



SENATOR CATHERINE S. BLAKESPEAR

REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 38

WELCOMES YOU TO THE THIRD ANNUAL

Ending ^{STREET} ^ Homelessness Summit



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2025

University of California San Diego

THE JEANNIE AUDITORIUM • 9615 SCHOLARS DRIVE • LA JOLLA

9 am ... KEYNOTE CONVERSATION

The State of Homelessness in California

10 am ... PANEL 2

Interim Housing That Works: Policies, Models, and Momentum

11 am ... PANEL 3

Housing Now: A Vision to Reach Functional Zero Unsheltered Homelessness



Colleagues and friends,

Welcome to the **Third Annual Ending Street Homelessness Summit**. For three years now, we have gathered at this summit to examine the complex, systemic drivers of homelessness like rising housing costs, behavioral health and addiction crises, gaps in care, and a fragmented policy landscape. Each year, we've advanced the conversation, listened to a range of voices, and deepened our collective understanding of what it will take to end homelessness in California.

This year, I have chosen to focus specifically on unsheltered street homelessness—the most visible, traumatic, and deadly expression of our housing crisis. The numbers are striking and demand our attention. More than 180,000 Californians are experiencing homelessness, and the majority of them are living outside in tents, in cars, or on sidewalks. This is unacceptable in the world's fourth largest economy. In the last decade, over 50,000 people have died nationwide while living unsheltered. Allowing people to languish and die outdoors is not progressive, it's neglect.

We also know that this crisis is solvable. If we expand our understanding of what housing can be and if we prioritize **housing now** we can bring people indoors quickly, affordably, and humanely.

This year's summit explores that path forward. Cities like San José, for example, are showing what's possible by rapidly deploying interim housing using modular cabins on vacant land, supported by on-site services. These units are not the shelters of the past—they are secure, private, and scalable. They represent a middle ground between the street and permanent housing, and a lifeline for people currently waiting years for their forever home. Other cities, like San Diego, deploy safe sleeping and safe parking sites where services are co-located to connect individuals with the support they need.

Our current funding structures and regulations have not laid a path forward for **housing now**. Too often, state dollars are restricted to permanent housing only, excluding the very tools that can most quickly help people and end unsheltered homelessness.

This year, I authored **Senate Bill 16** to require California and its regions to plan and be accountable for reaching functional zero in unsheltered homelessness—meaning we have a system in place to consistently house people faster than new people enter homelessness. I remain committed to advancing unsheltered homelessness legislation until we solve this crisis.

This summit brings together local and state leaders to confront these challenges with urgency and hope. It is a call to act with clarity of purpose and with a willingness to do things differently.

Our policies must match the scale and immediacy of the crisis. This matters deeply to me, not just as a policymaker but as a human being who believes that no one should have to live and die on the streets. Thank you for being here today. Together we can—and must—do better.

With urgency and resolve,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'C' followed by 'S. Blakespear'.

Catherine S. Blakespear
State Senator, 38th District

AGENDA

TIME	DESCRIPTION
8:30 am	Welcome Reception and Registration
9:00 am	Welcome Remarks by UC San Diego
9:05 am	Welcome Remarks by Senator Blakespear
9:10 am	Keynote Conversation: <i>The State of Homelessness in California</i>
9:50 am	Break 1
10:00 am	PANEL 2 <i>Interim Housing That Works: Policies, Models, and Momentum</i>
10:50 am	Break 2
11:00 am	PANEL 3 <i>Housing Now: A Vision to Reach Functional Zero Unsheltered Homelessness</i>
12:00 pm	Event Ends

KEYNOTE CONVERSATION

The State of Homelessness in California

To open the summit, California State Senator Catherine S. Blakespear (D-38) and the State's Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency Deputy Secretary of Homelessness Dhakshike Wickrema, will offer a candid look at the state of homelessness and unsheltered homelessness in California. Deputy Secretary Wickrema will bring a big-picture perspective on how policy, funding, implementation, and coordination need to align to drive real progress. Together, they will demonstrate that there is hope and a clear path forward – to help people move off the streets and into safe, stable housing. Drawing on her firsthand experience shaping policy in Sacramento, Senator Blakespear will unpack the challenges and outline a vision for the bold actions needed to build real momentum for change.

KEYNOTE CONVERSATION



Catherine S. Blakespear

California State Senator, District 38

California State Senator Catherine S. Blakespear (D-38) was elected in 2022 and represents north coastal San Diego and southern Orange County. She previously served eight years in local government – six years as the Encinitas Mayor and two on the Encinitas City Council.

Senator Blakespear's policies have focused on expanding affordable housing, protecting the environment, improving public transportation, preventing gun violence, and countering climate change.

Blakespear is Chair of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee and Chair of the Senate Transportation Subcommittee on LOSSAN Rail Corridor Resiliency. She also sits on the Senate committees for Governmental Organization, Transportation, Budget and Fiscal Review, and the Joint Committee on Climate Change Policies.

Blakespear authored 19 bills in 2023 and 2024 that were signed into law, tackling some of California's most pressing issues. This year, Senator Blakespear has legislation focused on clean energy affordability, increasing civil rights, habitat preservation, unsheltered homelessness, reducing plastic waste, increasing affordable housing, and more.

A lawyer and former journalist, Blakespear lives with her husband and two teenagers in Encinitas.

KEYNOTE CONVERSATION



Dhakshike Wickrema

Deputy Secretary of Homelessness
Business, Consumer Services,
and Housing Agency

Dhakshike Wickrema was appointed Deputy Secretary of Homelessness at the Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency by Governor Newsom in March 2022. She previously served as Senior Deputy for Homelessness and Housing in Los Angeles City Council District 10, and as Senior Deputy for Homelessness and Mental Health in Los Angeles County Supervisorial District 2, where she supported efforts in 2017 to pass Measure H, which funds housing and homelessness services. She also worked at Shelter Partnership, a nonprofit focused on homelessness and affordable housing policy, and for the World Bank's Poverty Alleviation, Health Services, and Social Development sectors. She earned a Master of City Planning from MIT.

PANEL 1: *Have a question for the Keynote Conversation?
Tear off this panel and give it to a staff member.*

PANEL 2

Interim Housing That Works: Policies, Models, and Momentum

This panel will spotlight what it really takes for cities and counties to bring people indoors with dignity and urgency. Local leaders will share real-world examples of interim housing solutions – from tiny home communities and safe sleeping sites, to navigation centers that cross city lines, and the creation of a first-of-its-kind shelter reservation app. This discussion will explore how communities are overcoming local challenges while building real momentum for change. This conversation will show when good policy meets innovative interim housing models, communities can make meaningful progress towards functional zero unsheltered homelessness.

PANEL 2: MODERATOR



Elizabeth Funk

Founder and CEO, Dignity Moves

Elizabeth Funk is the Founder and CEO of DignityMoves, a nonprofit ending unsheltered homelessness through systems change and innovative, scalable solutions. Elizabeth was an early technology pioneer, on the founding team of Microsoft Word and Office. As one of the first employees of Yahoo!, she oversaw the creation of Yahoo! Shopping, Finance, Travel, and other groundbreaking innovations. For nearly two decades, Elizabeth has been a prominent leader in the impact investing movement, leading funds addressing global poverty through microfinance, low-income housing, and environmental sustainability.

Elizabeth holds an honors degree from Stanford and graduated as a Baker Scholar from Harvard Business School.

PANEL 2: PANELISTS



Katie Melendez

Deputy Mayor and Councilmember,
City of Vista, District 3

Katie Melendez serves as Deputy Mayor of the City of Vista and Chairwoman of the Homelessness Standing Committee. She brings years of experience in housing policy, public health, community advocacy and has shaped Vista's award-winning Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness. Born and raised in Vista, she is deeply committed to advancing local solutions to homelessness that center on dignity, prevention, and long-term stability. Deputy Mayor Melendez has initiated life-saving programs such as Vista's first Permanent Supportive Housing for homeless seniors, safe parking program, rental assistance program, and more. In 2023, Deputy Mayor Melendez partnered with Senator Catherine S. Blakespear to open Vista's dignified, non-congregate shelter model.



Stephen Whitburn

San Diego City Council, District 3

Councilmember Stephen Whitburn represents San Diego City Council District 3. He serves as Chair of the City's Active Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Vice Chair of the Audit Committee, and member of the Public Safety Committee. He also serves as Chair of the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Board of Directors and Chair of the San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). Councilmember Whitburn is a member of the San Diego County Water Authority and the Regional Task Force on Homelessness Continuum of Care Advisory Board. Addressing the City's homelessness and affordable housing crises are top priorities for the Councilmember.

PANEL 2: PANELISTS, CONTINUED



Summer Stephan

San Diego County District Attorney

San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan is a nationally recognized leader in public safety, known for her work combatting human trafficking, protecting victims, and

championing justice reform. Elected in 2018 and reelected in 2022, she leads the second-largest district attorney's office in California, serving over three million residents. A seasoned prosecutor, she has tried more than 100 jury trials and pioneered San Diego's Sex Crimes and Human Trafficking Division. Under her leadership, the office has expanded victim services, tested over 2,000 rape kits, launched juvenile diversion programs, and increased prosecutions of hate crimes and fentanyl dealers. She also serves as the Chairwoman of the National District Attorneys Association and holds numerous state and national public safety leadership roles.

PANEL 2: *Have a question for Panel 2?*

Tear off this panel and give it to a staff member.

PANEL 3

Housing Now: A Vision to Reach Functional Zero Unsheltered Homelessness

This final panel will offer an honest look at what it takes to move the needle on unsheltered homelessness in some of California's largest cities. Local leaders will share how they're expanding interim housing options at scale and what barriers they face. The conversation will highlight the real successes and struggles that come with siting new solutions – like tiny home communities and safe sleeping sites – and how coordination must improve to reach the people who need the most support, including those struggling with severe mental illness and substance use. This panel will show what's working, what needs to change, and why collaboration at every level is key to bringing people indoors and on a path to lasting stability.

PANEL 3: MODERATOR



Catherine S. Blakespear

California State Senator, District 38

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PANEL 3: PANELISTS



Todd Gloria

Mayor, City of San Diego

Todd Gloria was sworn in as San Diego's 37th Mayor in 2020. He was reelected for a second term in November 2024. A third-generation San Diegan, he is the first person of color and the first LGBTQ person to ever be elected as the city's Mayor. Inspired by his parents – a hotel maid and a gardener – he entered public service to leave things better than he found them. He was elected to the City Council in 2008. He served as City Council President, and Interim Mayor in 2013. In 2016, Mayor Gloria was elected to the California State Assembly to represent the 78th Assembly District. Mayor Gloria is a graduate of the University of San Diego.



Matt Mahan

Mayor, City of San José

Matt Mahan is the 66th Mayor of San Jose. He previously served as a teacher through Teach for America before entering the business world, where he founded and grew companies dedicated to empowering neighborhoods and holding our government accountable. These core tenets remain key to his policy priorities as he pledges to focus city government on the basic quality of life issues that impact us every single day. He currently resides in San José with his wife, Silvia, and their two children.

PANEL 3: PANELISTS, CONTINUED



Monica Montgomery Steppe

San Diego County Supervisor, District 4

Supervisor Monica Montgomery Steppe is the first Black woman elected to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, representing District 4. A San Diego native, she leads with a deep commitment to equity, racial justice, housing, and behavioral health reform. Since taking office in 2023, she has advanced oversight of law enforcement, supported reparations, and expanded initiatives focused on homelessness and food access. With over a decade of experience in law and policy, including service on the San Diego City Council, she brings a justice-centered, community-first approach. She holds degrees from Spelman College and California Western School of Law.

PANEL 3: *Have a question for Panel 3?*
Tear off this panel and give it to a staff member.

Do you have a housing
or homelessness policy idea?

Share it with us by scanning the QR code below.



Thank you to UC San Diego
for hosting this event!



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38th Senate District

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