



HOPE4HOMELESS

A compassionate and
evidence based approach
to homelessness



OMAR PASSONS
FOR SAN DIEGO COUNTY SUPERVISOR

HOPE4Homeless:

A systems approach to addressing the homeless crisis

San Diego has a homeless crisis. It is a humanitarian crisis and an economic one. The County of San Diego must act – now.

Fortunately, that action need not be frenzied or disjointed and there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Our region has already completed work on portions of a *Regional Homeless Plan* based on the best work around the country and here at home. Also, we now have evidence-based approaches to get many people off the street permanently and we must act accordingly. There is always room for greater efficiency, improvement and eliminating duplicative efforts and we must keep a vigilant eye on evaluating the work being performed. But now is the time to take bold action to change direction on homelessness in sustainable, long-term ways.

Background

According to the San Diego State University Institute for Public Health, approximately 19,000 people accessed homeless services in 2016. Although not all of the people accessing these services were homeless, the number helps describe the magnitude of the issue.

MAGNITUDE OF THE ISSUE	
9,116	Total homeless
5621	Unsheltered homeless
23%	Increase in unsheltered homeless over 5 years
39%	Increase in unaccompanied youth homeless

If we know what to do, why are we in crisis?

We have struggled to build the will to end the policies that merely *manage* homelessness and start moving people off San Diego streets permanently. Further, it is critical that we abandon sound-bite politics and mere symptoms tactics in favor of strategic, long-term action that addresses root causes. This involves a special focus on youth, on trauma and adverse experiences, and on the high quality early child care and development called for in our *StrongStarts4All* plan to support every child. Working with community members, non-profit organizations, the business and tourism sector and homeless San Diegans, we can position the County to drive these system changes. This plan calls for the County to step into a primary leadership role in addressing not just social and mental health services but housing. The County cannot do this work alone, and cities in our region must commit to the type of fiscal management, support, and leadership that will be necessary to address these issues in partnership over time.

Six Key Steps: Connect – Coordinate – Implement – Build – Analyze – Scale

1. **Connect.** Fund up to 10 homeless navigation/outreach staff to help homeless access services and housing
2. **Coordinate.** Prioritize coordination of existing regional services with greater support to Regional Taskforce on Homeless
3. **Implement.** Support full implementation of the Regional Homeless Strategic Framework
4. **Build.** Leverage up to \$100 Million of existing reserve and use land as funding match to build more homeless housing
5. **Analyze.** Continuous open, available data analysis of housing production, services, health and recidivism are essential to long-term success
6. **Scale Service.** Leverage existing reserve balance and state mental health funding to scale mental health treatment and substance abuse prevention

How will this help communities in the 4th District of San Diego County?

Almost 60% of all unsheltered homeless people in our region live in the 4th Supervisor's District! Addressing homelessness is essential to the quality of life of residents and business owners in this District. The County must better support outreach in every community by connecting people to services and homes. The added resources, including professional outreach workers, will be used to partner with the City of San Diego to improve response and support in our neighborhoods. This increased focus on prevention and helping homeless people navigate the existing resources will free up law enforcement within our communities to focus on higher priority public safety issues.

We call for deploying resources and professional outreach staff to work directly with Business Improvement Districts across the 4th District to provide more support to help people get out of homelessness permanently.

Housing Affordability – Making the Connection

Our *Housing4All* plan recognizes the importance of bringing down the overall cost of homes and apartments in our region. This is the 'entry level market rate' side of the plan. It also called for a regional affordable housing measure and expansion of the *Jacob/Roberts* plan to utilize County-owned property for affordable and homeless housing. This is the 'affordable housing' side of the plan. Our *Housing4All* plan acknowledges the importance of fixing our broken housing system, but also explicitly calls out the need for expanded focus on homeless housing and services.

This *Hope4Homeless* Plan is an integrated part of our larger *Blueprint for Regional Prosperity & Inclusion*, and it is designed to supplement our other housing steps with specific focus on high-risk homeless populations such as youth, those with substance abuse and mental illness challenges, and our seniors. As the *Blueprint's* transportation, economic development, and environmental sections are released, the connections between and among components of the overall approach will become clear.

San Diego's high cost of living compared to wages is one of the reasons there are homeless San Diegans, but there are other significant reasons that impact homelessness, such as mental illness and substance abuse. As a result, this *Hope4Homeless* Plan recognizes that many homeless people cannot leave homelessness permanently simply by having housing alone. Often, social services are critical and this plan underscores that point.

Youth Homelessness Framework

Our campaign released *StrongStarts4All*, a path for elevating the support for every child in San Diego County. It is a recognition that every effort to end today's homeless crisis is undermined if we don't also place critical, long-term focus on decreasing the number of people who enter the homeless system in the first place. However, the long-term support will take time to be successful and the thousands of children and young adults currently experiencing homelessness need help now.

As a result of this immediate need, a portion of additional homeless resources must be specifically set aside for youth. The core areas of our youth framework are:

CORE AREAS	INVESTING EARLY MATTERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expanded "Drop-in" Centers• Customized Diploma/GED Support• Subsidized Transportation• Behavioral/Emotional Direct Support• Financial Literacy Partnership• Paid Work Experience	<p>69% Homeless San Diegans who have been incarcerated</p> <hr/> <p>70% Decrease in lifetime arrest rate for those with high quality early childhood education</p>

Greater detail with regard to each element of the youth-specific framework is included later in this plan. It is critical that we push forward with direct attention to homeless youth at a point during which they can still be prevented from becoming chronically homeless adults.

Substantive Action Steps

The remainder of this plan breaks down the substantive action steps to explain a path to more comprehensive leadership by the County of San Diego around homelessness issues. The purpose is to support the important regional work already ongoing and to clarify a path to greater, sustained County leadership.

Pay for Success Modeling

For many years, governments across the country have failed to leverage the type of outcomes-based funding that the private sector is accustomed to. This shift to *Pay for Success/Pay for Performance* has a track record of remarkable outcomes.

Pay for Success (PFS) is an innovative contracting model that drives government resources toward high-performing social programs. PFS contracts track the effectiveness of programs over time to ensure that funding is directed toward programs that succeed in measurably improving the lives of people most in need.

Santa Clara County implemented *Project Welcome Home*, an evidence-based permanent supportive housing program, utilizing the Pay For Success approach.¹ San Diego County has a history of searching for fiscally disciplined ways to address complex issues and this presents an excellent opportunity.

STEP I – Connect Homeless Individuals To Resources

Key items

Services	Increase County Outreach/Navigation staff to report to Director of Housing & Community Development
Support	Provide leadership, advocacy and resources to support City of San Diego regional intake center

Services

The County of San Diego must directly invest staff time to provide the homeless outreach and navigation support necessary. For this reason, we call for the County to fund up to 10 full-time positions from either reassignment of existing staff or creation of new positions within the Department of Housing and Community Development. Placing these staff in direct alignment with homeless housing supply efforts will increase effectiveness and coordination of both housing and outreach efforts.

While not every person who experiences homelessness requires every service available, the County must do its part to ensure that services it provides are accessible, available and efficient to maximize their effect in reducing homelessness.

Support

The City of San Diego is working to create a regional intake center that would create a “no wrong door” opportunity for all homeless individuals and families in the region. Although the ultimate intake center may be a combination of physical address and virtually connected staff in the field, the vital role of such a system is clear. As a result, the County must take steps necessary to partner with the City of San Diego in all phases of this intake center to ensure that the County’s public health and social service role is properly executed in service of San Diegans.

STEP II – Coordinate Existing Resources

Key items

Homes	Leverage up to \$100 Million from existing reserves coupled with streamlined permitting and revised inclusion of standards for inclusion of county-owned property to support building microunits
Services	Repurpose County staff FTE to support implementation of Regional Plan
Volunteers	“VolunteerWell” RFP to build ‘no wrong door’ Mobile App for volunteers to coordinate all regional volunteer efforts

¹ Read details of this approach here: <https://www.thirdsectorcap.org/santa-clara-homelessness/>

Homes

The best research across the nation is clear, the most effective strategy for getting people off the street starts with providing housing and then, when necessary, providing services for things like substance abuse, mental illness, healthcare and job training. This *Housing First* model has been adopted by the federal government and is being implemented in San Diego County, but the high cost of land and limited space means that the model cannot address the problem over night. The County must be steadfast in its leadership, but also recognize that interim support is necessary.

At the same time that the County is leveraging its property within District Four to support modest homes or apartments for homeless persons, it must participate in immediate support for homes that serve as a bridge between the street and permanent placement. This “bridge” housing can take many forms and the County must invest its resources immediately and in significant measure to help move homeless persons off the street and improve sanitary conditions while the longer term *Housing First* model construction and apartment renovations move forward.

Services

The County is the primary provider of social services – both through direct service and by contract with community providers – in the San Diego region. With expertise ranging from public health to mental illness, substance abuse to workforce systems, the County is equipped with the broad tools necessary to understand what is needed for any individual and, critically, to facilitate coordination and eliminate duplication of services. Major County systems addressing issues faced among San Diego’s homeless individuals include:

- Full Services Partnerships (e.g. Project One-for-All)
- Psychiatric Emergency Response Teams (PERT)
- Family rapid re-housing
- Whole Person Care

The process of coordinating these and other services is not always simple nor straightforward, but the County is not working in isolation. The Regional Taskforce on the Homeless (Continuum of Care) is a body charged by the federal government’s Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Department to bring together various essential public and private entities, make data-driven decisions, and support the implementation of a specific plan to efficiently provide necessary services.

Volunteers

Capitalizing on the existing talent and energy of volunteers will round out the effort. Creating a portal for people to link up to a meaningful volunteer opportunity that will be focused on moving people off the street versus just managing their homelessness. San Diego County is home to hundreds of efforts to support increased dignity and quality of life for homeless persons. These efforts range from providing meals and temporary relief through tents and sleeping bags to more formalized approaches through houses of worship, civic organizations or simply earnest people wanting to help.

Harnessing the good will and compassion of our community is essential to ensure the right type of services

STEP III – Implement existing Regional Plan

Key items

- Staffing levels** Increase in dedicated staff necessary to fully implement the plan
- Memoranda of Agreement** All participant entities must sign a Memorandum of Agreement to remove identified barriers to implementation and hold their staff accountable

In the past year, San Diego has created a plan modeled on all of the best research and successes around the nation. We need leadership to accelerate plan implementation, not to slow it down. The plan brings many homeless services and government entities across the county together around the common vision and goal of dramatically reducing homelessness. We must fully support the plan and encourage others to take the journey with us.

Additional funding will only help us reach our goals if the existing system is well-situated to serve more people efficiently and effectively.

STEP IV – Build and renovate modest homes

Key items

- Acquire Property
- Remove process barriers
- Expand market value definition

The plain truth is no matter how many services there are nor how well-coordinated we make them, if people do not have homes the problem won't get better. From motel acquisition and renovation to new construction on County-owned property, the County must partner with the City of San Diego, the San Diego Housing Commission and our private sector to move forward now on increasing the supply of homes for homeless persons.

Both the current emergency and the long-term planning require action and innovation now. The County's Housing and Community Development department must be given the flexibility to consider all innovative, unconventional and cost-effective options to bring this inventory online quickly.

In addition to the above, we will lead on two key policy innovations that will aid the County in more quickly enabling the increase in production of modest homes.

Policy Change #1 – Expand definition of value for County property

First, under current Board of Supervisors policy, the definition of value that the County must seek in the sale of land it owns is overly narrow and does not take into consideration the value of the public good generated by the end use – in this case, homeless housing. Board policy F-51 must be modified to enable County property that will be used for homeless or very low income affordable homes (such as for seniors and others) to be sold at less than market value. There simply is no "market" for the public good of housing homeless and the current requirement stifles the County's ability to perform one of its core functions. Removing this market value requirement in the extreme circumstance the County faces will accelerate production.

CREATIVE COLLABORATION

How the County can partner in generating homes for homeless San Diegans

- A. Split Large Parcel so that affordable and market rate developers do preparation on separate timetables
- B. County RFQ to short list qualified developers for the affordable portion
- C. County carries: site acquisition, financing commitments, carrying costs, site prep through NTP on market rate side
- D. County policy shift to allow use of full land value in as County matching funds for subsidized portion
- E. Expedited processing for code compliant designs
- F. County/City defer Developer Impact Fees until close-out

This sample will lead to significant project savings, developers able to build both entry level and homeless/affordable housing stock, and immediately address shortage in the 4th Supervisor's District on land identified in the Roberts/Jacob plan

Policy change #2 – Removal of processing barriers

The County has the unique capability of tackling public health emergencies with swift, bold solutions that protect the public. One such capability is to suspend all non-environmental project processing barriers to accelerate production of homes for homeless San Diegans. In this instance, the policy change would involve two parts. First, the County already utilizes an RFQ/RFP process to get a shortlist of qualified builders for its projects. Applying this model to homeless housing construction will give every contractor the opportunity to get on this shortlist, but then streamline all subsequent contract processes to get projects moving. Second, the process of applying the many layers of oversight, advisory group and land use review currently applicable adds months or years to project timelines. Providing certainty to these projects will enable better pricing, clearer timelines and faster production of modest, quality homes.

STEP V – Analyze the data we collect

Using data responsibly is essential to driving sustained change. For example, our best data indicates that between 71 and 77% of our region's homeless lived in a home in the San Diego region before they were homeless – NOT from other parts of the country. While it is true that many people move from other parts of the country to San Diego for many reasons, we must not let this stand in the way of good decision making. Our actions must be both humane and driven by what we measure.

One way to ensure timely collection of data is to include funding for staff to enter and report it and then require that any homeless service provider submit the data as a condition of receiving funds.

This is not a new approach and is indeed currently being done in many circumstances across the San Diego region. Often, however, data timelines come with unfunded mandates on the scope and nature of collection. To get the data necessary to drive decisions, we need to treat collection and reporting of data with the same level of urgency as the services being provided.

STEP VI – Scale mental health, addiction and job training service availability

Key Steps

- Support proposed Homeless Funding/Convention Center Visitor Tax
- Business partnership to put services in convenient locations

The current need outstrips the supply of quality services, even after coordinating, streamlining, and continuously analyzing the services being provided. It is necessary to be efficient, and the County has demonstrated a long-term ability for fiscal care. Now it must utilize that same fiscal discipline on a larger pool of resources to achieve a core part of its reason for being – to protect the public's health. We must not merely respond to the crisis of the day. The County must shift its approach to a far greater attention on the root causes of homelessness so that we have a long term decrease in people accessing homeless services and experiencing homelessness. Our *StrongStarts4All* youth plan targets root causes by providing expectant parents with critical home visits and parenting training and with high quality, early child care and development, among other supports. Our *Hope4Homeless* strategy picks up that prevention orientation by addressing mental health, drug addiction and economic opportunity.

Consideration of Tax Revenue

Any tax alone will be insufficient to make a meaningful dent in our homeless crisis. This is precisely why most of our *Hope4Homeless* plan focuses not on raising taxes but on fixing the system and on root causes rather than symptoms. However, we must lay to rest the falsehood that additional resources are not needed and we must challenge ourselves to stop demanding that every efficiency measure be fully completed before considering additional revenue. This thinking creates a catch 22 in which we lack the resources to staff data analysts, outreach and process improvement all the while asserting that these are the things most needed before we will consent to additional revenue.

SPECIAL FOCUS – Housing our homeless and opportunity youth

This overlooked part of the San Diego system will receive long overdue enhancements. Housing our homeless youth is not only right for them, it is a key prevention step to reduce long-term chronic homelessness and improve our economy. The needs of our youth are unique and varied and we must be thoughtful about our efforts in this area. Specific, youth-focused strategies are identified both to draw youth in to the system of services that exist and to support them in developing the skills necessary to become full participants in society again.

A. **Embracing Youth** : Key Elements

- **Expanded “Drop-in” Centers.**
Homeless youth are not merely younger versions of the chronically homeless adult population. Drop-in Centers with specific access to shower and laundry options provide low-to-no barrier to entry for basic services without the fear of being harmed by yet another adult charged with their care. The San Diego region currently has several such centers, however the need outstrips the supply and more work must be done to adequately staff such facilities.



*Homeless youth face unique risks
and must receive specific focus*

- **Behavioral/Emotional Direct Support.**
Homeless youth experience significant and in some cases prolonged trauma. Targeted resources for support at Drop-in Centers will foster greater personal control. Although our *StrongStarts4All* plan specifically calls for expanded mental health services through the county library system, this element of *Hope4Homeless* recognizes that homeless youth are often less willing to engage traditional systems that may be appropriate for youth with permanent homes.

B. **Supporting Youth**: Key Elements

The elements above are designed to embrace youth and bring them back into the service network. The transition back into being able to fully participate in society requires an additional baseline level of support. The elements that follow below exist to varying degrees currently, the challenge is generally one of scale and/or access.

- **Customized Diploma/GED Support.**
The modern world does not have a financially stable place for someone without a high school diploma. The County must pair its mental health and social support services with Community College District flexible diploma completion opportunities. This can and should include expanded support and coordination with the County Office of Education Juvenile Court and Community Schools.
- **Subsidized Transportation.**
As noted in our *StrongStarts4All* plan, transportation is a major barrier to getting education, training and keeping employment. Fully sponsored public transportation until age 21 removes a key barrier.
- **Financial Literacy Partnership.**
Working with community partners and the private sector financial community, the County must use its convening power to bring critical — and widely available — financial literacy resources to bear so that homeless youth can manage the transition to adulthood. This is necessary in the long-term, but also specifically important to the final element of this youth framework.

- **Paid Work Experience.**

The County must leverage existing private sector opportunities such as the *100,000 jobs* initiative and its own resources to provide an economic bridge while homeless youth stabilize. Providing the financial tools necessary to manage one's money is crucial so that as each youth transitions from paid work experience to participation in full employment he or she has developed the skills to use those resources wisely.

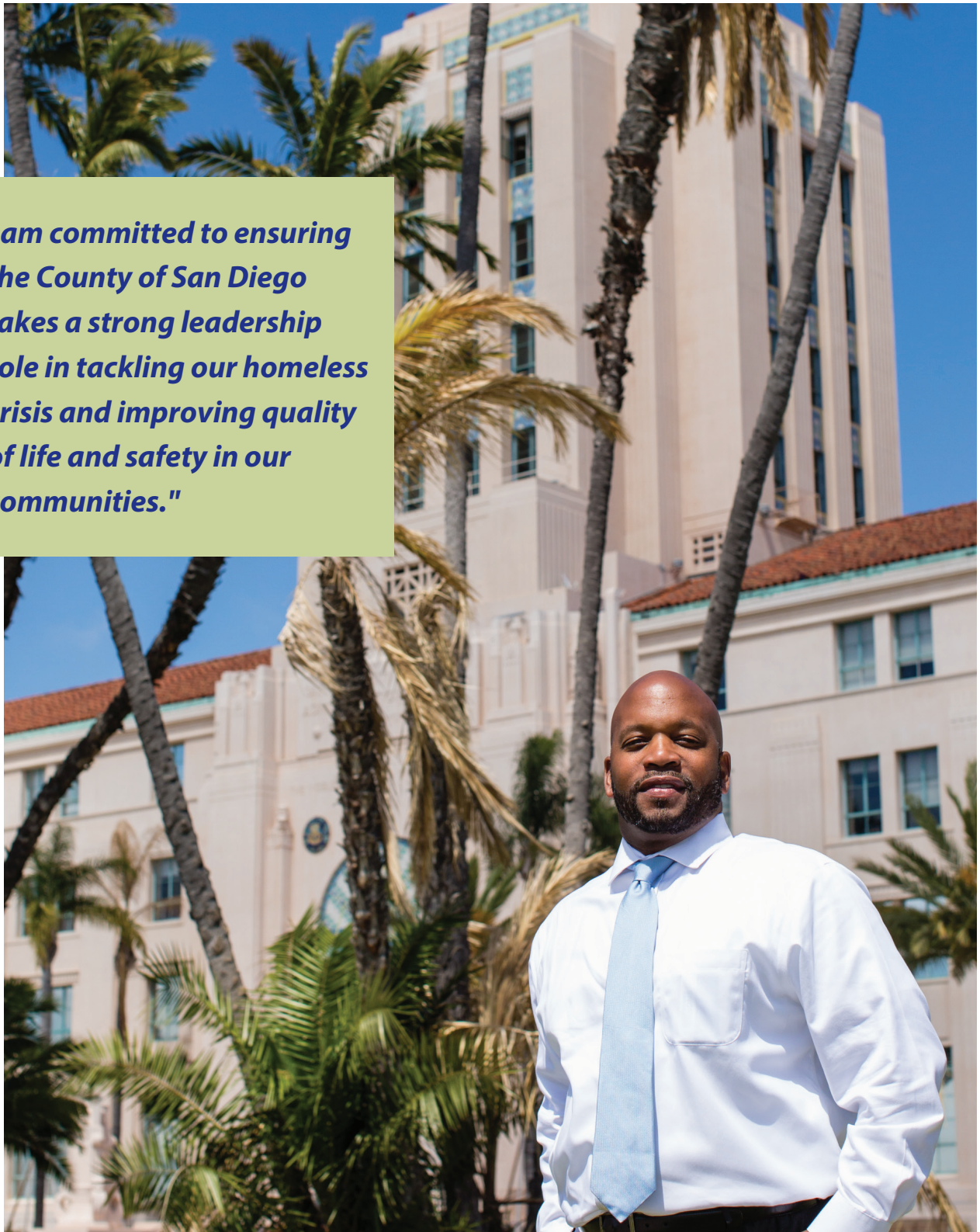
This youth-centric framework recognizes that there are differences between the needs of adults and youth and calls to put in place structures that will honor those differences. Creating a framework within the greater structure of homeless work will also enable the County to better align its broader systems of support and protection. For example, San Diego youth who become homeless may come from homes in which families are receiving County services related to incarcerated parents, child welfare, nutrition or cash assistance before becoming homeless. Better coordination of these systems may create further efficiencies so that when a homeless youth is identified these other prior interactions with County services can provide better context for supporting a youth's transition back into society.

What's Next?

The Regional Taskforce on the Homeless will release its second report in mid-2018. This report will provide greater operational detail on implementing a host of key findings. There has not been explicit incorporation of either Pay for Success models or youth-specific homeless intervention planning in the materials produced to date. As a result, it is anticipated that the County's likely role will be in championing the work put forward by the Regional Taskforce but also in providing leadership and resources – both human and financial – to overcome the crisis situation in our region's homeless. Again, of critical importance, the County must fundamentally change how it supports young people from the earliest ages to make any meaningful, long-term strides on the root causes that led us to a homeless crisis.

The combined efforts of stakeholders, a committed political leadership, the philanthropic and business communities and the citizens of the San Diego region will be necessary to counter a long-standing issue that has not received sufficient attention.

"I am committed to ensuring the County of San Diego takes a strong leadership role in tackling our homeless crisis and improving quality of life and safety in our communities."



OMAR PASSONS
FOR SAN DIEGO COUNTY SUPERVISOR

Stay in touch! Text Omar4SD to 50500