Cate participated at a press conference with Rep. Scott Peters and Rep. Sara Jacobs to highlight the economic impact that tariffs have on regional businesses and supply chains.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Aug 25, 2025

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



18 more questions, zero more answers

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

Opinion — the views of the writers named, not news reporting

COMMENTARY
Moorlach Warns of Lasting Fiscal Damage From California’s Expanded Abuse Claim Window

The California Policy Center senior fellow argues that Assembly Bill 218, signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom, will burden already strained school districts, counties and cities with massive new liabilities.

California’s local governments and school

systems already face severe budget pressures, yet public employee unions have helped create even greater financial strain, according to John Moorlach.

Moorlach writes that former Assembly member Lorena Gonzalez-Fletcher sought to hold schools and other organizations accountable for past employee misconduct involving childhood sexual abuse. She modeled her legislation on a 2013 measure that Gov. Jerry Brown had

rejected.

The approach chosen was to lengthen the statute of limitations for filing civil claims. Moorlach contends this decision ignored several predictable problems, including the arrival of aggressive plaintiff law firms seeking clients, the likely death of many accused individuals, the scarcity of remaining witnesses, and the fact that many entities had already defended themselves in earlier rounds of litigation and considered the matter

closed.

He adds that insurance providers would probably refuse to cover these revived claims and would sharply increase future premiums. Gonzalez-Fletcher first pursued the idea with Assembly Bill 3120 in 2018. That measure passed the Legislature despite Moorlach’s lone floor speech in the Senate opposing it.

In that speech, Moorlach stated that extending the deadline “may devastate certain districts in our state

and it will make obtaining insurance next to impossible. It could be the straw that also breaks the backs of schools and numerous businesses and nonprofits.” Only he and Sen. Ted Gaines voted no. Brown vetoed the bill, citing the same fairness concerns that led him to reject an earlier version years before.

In his veto message, Brown explained that statutes of limitations exist because “there comes a time when an individual or organization

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COMMENTARY (CONTINUED)

Opinion — the views of the writers named, not news reporting

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Moorlach Warns of Lasting Fiscal Damage From California’s Expanded Abuse Claim Window

should be secure in the reasonable expectation that past acts are indeed in the past and not subject to further lawsuits.” He noted that evidence disappears, memories fade and witnesses become unavailable.

Brown also recalled a 2002 law that briefly reopened claims and produced more than 1,000 suits against the Catholic Church alone. Those cases, some dating to the 1930s, cost the church over \$1.2 billion by 2007, with

other nonprofits also paying settlements.

Undeterred, Gonzalez-Fletcher introduced a revised measure, Assembly Bill 218, the following year. With a new governor in office, the bill advanced through the Legislature. Moorlach notes that many Republicans abstained and that Gonzalez-Fletcher, then chair of the Assembly Appropriations Committee, helped steer it to passage.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed AB 218 into law. Moorlach criticizes Newsom’s fiscal record, pointing out that California’s per capita fiscal ranking slipped from 41st under Brown to 44th by 2023. Moorlach argues that

Newsom’s approval assured similar financial hardship for public agencies.

Gonzalez-Fletcher later became president of the California Labor Federation, a role focused on securing higher pay and benefits for public workers and teachers. Moorlach observes that her earlier legislative success created a major budget obstacle that will make fulfilling those goals far more difficult.

He predicts most public employee unions will see few or no salary increases for years to come. The self-inflicted wound, he says, stems directly from the expanded liability created by the new law.

Recent announcements illustrate the scale of the problem. The Los Angeles Unified School District plans to issue \$500 million in bonds to cover new settlements, while Los Angeles County will borrow \$4 billion for the same purpose. Both entities already rank near the bottom in fiscal health and will carry this debt burden for decades.

Moorlach urges residents to ask local school districts whether they intend to litigate or settle upcoming claims and how they will finance the costs. He concludes that Gonzalez-Fletcher and Newsom will be remembered for imposing a costly fiscal disaster on taxpayers through soaring

lawsuit payouts and insurance rates, much like the Orange County bankruptcy triggered by former Treasurer-Tax Collector Robert Citron.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Sep 2, 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.

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