




THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER MONICA MONTGOMERY STEPPE

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 19, 2021

TO: Honorable Members of the Committee on Public Safety & Livable Neighborhoods

FROM: Councilmember Monica Montgomery Steppe, Chair,  
Committee on Public Safety & Livable Neighborhoods 

SUBJECT: 2021 Public Safety & Livable Neighborhoods Committee Priorities & Work Plan

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As Chair of the City Council's Committee on Public Safety and Livable Neighborhoods (Committee), it is my distinct honor to share the 2021 Work Plan. While our nation, state, and city, continue to grapple with the tragedies of 2020, we must partner with community stakeholders, advocates, police and first responders, and social service providers to think critically about reimagining public safety. It is my goal to direct this Committee towards conversations and policies that will move us away from enforcement where it can be avoided, and towards the cultivation of vital services to our most vulnerable communities in an effective, equitable, and sustainable way. I have outlined numerous priorities for this committee to consider in the upcoming year, including suggestions from the community and committee members, and welcome continuous input from my colleagues in the months to come.

The following priority goals for 2021 include, but are not limited to the following:

**POLICE**

**Independent Commission on Police Practices**

With 75% approval of Measure B, voters approved the dissolution of the existing Community Review Board on Police Practices (CRB) and the establishment of a new independent Commission on Police Practices (Commission). The Commission will be responsible for investigating public complaints regarding police officers, officer-involved shootings and any deaths while a person is in the custody of the San Diego Police Department. The Commission will also have subpoena power and the duty to investigate allegations of dishonesty involving police officers and incidents showcasing a pattern of misconduct from individual or groups of police officers. By establishing this Commission, we can begin to reimagine public safety and can ensure that officers are more responsive to the communities that they protect and

serve. This Committee must consider the feedback of the community and the interim Commission and begin to draft an implementation ordinance that will lay out the specifics of how the Commission will function, as well as work towards ensuring that the new Commission has the necessary resources to truly be successful.

### Reimagining Policing

We must be intentional in order to tackle true reforms that will help to combat police violence and systemic racism within law enforcement. Together, we can work to set the example and redefine public safety so that it recognizes the humanity and dignity of every person. As elected officials, we are uniquely positioned to introduce common-sense limits on police use of force and find ways to reinvest funds back into core community services. The recently released “Campaign Zero, Evaluating Policing in San Diego” report further supports findings included in the 2016 SDSU report commissioned by the City that local law enforcement disproportionately stops, questions, searches and uses force against Black, Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander people. The Committee should explore policy options that will seek to address invasive policing practices used disproportionately to search and interrogate Black people, Latinos, LGBTQ and people with different abilities. This can be achieved by continuing to engage with community stakeholders, SDPD, and regional experts in order to receive a diverse range of input, which will lead to the development of fair and impartial policies that encourage officers to focus on public safety for all residents.

### Community Oriented Policing

Following the horrific death of George Floyd and so many others, coupled with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, community policing is more critical than ever before. It is imperative that we continue to invest resources to expand policing alternatives that deter officers from using force, promote de-escalation tactics, and to continue to build the trust and relationships between our residents and police officers. Strong relationships of mutual trust between police and the communities they serve are critical to maintaining public safety and effective policing. Community members’ willingness to trust the police depends on whether they believe that police actions reflect community values and incorporate the principles of justice and legitimacy. The Committee should receive a presentation from SDPD that details the data and findings from the study conducted by the Center for Policing Equity. It is crucial that the Committee receives these updates in a timely manner in order to fully evaluate what steps need to be taken to mitigate racial biases. In addition, the Committee should continue to explore opportunities for partnerships between SDPD, community leaders, faith organizations, and grassroots organizations, as well as work towards determining how, or if law enforcement is the proper response to non-criminal and non-emergency calls so we can reinvest funds and expand community policing efforts.

### Credible Messenger Program

The Credible Messenger Program has emerged as one of the most valuable models for transformative and restorative justice. This approach seeks to build trust and inspire change from within communities so that they can feel positive about possibilities rather than facing a future of frustration within the criminal justice system. As many San Diego communities have seen a rise in violence, it is imperative that the Committee explore options to implement a Credible Messenger Program that would encourage former gang members to mitigate potential violence in the community and promote peace throughout all neighborhoods. This innovative approach can begin repairing the harm that is caused

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from criminal behavior, and can lead to fundamental change in people, relationships, and communities. Not only could this program stop violence before it starts, it can also provide an opportunity to enhance public safety, decrease recidivism and provide meaningful social service interventions.

#### San Diego Police Department Wellness

Officers are subject to stress due to the nature of their jobs. Responding to tragic events, and sometimes coming under fire themselves, can be both physically and mentally demanding. The wellness and safety of officers is critical not only to themselves, and their colleagues, but also to public safety. An officer whose capabilities, judgment, and behavior are adversely affected by poor physical or mental health can potentially be a danger to the community, their families, and to other officers. In order to protect the communities they serve, our officers must receive the tools and resources they need in order to protect their own health and safety. The Committee should receive reports from SDPD regarding their protocols and plans to assist officers and what additional resources may be needed to address the impacts of stress and trauma.

#### Removal of Gang Injunctions

In 2019, the Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention's Biannual Report included a recommendation to remove all gang injunctions within the City of San Diego. Injunctions do not address the root problems of crime and violence, rather they can be used as an overly-broad discretion to label people as gang members without having to present any evidence or even charge someone with a crime. The Committee should take action on the 2019 recommendation from the Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention, as these injunctions impose restrictions on the daily lives of those who have either been mistakenly identified as a gang member or have turned their lives around in a positive way.

#### Monitoring of the Surveillance Ordinance and the Privacy Advisory Board

As technology continues to develop, it's essential that any tools that the City looks to acquire be subjected to rigorous transparency, accountability, and oversight to protect the public interest. Strong privacy protections and surveillance oversight are vital to cultivating public trust. Last year, the PS&LN committee led the push for a more comprehensive ordinance that establishes processes for encouraging transparency, accountability, and public deliberation, establishes rules for the acquisition and use of surveillance technology, and includes safeguards to protect civil rights and civil liberties. The Committee should continue to monitor the progress and be prepared to weigh in on both the proposed Surveillance Ordinance and the creation of a Privacy Advisory Board in order to ensure both are enacted in a timely manner.

#### No Shots Fired Youth Intervention Program

This pilot program will be the primary program for efforts to reduce violence in collaboration with a fiscal agent, CAST, The Gang Commission, and other city partners. Community organizations will reach out to gang members and get them to agree to a time period of no shots fired. The Pilot program is recommended to operate in a 5 month interval with a one month preparation period to establish baseline metrics, objectives and goals.

## **Strategy for Expanding Recruitment Opportunities**

### **Diversity in Recruitment and Retention**

As we continue to discuss building trust and legitimacy, one of the most important aspects to achieving this is the ability of our first responders and law enforcement to diversify its personnel to reflect the people and interests of the communities they serve. Increasing the diversity of the pool will require additional strategies to be layered on top of conventional approaches. The Committee should receive updates from both SDPD and Fire-Rescue on the efforts to reach out to individuals in underrepresented populations and recruit them into programs that can capture their interest, develop their skills, build their connection and commitment, and prepare them to succeed. The City should provide additional resources and take the necessary steps to encourage diversity in the recruitment and retention of our Fire-Rescue and Police Departments. The Committee should also continue to explore incentive programs like the First Responder Home Buyer Down Payment Assistance Program, which would not only encourage our First Responders and Law Enforcement officers to live in the community but could also assist with low retention rates across the board.

## **FIRE-RESCUE**

### **Emergency Medical Response**

Public services, such as ambulances, should be equally accessible, but results have shown that this is not always the case. Delayed response times around our City has put the health of our residents at risk. Additionally, data has shown that our most vulnerable communities have suffered the most under the current system. Improvements to that system have been few and far between. As the City moves towards finalizing the current Request for Proposal (RFP) process, the Committee should receive updates from the contract winner that provides concrete detail on how they plan to address these long-standing disparities. San Diego has an opportunity to reset the standard for truly equitable services and response, and we must act upon our obligation to ensure that public health and safety for all residents of our city is a priority.

### **San Diego Fire-Rescue Wellness**

Constant exposure to traumatic events and life-threatening situations, along with the stress of working long hours away from family members while under high-stakes conditions can easily build up and take an enormous toll on mental health. The current situation around COVID-19 has only compounded the stressors first responders cope with daily. The Committee should work with Fire Rescue to determine what resources are necessary to address these issues head-on and provide robust mental health and wellness support.

### **Brush Management and Abatement**

In recent years, the City has experienced numerous delays in brush abatement. As California has seen devastating wildfires across the state, it is imperative that we provide the adequate resources needed to take proactive and preventative approaches, as well as provide additional funding to our Fire-Rescue Department to conduct community education programs on brush maintenance and methods to prevent conditions that could lead to largescale fires. The Committee should receive reports from Fire-Rescue to evaluate our current process and determine what resources will be necessary to increase the maintenance and inspection of our open spaces, parks, canyon land, etc.

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### Girls Empowerment Camp

San Diego Fire-Rescue and the City launched the Girls Empowerment Camp to introduce and expose teens to careers in public safety. The Committee should receive an update from Fire-Rescue in order to determine the level of support needed to continue the program and expand upon the number of participants each year, especially in our underserved communities. This type of programming is critical to exposure for our young women and has the potential to lead to additional opportunities to diversify the Department.

### Citygate Studies Update

In the past, the Committee has received updates from Fire-Rescue on the Citygate Associates studies. These updates included recent studies that covered various recommendations for operational needs, including: Standards of Response Coverage, Emergency Command & Data Center capability and needs assessment, 911 ambulance services oversight analysis, and an evaluation of our all-risk maritime response capabilities. The Committee should receive a timely update on these studies in order to track the progress of these recommendations and advocate for priority needs addressed in the reports.

### Lifeguard Five-Year Plan Update

In 2014, the Lifeguard Division presented their Five-Year Plan, which included the need for additional lifeguards and support workers and setting aside funds for a vessel replacement. As we look to the future of lifeguard services, we must take a closer look at the progress that has been made, what obligations remain, and determine what additional resources and support may be needed to continue effective operations.

## HOMELESSNESS

### Impacts of COVID-19 on the Community Action Plan on Homelessness and Data Management Systems

The City has invested millions of dollars over the years to provide services for our homeless population. Services are vital to assist those who are without shelter. Therefore, it is imperative that the City take a comprehensive approach to this crisis. The City should consistently monitor progress on the regional plan from the Regional Task Force on the Homeless, as well as monitor homeless management data systems so that those in databases can receive wrap-around services in a timely manner and allow for coordination and collaboration from various agencies. In addition, the Committee should receive a progress update on the recommended actions, COVID-19 impacts, and additional strategies that have been proposed as we look towards recovery. We have the unique opportunity to make long lasting impacts on our homeless coordination system well beyond the COVID 19 pandemic. The Committee should receive a detailed update on the efforts to connect those experiencing homelessness to long term, sustainable housing, and wrap around services.

### Diversity Study

Any effort to end homelessness in the United States must address the range of issues that have resulted from racial inequity. This includes assuring affordable, stable housing for all. Systems, programs and individuals that serve people experiencing homelessness should monitor their outcomes in order to eliminate disparities in the way they provide services.

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Therefore, the Committee should receive a presentation that outlines how City funded shelters are addressing this issue.

#### Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets (CAHOOTS)

Our communities have expressed the desire for humane care to be administered to those in need as well as ensuring public safety. We must continue to explore ways to reduce police brutality and adequately address mental health and substance use disorder crises. This requires thoughtful investment into proven models that prioritize effective, trauma-informed care through robust health care and social services rather than immediately involving law enforcement. Investment in programs like CAHOOTS could alleviate the significant burden on our police department.

#### Updates on the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) and the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT)

The Homeless Outreach Team has played a key role in reaching individuals that are experiencing homelessness, and connecting individuals to the proper providers as we continue to face the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we must begin to look towards alternative methods. The Committee should partner with police, mental health providers, and homeless services officials to come up with a new model that would transition the HOT team out of direct response to these calls and redirect calls about certain nonviolent issues to outreach workers and medical providers. The City has seen success with the PERT program, the number of clinicians continues to increase each year. These licensed mental health providers accompany both the Homeless Outreach Team and officers on their patrols and have the expertise that is needed to assist in mental health emergencies that occur across the City. Given the crucial role that these clinicians play, as we move towards the goal of phasing out law enforcement response to homelessness, the Committee should receive updates from SDPD on the progress of the program, and gather additional information to determine what resources will help to achieve higher levels of service.

#### Safe Parking Program / Vehicle Habitation Ordinance

Homelessness continues to be a crisis in San Diego. The City has a responsibility to provide safe, clean, and healthy neighborhoods for all residents, without criminalizing individuals for living in their cars due to lack of available affordable housing. Therefore, the PS&LN Committee should explore options to repeal the Vehicle Habitation Ordinance, while also working with City staff to identify ways to expand the Safe Parking Program in every Council district. While the Safe Parking Program was created to provide safety and a pathway for those who are looking to access robust services that will lead to permanent housing, we must emphasize the need for progressive enforcement to that encourages and connects people to the program. The Committee should receive updates on this program, its enforcement efforts, and how the City is working to partner with organizations that can offer similar services.

## **LIVABLE NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

### **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program**

CDBG is a vital resource for local governments and has been crucial for reducing the negative impact that COVID-19 has had on communities. Following the initial onset of the pandemic, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provided \$5 billion in CARES Act funding for CDBG programs. The Committee should receive regular updates from Economic Development Department regarding plans to reinvest funds and help local communities combat the coronavirus and alleviate economic hardship.

### **Safe Syringe Program**

The Safe Syringe Program has provided case managers, facilitates safe disposal of used syringes, and provides the connection to other critical services such as referral to substance use disorder treatment programs, screening for potential infections, and education around overdose prevention and safe injection practices. The Committee should amplify the work of the Family Health Center, which has offered comprehensive services that have proven to be effective and have provided community-based approaches. Further investment into this program will increase the City's efforts to provide clean and safe streets, park space, and neighborhoods, as well as mitigate risks to public health.

### **Food Insecurity**

The Committee will continue to find avenues to collaborate with community organizations, stakeholders, and the County of San Diego to address the lack of access to fresh and healthy foods in underserved communities. The San Diego County Food Vision 2030 is community-engaged plan facilitated by the San Diego Food System Alliance with a goal to inform planning, policy, programs, and investment opportunities for San Diego region food system for the next ten years . We have continued to face challenges within the food system, which have not only been magnified through the COVID-19 outbreak, but also naturally as more communities urbanize and populations continue to grow. The Committee should discuss ways to increase the viability of local food businesses by creating specific funding mechanisms for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) farmers, fishermen and businesses, as well as expand support for urban community gardens and agriculture.

### **Park and Recreation Equity Funding**

In recent years, the proposed fiscal year budget for Recreation Center Funds from the Park & Recreation Department has shown large disparities in regard to funding that is received by parks across the city. This funding is crucial, as it covers recreational programs and events at parks across the city, as well as maintains facilities. The Committee should receive updates from Parks and Recreation on how these disparities are being remedied and should explore methods that will ensure that all community parks in San Diego are receiving the same level of services. Additionally, the Committee should focus on a Citywide Park and Recreation Condition Assessment in order to direct specific investments to under-resourced public parks and help address system-wide needs for park equity throughout our City's neighborhoods.

### **Neighborhood Code Compliance**

The Neighborhood Code Compliance Division of the Development Services Department

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administers programs designed to protect the public health, safety, welfare, and property value through enforcement of the City's ordinances and State/Federal laws relating to land use, zoning, housing, public nuisances, graffiti abatement, and vegetation/fire hazard abatement. For too long, the staffing levels in the Division have been low and enforcement priorities have been adjusted downward to keep pace. It is imperative that the resource capacity of the department be analyzed in a timely manner in order to determine the proper amount of funding that may be necessary to assist the Division in carrying out their duties.

#### Family Justice Center

For those living with or exposed to abusive partners, COVID-19 restrictions, social distancing, and stay-at-home orders can be exceptionally dangerous. As we continue to navigate through the new normal of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that we learn more about domestic violence and how we can support survivors during these times. The Committee should receive an update from the Family Justice Center (FJC) regarding the spike in domestic violence calls and how the center is working to advocate for the necessary resources to ensure the FJC continues to provide the highest quality of service to victims of domestic violence.

#### Library Programming

Recently the Library Department was asked to prepare a nearly 10% -15% reduction to its budget for Fiscal Year 2022. This represents a loss of millions of dollars for the Library Department. A cut of this magnitude would have a dramatic impact on service levels. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Library has experienced a change in the way materials and services have been traditionally provided to patrons. With declining purchasing power and the high cost of online materials, the Library Department will be forced to reduce access to popular digital databases, online tutoring programs, and eBooks without an increase to the materials budget. Therefore, the Committee should work closely with City Staff to hear recommendations and explore options that would have minimum impacts on service levels that are already suffering.

#### Opioid Settlement

The collateral consequences of the opioid epidemic have devastated families and communities. Low-income communities are more likely to experience the effects of the epidemic due to a lack of resources or health services to address their addiction. The Committee should receive an update from the City Attorney regarding the settlement efforts with the pharmaceutical industries involvement in the opioid crisis, as well as explore options for utilizing these funds in our most impacted communities.

In addition to the priorities noted above, the Committee should continue to receive periodic updates from staff regarding youth services, special event permits, maintenance assessment districts, veteran services, senior services, and volunteerism.

I look forward to addressing these priorities and issues presented by myself and members of this Committee in the upcoming year. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact the Public Safety & Livable Neighborhoods Consultant, Chloe Triplett, at (619) 236-7038.



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cc: Andrea Tevlin, Independent Budget Analyst