



San Diego Convention Center

FY21 ANNUAL REPORT



AN EXTRAORDINARY YEAR

This fiscal year began at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. It was a time when vaccines were merely a possibility, when people were nervous about going to grocery stores and barber shops. A time of video calls, virtual celebrations and ever-changing public health guidance. Though we tried to maintain hope, it was hard to see the light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel.

This time was especially uncertain for the tourism, hospitality, and event sectors. As we navigated each change, we found strength in the things most important to us: Our families, friends, colleagues, and the core values that guide us.

Amid all that, our San Diego Convention Center team lived out our values in ways we never expected—first as a shelter for San Diegans experiencing homelessness and then as a shelter for unaccompanied migrant children. Ultimately, we served as a temporary home for more than 7,000 individuals in need.

As our guests received warm meals and shelter, accessed social services, reconnected with family members and transitioned to their next

phase of life, we saw the life-changing power of collaboration. We also saw our staff rise to each and every challenge—sometimes in head-to-toe PPE—working in dramatically different environments than those of pre-pandemic days. We cannot say enough about our hardworking, talented and dedicated employees and business partners.

Toward the end of this fiscal year, COVID-19 case rates were declining, vaccines became widely available, and we were actively preparing to return to our primary purpose as a premier gathering place and economic driver for our region. We hope we never have another year without events, but we know this experience will stay with us, making us more experienced and resilient for the benefit of our clients and the San Diego community.



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President & CEO



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A TIME WITHOUT EVENTS

In typical years, the San Diego Convention Center serves as an economic engine for the City of San Diego, generating activity for businesses in the region and essential tax revenue for core City needs and services. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 100 events were canceled, rescheduled, or became virtual events during this fiscal year.

Before the pandemic, we forecasted:

- **822,000** Attendees
- **847,500** Room Nights
- **\$930M** Direct Attendee Spending
- **\$35M** Tax Revenue to San Diego
- Ultimately, **\$1.58 BILLION** in Regional Economic Impact

Regional Economic Impact reflects the effect of our lost events on the many businesses that see activity because of a convention. Beyond the many people working inside our building for such an event, hotels, restaurants, attractions, AV companies, printers, caterers, grocery stores, dry cleaners, and gas stations are just some of the affected businesses.



Celebrating the

COMIC-CON

Community

COMIC-CON@HOME

Continuing our tradition of producing chocolate bars to celebrate the annual Comic-Con event, we partnered with our food and beverage team to introduce a limited-edition chocolate bar to share with fans via social media contests in July 2020.

With a Saturday Morning Cartoons theme, the colorful treat featured white chocolate, fruit-flavored cereal and freeze-dried raspberries.



THE TWISTS & TURNS

of FY21*



JULY 1, 2020
At the start of the fiscal year, our Center is sheltering more than 1,300 individuals for **Operation Shelter to Home**.

OCTOBER 31–NOVEMBER 3, 2020
Hall B serves as a **polling location** for the 2020 Presidential General Election.

JANUARY 26, 2021
San Diego City Council unanimously approves **funding to extend** Operation Shelter to Home until March.



MARCH 9–10, 2021
COVID-19 **vaccines available** to shelter residents and staff.

MARCH 23, 2021
Adult **shelter residents** **move** to the City's reconfigured shelters.

MARCH 27, 2021
The first 500 children arrive as part of **Operation Artemis**, the federal emergency intake site for unaccompanied children.



APRIL 6, 2021
Governor Newsom announces "Beyond the Blueprint" guidance for **large events to resume** in California in Summer 2021.

JUNE 30, 2021
Operation Artemis winds down and Convention Center **staff prepare to reopen for events** on August 1, 2021.



*July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021



OPERATION SHELTER *to Home*

As COVID-19 became a serious public health concern in March 2020, our team began coordinating with customers on the cancellation or rescheduling of dozens of events. Like most other venues across the country, we soon realized we would likely not host any events for several months or more. At the same time, our leadership began discussions with the City and County about transforming our Convention Center into a temporary shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness. Opening the Convention Center for this purpose would allow for greater physical distancing within existing shelter facilities and provide greater access to health services, mental health support and reliable food sources as COVID-19 began to spread.

Operation Shelter to Home offered services similar to other shelters, including 24-hour security, meals, showers, bathrooms, laundry services, case managers and housing navigation. The County of San Diego provided mental health and medical services. In collaboration with Smart City and ON Site, we installed large projectors and Wi-Fi access to provide residents with full connectivity for work, school or other needs.

As a result of this collaborative and bipartisan effort, we eventually housed more than 1,300 residents at a time. Between April 2020 and March 2021, the operation served over 4,000 individuals and helped more than 1,300 individuals and 43 families find permanent or longer-term housing.

During a time when we were not able to fulfill our purpose as an economic driver for the region, Operation Shelter to Home represented an incredible opportunity for our team and facility to continue to serve our community.

April 2020 – March 2021

“What this experience has demonstrated is that we can come together to address people’s homelessness. We can create the ecosystem of services and service providers that addresses the needs of the individual. This will now guide our efforts as we move toward ending chronic homelessness.”

**— San Diego Mayor
Todd Gloria**



PHYSICALLY DISTANT BUT CIVICALLY ENGAGED

Between October 31 and November 3, we served as one of the County of San Diego’s super polling locations for the 2020 Presidential General Election. Onsite voting took place in Hall B and ballot drop-off was available on our Front Drive. Staff and visitors fully complied with safety protocols and we did not have any known cases of COVID-19 among poll workers or voters.

1 MILLION + MEALS

Our food and beverage team served more than one million meals to residents of Operation Shelter to Home. As explained by Sodexo Live! District Manager Bobby Ramirez in February 2021:

“The operation is seven days per week with multiple meal servings per day. In our line of business, we know how to feed a lot of people—sometimes tens of thousands per day—so we know how to be nimble and solve problems. Our top priority continues to be the safety and health of our consumers and employees amid the biggest health crisis the world has seen in the last 100 years. I am truly grateful for the dedication and commitment our team has shown.”



Regional Partners

City of San Diego • County of San Diego • Regional Task Force on Homelessness
San Diego Housing Commission • Homeless Services Providers



OPERATION ARTEMIS March – July 2021

Our humanitarian operations did not end with the closing of the homeless shelter. As the last of the adult shelter residents moved into permanent housing or reconfigured shelters in March 2021, and as events continued to cancel through the summer due to ongoing restrictions in California, we were once again called to meet an urgent need. This time, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services requested our assistance with temporarily housing unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the United States.

We welcomed the first group of 500 children just a few days after Operation Shelter to Home concluded. The children were 5 to 17 years old, primarily girls from Central America who were previously staying in crowded facilities at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Our food and beverage team provided nutritious meals, local nonprofit SBCS led social services, Rady Children’s Hospital provided medical care, and the San Diego County Office of Education provided educational services. Numerous subcontractors provided additional services while other organizations helped with enrichment activities on a volunteer basis. Between March and July 2021, more than 2,400 children reunited with family members or sponsors in the United States.



EXPERIENCES

“From day one, the San Diego Emergency Intake Site accomplished this mission and served as a model for other emergency intake sites. I’m grateful to all of the staff, volunteers, local leaders and people across neighboring communities who supported this temporary shelter and stepped up to support the children.”

— Xavier Becerra, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary

“Our Convention Center showed the world leadership by demonstrating an unmatched ability to reimagine its facility to help unsheltered individuals and unaccompanied migrant children.”

— Nathan Fletcher, Chair, San Diego County Board of Supervisors

“Thousands of vulnerable children hoping to escape unimaginable conditions in their home countries needed San Diego’s help—and the people of San Diego responded.”

— San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria

“I know that the majority if not all of the youth that we’ve interacted within this time, they left the convention center feeling ten times more of a human being than when they entered”

— Natasha Salgado of Logan Heights Community Development Corporation (Union-Tribune interview, August 2021)





The San Diego Convention Center is the region's premier gathering place, hosting conventions, trade shows and community events that economically benefit the City of San Diego and advance our convention and tourism industry.

