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SDPD Receives City Council Approval to Use Smart Streetlight, Automated License Plate Technologies

CONTRACT TO BE DRAWN UP FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL IN COMING MONTHS

San Diego – The San Diego Police Department (SDPD) today received City Council approval for the use of Smart Streetlights and Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) technologies to investigate and solve crimes.

SDPD's request to use the combined Smart Streetlight cameras and ALPR technologies in an initial 500 locations citywide included details regarding access, data storage and retention, the release of data and information collected, and more, as required by the [Transparent and Responsible Use of Surveillance Technology Ordinance](#), also known as the [Privacy Ordinance](#).

"It's the responsibility of local government to keep its residents safe. Smart Streetlights have helped the San Diego Police Department identify and apprehend suspects in deadly crimes and bring them to justice, making our communities safer," Mayor Todd Gloria said. "I thank the City Council for appreciating the importance of these investigative tools, which will now be deployed consistent with the substantial transparency and oversight provided by the City's Privacy Ordinance."

After presenting at nine community meetings across the city, responding to more than 100 questions and requests for information from the Privacy Advisory Board, and receiving both Public Safety Committee and City Council approvals, the department can now begin working with vendors to iron out a contract. The contract will need to be brought back to Council for approval once finalized.

“The San Diego Police Department has put a great amount of time and effort into ensuring the City Council had the information they needed to put victims first today by approving our use of Smart Streetlights and ALPR technology,” Police Chief David Nisleit said. “SDPD will be working quickly to draft a contract and bring it back for Council approval as soon as possible so that we can put this technology to work solving crimes.”

The Smart Streetlights and ALPR are the first technologies to be approved through the review process outlined in the Surveillance Ordinance, which was passed by City Council in 2022 and amended in July 2023 to allow more time for the City to comply with the requirements and narrow the definition of surveillance technologies.

“We must move forward to make San Diego safer and more secure for everyone. Cameras in high-traffic, public areas can help prevent crimes and solve them,” Councilmember and Chair of the Public Safety Committee Marni von Wilpert said. “By approving the use of Smart Streetlight and License Plate Reader Technology, the Council recognized that these tools are important to protect public health and safety, while their use must be appropriately monitored and regulated to protect individuals’ right to privacy.”

A little more than 3,000 Smart Streetlights were deployed in San Diego before being deactivated in 2020 due to concerns over how the program was rolled out and questions about privacy protection.

Prior to that, SDPD used Smart Streetlight data to help investigate and solve more than 400 crimes, including 56 murders or attempted murders, 26 hit-and-runs, 55 robberies/burglaries, 19 sex crimes and 10 carjackings.

A [Grand Jury Report released in June 2022](#) found that the use of Smart Streetlights by SDPD presented no valid privacy concerns and recommended that the Mayor and City Council authorize and fund the reinstatement of the use of Smart Streetlights immediately.

Every City department must comply with the ordinance for each technology that meets the criteria for surveillance. The City has approximately 300 technologies that may be defined under the ordinance, with more than 70 of them being used by SDPD to conduct investigations, enhance response to critical incidents and public threats, and safeguard the lives of community members.

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