



# City of Chula Vista

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## Legislative Program

2022

Revised March 1, 2022



## **Overview of the City of Chula Vista**

Incorporated in 1911, Chula Vista is the second largest city both in size and in population in San Diego County, with a population of ~~272,000~~275,487 and 52 square miles.

Chula Vista is a global leader in sustainability and embracing new technologies to enhance the safety and quality of life for its residents. It became a charter member of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) in the early 1990s, completed a greenhouse gas inventory in 1996 and formally adopted its first CO2 reduction plan in 2000, making it the first city in San Diego County to adopt a climate action plan. It has also led the way with early action on developing transit-oriented neighborhoods, an innovative and sustainable plan to develop the Chula Vista Bayfront, and was one of the first cities in the nation to create a smart city plan to integrate technology to not only better serve and protect our residents but also ensure universal internet and technology access for all communities.

As such, this Legislative Program is seen as a framework to help Chula Vista meet its goals in continuing that leadership and enhancing the region.

The cornerstone of meeting those goals is to establish a four-year university and an innovation district that will act as a regional economic engine to make Chula Vista and the South Bay a global hub of green technology, emerging autonomous technology, and building a binational economy.

This program is also intended to be a living document that should be updated by staff periodically as circumstances and goals change but the foundation will always be finding ways to enhance our city and the quality of life for our residents.

## **Guiding Principles of Legislative Program**

Our Legislative Program is a tool to protect, promote, and guide our City's interests on priority issues and legislative/regulatory matters that might impact the City at the state and federal level. The guiding principles and broad policy statements below allow City staff and legislative advocates to address legislative and regulatory issues in a timely and directed manner, without precluding City Council consideration of additional legislative matters arising throughout the year.

With the continued growth of the City and planned development in the future, the City's Legislative Platform is aimed at securing legislative policies and resources that will help the City manage this growth, fund critical infrastructure needs, keep the City safe and maintain and enhance the quality-of-life residents have come to expect.

### **1) Maintaining Local Control**

- Support efforts that preserve and protect our local authority to enact policy pertaining to local affairs. Oppose measures that seek to preempt local control without the occurrence of the City.

## **2) Promote Fiscal Responsibility**

- Support efforts that promote fiscal stability, predictability, and financial independence. Support efforts that preserve and promote the City's revenue base. Oppose efforts that mandate costs with no guarantee of local reimbursement or offsetting benefit, and that shift local funds to the county, state or federal government, without offsetting benefits.

## **3) Promote Economic Development**

- Support efforts that are designed to provide local governments with the tools necessary to bolster economic development and efforts streamlining initiatives that would enhance our ability to attract and retain businesses as well as encourage business expansion and job retention.

## **4) Support Funding Opportunities**

- Support efforts that allow the City to compete for its fair share of regional, state and federal funding including competitive grants and other funding programs. Support efforts that promote dedicated funding streams at the regional, state and federal levels allowing our City to maximize local revenues, offset and leverage capital expenditures, and maintain our goals and standards.

## Legislative Priorities

### Reform of AB 1486 (Ting) and expansion of CalGrant Program Access

For over thirty years the City has persistently pursued the acquisition and development of two major employment centers, the 535 acre Chula Vista Bayfront Redevelopment project and the acquisition of almost 400 acres in the Eastern portion of the City for a new bi-national multi-institutional University and Innovation District project. Most recently Chula Vista was studied along with four other cities as a potential location for new State University and during that same year was the passage of AB1486 and efforts to open access to the CalGrant program.

AB 1486 (Ting), the Surplus Lands Act, was enacted on January 1, ~~of this year~~2021, has severely hampered our three decades of efforts to develop a University and Innovation District, as envisioned by the 2018 adopted Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan Area. The bill has removed our ability to negotiate to develop a new self-sustaining model of education for our South Bay residents through its requirement to provide this land for affordable housing before our University and Innovation District uses.

It is critical that AB1486 be amended to exempt the Chula Vista University and Innovation District project so we can pursue our efforts to create jobs and new educational opportunity for our residents of the South Bay.

Furthermore, our pursuits ~~most likely will~~could involve non-profit out of state institutions and it will be important for these institutions and their students to have access to the State's CalGrant program for out-of-state institutions with brick and mortar facilities in California.

### Assistance in obtaining Federal and State funds for Grade Separations at major crossings.

As we complete our Bayfront project, mobility and the free flow of people and goods to and from Chula Vista will be critical as more people will be coming to Chula Vista to enjoy our bayfront, to work and live in our city. Because of this, it is essential that we continue to expand our public transit system and its frequency. In order to do so, grade separations along the Blue Line Trolley are urgently needed along Palomar Street, F Street, H Street, and E Street. Palomar street has been identified by SANDAG as vitally needed to reduce congestion in the western part of Chula Vista and was ranked in the top two most urgently needed separations and our city has already invested over \$3,000,000 in plan and design. Ideally, the state could provide funding to complete this project as it did for the City of San Diego for the at grade crossings at Park Boulevard and Harbor Drive.

Secure additional state Funding to support relinquishment of State Route 125 from SANDAG to CalTrans.

Chula Vista currently has a jobs-housing imbalance with more than 70% of the total workforce leaving Chula Vista for employment throughout the region. It is estimated that approximately 80,000 residents must commute north into San Diego and beyond each workday. This imbalance results in extreme unidirectional freeway gridlock in the AM and PM commutes while the opposite direction of traffic is free flow. Intra-regional commutes would be better balanced through the creation of jobs in Chula Vista and the South Bay region.

Improving opportunities for businesses to locate in Chula Vista and the region would help to address transportation congestion in our region's mobility network by more fully utilizing the existing capacity that exists along our regional freeways and arterials when commuting south in the morning and north in the evening peak hours. Chula Vista staff has heard directly from businesses considering locating in Eastern Chula Vista that the State Route 125 (SR-125) toll road, or South Bay Expressway (SBX), operated by San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), is a significant impediment to their ability to locate here.

The tolls represent an additional financial burden for their employees when traveling to and from their place of employment. To better understand what options exist to alleviate this impediment, staff reviewed the bond indenture documents, annual financial statements for the SBX, and has had extensive meetings with SANDAG staff. It is important to note that the tolls established for the SBX are intended to repay the debt for purchasing the facility and not for the purpose of congestion management.

During these discussions and review of documents it was determined that the bonds that are financing SBX are callable in 2027 provided that SANDAG can address the gap of \$32.4 million between projected cash on hand (\$110.8 million) and the outstanding remaining debt (\$143.2 million) in 2027. It must also terminate the franchise agreement with CalTrans in 2028 or earlier in order to set aside funds for the payoff of the debt.

As part of this process to speed up the relinquishment of SBX, discussions with SANDAG staff determined that financial assistance will be needed by the state in order to compel CalTrans to terminate the franchise agreement so as to offset the additional expenses of maintaining and improving the roadway at an earlier than the expected date of the franchise agreement.

Early retirement of the SBX toll facility debt will increase the opportunity to balance mobility demands and reduce regional VMT with the creation of an employment centers in the surrounding South Bay region. As the only tolled freeway in San Diego County, relinquishment of SR-125 will incentivizing businesses to locate in Chula Vista and the South Bay region, which for a long time this region has been neglected as it is mostly made up of communities of color that have disproportionately impacted by lack of economic opportunity and environmental justice. The relinquishment would help to alleviate transportation congestion on our region's freeways by more fully utilizing the existing capacity that exists along South Bay freeways and arterials when commuting south in the morning and north in the evening.

Secure legislative support and funding from the State of California for infrastructure to seed Phase 1 of Chula Vista's University-Innovation District.

Chula Vista is the only city in California with a population greater than 200,000 residents that does not have a nonprofit or state university within its city limits. In addition, the South Bay area of San Diego County has approximately 500,000 residents and no public or private non-profit university. It is critical to provide viable, equitable and accessible pathways to higher education which requires the elimination of barriers to access public universities and successful degree completion.

The City has acquired 383 contiguous acres of greenfield property together with 155 acres of state-of-the-art sports facilities used as an Olympic Training site. This provides a conservative estimated total value of approximately \$700 million dollars toward a University partner. In addition, the City of Chula Vista has an approved land use plan for the University-Innovation District that would allow an institution to benefit from the co-location of academic and industry partners within a common footprint or building.

The City is actively recruiting a unique mix of academic partners in an effort to cultivate an environment different from a traditional university campus that will integrate with commercial, retail, and residential development in an urban, mixed-use setting. The location and vision also provides an environment for cross-border economic, social and cultural development.

## **Policy Statements**

The following categories of policy statements are broad and are not intended to be all-inclusive but will be used as a reference tool and guideline for the City's advocacy efforts.

### Administrative Services

General Area of Review: Elections, Ralph M. Brown Act, Public Records Act, Political Reform Act, conflict of interest, insurance, tort reform and open and transparent government.

- Support legislation to allow alternative methods of meeting public notice requirements and enhancing them with cost effective and innovative, user friendly methods of communication
- Support efforts to change the legal principle of 'joint and several liability' to protect cities against 'deep pocket' liability
- Support efforts to minimize governmental exposure to frivolous lawsuits. Create a more equitable balance for cities to recover attorney fees
- Support efforts to improve liability protection for governmental agencies and their personnel

## Community Service

General Area of Review: Parks, recreation, libraries, cultural arts, youth, community and human services programs.

- Support funding efforts to construct or renovate parks and recreation facilities in aging/underserved areas of the city
- Support park bond measures that provide per capita and competitive grants for park and recreation facility development and renovation
- Support funding for after-school art and recreational programs promoting the arts and physical exercise
- Support funding for access opportunities for all citizens for physical activity, proper nutrition and healthy lifestyle options
- Support funding efforts to connecting libraries to the same statewide, high-speed, broadband backbone for the K-12 system, UC, CSU and community colleges
- Support fully funding the California Public Library Fund and eliminate financial penalties to municipal libraries experiencing budget reductions
- Guarantee libraries the largest possible discount in rates for telecommunication services, internal connections and internet access
- Support library bond measures that provide per capita and competitive grants for library facility construction and renovation
- Support efforts to fund after-school library programs for crime diversion during critical hours
- Support legislation to establish the threshold for library capital bonds or operating levies measures from 66.7% to 55% approval to pass
- Support legislation that prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability or immigration status

## Employee Relations

General Area of Review: Labor relations, employee relations and other matters related to human resources.

- Support efforts to protect and enhance cities' ability to establish conditions of employment, including hours, wages, benefits, the meet-and-confer process, appeal procedures and management rights
- Support efforts to reform the California Workers' Compensation Program to reduce public costs
- Oppose efforts for mandated binding arbitration in public employee disputes

## Environmental Quality

General Area of Review: Air, water and water quality, climate change, CEQA, integrated waste management, hazardous materials, coastal issues, and utilities.

- Support programs and rate structures that expand access to solar and other clean energy technologies, particularly for renters and other underserved community members
- Support programs that provide incentives for energy and water saving upgrades
- Support legislative efforts to strengthen San Diego Community Power, our CCA, to provide more affordable and clean electricity options
- Create new and sustainable funding opportunities to support local habitat preservation, water conservation, water reuse and recycling efforts
- Oppose New leases for oil/gas development in state-owned coastal waters off San Diego County
- Oppose restrictions on local jurisdictions' authority and ability to adopt environmental policies and codes exceeding state or federal standards
- Reinforce local control of telecommunications, energy, water, franchise agreements
- Support reauthorization of the CPUC Public Goods Charge, and legislation that provides local funding to complement environmental and economic sustainability
- Clean up Digital Infrastructure and Video Competition Act (DIVCA) legislation
- Monitor for impacts on water quality standards and storm water discharge requirements (AB 377)
- Promote 'smart growth' incentive programs, reward agencies that promote sustainable practices such as energy conservation, renewable resources, green buildings and the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
- Develop new funding source to cover all additional Local Agency costs in order to comply with new State and Regional Water Quality Control Board Stormwater Permits since new permit requirements create unfunded mandates

## Housing, Community, Economic Development

General Area of Review: Land use, development, annexation and incorporation, building standards, economic development, redevelopment and enterprise zones, mobile home and sign regulations.

- Support legislative efforts to assist our city to attract businesses and industry that will advance responsible Economic Development that will cement Chula Vista's position as a national leader in embracing new technologies and environmental innovation
- Secure an exemption from the Surplus Lands Act (AB 1486) for the City's University and Bayfront projects
- Promote local purchasing, hiring and workforce training that create quality career opportunities and living wages for the local workforce
- Provide startup funding for economic development programs/partnerships
- Fund extending advanced telecommunications, smart grid energy, sustainable water supply and transportation infrastructure that helps develop quality jobs in disadvantaged communities
- Promote opportunities for public art funding and encourage programs that tie arts and culture to economic development
- Strengthen and/or add tools to promote redevelopment of economically distressed areas
- ~~Prevent the loss of affordable housing with assistance from federal or state funding~~
- Support new affordable housing development opportunities and preservation of existing affordable housing
- Support legislative efforts to enhance funding for homeless services, outreach, prevention, and assistance
- Support City's operations of a bridge shelter for homeless individuals
- Support efforts to assist first-time home buyers and promote pathways to home ownership
- Support opportunities for the ~~construction development~~ of workforce housing and permanent supportive housing and programs
- Support equitable distribution of housing funds from regional, state or federal agencies
- Support efforts to preserve and enhance mobile home livability
- Promote historic preservation and facilitate the funding of it
- Support public health and age friendly livability
- Support efforts that ~~assure~~ ensure major changes to Building, Energy or Accessibility code requirements are given enough time and resources for local government and industry training
- Support legislation that eliminates regulatory and processing barriers for projects that enhance or restore biological habitats
- Exempt stormwater fees from the restrictions of Proposition 218
- Fund construction of needed infrastructure, parks, libraries and other civic/public safety programs

## Public Safety

General Area of Review: Law enforcement, fire and life safety, emergency communications, emergency services, disaster preparedness, and nuisance abatement.

- Support efforts to reinstate Federal COPS and State SLESF grant programs
- Increase employment opportunities through the California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Program
- Fund emergency preparedness measures, particularly those related to wildland fire and fund minimizing fuels in wildland interface areas
- Support efforts to prohibit drone operations that prevent or interfere with firefighting efforts
- Expand the availability of Automated External Defibrillator (AED) in higher occupancy structures
- Support funding activities that will reduce the incidence of drownings
- Continue funding for "front-line" law enforcement for AB 109 compliance
- Provide adequate resources to support public safety response to the mental health crisis involving the homeless population
- Oppose efforts to allow unlicensed fire protection contractors to install fire protection systems
- Oppose efforts to preempt local public safety ordinances
- Oppose any efforts to impose upon police department the responsibility to enforce federal immigration laws

## Revenue and Taxation

General Area of Review: Finance administration, taxation reform, general and special revenue and revenue sources at the federal, state and local levels.

- Provide grant distribution criteria that includes a 'per capita' component in addition to 'merit-based' programs
- Oppose unfunded mandates and legislation that reduces local control or abridges home rule authority
- Oppose any repeal of Gas Tax exemption for local agencies
- Oppose efforts to preclude cities from collecting Utility Users Tax, including revenue on cellular or digital telephone use
- Protect or enhance local government revenue resources including sales, property and use taxes, COPS (Citizens' Option for Public Safety), and Booking Fees
- Support reducing the vote threshold for special use taxes from 66.6% to 55%
- Support the establishment of a federal Marketplace Fairness Act and oppose any efforts to roll back the 2018 Wayfair decision
- Oppose efforts to limit cities' ability to impose franchise fees, taxes, etc. on cable or satellite television or other telecommunication operations & services

## Transportation, Communication and Public Works

General Area of Review: Transportation, construction, telecommunications and general public works related areas.

- Support legislation that allows for opportunity to pay off bonds for SR 125 prior to 2043 provided capital, overhead costs and non-operating expenses can be minimized and additional toll revenues are allocated to debt service.
- Request support for transferring maintenance of SR 125 to Caltrans when SR 125 is paid off and tolling has ended
- Support efforts to allow local agencies flexibility in complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act to provide the greatest benefit to the disabled population, and provide protection from ~~third~~<sup>3rd</sup> party lawsuits
- Oppose elimination of Rule 20A Utility Undergrounding Program
- Support efforts to fund programs to provide high-speed internet to lower income residents
- Support efforts for funding for priority infrastructure projects including drainage and other improvements to the storm drain system
- Support efforts for funding the region's top priority rail grade separation project on Palomar Street at Industrial Boulevard
- Oppose any further restrictions on the use of multi-year renewable contracts
- Support legislation to reduce municipal costs associated with Caltrans projects
- Supports efforts (or legislation) that enhance traffic safety on city streets for all modes of transportation (AB 43)
- Oppose efforts to preempt local authority with the goal of assisting the wireless industry in the expansion of broadband access by allowing access to City infrastructure including light poles, traffic poles, etc. While SB 556 purports to preempt local authority with the goal of assisting the wireless industry in the expansion of broadband access, it fails to set any requirements for the wireless industry to expand broadband facilities or close the digital divide. (SB 556)
- Support efforts to expedite disbursement of Proposition 84 funds to local government
- Promote grant requests submitted by the City
- Support efforts to protect dedicated transportation and public transit funds

## Conclusion

Chula Vista is on the cusp of being an engine of economic and cultural growth that reflects the values of our region. The values of inclusion, sustainability, and responsibility.

It is the hope that this legislative program will help to realize this vision and strengthen Chula Vista to make it a center for strong education, clean technology, and advanced manufacturing to a growing and well-educated middle-class for the San Diego Region.