

TRUST

SD COALITION

*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****

San Diego City Council Gives Unanimous and Final Approval of TRUST Surveillance Technology Oversight Ordinance

San Diego will be the largest city in the US to oversee acquisition and use of surveillance technology, while also inviting a community-led Privacy Advisory Board to vet the city's surveillance technology proposals.

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San Diego, CA - The San Diego City Council unanimously gave final approval to a new privacy and technology ordinance that will place the City's surveillance technology under its oversight. The passage of the "Transparent and Responsible Use of Surveillance Technology" ordinance was the result of a long three year effort by the 30+ community organizations that make up the TRUST SD (Transparent and Responsible Use of Surveillance Technology San Diego) Coalition who wrote and proposed the ordinance. The TRUST SD Coalition sounded alarm bells about the dangers of the City's surveillance technology deployments.

The TRUST SD Coalition originally proposed the ordinance in 2020, and it received unanimous approval from San Diego City Council in November 2020, guided by ordinance champion Council President Pro Tem Monica Montgomery Steppe. In June 2022, the ordinance was considered for final passage, but it instead received amendments. One controversial amendment exempts the City's federal task force activities from oversight. The newly amended ordinance received its first vote in July 2022 and its final vote on August 2, 2022.

The passage of the TRUST surveillance oversight ordinance goes in tandem with the creation of a community-led Privacy Advisory Board, which was created by an ordinance also written by the TRUST SD coalition. The Privacy Advisory Board ordinance was approved by City Council in April 2022 and should strongly advocate for community perspectives when surveillance

technology is proposed. The board includes seats for representatives of communities historically impacted by surveillance.

These coupled ordinances provide San Diegans with an enforceable framework for significant transparency and accountability regarding how the City acquires and operates surveillance technology such as streetlight cameras, noise-detecting microphones and body-worn cameras.

Crucially, the ordinance lets the general public be involved in decisions to adopt surveillance technologies. The ordinance requires the City to hold public meetings in City Council districts where the technologies will be deployed early in the process. Community input should inform the Privacy Advisory Board and City Council's deliberations. Community members can also offer their input on the use of technology at those district meetings or at Privacy Advisory Board meetings.

Since this ordinance was proposed in 2020, the TRUST SD Coalition stopped the City from using controversial surveillance technologies such as "smart streetlight" surveillance cameras and "Shotspotter" noise detection microphones. The surveillance oversight ordinance brings these and other technologies, such as "ALPR" license plate location trackers, into public oversight advised by the Privacy Advisory Board. Finally, any proposal to use these systems must now receive City Council's approval annually.

The City must now finalize the appointments for the Privacy Advisory Board so that the board can begin reviewing surveillance technology currently in use by the City of San Diego. Per the oversight ordinance, the city has one year to move all its existing surveillance technology through the oversight process.

Members of the TRUST SD Coalition's Steering Committee made the following statements:

"This is one step towards making sure technology serves people's needs, not the needs of profiteering tech companies or people experimenting on the City's residents. Next time we find a library being defunded while surveillance technology is being funded, a lot more people have learned to stand up, understand the technology, organize together, and say no." Lilly Irani, Tech Workers Coalition and Professor at UC San Diego, Communication & Design Lab

"Surveillance technology will continue to be widely used in San Diego, but now it will be under the watchful eye of our elected officials and also with nine seats at the decision making table reserved for expert community members. Our coalition will be watching closely and will continue to hold all stakeholders accountable if they decide to violate the rights guaranteed to all San Diegans. San Diego's communities should control this technology, not be controlled by it." Seth Hall, Tech Lead San Diego

"These victories were hard fought by the Community. They serve as perfect examples of how impacted community members can be — and why they should be — a part of policy creation. Without the vigilance of the TRUST coalition coupled with the leadership of Council

President Pro Tem Monica Montgomery Steppe, the City would still be failing San Diegans and its visitors.” Geneviève Jones-Wright, Community Advocates for Just and Moral Governance (MoGo)

Over the last year we have learned the importance of community oversight of technologies and their increasingly intrusive presence in our lives. **Too often these technologies are sold to politicians by law enforcement and unscrupulous companies that profit from fear and misinformation. These ordinances are an important step to avoid abuses.** For the first time in San Diego history, the community and elected officials have a tool which will help them understand these technologies and, hopefully, avoid wasteful government spending on shiny toys like the “smart” street lights. Khalid Alexander, Pillars of the Community

“Our communities are the ones most impacted by unfettered surveillance technology and we finally have an opportunity to be a part of the discussions about the surveillance technologies our city uses and acquires. This is a step in the right direction for repairing trust with our communities and increasing transparency, which is so crucial to the democratic process.” Homayra Yusufi, Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA)

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For facts about the TRUST SD Coalition, please feel free to follow us on Twitter at @SanDiegoTRUST or visit our website at www.SanDiegoTrust.org

The Transparent and Responsible Use of Surveillance Technology San Diego (TRUST SD) Coalition was originally formed to address the widespread and secretive use, installation, and acquisition of the Smart Streetlights technology that was deployed all over San Diego County. Since 2019, TRUST SD has led the call for community oversight of the use of all surveillance technology and strong, legally enforceable ordinances to address privacy and civil liberty issues. Accordingly, we wrote two community-focused ordinances that put in place community oversight and transparency essential for our Democracy. We educate community members through community forums and workshops around the county as well as city council members and other government and elected officials through our lobbying efforts. We advocate for community-led solutions to all of the problems we face as a city. We are 100% community-centered and community-driven. TRUST SD is made up of more than 30 local community organizations that represent various sectors of our communities.

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