

## **2019 STATE OF THE CITY**

January 15, 2019

Thank you and good evening.

I want to start by thanking Jamie, Paialani, Linda, Tootie, and Officer Leiber for sharing your stories with us.

You represent the best of San Diego. Thank you.

I'd like to welcome our neighbors from throughout San Diego as well as our region's elected officials, military leaders and our friends from Baja California.

Juntos trabajamos para mejorar nuestra región y somos un ejemplo para el resto del mundo. Gracias.

I want to thank my wife, Katherine, and our children, Jack and Lauren, for their continued support – and for being here tonight.

I'd also like to take a moment to recognize our City employees, many of whom are here tonight.

From collecting trash to protecting our neighborhoods to filling potholes, you work every day to serve all of us.

You don't always get the credit you deserve. You keep our city running.

Thank you.

2019 is an important year for San Diego.

We are about to reach a tremendous milestone in our city's history:

This year we mark San Diego's 250th anniversary.

We grew into the vibrant city we are today with ideas that were big, bold and groundbreaking.

It's that same spirit we need to tap into at this moment – to take advantage of new opportunities and meet 21st century challenges.

A housing crisis we must tackle.

Communities we must lift up.

An environment we must protect.

Tonight, I will focus on these key issues. They will define this year, and help shape our next 250.

Now more than ever, it's important that we work together as one city. Just look at Washington, D.C., to see the alternative.

Federal leaders are abandoning their responsibilities – and have literally shut down the U.S. government – because they can't find common ground.

These political games are affecting real people.

Look no further than the migrant families that federal immigration agents are dropping off on San Diego's street corners with nothing more than the clothes on their backs.

For months, my administration has been working with nonprofits and our partners at the County and State to provide shelter and prevent this humanitarian crisis from becoming a San Diego crisis.

San Diegans have big hearts, and is reflected in how we are addressing this situation.

But it's time for the federal government to do its job.

Our national landscape has become one that seeks to divide us – by political party, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation – and define us by who we vote for, where we were born, or what language we speak.

I reject this notion.

Striving for equality, celebrating our diversity, and being proud of what makes us unique is what San Diego is all about.

But let us never allow our differences to blind us to the common humanity we all share.

We cannot achieve the goal of inclusion using the tools of division.

As your mayor, I'm working to create a city that works for all of us.

One that improves the lives of all residents in all neighborhoods. One where it doesn't matter if you're a Republican, Democrat or independent – because we're all San Diegans.

San Diego, we are stronger than the national political division.

We are smarter than the partisan rhetoric.

And we are better together than we are apart.

The state of our city is strong and united, we will make it even stronger!

We need a united front to tackle the housing crisis – the No. 1 challenge facing us today.

You can see the urgency in the faces of people struggling on our streets.

Homelessness is not merely an issue in California. It is the issue.

If we want different results in San Diego, we must continue to break away from the old ways of doing things.

Some say they support more homeless services. They just want them somewhere else.

Some claim they want to support new solutions then throw up roadblocks to stop progress.

Some say we need to study the problem further, which just kicks the can down the road.

I am not going to tell a veteran sleeping in a park, or a family living out of their car, that they should wait for the government to do another study while they spend another night in the cold!

Moving people into a home is the ultimate goal, yet for too long City Hall made a mistake by acting like it is the only solution and waited for more housing to be built before taking action to help people off the street.

Last year I said I was done looking for universal consensus – and that we would not be waiting any longer.

Now we are taking on homelessness with a new resolve.

Our approach is housing first – but not housing only.

We implemented the “Connect, Support, House” strategy. And lives have been changed as a result.

Hundreds of homeless San Diegans looking for a job, attending school, going to treatment clinics or living in their car have been helped thanks to our new storage center and safe parking programs.

More than 2,000 have been connected to an apartment through our landlord engagement and assistance program.

And hundreds more men, women, children and veterans have been helped off the streets and placed in a safe and sanitary environment thanks to our bridge shelters.

In fact, the bridge shelters have helped more than 500 people transition into long-term housing.

516 people to be exact.

It may sound like just a number. We often talk about homelessness in terms of statistics.

But to me, that’s 516 unique stories.

516 real people, real lives – that we have all made better because of our actions.

Some may say, “That’s not enough.” The individuals who now have a home would disagree.

That’s what drives me to keep pushing for new solutions to not let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

Our city cannot, and as long as I'm mayor will not, stand by while our citizens are suffering on our streets.

We're not waiting to help people. And others are taking notice.

Official delegations from Los Angeles, Sacramento, Vancouver, and many other cities are visiting San Diego to see what we're accomplishing.

Many now use San Diego as a model because they realize what we've already learned: Safe parking programs, storage centers and bridge shelters are lifelines that homeless individuals need to reconnect to a better tomorrow.

Our message has made it all the way to the State Capitol.

The governor's new budget, released last week, smartly includes major statewide funding for programs San Diego has spearheaded over the last year – like temporary shelters and housing navigation centers.

I also joined with mayors across California to call for more help from the state.

We worked together with legislators to budget \$500 million for cities struggling with homelessness.

The state of California is quickly becoming one of our strongest partners on homelessness – and I'd like to thank the governor and state legislature for their strong support.

This year we will open San Diego's new housing navigation center, centralizing homeless services under one roof to connect folks to a permanent home.

We will deploy more outreach workers into neighborhoods outside of downtown to help people come in off the streets and accept supportive services.

And we will move even more people into permanent living conditions by hiring new housing experts at the bridge shelters.

I understand some San Diegans may fear homeless programs and affordable housing coming to their community.

But we can't let fear control our actions.

Saying "not in my backyard" is saying "yes" to homelessness in our canyons, our parks and on our streets.

The choice is simple: We either help folks find a place to sleep inside or we condemn them to sleeping outside.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must say "yes!" to doing what's right.

"Yes!" to new services to reduce homelessness throughout our city.

"Yes!" to keeping the bridge shelters open so people have a safe and clean place to sleep at night.

And "yes!" to affordable housing in every single City Council district.

San Diego, we need to say, "Yes!"

If our region wants lasting change on homelessness we must tackle the problem at its core: the mental health crisis and our acute housing shortage.

Unfortunately, many in our homeless community suffer from severe mental illness.

In fact, one out of three people staying in the bridge shelters self-identify as having challenges with mental health.

And the problem could get much worse: Last year, we lost dozens of hospital beds dedicated to serving those individuals in San Diego County.

And we're at risk of losing even more, further straining our emergency response system.

First responders do everything they can to help.

But police officers and firefighters are not doctors. They're not psychiatric experts. And they're not trained mental health professionals. Relying on them to be the safety net for people suffering from mental illness is the wrong approach.

Our county government is tasked with maintaining the region's health and welfare. We need its help to get things back on track

The city is taking a new approach. The state is stepping up. Now it is time for the county to do the same.

We need more hospital beds with psychiatric services.

We need more specialists in the field helping people who are suffering.

We need more long-term housing that includes mental health services.

It's time for the County of San Diego to step up and lead the way in addressing our mental health crisis!

San Diego lost its biggest funding source for affordable housing when Sacramento took away California's redevelopment program seven years ago.



It's one reason I'm so passionate about the citizens' initiative to create San Diego's first dedicated revenue stream for housing, homeless solutions and other city priorities.

I am excited that the initiative to provide billions to reduce homelessness as well as repair our roads and modernize and expand the San Diego Convention Center is finally, without question, headed to a public vote!

The coalition of supporters continues to expand.

Homeless advocates, public safety, Democrats, Republicans, business groups, labor groups – they're all on board because they agree how important this is for San Diego.

The homeless crisis makes the need for a vote more urgent than ever.

Without this funding, we'll have to keep using millions from our day-to-day budget for homelessness, making less money available for libraries, public safety and other important neighborhood services.

That's why I will work with the City Council and the citizens proposing it to show San Diegans that there is no doubt that the best way to address these civic problems is by entering the voting booth and voting yes.

Until then, there are steps we can take right now to build the housing we need.

We need to think about homes how we think about water and streets: These aren't "nice-to-haves." They are essentials.

Federal funding helped open more than 4,000 affordable housing units in our city in the last five years.

And it's barely made a dent. We still need 35,000 more units to house low-income San Diegans.

It shows government can't build its way out of this crisis.

We need to get government out of the way, so constructing homes becomes easier, less expensive and faster.

We've said "no" to new housing for far too long.

I've made it a priority to reverse this trend through my "Housing SD" plan.

We sped up the permitting process.

We incentivized developers to construct more affordable homes.

We made it easier to build new types of housing like micro units and granny flats.

And we added capacity almost 40,000 new homes in communities throughout the city – giving property owners the right to build without going through an onerous approval process.

These changes have made an impact. Take the Grantville community, where nearly 1,000 new units are under construction or have opened since 2015.

Since I took office, the number of housing permits issued annually has nearly tripled.

The bottom line is that we have significantly streamlined San Diego's development system.

Now, I want to radically overhaul the system itself.

The bureaucracy has been set up to empower anti-housing forces that delay or deny projects at every turn.

Delays come in many forms – frivolous lawsuits, NIMBY opposition, lack of political will.

We need to build more housing near employment centers and transit.

So I'm pleased to announce the next phase of "Housing SD" to remove the anti-housing bias that kills development before it even starts.

For example, height limits outside the coastal zone put a cap on housing – this year I'll propose the Council remove them.

Outdated parking requirements make homes more expensive – this year I'll call on the Council to eliminate them.

Projects intended to house the homeless are subject to countless hearings and appeals – this year I will introduce legislation to allow developers to build without any unnecessary review.

And I will deliver a plan to the Council to authorize unlimited density for developments that include affordable housing and housing for the homeless – the most generous incentive in the state.

Ladies and gentlemen, obstructionists must never again be able to halt the housing that San Diego needs!

These changes represent a complete rethinking about how we deal with housing.

We must change from a city that shouts, “Not in My Backyard,” to one that proclaims: “Yes In My Backyard!”

From a city of NIMBYs to a city of YIMBYs!

Together, we’re going to transform San Diego into a YIMBY city!

The next topic I want to talk about tonight is the state of our neighborhoods.

Making sure our communities receive the attention they deserve is why I ran for office. I know it’s why many of my City Council colleagues ran as well.

I couldn’t stand by any longer and watch as City Hall kept making short-sighted decisions that led to long-term problems.

Our city favored McMansions over smart urban growth; lived with policies that prioritized neighborhoods north of the 8 over those south of it; and chose Cadillac pensions over paving our roads.

The past deliberate underfunding of our pension system continues to cost taxpayers to this day – \$100 million each and every year that should go to neighborhood services.

We still feel this pain in the annual budget. \$100 million could run San Diego’s regional parks and library system for an entire year.

Righting wrongs like that is what energizes me to keep fighting for our communities and for our families.

That’s why five years ago I put my One San Diego platform into action.

And we’ve followed it up with record neighborhood investments.

We're building parks, fire stations, rec centers and libraries at a pace San Diego has never seen.

In the spring, I will join seniors in Southeastern San Diego to break ground on the long-awaited Bay Terraces Community Center.

Next week I will help open the doors of the new Mission Hills/Hillcrest Library.

And this summer we'll unveil the new San Ysidro Library.

Marking the first time San Diego has ever opened two libraries in a single year.

I never forget, though, that everything begins and ends with ensuring San Diego is a safe city.

We received some great news in September when San Diego was named the safest big city in America.

It's an achievement earned with the hard work and sacrifice of every San Diego police officer.

And San Diego thanks you.

SDPD has long struggled to stem the tide of officers and recruits leaving for other agencies – something that threatened our ability to protect the public.

That's why I fought for, and the City Council approved, the most competitive police contract in city history.

Now I'm happy to say that officers are returning, and our police academies are some of the largest in a decade.

Yet as dedicated as our officers are, they can't do the job alone.

Building trust between the community and police department is crucial.

It makes the department stronger and our neighborhoods safer.

When residents feel like they can talk to the police, officers can stop crime before it starts.

I recently hired two community leaders as advisors to help make the relationship even stronger: One to lead the City's Gang Commission, and the second in a brand-new position completely dedicated to improving police-community relations.

And this year I look forward to working with the new City Council to make sure our police department is working with our neighborhoods and for everyone in our city.

One San Diego means every part of our city is a place residents are proud to call home.

That can be hard if there is trash piling up on streets, in alleyways and at local parks.

For years, the city ignored this growing problem. So I did something about it.

The "Clean SD" initiative is an aggressive campaign to remove public eyesores and clean up our communities.

Now, streets and sidewalks are regularly washed and sanitized.

City crews have removed more than twenty-seven hundred tons of trash citywide. That's enough to fill up your curbside trash bin 40,000 times.

And, in conjunction with our homeless service providers and the San Diego River Park Foundation, encampments along the San Diego River have been reduced by 70 percent.

It's a great start. And I've heard from San Diegans that want to see even more.

So, in my upcoming budget, I'll renew my commitment to clean up our city and protect our natural environment.

You will see more crews removing garbage and graffiti. More community cleanups. And even faster responses when you use the Get It Done app.

This is our city.

So we're saying "yes!" to clean parks.

"Yes!" to clean sidewalks.

And "yes!" to a Clean SD!

Nothing affects the quality of life in our neighborhoods more than the condition of our infrastructure and roads.

And let me tell you, people aren't shy about telling me what needs to be fixed.

I remember those conversations when I develop the budget each spring.

This year we passed the largest capital budget in San Diego history – over half a billion dollars for our neighborhoods.

In fact, we have more than tripled infrastructure funding since I took office.

Four years ago, I stood before you and made a pledge to make road repair the City's highest infrastructure priority.

And fix 1,000 miles of streets within five years – something never accomplished before.

I am pleased to say that our hardworking crews rose to the challenge: Last October – nearly two years ahead of schedule – we passed our 1,000-mile goal!

And we're just getting started.

At our current pace, by the time I leave office, we will have repaired nearly half of San Diego's entire street network!

For the past two decades, one of the biggest civic debates has been about how best to redevelop the Mission Valley stadium site.

Two months ago, voters gave us a final answer.

Before us is a golden opportunity to turn the city's most underutilized piece of real estate into something special that will benefit the entire San Diego region.

A chance to expand educational opportunities in our region, teach the students who will fuel our economic growth, build housing for those in need, and create San Diego's next great public space with a world-class river park.

All this is possible with the expansion to Mission Valley of one of our most cherished institutions – San Diego State University.

We are negotiating an agreement with SDSU that respects taxpayers, fulfills the will of the voters and transform a dilapidated parking lot into San Diego's next crown jewel!



I believe our city is at its best when we all have a chance to achieve the American Dream. It's what One San Diego is all about.

So we've taken steps to bolster access to quality education and employment opportunities.

At our libraries, we're providing after-school tutoring, lab space, and programs to earn college-level credits and online degrees.

We've also advanced efforts to hire employees and contractors that reflect the diversity of our community.

This year I want to challenge ourselves to do even more.

I will commission a citywide review to determine if the companies that do business with the city reflect the people we serve.

Women-owned businesses. Minority-owned businesses. Every qualified business should have equal opportunity to bid and win a City contract.

This disparity study will show us where to focus our efforts.

So when we're done the businesses serving our city will be as diverse as the people in our communities!

The final issue I want to discuss tonight is our environment.

Climate change is real. We see it in the wildfires that ravage our state with new frightening intensity.

While San Diego was spared last year, San Diego firefighters still answered the call of duty, responding to the Camp Fire that devastated communities like Paradise in Northern California.

Please join me in thanking our Urban Search and Rescue team and all of our San Diego firefighters.

San Diegans are committed to combating climate change locally.

And the most effective way to slash harmful greenhouse gas emissions is by reducing the number of tailpipes on the road.

That's why I've pushed for projects that make it easier and safer to get around without a car like bringing the Downtown Mobility Plan to life.

And as we speak, crews are installing dedicated lanes so bicyclists can safely navigate city streets without fear!

You shouldn't have to take your life into your own hands when you cross the street.

Seniors, students and pedestrians should be able to use a crosswalk without having to dodge oncoming traffic.

So tonight, I'm pleased to say that improvements to the last of the city's fifteen most accident-prone intersections will be completed later this week.

And we have a lot more to do. So this year we'll begin work on nearly 300 more safe intersection projects throughout the city!

Something that affects all of us is our water supply. The City of San Diego and County Water Authority agree – we must use more local resources.

This spring we will break ground on the largest water recycling program in California.

The Pure Water initiative will deliver a safe, reliable and sustainable source of water for all San Diegans for generations to come making it the single biggest sustainability project in city history.

California leads the country on environmental protection – and San Diego leads California.

San Diego is now on the path to achieve 100 percent renewable energy by 2035 – 10 years before the state.

And I've decided that the best way to make us the greenest city in the nation is to give San Diegans a new choice on where they get their power – community choice energy!

For decades San Diegans have only had one option on where they get their electricity.

Community choice will change that by injecting healthy competition into the marketplace, allowing customers to benefit from lower energy costs, and pick greener energy sources to power their home or business.

And we're bringing the region along with us.

Next month I will ask the City Council to say "yes" to community choice with a resolution to create a joint-powers entity, separate from the City, to supply renewable power.

Then we will invite the County and other cities to join us – so we can provide the same choice to customers throughout the entire region!

People said this couldn't be done in San Diego.

But when we say "yes," we open new doors to what is possible.

So before we conclude there is one more thing.

San Diego International Airport connects our region to the world. But our region, in a major way, is disconnected from our airport.

The trolley stops frustratingly short of Lindbergh Field.

You can wave at the airport as you pass by on the trolley – and that's about it.

Ladies and gentlemen, we can do better. And with the redevelopment of Terminal 1 on the horizon, now is the time to fix it.

I've assembled our region's top leaders to do more than talk about it and – for the first time – draw up concrete plans to make it happen by designing and securing funding for this transformational economic development opportunity that will connect commerce, transportation networks and our entire region.

We will build what the world's major cities already have, and what America's Finest City deserves – a state-of-the-art transportation hub that will finally connect the trolley to the airport!

Working as one city, we can accomplish anything.

In our 250th year, we will build on the foundation that made San Diego what it is today.

We have a thriving tourism economy that welcomes millions of people each year. Now we must welcome even more housing and homeless solutions.

We take great pride in being a melting pot of diversity. Now we must take new steps to ensure every neighborhood gets its fair share!

We treasure our beaches, bays and healthy environment. Now we must lead the climate action revolution to protect them!

As one city, we can get these things done!

All it takes is for all of us, in one clear voice, to stand up and say: "YES!"

Thank you and good night.