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# Sunbreak Ranch Is the Answer to San Diego — and America's — Homeless Crisis

By George Mullen and Bill Walton



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

Americans who live in or near an urban population center are facing a series of homeless crises that have become the number one issue of our day.

We can either rise to the occasion and tackle this challenge, or we can let the destructive, cruel, and inhumane downward spiral continue. We have a choice.

Most of us can no longer walk or bicycle our downtown city streets, sidewalks, and parks without facing an obstacle course of tents, bodies, human excrement, needles, trash, and a slew of walking-zombies that are impossible to distinguish between which

ones are just down on their luck and which ones are out-of-control substance abusers about to attack us.

We, the civilized taxpayers of our society, are being forced to cede our cities and parks to lawlessness. And that just cycles ever-downward into only more lawlessness.

The social compact of our once great civilized society is disappearing before our eyes — American cities en masse are nose-diving.

In San Diego we have had enough. We are no longer going to follow other once-great American cities into the abyss of homelessness, lawlessness, and roadside shantytowns.

San Diegans are coming together in a grassroots effort to propose an innovative program of what should be the homeless solution for America. It's called [Sunbreak Ranch](#).

A Sunbreak is defined as “*a breaking forth of the sun at sunrise; a new beginning*”.

Ranch evokes a large open space environment with fresh air to foster revival and rejuvenation.

The Sunbreak Ranch motto is “*New Beginnings for Homeless People in Transition*”.

There are more than 580,000 persons currently living and sleeping on the streets and canyons of the United States today.

In San Diego, the true (unreported) homeless numbers are likely significantly more than 20,000 in the city proper, and 45,000 countywide.

Too many of us have been numbed into thinking this carnage is a fait accompli.

It is not.

The vast majority of cities around the world are not committing city-suicide via homelessness like we are. This includes cities rich and poor, large and small.

Homelessness is a serious and catastrophic problem.

It certainly can, and must, be managed humanely, compassionately, and within the context of a civilized, law-abiding society.

Sunbreak Ranch has three straightforward and achievable goals:

First, provide real help to our homeless brothers and sisters (and stop pretending that allowing them to sleep, urinate, and defecate on our city streets is helpful or humane to anyone).

Second, clean up our cities.

Third, return our cities to the Rule of Law, which is the key component of our social compact and all great civilized and sustainable societies.

Sunbreak Ranch 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 fellow citizens.

Sunbreak Ranch will maintain a “*clean, healthy, safe and secure environment*” for everyone at all times.

To put Sunbreak in motion, we are proposing a bold new strategy called *Federal Leadership, Local Control*.

We need the federal government to partner with us in the launch of Sunbreak.

Once launched though, the role of the federal government ends. From this point onward, the locals (who always best understand their communities) take full operational control and responsibility of Sunbreak.

The best location in San Diego for this beta test is on the unused empty federal lands just east of Interstate 15 on the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar.

This location is at the geographic and population heart of San Diego County (pop. 3.3 million) and easily accessible to everyone.

From Interstate 15, exit Miramar Way, head east, and you are there.

Sunbreak Ranch will be the location and solution center for homelessness.

It is designed to welcome all homeless persons, each 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.

Sunbreak Ranch will span 2000-acres with vast open space surrounding it.

There will be portable toilets and portable showers, mess halls, medical tents, storage facilities and onsite service providers including dedicated teams of mental health professionals, substance abuse rehabilitation specialists and vocational trainers.

There will be free daily shuttle service going to and from Downtown San Diego (only 12 miles away).

Sunbreak will have private security as well as a permanent 24/7 public police station in order to maintain a “*clean, healthy, safe and secure environment*” for everyone at all times.

Sunbreak’s approach will be focused on diagnosing each person’s unique situation. And then will assist every able person back to work and independent living.

For those unable, Sunbreak will 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 substance use and criminal activity on our streets, parks, canyons, and river basins will no longer be permitted, and strictly enforced.

San Diego has the nation’s best year-round weather and ample adjacent federal lands, making it the perfect site for the start of a national solution to homelessness. Sunbreak will soon prove successful in San Diego and can then be quickly replicated up the west coast and across America.

We need help in three ways to launch the Sunbreak initiative:

1. We need our U.S. President / federal government to lease 2000-acres of MCAS Miramar land to Sunbreak Ranch at \$1 per year, and to designate this land as a temporary “*federal emergency homeless help zone*”. This will eliminate local red tape and opposition.

2. We need our U.S. President / federal government to deploy our military and security services to build a tent city for Sunbreak Ranch on this site with surplus equipment from the Afghan and Iraq deployments. Our military and security services have the manpower, expertise, and equipment to build out this entire tent city within weeks.

3. The cost of this Sunbreak experiment is minimal compared to the untold tens of billions of dollars currently being spent (to no avail) on homelessness annually.

To prove the viability of Sunbreak, we need significant individual philanthropists or organizations to step up and seed-fund this three-year Sunbreak initiative with up to \$275 million.

With the proviso that when this program succeeds, the federal government will step in and begin fully funding a Sunbreak Ranch outside of every major U.S. metropolitan center that agrees to return to the Rule of Law on their streets.

Homelessness is ultimately a public sector responsibility, but we first need the private sector and philanthropists to illuminate the pathway forward.

The potential upside here is beyond comparison to any other issue facing America.

The successful implementation of Sunbreak Ranch will save hundreds of thousands of lives, alleviate widespread suffering, unlock unfathomable human potential, and clean up America's cities for all of us.

Sunbreak is a unique program where everyone wins. A “*clean, healthy, safe and secure environment*” will be provided for those who desperately need it; our homeless brothers and sisters will have the opportunity to turn their lives around; and our cities will be returned to civilized normalcy.

We invite everyone to join our Sunbreak effort. Let's get to work.

About the all-volunteer authors: *Mullen is Chairman of [Sunbreak Ranch](#) and Walton is a former NBA basketball player and Hall of Famer. Both are natives of San Diego.*

Link to article: <https://timesofsandiego.com/opinion/2023/01/14/sunbreak-ranch-is-the-answer-to-san-diego-and-americas-homeless-crisis/>