



Downtown Community Planning Council San Diego

Planning a Vibrant Downtown for All

Downtown Community Planning Council Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2026, 6:00 PM

**12th Floor Committee Room, City Hall,
202 C Street, San Diego, CA, 92101**

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

Meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM.

In Attendance: Hewitt (Acting Chair), JP Schwarz, Link, Robles, Barr, Baham, & Avita (7 of 13 required for quorum)

II. Non-Agenda Public Comment

A. Becky Rapp

- Raised concerns about the city's proposal to add 36 new marijuana permits, which would double the current citywide cap from 38 to 72. She noted financial concerns given the city's budget deficit, the administrative costs of the program, and the lack of a recent financial audit (the last was over five years ago). She urged planning groups to contact city representatives to oppose the expansion.

B. Katie Hall

- Highlighted the lack of city oversight of smoke shops, reporting that some sell to minors, carry illegal high-THC products, and operate without restricted hours. She noted the impact on youth vaping in schools and urged the board to pay attention to this issue.

III. Community Reports

A. Christina Gaffney, Office of Council Member Steven Whitburn:

- Provided update on Balboa Park paid parking adjustments taking place on March 2nd, which would change the enforcement hours.
- Provided a handout with a QR code for the Crosswalk and Stop Sign Ordinance survey
- Provided an update on the non-owner occupied property tax being considered by the City Council.

Board Discussion: JP Schwarz raised his concerns regarding aggressive parking enforcement in Cortez Hill.

B. Danny Avita, Office of County Supervisor Paloma Aguirre

- The Board of Supervisors is holding a public hearing on Tuesday regarding the Truth Act, which informs the public about ICE interactions with the Sheriff's Department.
- Budget season is underway with significant fund shifts; public attendance is encouraged.
- A downtown coffee event was held for Cortez Hill residents with approximately 60 attendees. Topics included small business support, the Tijuana sewage crisis, homelessness, and city-county partnerships.

Discussion on Air Quality: None

IV. Action Items

A. December Regular Meeting Minutes

- Member Baham requested his name be spelled correctly
- **Motion** to approve by Avitia, Seconded by JP Schwarz to approve with corrections. Approved without objection.

B. February Special Meeting Minutes

- No changes requested by Board
- **Motion** to approve by JP Schwarz, Seconded by Link. Approved without objection.

V. Informational Items

A. 6th Avenue to Balboa Park Connection

- Architect Rob Quigley, a founding DCPC member and 40-year downtown resident, presented a volunteer conceptual study for a pedestrian promenade reconnecting Balboa Park to downtown San Diego via 6th Avenue. The proposal envisions a 12-foot-wide landscaped walkway with large shade trees, a concrete sound wall to buffer freeway noise, and architecture inspired by the historic Cabrillo Bridge, featuring arches and board-form concrete to create a second iconic gateway to the park. To address funding, Quigley proposed a public-private partnership in which the city would transfer adjacent Caltrans-owned land to a developer in exchange for subsidizing the bridge. The envisioned boutique hotel or cultural venue, providing 24-hour activity to deter encampments. The concept has received prior endorsements from the Bankers Hill BID, Cortez Hill residents' group, Committee of 100, Forever Balboa Park, and the Downtown Partnership.
- Board discussion surfaced several points of interest and concern. Acting Chair Hewitt suggested exploring a partnership with the San Diego Zoo, positioning the hotel as a destination property with shuttle service and early park access. Member JP Schwarz raised concerns about traffic impacts if the curved I-5 northbound off-ramp at 6th Avenue were

replaced by a signalized intersection, as well as structural questions around bridge support (cantilever versus independent columns) and airplane noise exposure, particularly during Santa Ana wind conditions. Ryan Baham noted that the DCPC Community Plan Update Subcommittee had previously recommended improvements to a 6th Avenue promenade, and that he recently walked the bridge with the city's Brian Schoenfish to discuss similar concepts.

- The Board directed the DCP Update Subcommittee Chair to draft a letter of support for the project for consideration at a future DCPC meeting

B. DCPC Online Account Summary

- Acting Chair Hewitt provided an overview of DCPC's online accounts and operating costs. The city allows planning groups up to \$500 per fiscal year in reimbursable expenses. Current annual costs are approximately \$750.
- The Acting Chair recommended canceling the WordPress and Zoom accounts to reduce annual costs to approximately \$438, within the city's \$500 reimbursement allowance and to potentially designate a treasurer at the April meeting to manage the budget and file reimbursement paperwork.

VI. Committee Reports

A. DCPC Committees

- Community Planners Committee
 - Member Link reported that the CPC's "Seat at the Table" initiative was heard at the City Council Rules Committee. The proposal seeks a dedicated presentation time for community planning groups at council hearings, rather than requiring CPG representatives to cede public comment time. Council Members Lee and Ola spoke favorably. The city attorney confirmed there are no Brown Act issues. Seven community members plus CPC Board Chair Victoria de la Bruza attended. A decision is expected in a future Rules Committee meeting.
 - Member Link noted that SB 707 is updating Brown Act teleconferencing provisions, potentially allowing subcommittees to meet virtually without requiring a physical location, as long as meetings are properly noticed with a public link. CPC is using this procedure as a test case. A city council decision on formal authorization is pending.

B. External Committees

- No Reports

VII. 2026 Election Results

- JP Schwarz and Danny Avita, Elections Committee Co-Chairs, presented the results. The election had 29 candidates and 78 ballots cast, both believed to be records.

- Official Election Results
 - Cortez Hill – Resident
 - Winner: Jeffrey Wagner
 - Marina – Resident
 - Winner: Michael Sweeney
 - East Village North – Resident
 - Three-way tie between Bob Link, Brendan Mahoney, and Quinn Moore. Bob Link dropped out and there was a tie-breaking coin toss.
 - Winner: Brendan Mahoney
 - East Village South – Resident
 - Winner: Gary Hewitt
 - Gaslamp / Civic Core – Resident
 - Winner: Michael Arenas
 - Little Italy – Resident
 - Two-way tie between Greg Barr and Danae Palmer. There as a tie-breaking coin toss.
 - Winners: Danae Palmer
 - At-Large – General
 - Winner: Amanda Hustrulid
- The following seats remain open because there were no candidates:
 - East Village North – Business Seat
 - Gaslamp / Civic Core – Business Seat
 - Little Italy – Business Seat
 - Marina – Business Seat
 - At-Large Community Organization Seat 2
 - At-Large Community Organization Seat 3
- Newly elected board members will be notified and seated at the April 15, 2026 meeting. Officer elections (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and potentially Treasurer) will also take place at the April meeting.

VIII. Remainder Non-Agenda Public Comments

- No additional non-adenda public comments

IX. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM
- Next meeting on April 15, 2026 at 5:30 PM, at City Hall’s 12th Floor Room A