



# County of San Diego

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March 9, 2023

**TO:** Supervisor Nora Vargas, Chairwoman  
Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer, Vice-Chair  
Supervisor Joel Anderson  
Supervisor Nathan Fletcher  
Supervisor Jim Desmond

**FROM:** Nick Macchione, Agency Director  
Health and Human Services Agency

## **UPDATE ON ENHANCEMENT PREPARATIONS FOR THE ARRIVAL OF MIGRANTS AND THE LIFTING OF TITLE 42 RESTRICTIONS**

The County of San Diego (County) is a thriving binational, multicultural region, and home to the San Ysidro Port of Entry, the largest land border crossing in the western hemisphere. Over the past five years, the U.S.-Mexico border has seen an increase in asylum seekers due to humanitarian crises around the globe. Federal law allows people from other countries to seek asylum in the U.S. if they fear persecution at home. To do so, they must be present in the U.S. and prove fear of persecution on one of five grounds: race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social class. However, in March 2020, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention put into effect Title 42, a law that prevented those seeking asylum from entering the U.S. Title 42 is a mitigation effort meant to control the spread of COVID-19. As a result of Title 42, the U.S. drastically decreased the processing of asylum seekers who arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border asking for humanitarian protection.

On February 7, 2023 (18), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to accomplish a variety of activities in preparation for the arrival of migrants upon the lifting of Title 42 restrictions and to report back to the Board on those activities listed below:

1. Direct the CAO to develop a Comprehensive Preparedness Plan to identify actions that can be taken to ensure asylum seekers entering the U.S. will not add to the region's current homeless crisis. This plan should include convening with local jurisdictions, state and federal governments and NGOs as well as assessing the cost of sustaining capacity and continuing of operations laid out in this plan, among other activities.
2. Direct the CAO to report back to the Board in 30 days, identifying short-term actions that can be taken to ensure current asylum seekers released on the street by the federal government do not exacerbate the current homeless population in our region, while upholding our County's values and protecting public health, and provide regular updates to stakeholders.

3. Direct the CAO to continue to work with regional organizations involved in resettlement and respite shelter activities by jointly advocating for federal funding and resources, including application for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) included in the Fiscal Year 2023 Omnibus Appropriations Bill that will supplement and add regional capacity, not replace existing NGO capacity.
4. Direct the CAO to send a letter to San Diego County's Congressional delegation urging them to prioritize comprehensive immigration reform during the current legislative session, advocate for continued funding and investments, and include a request to prohibit the practice of lateral transfers into San Diego.

***Develop a Comprehensive Preparedness Plan***

The County's Health and Human Services Agency (HHS), Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (HSEC-OIRA) scheduled an initial meeting on March 28, 2023, with local jurisdictions, State and federal government representatives, and non-governmental agencies (NGOs) to discuss two major priorities (1) the need to increase greater migrant shelter capacity and (2) understand current coordination efforts among local stakeholders to ensure organizations assisting asylum seekers, dropped off at various locations throughout the region, are equipped to provide resources and help them reach their destination. In collaboration with these partners, HSEC-OIRA will continue meeting with these stakeholders to develop a comprehensive and innovative regionwide plan to address short-term and long-term migrant-related humanitarian needs, including identifying clear lines of responsibility and partnership, cross-sector and system support, explore ways to increase NGO-led sheltering infrastructure, and work with faith-based organizations and other non-profits looking for emerging shelter locations to see where we can scale as needed.

In preparation for this convening, the County's Department of General Services (DGS) provided a comprehensive list of available unused and underused County properties (Attachment A) that may be utilized to scale shelter infrastructure. This list includes the cost associated with equipping each property for short-term or long-term shelter as well as total capacity (e.g., square footage and beds).

Furthermore, an estimated cost proposal for utilizing a hotel for shelter was prepared, and includes monthly costs of \$5,792,925 to procure shelter, food, staff, essential services, equipment, and supplies for approximately 4,469 individuals. In addition, to a one-time site preparation cost between \$300- \$500K to address security and privacy measures for the shelter (Attachment B) depending on the site. This cost estimate assumes that a leased hotel would be utilized, and actual operating costs would be dependent on the location and other services being provided by other governmental agencies.

***Efforts and Strategies***

Due to the recent delay in the proposed lifting of Title 42, the County has been able to activate a variety of strategies to ensure that current asylum seekers released do not become homeless. Below is a list of some of those efforts:

Previously Established Efforts	Ongoing Efforts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established an Incident Command for contingency planning, such as exploring sheltering options to support federal, State, NGOs, and asylum seeker efforts.</li> <li>• Assisted the State Incident Management Team in identifying an additional shelter and partner organization to support operations.</li> <li>• Leveraged County HHSA, Public Health Services staff to support State and NGOs with health screenings, testing, and vaccination services.</li> <li>• Developed a proposal to establish a County-facilitated shelter, thereby expanding temporary lodging capacity.</li> <li>• HSEC-OIRA established a Welcome Center at the South Region Live Well Center located in National City to serve as a central hub in facilitating access to existing programs and services for all regardless of immigration status.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively communicate and collaborate with NGOs, local jurisdictions, State and federal agencies, via a network notification system, to halt potential release of individuals in U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody to various locations throughout the region, discuss migrant-related humanitarian needs and leverage resources.</li> <li>• Hiring Community Health Workers to serve as liaisons with the community in providing support and linking asylees to programs and services.</li> <li>• Hosting community listening sessions throughout the County and participating in various outreach events to learn about the trends and needs of immigrant and refugee communities for better coordination among County programs and resources.</li> <li>• HSEC-OIRA continues to plan future expansion of the Welcome Center model to East and North County.</li> <li>• Seeking funding opportunities to support immigrants and refugees that reside in San Diego County.</li> </ul>

***Update on Advocacy for Federal Funding and Resources***

HSEC-OIRA continues to work alongside regional organizations to actively identify and seek information regarding funding opportunities, provide bidding support, via letters of support, as well as coordinate closely on the actions necessary to ensure a successful arrival process for those seeking asylum.

Funding opportunities include the Fiscal Year 2023 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which provides funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) that will supplement and add regional capacity, not replace existing NGOs capacity. On March 1 and 3, 2023, FEMA and CBP hosted virtual stakeholder sessions, that HSEC staff attended, to gather feedback on program requirements for the new Shelter and Services Program (SSP), which will eventually replace the EFSP. Upon completion of the stakeholder sessions, FEMA and CBP plan to develop the SSP and present it again to stakeholders and gather feedback. That feedback will eventually lead to procurement of the SSP and upon release HSEC-OIRA will support, coordinate and/or collaborate with the regional organizations interested in bidding for this funding opportunity.

***Update on Letter sent to San Diego County's Congressional Delegation***

On February 7, 2023, Chairwoman Nora Vargas sent a letter on behalf of the County to San Diego County's congressional delegation urging them to prioritize comprehensive immigration reform during the current legislative session, advocate for continued funding and investments, and included a request to prohibit the practice of lateral transfers into San Diego County (Attachment C).

Although immigration policy remains the federal government's responsibility, as a welcoming community, the County continues to prepare for an increase in incoming individuals and families seeking asylum, who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, and connected to resources in a culturally competent manner. These actions are critical to the future of San Diego County and will help prevent additional homelessness in the region.

For any questions, please contact Barbara Jiménez, Community Operations Officer, Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities at (619) 338-2722 or [Barbara.Jimenez@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Barbara.Jimenez@sdcounty.ca.gov).

Respectfully,



NICK MACCHIONE, Agency Director  
Health and Human Services Agency

Attachment A – Potential Available Unused and Underused County Properties

Attachment B – Potential Budget for Shelter Using Hotel

Attachment C – Letter from Nora Vargas to San Diego County's Congressional Delegation

c: Helen N. Robbins-Meyer, Chief Administrative Officer