

OPINION CHALLENGE: If you ran San Diego, how would you address homelessness?

We wondered: NBA legend Bill Walton has criticized San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria over the city's growing and unsafe homeless encampments and was criticized himself for not offering solutions. If you were mayor, what would you do to address homelessness and balance rights of the unsheltered and the rest of the community?



Downtown, San Diego, CA - May 18, 2022 in San Diego, CA., rows of tents along 16th Street in downtown San Diego. (Nelvin C. Cepeda / The San Diego Union-Tribune)

San Diego Suited to Try Something New

By Robert A. Rauch

George Mullen is the founder of [Sunbreak Ranch](#), a very entrepreneurial solution to homelessness. While Mullen envisions this as a national solution, he and I agree the first one of these Sunbreak Ranch sites should be in San Diego.

Sunbreak is designed to be a large-scale temporary ranch in the layout of the old California ranchos. It will be a creative, one-of-a-kind location featuring 35-plus amenities and benefits that strive to make the ranch the best possible temporary home for our homeless brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors.

The best location for this is on the federal lands just east of Interstate 15 on the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. This location is at the heart of our county and easily accessible to everyone. From Interstate 15, exit on Miramar Way, and you are there.

Sunbreak Ranch will be the solution center for homelessness as it is designed to welcome all homeless persons, all of whom may come and go as they please. Individuals can reside in a community tent or camp on their own in a series of designated (and protected) areas for families, single mothers, elderly people, veterans, those with dogs, and others as needed.

What will Sunbreak Ranch look like? There will be portable toilets and portable showers, mess halls, medical tents, storage facilities and onsite service providers. These will include dedicated teams of mental health professionals, drug rehabilitation specialists and vocational trainers. There will be a free daily shuttle service going to and from Downtown San Diego. Sunbreak will have private security as well as a permanent 24/7 police outpost to provide safety and security to all residents.

Sunbreak's goal is focused on diagnosing each person's unique situation, and then assisting every able person back to work and independent living. For those unable, the goal is to get them the services that will best help them. With a safe Sunbreak housing option available to all homeless persons in need, public loitering, camping, littering, defecating, urinating, illicit drug use and petty theft on the streets, canyons and river basins would no longer be permitted.

San Diego has the nation's finest year-round weather and ample adjacent federal lands, making it the perfect test site for a national solution to homelessness. If Sunbreak proves successful in San Diego, this homeless strategy could be quickly replicated up the West Coast, and then across the nation.

Now is the time as homelessness has created challenges that will only get worse if not fixed. The cost of this experiment is likely to be far less than we are currently spending.



Proposed federal land site for Sunbreak Ranch — Miramar Way exit on Interstate 15.

Robert Rauch is a San Diego civic leader and widely known as the “[Hotel Guru](#)”. He is CEO of RAR Hospitality.

UT article link: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/story/2022-10-21/opinion-if-you-ran-san-diego-how-would-you-address-homelessness>