



Downtown Community Planning Council San Diego

Planning a Vibrant Downtown for All

Downtown Community Planning Council Meeting Minutes

April 15, 2026, 5:30 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 5:38 PM PM.

In Attendance: Hewitt (Vice Chair), Helmer , Wagner , Sweeney, Mahoney, Baham, Arenas, Palmer, Hustrulid, and Avitia (online). Quorum met with 9 of 13 in attendance

Absent: Schwarz, Bargmann, Salas

Note: Six new members were seated at this meeting following the 2026 election. Bob Link, having served nearly 8 years, stepped aside during a three-way tie in the East Village North race and is transitioning to a role with the Downtown Partnership as resident representative. Link attended as a guest.

II. Non-Agenda Public Comment

Gary Smith, President of the Downtown Residents Group, welcomed the new members and thanked them for their willingness to participate.

Introductions: Board members introduced themselves, sharing their neighborhoods, prior civic involvement, and reasons for joining DCPC. Key themes included HOA and neighborhood association backgrounds, professional interest in urban planning and policy, and outreach through the Office of Supervisor Aguirre, which was how three of the six new members first learned of the position.

III. Community Reports

A. Christina Gaffney, Office of Council Member Steven Whitburn

- Following the October 27 City Council vote to allocate \$1.8 million in community parking district meter revenue to the Transportation Department, city crews have restored 781 street lights and completed 558 pothole repairs in the downtown parking district.

Electricians are currently rotating through the two remaining funded districts (downtown and uptown); the downtown rotation (April 13–26) focuses on Columbia District, Cortez Hill, Gaslamp, and Little Italy.

- Recent traffic safety installations citywide include over 10,000 linear feet of crosswalks, 73 pavement legends, 85 traffic signs, over 3,000 linear feet of red curb per AB 413 daylighting requirements, and 1,290 linear feet of traffic striping. Residents can submit issues via the GetItDone app; report numbers can be forwarded to the council office for escalation.
- The mayor released the draft FY2027 budget today. Council Member Whitburn will host a budget town hall on **Tuesday, May 12 at 6 PM** in City Council Chambers, featuring Independent Budget Analyst Charles Monica. RSVPs are encouraged. A budget timeline with key review dates was distributed.
- Council Member Whitburn chairs the Active Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which is seeking public feedback on city policies governing the installation of crosswalks and stop signs. A QR code survey was distributed; direct comments to the office are also welcome.

Board Discussion on crosswalk/stop sign policy: A board member asked whether there is a deadline for submitting feedback; the council office will confirm. It was clarified that the survey addresses the *criteria for installing* new stop signs and crosswalks — currently evaluated on a 20-point threshold — rather than enforcement. Enforcement concerns are best directed to SDPD. An alternative process also exists: even when the 20-point threshold is not met, a planning group may submit a memo requesting a stop sign, and no such requests have been denied to date. The first step for any specific location is the online Traffic Safety Request form.

B. Jesse Brown, Office of State Senator Akilah Weber Pierson

- The office will host a virtual lupus awareness symposium in May; flyers were distributed.
- Senator Weber Pearson introduced legislation that would require chain restaurants with 20 or more locations to label beverages with high added sugar.
- Nominations are currently open for the office's community recognition program: Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May), LGBTQ+ Pride Month small business (June), and Youth Leader of the Year (August).

C. Danny Avitia, Office of County Supervisor Paloma Aguirre

- The Supervisor's office is conducting a series of tele-town halls through June. The most recent, focused on the affordability crisis, drew approximately 11,000 attendees. Board members are encouraged to participate when called.
- Recent testing in San Ysidro, Imperial Beach, and surrounding coastal areas has shown toxic chemical levels well in excess of state thresholds, attributed to the ongoing Tijuana

sewage crisis. The Supervisor is calling on the governor to declare a state of emergency, which would unlock emergency funds, waive permitting delays, and accelerate a resolution timeline currently estimated at 2031 without emergency action. The governor has characterized this as a federal issue; the Supervisor disagrees.

- Progress to date includes construction and planned expansion of the South Bay treatment plant, \$21 million in county reserve funds allocated to address culvert gaps, and air filter distribution to affected residents. With full collaboration, a 2028 resolution may be achievable; the project is estimated at \$1 billion in total cost.
- The Board of Supervisors will hold a full-day meeting on **April 21** (9 AM–6 PM, 1600 Pacific Highway, 3rd floor). Items include an initiative to extend term limits and charter reforms, and a proposed film office and film commission intended to attract production to San Diego and create local jobs. Public comment is encouraged.
- Upcoming events: health resource fair (late May), business walks in East Village, Gaslamp, and Spring Valley; neighborhood wraparound resource fair; and a housing town hall on April 26.

Board Discussion on sewage crisis: Board members raised the question of why progress has been so slow on an issue discussed for decades. It was noted that the Supervisor has prioritized this issue since taking office, allocating county funds and working across federal, state, and local jurisdictions. Key barriers include the 10th Amendment limitation on state/local interaction with foreign infrastructure, the scale of the project, adjacency to Navy property, and the coordination required among multiple agencies. The crisis has recently worsened as pollution has entered the air supply, prompting a heightened response.

IV. Action Items

A. March Regular Meeting Minutes

No board comments were raised. A procedural question was raised about whether newly seated members could vote on prior minutes; the board determined that members present at the March meeting may vote.

Motion to approve the March regular meeting minutes by board member Avitia; seconded by Helmer. Approved by Hewitt, Helmer, Wagner, Baham, Avitia, & Sweeney. Other members abstained because they were not in attendance.

B. Officer Elections

The Chair provided an overview of each officer role and the associated time commitment. Nominations were taken from the floor for each position.

Chairperson: Hewitt was nominated; no additional nominations. **Motion** by Baham to elect Hewitt as Chair; seconded by Sweeney. Approved without objection.

Vice Chairperson: Helmer was nominated; no additional nominations. **Motion** by Hewitt to elect Helmer as Vice Chair; seconded by Sweeney. Approved without objection.

Secretary: Wagner was nominated on the basis of notes taken voluntarily at the March meeting; no additional nominations. **Motion** by Hewitt to elect Wagner as Secretary; seconded by Helmer. Approved without objection.

Treasurer: No nominations. Hewitt will submit expense reimbursements this year and noted interest in filling the position later in the term.

Parliamentarian: No nominations.

C. Subcommittee Appointments

The Chair provided background on subcommittees: the city provides DCPC with meeting space, a city webpage, and a \$500 annual operating budget. Discretionary approval referrals have declined significantly due to state and city-level streamlining, reducing subcommittee workloads. Subcommittees must maintain agendas, minutes, and open public access. Non-DCPC members may serve, provided DCPC members constitute a majority; typical size is 3–4 members (maximum 13).

The following subcommittee roster was proposed and approved:

Design Review — Chair: Helmer | Members: Schwarz (pending confirmation), Arenas, Baham, and Wagner

Elections — Chair: Sweeney | Members: Palmer, Hustrulid, and Mahoney (*Composed of members not standing for election in 2027; duties include promoting elections, vetting candidates, candidate recruitment, and hosting candidate forums. Work begins approximately December.*)

Communications — Chair: Avitia | Members: Hustrulid, Sweeney (*Social media posts, election outreach materials, post-meeting communications.*)

Downtown Community Plan Update — Chair: Baham | Members: Mahoney, Palmer, Hewitt, Hustrulid (*The city's downtown planning update process is largely closed; the subcommittee's focus will shift to proposing ordinance changes.*)

Public Spaces — Handled ad hoc as issues arise.

Operations and Budget — Handled by the Chair; Vice Chair to assist as needed.

Motion by Helmer to approve the subcommittee structure and membership; seconded by Sweeney. Approved without objection.

D. 6th Avenue to Balboa Park Connection — Letter of Support

The board received a presentation on this project at the March meeting. The concept involves an elevated pedestrian and cycling crossing over 6th Avenue to Balboa Park, with a potential hotel component on Caltrans land. The full slide deck has not yet been provided, and the board determined it does not have sufficient information to draft a letter of support at this time.

It was noted that the Downtown Residents Group reviewed the proposal at their Monday meeting and voted to strongly endorse the 6th Avenue bridge concept.

Motion to continue this item until the slide deck and supporting materials are received; moved by Avitia, seconded by Wagner. Approved without objection.

E. City of San Diego Crosswalk and Stop Sign Policy

The board discussed whether to submit a formal position letter in response to the city's crosswalk/stop sign policy survey (see Item III.A above).

Discussion highlights:

- The survey addresses criteria for installing new infrastructure, not enforcement, which several members identified as the more pressing concern.
- Enforcement requests can be directed to SDPD and the council office.
- A planning group letter could carry more weight than individual submissions, particularly if it identifies specific intersections or articulates a unified position on preferred interventions (stop signs, crosswalks, traffic signals, chicanes).
- A board member suggested the group develop a comprehensive position on what types of traffic calming measures it wants to prioritize before pursuing a letter.

The board agreed not to take action on this item; members are encouraged to complete the QR code survey individually. The topic may return to a future agenda as the board develops a unified traffic safety position.

No formal motion required.

V. Informational Items

A. Vacant Board Seats

Six seats remain unfilled: four business seats and two community organization seats. The board discussed outreach strategies.

- Avitia offered to prepare a graphic or flyer with eligibility information for board members to distribute. Members were encouraged to approach at least five nearby businesses over the next two to three months. Avitia will coordinate with Dominic Lemendre on additional business outreach.
- Business seat eligibility: the seat holder may be the business owner or a designated employee, provided the business is located in the applicable downtown district.
- Community organization seat eligibility: a qualifying organization nominates a representative; the nominee does not need to reside downtown. The Chair will review the operating procedures and clarify the definition of an eligible organization at a future meeting.
- A board member asked whether a current member who has missed several consecutive meetings should be notified. The Chair confirmed the threshold is four absences in a rolling 12-month period; one current member is approaching that limit and will be notified if the next meeting is missed. Remote attendance counts toward presence.
- The Elections and Communications Subcommittees will collaborate on outreach materials and promotion.

B. Policies and Roles

The Chair reviewed board member responsibilities, including:

- Attending monthly meetings.
- Completing **Brown Act training within 60 days** of seating (approximately one hour, city-provided; covers open meeting requirements, serial meeting prohibitions, and liability protections). The Chair will send instructions.
- Reviewing discretionary approvals and submitting required forms to the city.
- Maintaining open records — agendas and minutes — on the DCPC website.
- Disclosing conflicts of interest and abstaining from affected votes.

Note: DCPC maintains two web presences — its own site (currently transitioning to Google Sites) and the city's planning group portal, which posts Brown Act-compliant short agendas and receives our official submissions. The city portal also links to all other planning groups.

A voluntary demographic survey will be distributed as part of the annual report requirement. The annual report, summarizing board actions for the year, will be circulated to prior board members for review before submission to the city.

VI. Committee Reports

A. Community Planners Committee — Bob Link

The Community Planners Committee (CPC) represents all 41 community planning groups in San Diego, each roughly the size of DCPC. Agendas and minutes are available online.

At the most recent city council meeting, the CPC chair presented an informational item titled "Seat at the Table," making the case that because planning group members are elected and operate under the Brown Act, they should receive dedicated presentation time before city council — rather than the same one-to-two minutes allotted to general public commenters, especially when project applicants may receive unlimited time. The presentation received a favorable response from council members. Next steps involve city council taking action on the proposal.

Link also encouraged board members to consider participating in the **Downtown Residents Group (DRG)**, which meets the Monday before each DCPC meeting (typically online, 9–12 members) to form resident positions that are forwarded to DCPC for consideration. A longtime DRG member recently had her nomination for "Harmony Park" accepted as the name for the new Bosa development park in the neighborhood.

VII. Remainder Non-Agenda Public Comment

Katie Hall noted that Council Member Foster has proposed a socially equitable cannabis program that would increase the number of dispensaries in the city by 36, roughly doubling the current number, and remove sensitive-use barriers. The mayor's draft FY2027 budget released today does not appear to fund this program. Attendees were encouraged to contact their council representatives to oppose expansion of the program.

A board member requested that public comment be kept to its designated slot at the beginning of the agenda, with end-of-meeting overflow limited to cases where the opening period was cut short.

VIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:18 PM.

Next meeting: May 20, 2026, City Hall 12th Floor Room A