

BACKGROUND

Like much of the nation, the San Diego region is experiencing record homelessness. It's estimated that 10,264 homeless people live in San Diego County and the number of people who become homeless for the first time continues to outpace the number who find housing each month. However, as of November, homelessness in downtown San Diego has fallen to 1,172 — a 44 percent decrease from a record high in May 2023.

KEY INITIATIVES

The City of San Diego, in partnership with San Diego County and the State of California, has developed a comprehensive program of work to address homelessness.

State of California

- In October 2023, the Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act went into effect. This first-in-the-nation framework allows family members, health care workers and law enforcement to request court-mandated treatment for people with severe mental health and substance use disorders.
- In March 2024, Californians will vote on Proposition 1, which would modernize the state's Mental Health Services Act by expanding services and prioritizing care for those with the most serious mental illnesses. The measure would create a \$6.38 billion bond to build 10,000 more treatment beds and supportive housing for more than 100,000 people annually.

San Diego County

- In September 2022, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors declared homelessness a public health crisis. In doing so, the county prioritized complex issue, calling on all departments, jurisdictions, stakeholders and resource providers.
- The county's Ending Homelessness initiative offers emergency housing vouchers, emergency solutions grants to prevent homelessness, continuum of care plans to support nonprofits and housing for vulnerable populations.

City of San Diego

- **Programs:** In 2021, the city created the Homeless Strategies and Solutions Department. The city also launched a Coordinated Street Outreach Program to build trust with unsheltered residents to persuade them to accept shelter and services.
- **Shelters:** In June 2023, the Unsafe Camping Ordinance is signed into law, prohibiting encampments across the city and requiring people to accept shelter if it is available. The ordinance coincides with the launch of Safe Sleeping Sites, where people can camp legally with access to services. The city also expanded its Safe Parking program to four sites for people who live in cars.
- **Housing:** Mayor Todd Gloria launched four housing initiatives to reform affordable housing laws, invest in affordable housing, and approve affordable housing projects within 30 days. Forty-two permanent supportive housing units were created through California's Homekey program. In October, the city received \$20.8 million to create 75 additional units.
- **Additional Initiatives:** Increased sanitation efforts, including street sweeping in Downtown San Diego, homeless encampment abatement and regular trash cleanups.

Who to contact

- To reach the police for non-emergencies call (619) 531-2000.
- To request homeless outreach or report an encampment, download the Get It Done app.
- Those experiencing homelessness can call 2-1-1 to find services.

How you can help

- Donate to Downtown San Diego Partnership's Family Reunification Program, which since 2011 has reunited 1,700 people with their support systems.
- Volunteer at Father Joe's Villages in Downtown San Diego to prepare and/or serve meals, tutor children or help with maintenance and beautification projects.

For more information

- City of San Diego: sandiego.gov
- San Diego County: sandiegocounty.gov
- State of California: auditor.ca.gov