

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

Meet Treasurer-Tax Collector Finalists at Community Meet and Greet



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

Members of the public are invited to meet the four finalists for County Treasurer-Tax Collector and ask them questions during an upcoming community event.

The informal event will take place at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 30 in the Campus Center Chambers at the County Operations Center in Kearny Mesa. The address is 5520 Overland Ave., San Diego, 92123.

The Board of Supervisors selected the four finalists during a public hearing Sept. 30. The four were chosen from a pool of 11 qualified applicants who applied for the position.

The call for applications went out after the former Treasurer-Tax Collector Dan McAllister retired on Aug. 2.

The person appointed to the position will serve until the current term ends on Jan. 4, 2027. An election will determine a successor for the following four-year term.

During the community forum, the finalists will give short introductory remarks and then take part in small group or one-on-one conversations with attendees who can learn more about the candidates and their perspectives.

At the second hearing, each candidate will have three minutes to make an oral presentation before the Board. Afterward, the Supervisors will have a chance to ask questions before voting for the finalist who will fill the position. All votes will be read aloud, and a finalist must receive at least three votes from Board members to be

appointed.

The Treasurer-Tax Collector's office collects more than \$9.1 billion in property taxes every year. The office also collects the transient occupancy tax and the cannabis business tax from businesses in the County's unincorporated area.

The treasury side of the office manages the County investment pool, which ranges in size from \$10.2 – \$18.8 billion in assets on an annual basis. The Treasury is also the paying agent for all 42 school districts in the region.

Additionally, the office handles the Deferred Compensation Program for County employees and has oversight of the County's \$2.7 billion Deferred Compensation Program: 401(a), 457(b) + Roth Plan versions.

It also reconciles internal payroll reports, approves wires, oversees program activities, education and works closely with payroll, Human Resources and the record keeper.

County of San Diego news release · Oct 14, 2025



Illustration

COUNTY

VIDEO: Grand Opening for 62 Affordable Studio Apartments in Midway District

A grand opening celebration was held today in the Midway District for Pacific Village, the newest affordable housing development for veterans,

transition-age youth, and people at-risk of or those experiencing homelessness.

Pacific Village is a collaborative effort between the County of San Diego, the City of San Diego, and the San Diego Housing Commission with over \$16 million in Homekey funding from the State of California.

The County contributed \$5.9 million plus \$5 million over five years toward behavioral health supportive services including housing stability, transportation, referrals to community resources, and clinical case management for crisis intervention and care coordination.

Formerly a hotel on Midway Drive, the property and rooms have been re-modeled and now offer 62 furnished studio apartment homes with access to supportive services, including those for behavioral health. The development features 15 units for homeless veterans.

“When we prioritize affordable housing and combine it with crucial supportive services, we are improving health outcomes and creating opportunities for residents to thrive,” said Kimberly Giardina, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for the County's Health and Human Services Agency. “It takes all of us coming together to get people into safe and stable housing.”

The hotel conversion included the installation of kitchenettes in all units, fire sprinkler and alarm systems, security cameras and perimeter fencing, plumbing fixture replacements, roof replacement, the installation of rooftop solar panels, interior and external painting, accessibility upgrades and termite fumigation and repairs.

The property also has a designated pet area, picnic area, bike rack and laundry room. It is within walking distance of numerous restaurants, grocery stores, retail shops, pharmacies, and public transit.

Since 2017, the County has invested more than \$327 million into affordable

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

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VIDEO: Grand Opening for 62 Affordable Studio Apartments in Midway District

housing, using excess land, its Innovative Housing Trust Fund, and other state, federal and local funding. Those funds have helped open doors to 2,966 homes, with 3,0007 more on the way.

County of San Diego news release · Oct 9, 2025

COUNTY

County and Partners Kick Off New \$75 Million Investment to Build Behavioral Health Workforce

The County and its partners gathered Thursday to kick off the ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund (ELEVATE) , a \$75 million investment to build a stronger behavioral health workforce in our region to meet the needs of residents.

Administered by the San Diego-based Policy & Innovation Center in partnership with Social Finance, Trailhead Strategies and other agencies, the fund aims to add 3,000 new professionals into jobs supporting behavioral health.

A workforce assessment completed in 2022 at the request of the County Board of Supervisors found that an additional 18,500 behavioral health workers will be

needed to meet anticipated demand for mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment services in the region by 2027.

“There are many barriers San Diegans face in accessing careers in behavioral health like high tuition costs for students, a lack of training programs and paid internships,” said Nadia Privara, Acting Director of County Behavioral Health Services. “These barriers have a larger impact on the diversity of the workforce. That’s why a major focus of ELEVATE is to build a diverse and culturally competent workforce who are representative of the communities being served.”

ELEVATE has five new programs to enhance the skills of current and prospective behavioral health professionals.

San Diego Pay it Forward Loan Program – Provides zero-interest loans to new and established behavioral health workers to pursue graduate level degrees. Loan repayments are recycled to help fund future students. .

Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network Program – Provides apprenticeships to help people become SUD counselors, case managers, community health workers and fill other in-demand roles.

Peer Support Training Grant Program – Expands training and job placement for certified peer support specialists who are people who

have lived experience in recovery. The program is in partnership with Pacific Clinics and National Alliance on Mental Illness San Diego & Imperial Counties.

Social Work, Therapy Counseling Internship Program – Provides paid internships in public behavioral health settings to master’s level social work, counseling, and therapy students.

Nurse Practitioner Expansion Program – Supports students in nurse practitioner programs to obtain educational and clinical experience in public behavioral health settings.

More information for current and future behavioral health workers is available on the Elevate Behavioral Workforce Fund website .

If you or someone you know needs help with mental health, call 9-8-8 to speak to a trained crisis specialist. Calling 9-8-8 will connect you to the San Diego Access & Crisis Line, available seven days a week/24-hours a day. Support is free, confidential, and available in over 200 languages within seconds.

County of San Diego news release · Oct 10, 2025

COUNTY

Two New Openings Bring More Affordable Housing to Mt. Etna Campus

A celebration was held in the

Clairemont Mesa neighborhood today for the grand opening of two new affordable housing developments located on Mt. Etna Drive, near the intersection of Genessee Avenue and Balboa Avenue.

The two new multi-story buildings, named Modica and Taormina, are the second and third buildings to open on the Mt. Etna Campus. The first building, the Paul Downey Senior Residence , opened in January for low-income seniors.

A fourth building is scheduled to open in early 2026 for low-income families, completing the intergenerational Mt. Etna campus built on County surplus land. Combined, the four buildings will add 404 homes to the community that will remain affordable for the next 55 years.

Modica and Taormina feature 228 one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom apartment homes plus two manager units. Between them, 73 of the apartments are dedicated to permanent supportive housing. Mt. Etna is also pedestrian friendly and within walking distance of grocery stores, schools, parks, restaurants, retail, medical facilities and public transportation.

“When we support affordable housing in our communities, we are creating a safe and stable living environment for all residents, said

Courts · Transit · Public safety

Kimberly Giardina, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for the County’s Health and Human Services Agency. “Everyone deserves a place to call home.”

The Mt. Etna campus is a testament to the success of public private partnerships and a regional commitment to build more affordable housing. The County invested \$15 million in funding for the Mt Etna campus and provided the parcel of land, which formerly housed the County Crime Lab, valued at \$21 million.

All four phases of the Mt. Etna campus are being developed by Chelsea Investment Corp . with supportive services provided by Serving Seniors .

More about the Mt. Etna interest list is available online.

Since 2017, the County has invested more than \$327 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 helped open doors to over 2,900 homes, 1,800 new units just for seniors, with 3,000 more on the way.

County of San Diego news release · Oct 14, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



Illustration from a photo by Adbar · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0

BUSINESS

Continue Your Leadership Journey at Amplified Impact Partners

For LEAD graduates and alumni looking for avenues to channel their spirit of civic and community engagement beyond our programs, Amplified Impact Partners offers a unique opportunity. At Amplified, you can apply your professional and leadership skills to create lasting benefit for the San Diego region.

Amplified Impact Partners is a San Diego-based 501(c)(3) that mobilizes skilled professionals to provide strategic, pro bono consulting for local nonprofits. Each year, Amplified collaborates with

more than 30 nonprofits serving San Diegans in areas such as the arts, homelessness, veteran support, youth opportunity, animal welfare and more.

Partners work in small consulting teams alongside nonprofit leaders to identify solutions and strategies that drive long-term results. Beyond the impact made, these projects foster deep connections among professionals who share a passion for community progress, collaboration, and purpose-driven work. Amplified is currently recruiting its next cohort of new Partners—professionals experienced in areas such as strategy, operations, marketing, human resources, finance, and beyond. No prior consulting experience is required; Amplified provides all necessary training to help translate your expertise into meaningful nonprofit impact.

Amplified is hosting two ‘Why Amplified’ information sessions this fall where you can learn more about what’s involved in becoming a

Partner and the experience you can expect to have:

Session 1 : Tuesday, November 4 | 1:00–2:30 p.m. | Amplified Office, Old Town

Session 2 : Wednesday, December 10 | 1:00–2:15 p.m. | Zoom

If you’re looking for a rewarding and distinctive way to give back, register for an information session at amplified.org/become-a-partner .

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Oct 14, 2025

BUSINESS

Member Spotlight: 3D Expo Solutions

Your Partner in Designing the Ultimate Trade Show Exhibit

Dennis Doyle’s journey in the trade show industry began in 1994 as a union carpenter with locals 974 and 831 in Baltimore and San Diego. While he honed his craft, he envisioned running his own business, so when the convention and trade show events world shut down in 2020 due to the pandemic, Dennis tapped into his

lifelong love of surfing and opened a surfboard repair, sales, and rental business. It was built on resilience, craftsmanship and his deep commitment to helping others succeed. That entrepreneurial spirit set the foundation for 3D Expo Solutions.

Whether you’re a Fortune 500, startup or small business, 3D Expo Solutions handles every detail of your exhibit booth needs from custom design, fabrication and graphics to logistics, shipping, installation and dismantling. Clients know exactly what to expect well before an event thanks to detailed mockups and full setup photos from our 15,000 sq. ft. design studio in El Cajon. We create eye-catching, high-impact booths for conventions and trade shows, highlighting your brand and merchandise. We also design and build smaller, permanent, museum-quality, private installations to your specifications.

3D Expo Solutions is continuously upgrading and using the latest technologies

and materials to deliver top-quality graphics, lighting, lamination, and printing. Booths are available for rental or purchase, and every project is tailored to your specifications, timeline, and budget. Sizes range from 10’ x 10’ to any size and are shipped domestically and internationally with trusted partners to ensure everything arrives show-ready.

Some of our clients include industry giants Google TV, Lockheed, Delta, Panasonic, Nissan, Honda, BrinksHome, Ripple, Ultra Maritime, Modern Treasury, and GlobalJet, but 3D Expo Solutions is just as passionate about working with small businesses helping them create a unique and memorable presence. Reach out to Dennis 858-349-0630 for your exhibit needs.

Let the professionals take it from here. With 3D Expo Solutions, your next exhibit isn’t just built – it’s unforgettable.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Oct 7, 2025

AROUND CALIFORNIA

Statewide news

CALIFORNIA

Newsom Signs Bill Opponents Call 'A Child Trafficker's and Kidnapper's Dream Bill'

Critics including Erin Friday and the California Family Council contend that Assembly Bill 495, the Family Preparedness Plan Act of 2025, creates legal loopholes that make kidnapping children easy and undermines parental rights.

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom has approved legislation that opponents warn creates dangerous loopholes for predators to gain control of children without meaningful oversight.

The measure, known as Assembly Bill 495 or the Family Preparedness Plan Act of 2025, allows a court to appoint a temporary guardian

for a child chosen by the child's custodial parent.

According to the Senate Human Services Committee, the bill allows this arrangement "if the parent is temporarily unavailable due to an immigration-related administrative action, among other circumstances."

Supporters, including Assemblywoman Celeste Rodriguez, the Democratic author from San Fernando, described the law as a way to protect families from sudden separations. Rodriguez said the state must "do everything we can to safeguard families from separation and ensure children are supported."

Yet child-protection advocates and parental-rights groups contend the statute applies far beyond immigration cases. They say it extends to any child for any

reason and grants authority to nonrelative extended family members.

Erin Friday, a vocal opponent, originally called AB 495 "a child trafficker's and kidnapper's dream bill." She warned there is "no background check, no welfare check, no court oversight, and no verification."

Friday added that all an adult needs is "a piece of paper and some form of identification," with no duty for the handing-over parent to confirm the recipient's identity. "Presto, someone walks away with your child," she said.

The legislation also lets these temporary guardians authorize school-related medical care. Critics argue this threatens parental rights by allowing interventions even for parents who do not affirm their child's gender identity.

Opponents claim the bill redefines a "safe" home and replaces parents with government in deciding what is best for a child.

Friday rejected the notion that the law is narrowly crafted for deportation emergencies. "This bill is not about immigration. It's about relinquishing parental rights to unvetted strangers under the guise of compassion," she said.

The measure further allows school employees to flag situations in which a pupil's parent or guardian is unavailable and trigger appointment of a temporary caregiver for any issue.

Newsom issued a statement upon signing the bill that echoed themes of safety and family support. He said, "Our children deserve to feel safe at home, in school and in the

community. We are putting on record that we stand by our families and their right to keep their private information safe, maintain parental rights and help families prepare in case of emergencies."

California Family Council officials countered that AB 495 "creates legal loopholes that make kidnapping children easy." They warned the law absolves medical providers of liability when a consenting adult lacks genuine legal ties to the child.

Parental-rights rallies earlier this year drew thousands to the state Capitol to protest the legislation. Despite the outcry, Democratic majorities advanced the bill through committee and both houses.

San Diego Newsline · Based on reporting by California Globe · Oct 13, 2025

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



Meet the finalists — before they meet your wallet

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

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COMMENTARY

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

COMMENTARY

Petaluma Attacks Data After Landing at Bottom of California Cities’ Fiscal Health Rankings

The California Policy Center says the city should focus on fixing its finances instead of criticizing the metrics derived from its own audited reports.

SACRAMENTO — After finishing in last place among California cities on the California Policy Center’s latest fiscal health assessment, Petaluma officials released a lengthy press release that criticizes the data, its methodology and the organization itself.

According to the Center, Petaluma placed 328th out of 328 cities with available information on the 2024 Local Fiscal Health Dashboard. The city’s response came after residents began asking questions about the poor showing.

The California Policy Center argues that the dashboard relies on audited financial statements that Petaluma and other municipalities must file each year with state and federal authorities. It was created to replace the California State Auditor’s discontinued Local Government High-Risk Dashboard.

The Center writes that its approach builds on work by the Hoover Institution’s State and Local Governance Initiative, which examined cities across the country using a framework similar to the former state auditor’s model.

California Policy Center President Will Swaim is quoted as saying, “We built the dashboard so Californians can see how their tax dollars are managed — without government spin.” He added that if Petaluma seeks a higher score, it should improve its finances rather than challenge the numbers.

The Center suggests the city treat the ranking as a prompt to examine past policy choices that led to its current position. It warns that continuing on the present path would only allow the city to survive through repeated tax increases, deferred maintenance and deteriorating services, which would be unfortunate for residents and businesses.

Petaluma earned an “F” on the 2024 dashboard, a sharp drop from “C” grades in both 2022 and 2023. Because the Center has applied consistent criteria each year, the decline points to worsening financial

health, most evident in the decline of general fund reserves shown in the city’s audited statements.

The California Policy Center notes that a city’s general fund functions much like a household checking account. Between mid-2023 and mid-2024, Petaluma’s unrestricted general fund balance dropped from \$18.5 million to \$9.9 million after a transfer to a capital projects fund.

As a share of spending, that reserve fell from 29.3 percent to 13.9 percent, below the Government Finance Officers Association guideline of 16.7 percent. The Center points out that nearby Santa Rosa held \$152 million in comparable reserves.

The same trend appeared in the city’s governmental funds unrestricted net position, which increased its unrestricted net deficit from \$51 million to \$59 million. The Center observes that while many California cities carry net deficits, Petaluma’s is deeper than peers such as San Rafael, which reported only a \$6 million gap despite similar population size.

On retirement costs, the California Policy Center acknowledges that pension rules are set at the state level

through CalPERS. Yet it stresses that local leaders decide how many workers to employ and what salaries to offer. The Center invites residents to examine compensation data on the State Controller’s Public Pay website, noting that 36 Petaluma employees received over \$200,000 each in cash compensation.

Pension and retiree health funding also remain under city control. The Center cites Brentwood’s \$22 million in extra CalPERS contributions from 2018 to 2024 and Corte Madera’s prefunding of retiree health obligations with \$5.3 million in assets against \$7.3 million in obligations. It contrasts this with Walnut Creek, which offers no such benefits.

The California Policy Center disputes Petaluma’s description of its retiree health coverage as a “defined contribution” plan, stating that the minimum benefit increases each year with medical cost inflation. It emphasizes the principle of intergenerational equity, arguing that costs should be covered as earned rather than passed to future taxpayers.

The Center also questions the city’s claim of an AA

credit rating from Moody’s Investors Service, noting that “AA” is not a valid Moody’s rating and that Moody’s withdrew Petaluma’s bond rating in 2019 when it stood at A1.

The California Policy Center maintains that its dashboard supplies objective indicators to help officials, residents and analysts spot trends and compare performance. It offers free confidential consultations to local governments and has published a Municipal Finance Triage Guide to support better budgeting and planning.

The Center argues that Petaluma should use the dashboard as an invitation to challenge the policies and decisions that have brought the city to its current condition rather than attack the data.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Oct 13, 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

Downtown, City & County

COUNTY

Key Appointments Made to County Health and Human Services Team

County Chief Administrative Officer Ebony Shelton announced interim appointments today for two key positions in the County’s Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA).

Dr. Elizabeth Hernandez, Ph.D., will step into the role of Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of the Health and Human Services Agency as Dr. Kim Giardina prepares to leave the position Nov. 6 to pursue other opportunities. Dr. Alberto Banuelos will serve as Interim Director of Self-Sufficiency Services effective Nov. 29. Current Director, Rick Wanne, will retire in December.

“We wish our departing colleagues well and thank them for their decades of leadership,” Shelton said. “This transition will ensure we can

continue our commitment to providing services that support the health and well-being of the community.”

Dr. Elizabeth Hernandez, Ph.D., will step into the role of interim Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of the Health and Human Services Agency. She has been serving as Director of Public Health Services and will begin her new role on Oct. 17.

Dr. Hernandez joined Public Health Services in 2016 as Assistant Director. In 2021, she was named Director, overseeing 775 employees as part of the department’s operations and administrative functions, which include Tuberculosis Control and Refugee Health, Preparedness and Response, Maternal, Child and Family Health Services, California Children’s Services, HIV/AIDS, STD and Hepatitis, as well as the Epidemiology and Immunization Services.

She serves on the Executive Committee for the County

Health Executives Association of California, is a board member for the Public Health Institute, is co-chair of the Public Health Alliance of Southern California, represents the County on the California Department of Public Health Office of Binational Border Health Advisory Group, and serves on the San Diego State University School of Public Health Advisory Board.

Dr. Alberto Banuelos will serve as Interim Director of Self-Sufficiency Services, after previously serving as Assistant Director since 2016. Self-Sufficiency Services provides resources that include CalFresh, Medi-Cal and CalWorks.

Dr. Banuelos’ accomplishments include centralizing eligibility services during the COVID pandemic and the integration of the Office of Military and Veteran Affairs and the Office of Immigration and Refugee Affairs.

His earlier experiences

include 17 years with the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency.

County Health and Human Services provides vital health, housing, and social services to more than 3.3 million residents across 18 cities, 18 federally recognized tribal reservations, 16 major naval and military installations, and the unincorporated areas of the County. About one in every three county residents is a direct recipient of its services each year.

The County will pursue a recruitment process for both roles.

County of San Diego news release · Oct 10, 2025

COUNTY

County Hosts Community Flu Events With Free Vaccinations

Fall and flu go hand-in-hand, and that means soon the coughing, sniffing and sneezing will begin. The best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from getting a

severe case of influenza is to get a flu vaccine .

While County Public Health Services focuses on the uninsured, it does each year host no-cost flu events to kick-off its vaccination campaign and educate the public on the benefits. Anyone who would like a vaccine can walk-in and get one without an appointment. The events also serve as an opportunity for County public health teams to train in disaster response for emergency situations.

The final flu vaccination event of the season is Thursday, Oct. 16 from noon to 5 p.m. at City of San Diego’s Oak Park branch library, 2802 54 th San Diego, CA 92105)

The first flu event was Tuesday afternoon at the Spring Valley Casa de Oro Library, where a steady stream of clients showed up ready to roll up their sleeves.

County of San Diego news release · Oct 15, 2025

SAN DIEGO NEWSLINE

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