WHAT IS THE CBA?

The Community Budget Alliance (CBA) is a coalition of community, labor, and faith-based organizations united to ensure that San Diego’s budget equitably invests public dollars. By prioritizing communities and neighborhoods with the greatest need, the City of San Diego’s budget can meet the needs of all San Diegans while combatting systemic racism, discrimination, and income inequality. The budget should be created through collaboration between elected officials and community members. We envision a San Diego where budgets and the budget processes are transparent, accessible and give communities decision-making power to ensure government responsibility and accountability.

WHAT IS THE PEOPLE’S BUDGET?

The City continues to underfund communities that have been historically excluded and targeted by discriminatory policies. Each year, we see the same status quo budget. City elected officials increase the budget for the police department while community programs and services are either cut or remain stagnant.

The Community Budget Alliance fights to break this pattern by working within impacted communities to develop a People’s Budget outlining budget priorities that work for all of us. We focus our work on the five issue areas most important to the communities we represent: redefining public safety, housing and tenants’ rights, environmental justice, democratizing power, and worker justice. Our People’s Budget addresses the root causes of San Diego’s most pressing issues. We call on San Diego City officials to commit to an anti-racist budget that breaks the pattern of discrimination against people of color and exploitation of poor people.
REDEFINING PUBLIC SAFETY

DISMANTLE THE STREET GANG & GANG INTERVENTION UNITS

PROBLEM
San Diego’s “Gang Suppression Unit,” which was “disbanded” and reorganized into the “Special Operations Unit,” is infamous for its criminalization and brutalization of youth in marginalized communities. The unit often racially profiles individuals and incarcerates youth, not as a response to violence, but because of the communities youth reside in, and arbitrary characteristics such as the colors they are wearing. Once someone is added to the database and labeled a gang member it is used to justify further stops, questioning, harassment by police and sentence enhancements. Ninety percent of people in jail with gang enhancements in California are Black or Latino.

The City spends $16.8 million on the Special Operations and Street Gang Units.
Instead of spending millions on criminalizing youth of color, the City should invest in creating more opportunities in historically underfunded communities.

RECOMMENDATION
Dismantle the Street Gang and Gang Intervention units and reallocate the $16.8M towards community care such as the Youth Care & Development Program.

Cost Estimate: $16.8 Million
Problem

Youth incarceration negatively impacts development, family dynamics, education, and future socioeconomic status. In addition, youth placed in juvenile detention centers are much more likely to later spend significant time in prison than those who are offered alternative interventions—furthermore, both racism and classism shape how youth experience the juvenile policing system. For example, people of color receive harsher punishments than white people accused of the same offenses. Administrative fees can also lead to longer involvement and greater chances of incarceration for low-income youth.

The San Diego Community Justice Initiative (CJI) allows youth accused of low-level misdemeanors to have their cases dismissed by completing 16 hours of community service. The City Attorney’s Office has the discretion to offer the Community Justice Initiative to individuals charged with low-level misdemeanors. The offer is made during the first court appearance. If accepted, the defendant enters a guilty plea and is referred to a non-profit service provider -- either Alpha Project or Urban Corps of San Diego County -- to complete 16 hours of supervised community service within 60 days. The plea system often encourages people to admit guilt even when they are innocent to quickly complete their sentence or avoid hearings because they need to get back to paid work, schooling, provide childcare or meet other needs.

Additionally, participants must pay a $150 administrative fee. Administrative fees disproportionately burden youth from lower-income backgrounds. Many young people do not have the resources to pay the $150 fee, which can prolong their involvement with the system. Today, the fee is only waived for some people who cannot afford the fee. But many youth and families either do not know that they can request a fee waiver or do not know how to do it.
RECOMMENDATION

Eliminate the guilty plea requirement and the $150 administrative fee for the San Diego Community Justice Initiative for all youth, including transitional age youth between 18-25.

This policy would still leave us far from a transformative and restorative justice system that allows youth the opportunity to grow, reduces entry into the system and mitigates some of the underlying issues (i.e., substance abuse, homelessness, mental health, lack of basic needs at home, etc.). However, the policy would at least more fairly address youth accused of low-level misdemeanors.

Cost Estimate: Unknown

YOUTH CARE AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

PROBLEM

The youth experience often differs in the City of San Diego depending on what opportunities are available and accessible in their neighborhood, including education, after-school programs, youth development programs, and access to mental health resources. Youth also often experience violence in multiple ways: in the media, at home, in their community, or at school.

In addition, youth of color and youth living in certain neighborhoods are often racially profiled, criminalized and denied the ability to make mistakes. In order to prevent violence, young people need quality education, job opportunities, outlets for recreation, safe neighborhoods, supportive adults in their lives, and mental health resources.
Create robust community youth social and emotional development programs in eight neighborhoods located in San Diego: City Heights, Barrio Logan, Memorial, Mt. Hope, Oceanview, Lincoln Park, Encanto, and Skyline.

Each program should:
- Hire credible messengers from within the community to outreach and recruit youth.
- Offer evidence-based violence prevention programs such as Anger Replacement Therapy and other cognitive-behavioral programs.
- Provide opportunities for program participants to travel inside the U.S. and abroad to learn about shared struggles and successful violence intervention and prevention programs.
- Offer certified MFT counseling and mental health services.
- Provide positive youth development activities including boxing, martial arts, weightlifting, computer labs.
- Offer job training programs that lead to stackable, portable industry-recognized certifications.
- Manage a 24-hour crisis line to dispatch credible messengers to immediately work with families who are victims of violence to prevent the spread of violence during traumatic occurrences.
- Hire program case managers to work with the entire family, identifying needs within the home to strengthen and promote resiliency using trauma-informed care.
- Offer paid internships, job placement, union preparation, and assistance with long-term occupational goals for participating youth.

Creating these opportunities through trusted community partnerships, not police, will ensure all youth have access to opportunity and community care. A similar program exists in Seattle, WA.

Cost Estimate: $16,000,000 *Funding should be re-allocated from the Special Operations and Street Gang Units to create this program.
Housing Stability Fund

Problem

Rent is skyrocketing in San Diego County, with the median rent at $1,940 per month. In 2020, the number of new people experiencing homelessness doubled in San Diego County. Low-income renters are just one bad financial situation away from adding to this growing number. Emergencies, such as what we have experienced with the COVID-19 pandemic, are times tenants need financial assistance to make on-time rent payments. Furthermore, with the end of eviction moratoria, an increasing number of renters will be forced to leave their homes and find new housing. Unfortunately, moving comes with its own financial barrier - tenants often need 2-3 times rent to secure a lease. This financial barrier can be the difference between someone staying housed or entering homelessness.

Recommendation

Create a Housing Stability Fund distributed through community-based organizations (CBOs) that provides short-term rent relief grants, security deposit assistance to help individuals secure permanent housing, or assistance payments for individuals needing to transition into new housing due to eviction and/or their financial situation.

Ensure fund application is accessible with limited documentation requirements (see City Heights CDC rent relief application example or NLIHC Recommendations). Renters should be eligible for funding assistance once per year and receive assistance payments within two weeks of application submission. This fund will help renters experiencing financial hardship while also helping keep people housed. Similar programs exist in the County of San Diego, San Francisco, and Alameda County.

Cost Estimate: Ongoing allocation of $24,000,000 - an average one-time payment of $2,000 for 10,000 households in the City of San Diego with an additional 10% buffer for administration and 10% for tenant outreach. Ongoing fund allocation should account for a 5% inflationary rise every year, addressing Consumer Price Index changes.
Too many workers experience wage theft and other labor law violations. The City of San Diego’s own reports show high non-compliance of its minimum wage and living wage ordinances. Workers are afraid to come forward for fear of retaliation and a system based on worker complaints without proactive investigations means thousands of workers are left vulnerable to retaliation. Bad faith employers break the law because most workers do not know their rights. Furthermore, because it takes so long for the City to complete investigations and provide resolution, many people still do not get the money stolen from them.

Labor law enforcement has been massively underfunded. In 2012, workers in the US recovered $933 million in stolen wages, almost three times the amount of money stolen in robberies that year. Yet this does not represent the extent of wage theft, only wages recovered. In addition, a weak enforcement effort affects the regional economy by creating a system of unfair advantage that rewards law-breaking businesses instead of supporting responsible employers.
Office of Labor Standards Enforcement implementation should include community, worker, and labor union collaboration to ensure the office is set up to effectively and proactively enforce labor laws, supply public education, and provide high-quality public service.

A worker-centered Office of Labor Standards Enforcement (OLSE) is critical to effectively enforce labor violations and support policies to improve workers’ work conditions, economic security, household well-being, and community improvements. The City should allocate additional funding to ensure the office can adequately perform its intended functions and enforce the many labor laws in the City (Contractor Standards Ordinance, Equal Opportunity Contracting, Equal Pay Ordinance, Living Wage Ordinance, Equal Benefits Ordinance, Minimum Wage & Earned Sick Leave Ordinance, Prevailing Wage, and others).

- Allocate $240,000 for 2 additional FTE City staff lawyers (either in-house at OLSE or designated with the City Attorney’s Office) to assist workers with claims.
- Allocate $72,000 for 1 FTE Field Investigator modeled after the State Labor Commissioner’s Bureau of Field Enforcement (BOFE).
- Create a $1,000,000 City Worker Justice Fund to support workers with wage replacement, legal assistance, and other needs as they file claims with the office.
- Allocate $1,200,000 to partner with community organizations to provide outreach and education for hard to reach and vulnerable workers.
- Allocate $75,000 for 1 FTE Community Outreach Representative who will raise awareness and educate workers about the function of OLSE and how it can help them.

Cost Estimate: $2,587,000
WORKER JUSTICE

DIRECT CASH AID FOR EXCLUDED WORKERS

PROBLEM

Since March 2020, the Federal government has provided trillions in COVID relief to support those affected by the pandemic from job or income losses. California has also provided additional support.

However, undocumented immigrants, previously incarcerated individuals, and cash economy workers have been ineligible for most public assistance despite experiencing similar or worse impacts on income and job loss. In addition, undocumented workers are often overrepresented in fields that experienced massive layoffs due to the pandemic, including restaurant and hotel industries. At the same time, non-citizen workers are also more likely to be frontline workers.

RECOMMENDATION

Create an Excluded Workers Fund that provides $20,000,000 in direct cash assistance for workers excluded from state and federal programs, including undocumented immigrants, previously incarcerated people, cash economy workers, and their families. A similar program exists in New York and is expected to provide much-needed support to families and benefit the local economy.

Cost Estimate: $20,000,000 *Funding would cover payments of up to $2,500 to 8,000 workers
YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL RECREATION CORPS EXPANSION

PROBLEM
The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted young people, who are more likely than older Americans to lose their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the number of youth who are not in school or working rises sharply as youth leave high school and struggle to find work or enroll in/afford higher education. To address this, we must support young people with more opportunities during this transition.

RECOMMENDATION

Allocate $1,000,000 in ongoing funding to the Youth Environmental Recreation Corps Program.

One-time summer funding in FY22 provided multiple new opportunities for youth employment and leadership opportunities. These opportunities should be continued long-term and expanded to the following departments: Libraries, Environmental Services, Public Utilities, Stormwater, Planning, Transportation, General Services, and Sustainability. The funding should also be provided to community organizations to support youth, prioritizing opportunity youth and youth eligible for CalFRESH employment opportunities in parks and recreation.

Cost Estimate: $1,000,000 *Funding for the Youth Environmental/Recreation Corps program can come from state, federal, and private grant programs.
PROBLEM

The City of San Diego does not provide adequate translation support or community outreach for individuals who do not speak English. 13% or 96,559 of San Diegans over 18 do not speak English well or do not speak English at all. Because of our advocacy, the City Clerk’s office recently introduced a new program for individuals to call into City Council meetings and provide comments in 200 languages. This initiative is a significant first step. However, all the materials, including meeting agendas and summaries, are not available in other languages. Further, there is limited language access city-wide with little to no translation of City documents and limited language translation opportunities or outreach conducted in different languages for programs and events.

RECOMMENDATION

Create a city-wide language access program to ensure residents can access, understand, and engage in public decision-making in city council meetings, committee meetings, publications, city-wide programs, and community engagement efforts.

- Conduct a city-wide, district-by-district linguistic diversity study to guide City hiring practices and outreach efforts.

- Translate city agendas, public communications, and press releases into multiple languages and provide subtitles for City Council meetings on Webcast/City TV to improve access to government events, communications, and services.

- Hire youth ambassadors to disseminate information about youth programs, services, resources, and scholarships.

- Support an ongoing $50,000 allocation (approved in FY 2021) to Community Planning Groups to expand language access and community participation in San Diego

Cost Estimate: Unknown
PROBLEM
Youth have limited opportunities to have their voices heard and play an active role in the decision-making within their community. City officials make decisions that impact youth and the future generations without youth’s shared experiences, insight on issues, and potential solutions.

RECOMMENDATION
Create two youth seats on each City board and commission and provide stipends for youth serving on these boards.

Adding youth seats ensures that all youth have the ability and opportunity to use their voice to make a positive impact within our community. In addition, valuing young people’s experiences, voice, and passion for social change means compensating them for their work.

The City should add two youth seats to the following board and commissions: Arts and Culture, Bicycle Advisory Committee, Citizens Advisory Board on Police/Community Relations, Citizens Equal Opportunity Commission, Commission on Police Practices, Gang Prevention and Intervention Commission, Human Relations Commission, Horton Plaza Theatre Foundation, Library Commissioners Board, Mobility Board, Sustainable Energy Advisory Board, Parks and Recreation Board.

Cost Estimate: $80,000
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

PARKS AND GREENING EFFORTS IN LOW-OR MODERATE-INCOME (LMI) COMMUNITIES

PROBLEM

Low-income communities and communities of color have less access to parks and green space due to historical and systemic underinvestment. Parks provide physical and mental wellness to residents while also increasing community-building opportunities.

In addition, green space and the urban tree canopy bring environmental health benefits, making low-income neighborhoods less vulnerable to climate and health risks by lowering local temperatures, improving air quality, and mitigating flooding. Currently, low- and middle-income communities in San Diego have less than 10% tree canopy cover.

RECOMMENDATION

- Pursue state funding through the CA Natural Resources Agency and Prop 68 funds for green space expansion and park development, and funding for outdoor equity programming.

- Allocate $250,000 for the Chollas Creek Regional Park updated master plan.
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

RECOMMENDATION

- Proactively buy, plant, and maintain trees in coordination with the community to ensure the tree canopy is 35% of the total area in census tracts that have been identified as having very low or low access to opportunity as specified in the San Diego Climate Equity Index by 2035.

- Allocate $150,000 for program manager for trees in historically under-invested communities and additional funding for staff to do maintenance, pruning, trimming and mulching, and watering.

- Fund park land acquisition for Castana Street Park

- Allocate $357,000 for Beta Street Green Alley Park Watershed Improvements

- Fund the Chollas Lake stormwater upgrade

Ensuring communities have broad access to parks and green space is critical in fighting for environmental justice.

Cost Estimate: $757,000 plus additional funding for unknown costs (Castana St. Park, Chollas Stormwater Upgrade, tree planting and maintenance)

BUILDING ELECTRIFICATION EQUITY

PROBLEM

Buildings constitute at least 12% of California’s greenhouse gas emissions, and most buildings are constructed to rely on methane gas or a mix of gas and other energy sources. The City is moving towards addressing this with new building codes that will require new construction to be all-electric. This initiative is a positive step forward given that burning fossil fuels in the buildings that we live and work in causes numerous health and climate issues, particularly in low- and moderate-income communities that already face high levels of air pollution. However, the City does not yet have a comprehensive plan to phase out gas infrastructure in existing buildings or ensure that the electrification transition is equitable.
RECOMMENDATION

The City should develop and implement an equitable existing building electrification program. Building electrification is the process of transitioning to use electricity rather than fossil fuels for heaters, stoves, and other appliances. Electrification is one of the most effective ways to cut climate pollution, but the City must manage the process equitably.

Equitable solutions to address these issues require strong community engagement with low-and middle-income communities, historically underfunded communities, individuals living in subsidized affordable housing, and licensed family child care providers. Through this engagement process with individuals and community-based organizations, who should be paid to participate, the City should develop a program to upgrade existing buildings.

Updates should support increased energy efficiency & weatherization, including gas appliance upgrades to electric, infrastructure to support solar upgrades, increased energy storage capacity, and electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Additionally, the City should immediately implement incentives and rebates for electric equipment that does not currently have any incentives from SDG&E.

**Cost Estimate: $5,200,000** for an incentive/rebate program and an existing building upgrade program with $200,000 of the total set aside for stakeholder/community engagement.
PROBLEM

While the Climate Action Plan (CAP) is a big step forward in addressing climate change in the City of San Diego, the City has further to go in ensuring it integrates the plan across departments with a robust and well-designed implementation plan and accountability measures. The City also lacks the staff and direct funding support to take aggressive action on CAP implementation to provide relief for Environmental Justice communities most impacted by environmental harms and risks.

RECOMMENDATION

✔ Allocate $75,000 for an inter-departmental staff grant writer/grant implementation manager to retain climate equity investments in Environmental Justice Communities.

✔ Allocate $95,000 for a Transportation Justice Planner in the Transportation Department to plan and coordinate the transition to 100% zero-emission heavy-duty trucks, medium-duty trucks, and transit buses. This position should also coordinate public right-of-way street improvement projects in Environmental Justice Communities.

✔ Increase the Climate Equity Fund (CEF) to a total of $15 million in ongoing funding and include community-led decision-making for the project selection process. The CEF provides funding for projects such as bike lanes, sidewalks, streetlights and park improvements to help low-income communities adapt to the effects of climate change.

With additional CAP support, San Diego has the opportunity to be a leader in the equitable distribution of local clean energy to create a better climate and fight the worst impacts of climate change and climate injustice.

Cost Estimate: $10,170,000