

Migrant Transfer Site and Respite Shelter for the San Diego Region



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OVERVIEW and BACKGROUND

San Diego is a welcoming county, in a welcoming state and home to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide aid to asylum seekers from throughout the Southwest. Although the San Diego County border region has experienced varying waves of migration over the years, we are currently facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. On May 11, 2023, Title 42 expired thereby removing the federal government's authority to turn away migrants who came to the U.S.-Mexico border on the grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19. Following the expiration of Title 42, border crossings began to slowly increase over time to the historic levels that they are today. Beginning September 13, 2023, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) began triaging asylum-seeking migrants crossing into the United States, sending only those who fit certain vulnerability criteria to existing federally funded and state managed migrant shelters and street releasing the rest. Also in 2023, the State of California ceased its migrant shelter operations, leaving NGOs and local municipalities to assist those being released into communities.

The San Diego County region continues to experience a significant number of migrant and asylum seeker arrivals daily. This is not just a local trend, but a national trend, and San Diego County continues to put our values of a welcoming and binational community at the forefront of our work. To address the increase in street releases and the state ceasing funding and support services, the County of San Diego stepped up and contributed \$6 million towards a centralized migrant center from October of 2023 through February of 2024. At the migrant transit center, those who have been recently processed by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) were transported to the Center and could then receive information to continue their journey, food, and other basic support services. The center processed hundreds of new arrivals daily, and in some instances nearly 1000 individuals a day. The funding was provided to a local non-profit, SBCS, to operate the intake center.

Currently, the County does not receive dedicated federal support for a Migrant Intake Shelter. FEMA's Shelter and Services Program (SSP), which is the primary federal funding vehicle for migrant support services, currently directs its funds earmarked for the San Diego region to Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego for its shelter operations.

With the rate of arrivals not appearing to slow, and with the absence of federal funding, there need to be consideration for longer term solutions until Congress achieves comprehensive immigration reform. This concept paper will lay out past research and background as well as possible solutions, in particular ones that will require greater partnership with the Federal Government.

SPECIFICATIONS

A Migrant Transit Shelter needs to accommodate the flow of migrants into the San Diego region and should be able to provide services to 500 individuals and/or families. The location of the shelter should be close to the US/Mexico border or Central San Diego to best serve those being released and to account for the next steps on their journeys, such as need to connect to the airport or other transportation hubs.

The space needs to be large enough to flex between congregate and non-congregate space options, depending on shelter census. The most efficient use of space would be to use a largely congregate setting with additional space for areas of isolation or separation to account for the potential need to curb the spread of infectious diseases such as influenza, tuberculosis, and COVID-19.

The space must include areas for sleeping and for restroom and shower facilities. Additional space will be needed for the essential support services provided by the shelter including case management, travel assistance, nutrition services, medical screenings, translation services, and other support such as storage facilities, administrative offices, charging stations for phones, and cultural and recreational space.

Specifically, to function adequately for the needs identified for the population, the shelter should include the following.

Guest Support

- Dedicated sleeping quarters to accommodate 300-500 guests per night on sleeping cots. Separate space should be provided for families.
- 25 private sleeping quarters to accommodate up to 6 guests, use of bunks, trundles, and rollway's all acceptable.
- Guest sleeping quarters to include space for luggage/storage racks.
- 20 private showers (15 Individual and 5 Family)
- Incorporated baby changing stations.
- Welcome/Intake space – separate from sleeping areas.
- 2 quiet spaces to be flexed for lactation support or religious expression.
- Multi-use space – to accommodate “Know Your Rights” presentations, transportation coordination, and other presentations (Flex to sleeping space).
- Phone charging stations throughout the facility.
- Interior play space / kids’ room (up to 30 children, ages 3 – 10 years old).
- Exterior play space (Mini sports field and green space with play structure).

Staff / Operations Needs

- Open seating area with desk/cubicles to accommodate 50- 60 Staff.
- 10-15 private offices for management/private guest meetings.
- Production space – including millwork, countertops, and space for three standing printers.
- Flexible conference/training space to host 60-100 Staff. Include partition to split space into two rooms.
- 5000 square feet of exterior operations storage – With roll up doors for easy loading and unloading.
- Staff lounge – including staff lockers/storage.
- Commercial kitchen – sized to serve 300-500+ guest per meal.
- Dining space to accommodate 100 guests.
- 500-1000 square feet of interior pantry/food storage space.
- Commercial laundry space to accommodate bedding.
- Janitorial supply closet.
- Maintenance/storage area.

- IT storage/server room.

Medical Support

- 2 private offices.
- File storage space.
- 2- 3 medical exam rooms.

Services would include 24-hour care, site supervision, mental health services, education services, legal rights presentations, and telephone services. Services, such as initial medical evaluation, case management, travel assistance, nutrition services, and translation services, will need to be procured by the Federal Government with one of several non-governmental agencies (NGOs) in this region who specialize in these areas.

While the Federal Migrant Transit Center would be funded and operated by the federal government, or the CBOs they choose to lead the effort, the County would provide some core services they would otherwise provide to individuals who are intending to remain in the county. Through the Refugee Health Assessment Program, the County would provide individuals with comprehensive health assessments, including follow-up and referrals for health conditions identified in the initial assessment process for those remaining in the County. Additionally, the County of San Diego would support these individuals and families by providing connections to public assistance benefits, and access to our Welcome Center when they choose to remain in San Diego. The County's Refugee Employment Services program, which provides employment focused services to assist families who are eligible, could provide employment focused services. Services could also include Welfare to Work services, Elder-Multicultural Access and Support Services, Vocational English-As-A-Second Language Services, and Work Readiness Exchange programs.

STAFFING

A robust staff will need to be hired and trained to support the Shelter. All hired staff should have the appropriate background clearances depending on the population being served. Funding would be needed to provide security for the shelter and to support the essential services being offered. In addition, there would need to be an ability to flex up or down staffing with volunteers or temporary staff depending on the Migrant Shelter's census. Specific staffing needs for essential services is still being considered.

FACILITY COSTS

The approximate cost for acquiring, constructing, or rehabilitating a space to accommodate 500 individuals and/or families ranges between \$12M and \$345M. See below for a breakdown of the approximate costs per option.

Buy Land and Build				
	Purchase Commercial Land	Construction	Total	Duration
Near Border	\$3,600,000.00	\$165,000,000.00	\$168,600,000.00	4.5 years
Central San Diego	\$18,000,000.00	\$165,000,000.00	\$183,000,000.00	4.5 years
Downtown	\$180,000,000.00	\$165,000,000.00	\$345,000,000.00	4.5 years

Buy Existing Building and Re-Purpose				
	Hotel Comps - Assuming 250 Room Hotel	Re-Purposing Costs	Total	Duration
Near Border*	\$64,500,000.00	\$6,000,000.00	\$70,500,000.00	4 years
Central San Diego	\$50,000,000.00	\$30,000,000.00	\$80,000,000.00	4 years
Downtown	\$62,500,000.00	\$30,000,000.00	\$92,500,000.00	4 years
NOTE: Near Border option does not have a large hotel operation to compare for this estimate. Purchase of a warehouse or retail 'big box' building would likely require zoning amendments. No large hotel operations near the border.				
*Near the Border Estimate is lowest confidence estimate: This estimate has least amount of supporting data.				

Lease an Existing Building and Remodel for Use				
	Annual Cost - Lease of existing building	Annual rental of portable bathrooms, showers, laundry, fence	Total	Duration
Near Border - Otay Mesa - Warehouse*	\$6,168,000.00	\$6,000,000.00	\$12,168,000.00	3 years
NOTE 1: Best available comp was the lease of a warehouse building in Otay Mesa. Actual use of a warehouse for this purpose would likely require zoning amendments.				

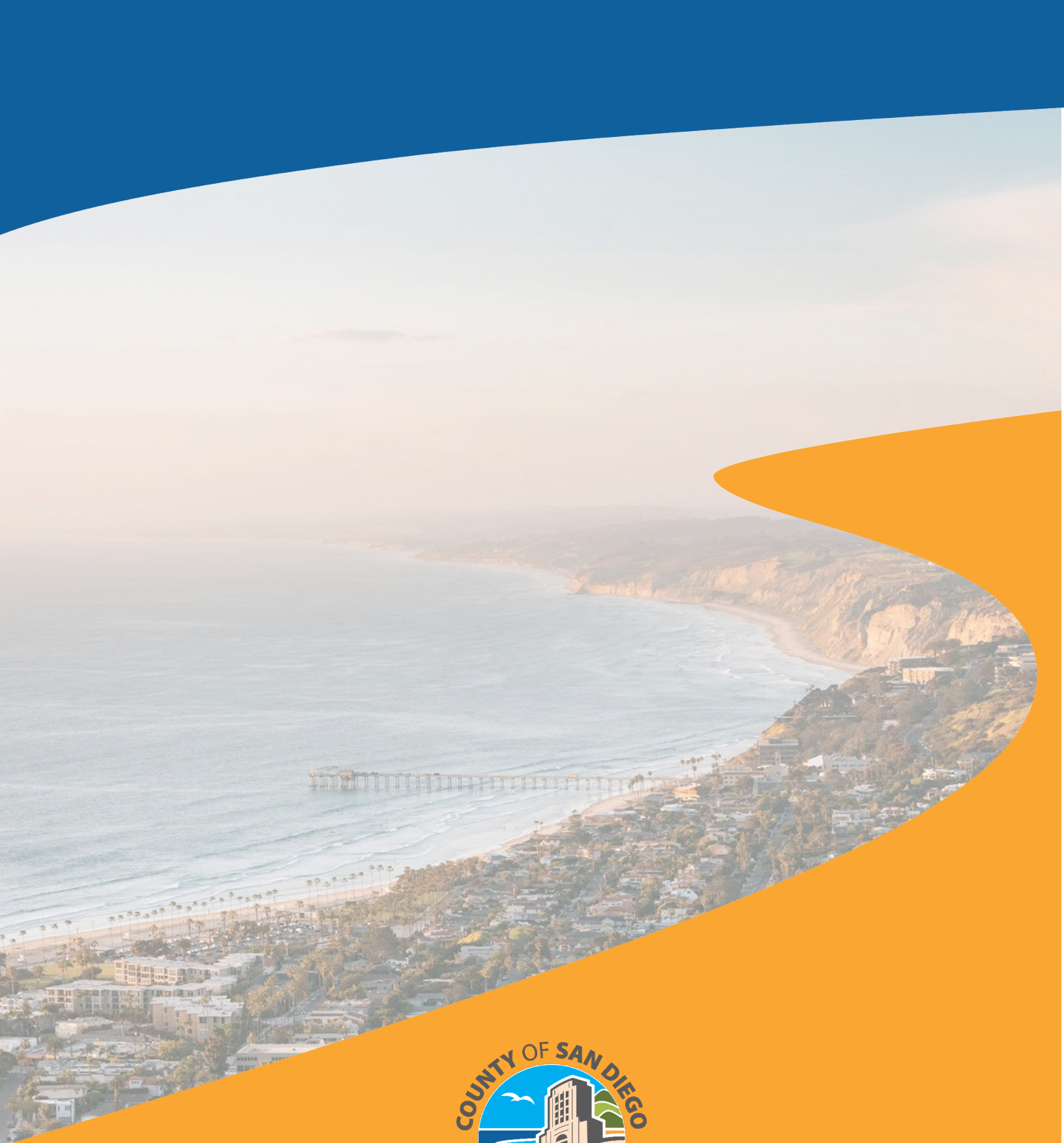
The chart below demonstrates vacant land comps for purchasing commercial land. Estimates are based on comparison of comparable sized properties.

Location	Per acre cost
Near Border	\$600,000.00
Central San Diego	\$3,000,000.00
Downtown	\$30,000,000.00

The chart below demonstrates hotel comps per room. Estimates for hotels are based on a comparison of comparable sized properties. Estimates for rehab/construction are based on previous research on conversion of hotels for sheltering programs.

Location	Per room cost
Near Border	No comparison available. Only small motel type operations exist.
Central San Diego	\$200,000.00
Downtown	\$250,000.00

Hotel Rehab/Construction Costs - based on conversion for sheltering	
Per room	\$120,000



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