



Economic Development

MEETING NOTES

San Diego Promise Zone

Healthy Communities Meeting Minutes

Thursday, Nov. 13, 2025 | 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. | via Zoom

Working Group Goal: Promote access to healthcare and healthy foods

In Attendance:

City of San Diego – Promise Zone (Amber Weber, Roosevelt Williams III, Daniella Salgado, Amairany Macias), **City of San Diego – Economic Development Department** (Michele Marano, Melissa Villalpando, Nadine Hassoun), **I Love to Glean** (Karen Clay), **County of San Diego – Health and Human Services Agency** (Alondra Estrada-Lam), **California Coast Credit Union** (Angel Nolasco), **Leah's Pantry** (Carlos Alessandrini), **Barrio Botany** (Christina Abuelo), **Sherman Heights Community Center** (Daniella Kelly), **Sanford Stem Cell Institute UC San Diego** (Alondra Venegas, Jamison Langguth), **Kate Sessions Commitment** (Anne Fege, Anisah Enciso, Annie Guthmann), **San Diego Food Bank** (Trent Beals), **San Diego Food System Alliance** (Lakisha McZeal), **San Diego Urban Sustainability Coalition** (Tanisha-Jean Martin), **Travelers Aid Society** (Adrianna Yemhatpe), **HealthCorps** (Andrea Harrison), **Logan Heights CDC** (William Burties), **Mission Edge** (Olivia Yazzolino), **Jewish Family Service of San Diego** (Megan Dowell), **Community Members** (Emma Smith, Miriam Perez)

Meeting Notes:

Introductions, Culture Share, and Agenda Review:

- Alondra Estrada-Lam welcomed everyone to the November Healthy Communities meeting and shared this month's agenda.
- The culture share for this month was related to **National Gratitude Month** and asked participants, "What is something or someone you are grateful for this year, and why?"

Partner Announcements:

- **Karen Clay:** Join the Community Recovery Team and I Love to Glean on Friday, Nov. 14 from 12:30 – 5 p.m. (food packing) or Saturday, Nov. 15 from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. (food distribution) at 4588 Market St., San Diego.
 - Please complete the volunteer form located in the upper right of www.ilovetoglean.org.
- **Tanisha-Jean Martin:** Sustainability Improv Production! The Certified Seasoned Climate Ambassadors at the Fourth District Senior Resource Center are developing a Sustainability Improv Production—a fun and interactive theater project that explores clean energy, equity, transportation, gas-to-electric transitions, water, community health, and more. They are looking for individuals interested in supporting content

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development and implementation. No theater experience is required—just passion, curiosity, and knowledge in your field.

- If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Tanisha-Jean Martin – Tanisha@sdusc.org.

- **William Burties:** Logan Heights Community Development Corporation will be hosting a Turkey Distribution on Nov. 21 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at their office. Families must register in advance to receive a free turkey and food items.
- **William Burties:** Join Logan Heights CDC for their annual Light Up Logan event on Dec. 5 at the Silk Factory. Families will be able to pick up toys (registration required), enjoy snow, meet Santa, and connect with community vendors.
- **Adrianna Yemhatpe:** Promise Zone Community Partner Grant: Transportation Support. Traveler's Aid has launched a transportation assistance program for older adults in the Promise Zone who need help getting to housing or medical appointments. Support includes one-time assistance such as bus passes, available primarily through walk-ins at Father Joe's Villages on Thursdays, with additional options available by phone.
 - Contact: adrianna@travelersaidsandiego.org
- **Nicholas Zubel:** San Diego County's Office of Emergency Services, in collaboration with the Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice, is inviting food system stakeholders and community members to provide feedback on the update to the County's Emergency Operations Plan. By participating, you help shape emergency response priorities, identify service gaps and access barriers, and strengthen coordination across organizations and communities. Public comments are open through Nov. 21.
 - To review the plan and submit your comments, visit the Engage San Diego County website or email Nicholas.Zubel@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Promise Zone Updates:

- The San Diego Promise Zone presented as a panel at the Live Well Advance Summit on Oct. 22, 2025. Our session was titled “San Diego Promise Zone: How Cross-Sector Organizations Unite in Community,” and the time was from 1:15-2:00 p.m. Jon Rios from the San Diego Housing Commission, Sarah Tuakli Cooper from the Elementary Institute of Science, and Angel Nolasco from Cal Coast Credit Union joined as panelists. We also had an exhibitor booth, which featured an interactive Promise Zone map, where attendees were invited to write down what they love about specific Promise Zone locations. The activity sparked great engagement and conversations, helping showcase the impact and pride within our communities. Overall, the session and booth were well received and provided an excellent opportunity to connect with partners and share the Promise Zone’s work with a wider audience.



- The next All-Partner Meeting will be on Thursday, Dec. 4 at San Diego City College. There are several interactive parts to the meeting, including opportunities for participants to guide decision making regarding the Community Perception Survey and the post-designation Community-Led Transition Plan. We're also inviting participants to donate a new toy to one of our partner toy drives, if desired.
- The November newsletter spotlight was Ale Ricardez, co-chair of the Promise Zone's Healthy Communities working group. Ale's involvement in the Promise Zone was in part brought about by her own cultural practices of Tequio and Guetza. Tequio signifies community work and service, while Guetza translates to gift in reciprocity. These cultural practices served as the groundwork for her passion in giving back and ultimately led her to pursue roles that center the lived experience of the community with participatory trust-based methodologies. Ale is currently the Duals Outreach and Enrollment Manager at Blue Shield of California and is also the Co-Chair and Co-Founder of the Indigenous Peoples Employee Resource Group at Blue Shield. She has been a board member for numerous local nonprofits.
- To nominate a community member for a future Community Spotlight, click [here](#).

Guest Presentation: Megan Dowell – Jewish Family Service

Megan Dowell serves as the Senior Director of Nutrition and Aging Services at Jewish Family Service, an organization that has supported San Diegans of all backgrounds since 1918. In her role, Megan oversees programs that strengthen nutrition security and support older adults.

During this meeting, Megan shared valuable information with the Healthy Communities Working Group about the wide range of services Jewish Family Service provides.

About Jewish Family Service (JFS):

- Founded in 1918
- Serves 70,000+ people annually
- Provides services to individuals of all backgrounds—not only the Jewish community
- Core values: justice, hope, community, repairing the world, loving-kindness, and healing
- JFS services are not limited to Jewish clients
 - While some programs are culturally specific, all programs presented at the meeting are open to the general community.

Nutrition Programs Overview:

JFS works to strengthen nutrition security across San Diego through three primary program areas:

- Groceries and fresh produce
- Meals for older adults
- CalFresh application assistance

Programs Offered:

Leiber's Corner Market (Main campus – Balboa Ave., Kearny Mesa)

- Client-choice market with a point-based system (100 points/month)



- All food is free; points encourage balanced, nutritious selections
- High demand; priority is given based on specific criteria
- Requires completion of an interest form to enroll

Hand Up Food Pantry / Smart Choice Online Ordering

- Clients select groceries online and pick them up curbside
- Additional fresh produce and baked goods included (varies by supply)
- Uses the same interest form as Leiber's Market

Community Distributions

- Includes a distribution site serving local neighborhoods

Contacts

- **Megan Dowell**, Senior Director of Nutrition and Aging Services – (858) 637-3277, megand@jfssd.org

Promise Zone Priorities & Transition Activities:

- Amber Weber updated the group on progress toward key projects for the rest of the year. These include the Youth-Led Career Expo (Mar. 3, 2026), the Community Perception Survey (Mar-April 2026), and community-led transition plans.
- Preparation has begun for the Youth-Led Career Expo. Over 90 young people completed a Career Expo Design Survey released this fall. The feedback we received will help guide the planning of an engaging and meaningful Expo experience for all attendees. If a specific business or organization would like to sponsor the event, there are many options to do so. We love to give each participant a swag bag and are always looking for interesting items or coupons to go in it. If you are an organization that would like to sponsor a raffle basket, gift cards, or other items, this is a great opportunity to get your organization's name out to youth! SDPZ has also begun reaching out to employers with a vendor interest form, so if you will have internships, part-time, or full-time positions available for this spring or summer and are interested in being a vendor, please email PromiseZone@sandiego.gov.
- Regarding the Community Perception Survey, an *ad hoc* joint Healthy Communities and Housing Affordability working group meeting was held on October 23 to review Google Form submissions, refine suggested questions, and consolidate them into a recommended list. The proposed survey will include questions on access to healthy foods, infrastructure and safety, healthcare, transportation barriers, and neighborhood park usage. These questions will be submitted for review by Professor Bracy.
- Time was spent discussing next steps on the transition from the City to the community post-designation. The Promise Zone Steering Committee held two in-person planning sessions since the last meeting. They are committed to advancing and prioritizing the shared goals and to explore opportunities to sustain current momentum to continue



the work. The Steering Committee will be sending out a draft overview of plans, which we'll share with each working group *before* the Dec. 4 All-Partner Meeting so that there is time to review ideas and provide input before the All-Partner Meeting.

Participants were encouraged to provide feedback or discuss ideas with co-chairs Ale, Karen, or Alondra.

- Finally, Amber reminded partners to continue submitting new activities or updating past activities in the Promise Zone logic model using the provided [Google form](#).

Wrap Up and Adjourn:

- Co-chairs thanked those who attended the meeting and encouraged them to leave any feedback through the [Digital Comment Box](#).
- **Next Meeting:** Thurs., Feb. 12, 2026, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., via Zoom