

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

Have A Say in Building County Budget



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

Get involved and share your feedback on what you’d like to include in the County’s budget for the upcoming fiscal year starting July 1.

A survey and a tool that lets people rank the County’s budget priorities in order of importance to you opened Wednesday on Engage San Diego County .

Through the survey, you can also choose how they want to stay informed about a budget process—by email, text or some other form of communication. The survey and ranking tool remain open through March 22.

The County collects public input about programs and services year-round, but from January through June, the process of seeking budget-focused input to help inform budget deliberations kicks into high gear.

In January, the County hosted a budget workshop and community feedback session . Other opportunities will arise throughout the budget process.

Public input will play an important role as the County develops the recommended budget. Other considerations include program and service delivery data, available resources, the local economy and availability of state and federal funding.

The recommended budget for fiscal year 2026-27 will be released to the public on May 1. The County budget in the current fiscal year totals \$8.63 billion .

The County funds many programs and services throughout the region. Some affect nearly all

residents. These include emergency preparedness; criminal prosecution and detention facilities; delivery of federal and state social service assistance, access to food and housing for vulnerable people; health programs including behavioral health services; food and restaurant inspections; elections and beach water monitoring.

The County also serves a large, unincorporated area. County government is responsible for the day-to-day things a city government would do, like law enforcement, roads, building permits, animal shelters and protection, along with parks and libraries. Some cities also contract with the County to provide these types of services.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 25, 2026



Illustration

COUNTY

First EMS Corps Training Class Graduates in San Diego County

County Fire celebrated the graduation of its first EMS Corps cohort, marking a milestone for a new program that prepares young adults for careers as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT).

The program combines classroom instruction with intensive, hands-on learning. Students practiced real-life emergency scenarios, including trauma simulations and field drills that tested teamwork and quick decision-making. One exercise even required students to request helicopter support, adding an unexpected challenge to the training.

The 20-week EMS Corps program

includes over 400 hours of EMS training, 150+ hours of mentorship, tutoring, career coaching, fitness, and counseling, and offers up to 12 college credits through Southwestern College. Participants earn a \$1,500 monthly stipend and receive career guidance and support after graduation to help them transition into the workforce.

In addition to technical training, the program is designed to reduce barriers that can prevent young adults from entering EMS careers. Students receive mentorship from EMTs, firefighters and paramedics, along with support services that help them stay focused and complete the program.

“Many of these youth come from backgrounds that would normally limit access to EMS careers, including foster care, juvenile justice or situational poverty,” said Program Coordinator Nicholas Bye-Carnes. “We provide counseling, one-on-one mentorship, financial literacy, and even support with housing or childcare so they can succeed.”

The program is funded through a grant from the state’s Employment Development Department and Public Works Alliance. EMS Corps began in Alameda County and is now expanding statewide to help address workforce needs in emergency medical services.

The second South County EMS Corps cohort launched in January at Southwestern College, and a North County cohort at Palomar College is expected to begin in April.

Adults ages 18 to 26 who live in California and meet the EMS Bureau background requirements are encouraged to apply.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 24, 2026

COUNTY

Community Invited to Reimagine Future of San Pasqual Academy

The County of San Diego is seeking community input around the future of San Pasqual Academy, a 238-acre

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

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Community Invited to Reimagine Future of San Pasqual Academy

residential campus that has provided foster youth with housing, education and enrichment for 25 years.

With an onsite high school, mental health services, independent living classes, and work readiness programs, San Pasqual Academy has supported more than 1,000 foster youth since opening in 2001. Since its opening, laws like the Continuum of Care Reform and Family First Prevention Services Act have shifted the system away from group-based care like the academy, and toward kinship and resource-family placements.

With this in mind, the Board of Supervisors has asked County staff to gather ideas on how the Academy can continue supporting foster youth while creating space for complimentary community uses, such as workforce training or transitional housing, that ensure the campus remains effective for the region. County staff will analyze feedback and present the results and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors in spring 2026.

To date, the County has hosted community forums, the next one is March 3, and published a project page dedicated to this topic on Engage San Diego County where visitors can provide feedback, take a survey and learn more

about these efforts.

Learn about San Pasqual Academy through the County’s engagement page .

Take the survey: Available through March 20

Attend the virtual meeting : March 3, from 5:30 – 7 p.m., via Zoom.

“We want community to help shape the future of San Pasqual Academy,” said Alfredo Guardado, director of Child and Family Well-Being. “This is a pivotal moment. The landscape of care has changed over the past two decades and your ideas will help us reimagine a campus that uplifts foster youth and benefits the broader community. We encourage everyone —members of the public,

service providers and partners—to share their vision and be part of this work.”

County Child and Family Well-Being is dedicated to promoting the safety and stability of children, youth and families in our community and their ability to thrive.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 25, 2026

COUNTY

Kitchen Team Filling Hearts and Bellies at County’s Polinsky Children’s Center

These are just some of the daily reminders the young residents at the County’s A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children’s Center are seeing when they open their paper snack sacks at school.

Including daily notes from the kitchen team started last year has brought the team words of thanks from the young snackers.

“It’s reminder to let them know that they are a super star,” said Polinsky Children’s Center Chef Freddy Recinos. “I know they’re going through a lot, so we want to make them feel like they are special, they are awesome, show them you’re not alone, and we’re here to make you feel happy.”

The reminders are a small but meaningful way bellies and hearts are being filled at Polinsky Children’s Center.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 23, 2026

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



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

BUSINESS

Tijuana Secretary Montejo Meets with Chamber Members

From aerospace and medical devices to electronics and automotive, Tijuana powers supply chains that support jobs, innovation, and cross-border growth. This month, the Chamber hosted an International Business Affairs Forum featuring Tijuana’s Secretary of Economic Development Pedro Montejo, who shared an overview of the city’s economic vision for 2026, the work of its business committee, initiatives to attract and retain talent across the region, and other key efforts shaping our region’s economic future.

With a full house of over 50 Chamber members in attendance, the Secretary shared the latest on employment trends, including the City of Tijuana’s contribution to 50% of the state’s total employment, and how cross-border workers represent 5% of Tijuana’s employment. In addition, he highlighted that under this administration, a Business Advisory Council was created with 84 active members from the business sector, chambers, and civil associations focused on expanding business, ensuring public safety, and competitiveness through five different commissions. Other topics included the expansion of the fast lane program at the land ports of entry, public safety efforts, digital governance, infrastructure and mobility, industry

development, talent development, and self-compliance program for local businesses to streamline and reduce audits.

Attendees included newly appointed Consul General of Canada in Los Angeles, Sylvie Bedard; Consul of Economic and Political Affairs at the Mexican Consulate in San Diego, Barbara del Castillo; Imperial County Supervisor Jesus Escobar; Tijuana City Councilmember Gina Arana; and business and community stakeholders from San Diego and Tijuana.

This forum marks the beginning of a series highlighting our neighboring cities that contribute to our CaliBaja region’s competitiveness. The next forum will focus on the city of Ensenada. Stay tuned for details!

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Feb 20, 2026

BUSINESS

SD in SAC Delegation Trip Recap

A group of nearly 90 business and civic leaders from the Cali-Baja region traveled to the state capital last week to advocate for policies that support economic growth, job creation, and regional competitiveness during the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce’s 2026 Leadership Delegation to Sacramento. Over two days of high-level meetings and policy discussions, delegates elevated the priorities of the San Diego-Baja mega-region while engaging directly with state lawmakers, agency officials, and policy leaders.

The two-day agenda focused on pressing issues shaping California’s economic landscape, including healthcare funding, the cost of doing business, AI and the innovation economy,

housing, renewable energy, and potential ballot measures that could significantly impact employers statewide.

AI & Innovation: Lawmakers continue to closely examine AI, with dozens of bills introduced last year and several expected to return this session. Our partners at CalChamber emphasized the need for balanced oversight that protects consumers while preserving California’s leadership in innovation and supporting the region’s growing tech sector.

Healthcare: Federal cuts will significantly impact healthcare funding and place pressure on clinics and hospitals statewide. With deficit projections varying widely, uncertainty remains around state obligations and possible funding reductions affecting providers and all employers.

Taxes & Ballot Measures: Proposed initiatives — including a potential “billionaires’ tax” — may impact business costs and investment decisions. The Chamber continues advocating for policies that maintain San Diego and California’s economic competitiveness.

Housing & CEQA Reform: Addressing housing affordability and modernizing CEQA remain critical to reducing cost pressures and enabling job growth, with leaders emphasizing the importance of voter education on interim housing solutions.

Energy & Emerging Industries: California continues advancing renewable and next-generation energy, including fusion technology, a sector with significant job creation potential and a growing presence in San Diego.

Business Climate: Antitrust proposals and regulatory changes are also expected

this year, underscoring the importance of policies that support investment, innovation, and regional prosperity.

Trade & Competitiveness : The state continues supporting priority sectors such as life sciences, aerospace, and semiconductors through grants, workforce training, and incentives such as the California Competes Tax Credit to attract investment and jobs. GO-Biz is also focused on strengthening global trade relationships and reinforcing USMCA. Delegates emphasized balancing sustainability with affordability, supporting emerging energy sources like hydrogen, and maintaining an innovation-driven economy. Despite concerns about companies leaving California, the state continues to lead the nation in Fortune 500 headquarters, with San Diego serving as a hub for new enterprise growth.

Delegates met with legislators, agency officials, and policy influencers who are at the forefront of the Chamber’s most watched issues, including:

Jennifer Barrera, President & CEO, California Chamber of Commerce

Carmela Coyle, President & CEO, California Hospital Association

Angie Pappas, Associate Vice President of External Affairs & Media, Visit California

Commissioner Andrew McAllister, California Energy Commission

Director Dee Dee Myers, Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Feb 20, 2026

BUSINESS

Local Advocacy – 2026 Land Development Code Update

The Chamber led a coalition letter of other local business groups in relation to the 2026 Land Development Code Update. The Chamber Board voted to support the Update while directing Chamber staff to continue to work on outstanding issues within the Update.

The 2026 Land Development Code Update is an annual update of zoning regulations in the City of San Diego. The annual Update contains clarifications to the existing code, items to bring City code into compliance with state law, and new land use policies. This year’s Update contains approximately 109 items for the entire City and approximately 31 additional items that only apply within Downtown.

The letter highlighted items within the Update that we support, items we oppose, and items we would like additional clarity on. Some of the key supported items include streamlining of wireless facilities, easing of barriers for outdoor cafes, and policies to enhance for-sale housing. Some items of concern include the removal of incentives for housing development and some arbitrary new zoning regulations.

The Chamber spoke at the City’s Planning Commission outlining our positions. Additionally, the Planning Commission and City staff agreed to remove several items we opposed, including an “angled transition plane” requirement for new housing and the full removal of development impact fee waivers for studio and one bedroom housing units under the

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BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

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Local Advocacy – 2026
Land Development
Code Update

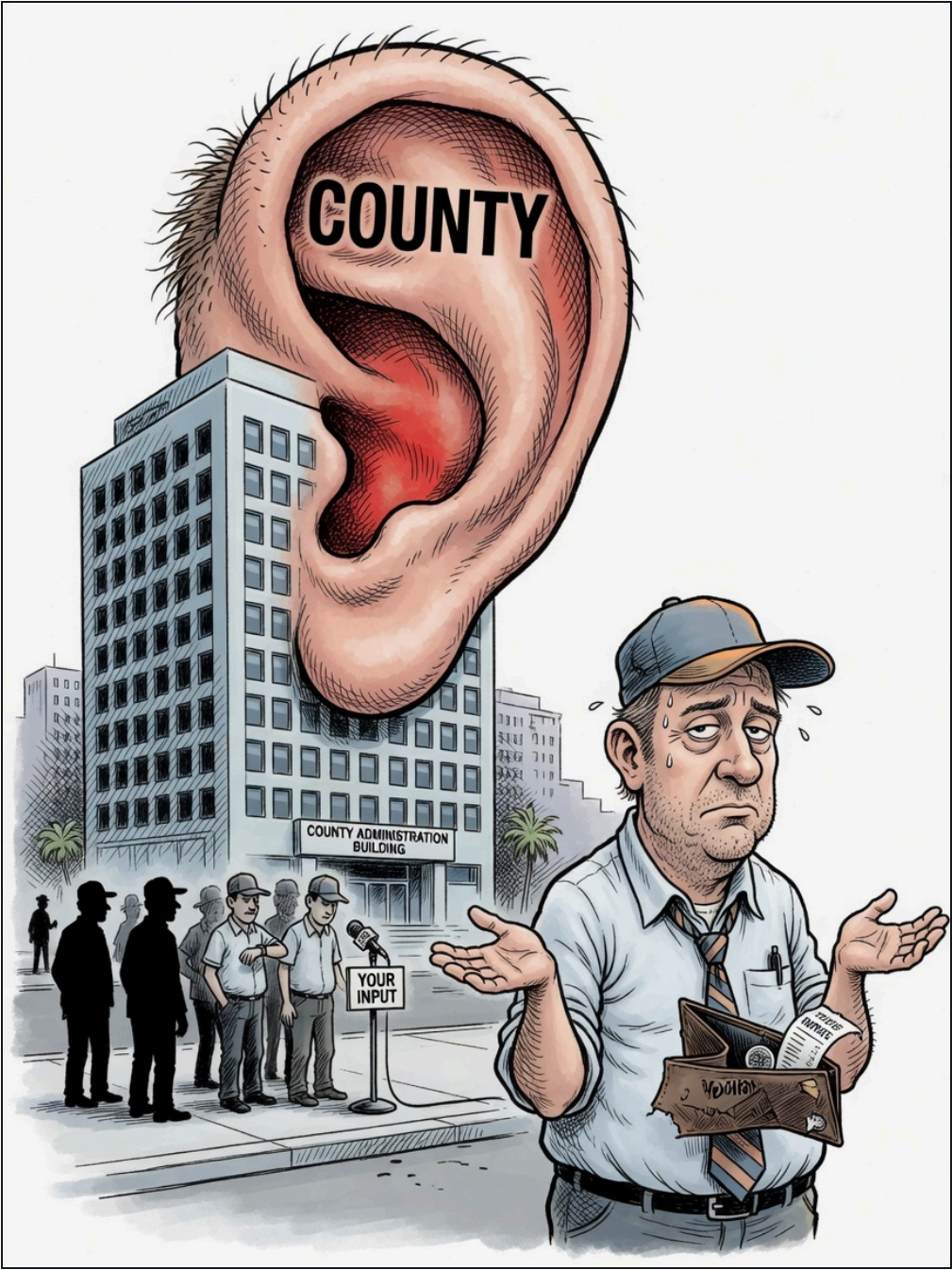
City’s Complete Communities
Housing Solutions program.
Chamber staff will continue
advocacy on the Update as it

heads to the City’s Land Use
and Housing Committee in
March.

San Diego Regional Chamber of
Commerce news release · Feb 20, 2026

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



They want your input on spending your output

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

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

COMMENTARY

Repeal of EPA
Endangerment Finding
Rejects Federal
Overreach on Climate,
Allowing California to
Continue Policies That
Raise Energy and
Housing Costs, Argues
Policy Center

The California Policy Center, via Edward Ring, argues that the Trump administration's repeal of the 2009 greenhouse gas endangerment finding highlights the flaws in California's extreme climate policies that have driven up costs, while predicting the state will persist and widen the gap with other states.

The Trump administration’s decision on Feb. 12 to repeal the Environmental Protection Agency’s 2009 endangerment finding has drawn fierce criticism from environmental organizations and certain states, according to Edward Ring of the California Policy Center.

The finding had granted the EPA broad power to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from nearly every form of energy use, including vehicles, power plants, factories, dairy farms, landfills, fertilizer plants, rice paddies, tractors, air conditioners and refrigerators, Ring notes.

Media outlets such as CBS News called it “an enormous blow to public health protection and the fight against climate change,” The Guardian termed it the administration’s “most confrontational anti-environment move yet,” and the New York Times headlined “Trump Erased a Bedrock Climate Rule. Here Come the Lawsuits,” Ring reports. The Sierra Club vowed to stop the EPA from revoking the finding.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta denounced the rescission and vowed to sue, Ring writes. He predicts that the move will trigger a wave of litigation from California and other blue states, where,

he says, climate policy has come to dominate all policy.

Ring argues that California’s aggressive climate enforcement has targeted the oil and natural gas sectors and now extends to housing development, with single-family detached homes defined as low-density if they have fewer than 10 units per acre and scrutinized for their climate impact.

He says planning meetings in the state often feature officials questioning developers about building homes with yards during a declared climate emergency. Most land is off-limits to construction, forcing new housing into dense, stacked configurations, according to Ring.

While California’s elite live in spacious, gated estates surrounded by lawns and mature trees, the public is told to accept “stack and pack” living, Ring writes. This approach, he contends, is a direct result of the state’s determination to lead globally in

fighting climate change.

As a consequence, California suffers the highest housing and energy costs in the nation, Ring states. He predicts the gap with other states will widen further as private investors shift toward red states offering cheaper energy.

California taxpayers will pony up additional billions to subsidize renewable energy projects that cannot compete in a deregulated market, according to Ring.

Ring observes that the Trump administration avoided directly challenging the underlying climate science in its announcement, a move he says was intended to limit new avenues for lawsuits. He notes that recent research, including a July 2025 Department of Energy study titled “A Critical Review of Impacts of Greenhouse Gas Emissions on the U.S. Climate,” has questioned the centrality of CO₂ and other anthropogenic greenhouse

gas emissions in driving climate change.

Even Bill Gates has stated that climate change “will not lead to humanity’s demise” and that “people will be able to live and thrive in most places on Earth for the foreseeable future,” Ring reports.

Ring cites climate scientist Dr. Judith Curry, who participated in the Energy Department review, warning that “Politicized science and a manufactured consensus on complex and deeply uncertain science will invariably mislead policymakers and lead to poor policymaking.”

Federal funding for climate research is estimated at \$2.4 billion per year, creating pressure to maintain the prevailing view, according to Ring.

He highlights two larger priorities emphasized by President Trump: the immediate threat of nuclear conflict, which could happen tomorrow, and the essential

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COMMENTARY (CONTINUED)

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

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Repeal of EPA Endangerment Finding Rejects Federal Overreach on Climate, Allowing California to Continue Policies That Raise Energy and Housing Costs, Argues Policy Center

role of affordable energy in driving prosperity and

national vitality. Average U.S. electricity costs \$0.18 per kilowatt-hour, Ring notes, while Germany and the United Kingdom pay \$0.40 and California averaged \$0.35 in February 2026.

By contrast, China’s electricity price stands at \$0.08 per kilowatt-hour, Ring points out, illustrating a country that is serious about national power.

Ring argues that the administration correctly recognizes affordable energy enables families to live in single-family homes with yards. California’s view that such housing creates excess greenhouse gases through increased driving in a low-density environment represents the kind of “obsessive, misanthropic nonsense” now rejected at the federal level, he

writes.

Micromanaging and restricting all economic activity according to its carbon impact is a path to national decline in a world that is more competitive and perilous than ever, Ring concludes.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Feb 20, 2026

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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