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EXHIBIT/DOCUMENT LOG**

**MEETING DATE & AGENDA NO. 04/21/2026 #26**

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**PUBLIC DOCUMENTS (Alphabetical)**

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A	Carlos Donato	3-Page Document
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Center for Tobacco  
and the Environment

**SDSU**

## Why San Diego Must Adopt a Consistent Smoke-Free Outdoor Dining Policy

San Diego's current approach to smoking in and near outdoor dining is **inconsistent with its identity as a healthy, progressive metropolitan center** and out of step with virtually every other major jurisdiction in the County. A clear and consistent policy banning smoking in outdoor dining areas will:

- **Protect public health** by eliminating second- and thirdhand smoke exposure for workers and patrons.
- **Align City policy with regional norms and expectations** so San Diegans don't have unequal protections compared to residents in neighboring cities.
- **Reinforce San Diego's brand as a healthy destination for residents, workers, and visitors.**

### 1. Health and Safety: There Is No Neutral Ground on Second-Hand Smoke

Medical and public-health science is unequivocal: **secondhand smoke exposure is harmful at any level**. Even short exposures outdoors can deliver fine particulates and toxic chemicals to non-smokers. Smoke contains dozens of known carcinogens and irritants, and no credible health agency considers outdoor exposure in dining settings "safe." ([County of San Diego](#))

Additionally, recent local research shows that **toxic tobacco residue (thirdhand smoke)** lingers on outdoor dining surfaces and on patrons' hands long after a cigarette is extinguished — exposing diners and employees to residual chemicals that pose real risks. ([policycte.sdsu.edu](#))

Outdoor settings are not free of risk. **Wind currents, proximity, and clustering at dining tables mean that smoke drifts toward non-smokers**, undermining their health and comfort.

### 2. The Policy Gap: San Diego Is the Largest City in the County Without This Protection

San Diego currently lacks a **comprehensive** smoke-free outdoor dining policy. While some restaurants operating under the **Spaces as Places** program prohibit smoking, there is **no citywide standard** guaranteeing smoke-free outdoor dining areas for all residents, workers, and visitors. ([policycte.sdsu.edu](#))

By contrast:

- **15 of 19 San Diego County jurisdictions already have comprehensive outdoor dining smoking bans.** ([policycte.sdsu.edu](#))

- Nearby cities like **Carlsbad, Chula Vista, Coronado, Del Mar, Encinitas, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, National City, Oceanside, and Solana Beach** explicitly prohibit smoking in outdoor dining patios. ([Smoke-Free San Diego](#))
- The **County of San Diego** enforces an outdoor dining ban in unincorporated areas, consistent with public health objectives. ([County of San Diego](#))

In practical terms, someone in downtown San Diego seeking outdoor dining may be **less protected here than in smaller neighboring cities** — a policy incongruence that undermines equity and public health leadership.

### 3. Economic and Public Expectations: There Is No Material Harm

**Evidence consistently shows that smoke-free dining policies do not hurt restaurant revenues.** Numerous evaluations — including studies of California’s indoor smoking ban from the 1990s – demonstrate neutral or positive economic outcomes for hospitality businesses after implementing smoke-free policies. ([County of San Diego](#))

Local opinion data reinforce this:

- **78% of San Diego residents support a ban on smoking in all outdoor dining areas**, including a majority of current tobacco users. ([SDSU Center for Tobacco and the Environment](#))
- **Restaurant professionals overwhelmingly prefer smoke-free patios**, with most indicating the policy wouldn’t harm business operations. ([SDSU Center for Tobacco and the Environment](#))

These figures suggest that a ban would **meet public expectations** without imposing commercial distress.

### 4. Worker Protection: A Moral and Legal Imperative

San Diego’s hospitality workers spend **hours each shift surrounded by smoke** unless there is a standard policy to protect them. Current state outdoor air quality protections do not extend comprehensively to outdoor dining settings — meaning **workers are left unprotected by default**. ([American Legal Publishing](#))

A city policy would:

- Standardize protections for **all restaurant workers**.
- Align outdoor policy with indoor smoke-free workplace norms already upheld by law.
- Reduce occupational exposures linked to heart disease, asthma, lung irritation, and other conditions.

### 5. Regional Leadership and San Diego’s Healthy Identity

San Diego markets itself as a **healthy, outdoor-oriented city** — a place where people live well and take pride in clean air, active lifestyles, and environmental stewardship.

A comprehensive smoke-free outdoor dining policy would:

- **Reinforce that identity** with a clear commitment to public health.
- Close a policy gap that currently sets San Diego apart from its peers in a negative way.
- Send a consistent message: **public spaces where people eat should be free from involuntary toxic exposures.**

## **Conclusion: A Necessary and Practical Step Forward**

San Diego's City Council has a straightforward choice:

- Continue to tolerate an awkward policy gap that compromises public health and offers unequal protections compared to surrounding cities.

**OR**

- Adopt a **comprehensive smoke-free outdoor dining ordinance** that protects workers, residents, and visitors; aligns with regional norms; reflects public sentiment; and strengthens San Diego's standing as a healthy city.

Public health imperatives, local data, and regional momentum all favor the latter. The only question is **when**, not **if** San Diego should act.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for assistance and further information at SDSU Center for Tobacco and the Environment: [tobacco.center@sdsu.edu](mailto:tobacco.center@sdsu.edu) .