

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

San Diego City Council Gives Unanimous and Final Approval of Privacy Advisory Board

A milestone victory for the community, the City Council, and the TRUST SD Coalition in the community-led effort to protect San Diegans' rights.

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San Diego, CA - San Diego could be the largest city in the United States to adopt a community-led oversight model for vetting surveillance technology.

Yesterday, the San Diego City Council finalized, and unanimously approved, the Privacy Advisory Board ordinance, which was put forward by the TRUST SD Coalition in conjunction with Council President Pro Tem Montgomery Steppe. The ordinance received its first unanimous vote of support in November 2020, and yesterday's vote finalizes the ordinance, clearing the way for the board's creation.

The creation of the Privacy Advisory Board has received considerable support from Mayor Gloria who is guiding the TRUST ordinances through the meet and confer process. Council President Sean Elo-Rivera also worked to ensure the Privacy Advisory Board ordinance was expedited to a final vote as efficiently as possible.

This win comes after a years-long effort by the TRUST SD Coalition that began when thousands of "smart streetlights" were found to be capturing live video of San Diegans, with little notice to the public and with no oversight.

Over 30 community organizations came together to form the coalition and demand accountability for violating the public's trust. The coalition worked with Montgomery Steppe's office to draft a new surveillance ordinance, as well as the privacy advisory board ordinance. Recognizing the streetlights as only one example of a wider problem, the coalition began a widespread campaign to bring all surveillance technologies acquired and operated by city departments.

Since November 2020, the City Council has faced pressure to add additional surveillance technologies to the city's departments. In July 2021, citing the unfinished oversight ordinances,

the City Council dropped consideration of a renewal for the city's ShotSpotter loud noise detection system, which uses microphones to record audio in public places.

The board's nine members must now be identified and appointed by the mayor. City Council members may nominate members for appointment by the mayor, and the City Council must confirm any appointment made by the mayor.

"The creation of a community-centered Privacy Advisory Board is a historic moment for San Diego. The strength of this advisory board will depend on who is selected, and we hope that representatives from communities most impacted by surveillance technologies are prioritized for the board positions," said Homayra Yusufi, Deputy Director of the Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA).

"With this Privacy Advisory Board, San Diego is trying to put the 'Smart' back in Smart Cities. There has been nothing smart about the looting of our privacy and our city's bank account, which was sadly the case with previous failed technology projects in our city. **Smart use of surveillance technology must start with broad community awareness, a full accounting of benefits, and meaningful consent,**" said Seth Hall, a technologist with the community group Tech Lead San Diego.

"The development of a Privacy Advisory Board is one tool and pathway towards ensuring that our communities are safer. From the very beginning, TRUST SD has made certain that the process would remain community-led as we would safeguard an oversight protection guided by the community. **This kind of victory has shown us what people power looks like as it highlights what's possible for all of us when we work together.** The unanimous vote today is an affirmation of our lives and a vote for the will of the people who brought forth this change," said DJ Kuttin Kandi, Executive Director of Asian Solidarity Collective (ASC).

"As the intrusive capabilities of technology grow faster than our collective ability to understand their impacts on our lives, it is absolutely essential for elected officials to protect their constituents from private tech companies seeking to profit from our naïveté. Today's vote to establish a privacy advisory board is an important step in that direction and a win for all San Diegans." Khalid Alexander, Pillars of the Community.

"A Privacy Advisory Board made up of experts — not just those in the tech industry but also those with lived experience — is essential for ensuring the City properly and fully vets surveillance technology it wishes to use all over our city. I'm happy this first step has finally been taken," said Geneviève Jones-Wright, Executive Director of Community Advocates for Just and Moral Governance (MoGo).