

City and County
of San Francisco



Board of Supervisors,
District 6

MATT DORSEY

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NEWS RELEASE

‘San Francisco Recovers’ strategy takes aim at street-level drug dealing, incentivizing recovery — and saving lives

‘San Franciscans are demanding solutions as big as our problems,’ Supervisor Dorsey says of ambitious approach based on successful drug market interventions in U.S. and Europe

SAN FRANCISCO (Sept. 6, 2022) — Supervisor Matt Dorsey was today joined by Supervisors Rafael Mandelman and Catherine Stefani in announcing a groundbreaking first step toward a comprehensive citywide strategy to reduce drug overdose deaths, incentivize recovery for those struggling with substance use disorders, and end street-level drug dealing and open-air drug scenes. Dubbed “San Francisco Recovers,” the ambitious approach will be introduced as a Board of Supervisors resolution later today in which relevant city departments and commissions will be urged to report back on needed resources and barriers to progress, enabling the Board to begin forging consensus on evidence-based solutions.

Since January 2020, drug overdoses have claimed the lives of nearly 1,700 San Franciscans, surpassing nearly twice over COVID-19’s lethality during the same time period. The city’s continuing fatal drug overdose crisis has been paralleled by sharp increases in overt drug markets and associated crime, with police department seizures of fentanyl from street-level drug dealers currently on pace to post a 10-fold increase since 2020 by year’s end.

“San Franciscans are demanding solutions as big as our problems, and none of the problems facing our City right now are more visible, more destructive, or more deadly than rampant street-level drug dealing, open-air drug scenes and overdoses,” said **Supervisor Matt Dorsey**.

“The resolution my colleagues and I are introducing today begins the important work of scoping ‘San Francisco Recovers,’ the comprehensive, coordinated and sustained citywide strategy we need to make the kind of progress San Franciscans expect of us. It is based on proven drug market intervention and public health strategies that have worked in major cities in the U.S. and Europe. Perhaps most important, it starts by doing the necessary groundwork of engaging with more than two-dozen relevant city departments and commissions, and then holding accountable all of us on the Board of Supervisors for ensuring that our city’s response is thoughtful, well coordinated and fully funded.”

“I’m incredibly grateful to my co-sponsors in this endeavor, Supervisors Catherine Stefani and Rafael Mandelman, for joining me in this comprehensive citywide approach,” Dorsey added. “My thanks as well to City Attorney David Chiu, whose civil litigation settlements with opioid manufacturers provides much-needed funding that will enable us to maximize the impact of existing citywide resources for years to come.”

“San Francisco’s future demands that we end open-air drug scenes. This resolution lays out a path to get there. Residents, small business owners, and visitors are justifiably frustrated that despite our \$600 million behavioral health budget, hundreds of people continue to die of overdoses year after year. ‘San Francisco Recovers’ calls on all of city government to upend the status quo of unmitigated suffering on our streets, and I look forward to working alongside Supervisor Dorsey to make real this vision,” said **Supervisor Rafael Mandelman**.

“We have thousands of people slowly dying on our streets and we must do everything we can to make sure that people struggling from addiction get the help they need. It’s time to end the open air drug markets, get fentanyl off our streets, reduce overdoses, and get people into recovery,” said **Supervisor Catherine Stefani**.

The resolution identifies significant financial recoveries that San Francisco City Attorney David Chiu has thus far secured from his office’s ongoing opioid litigation, with settlements against six defendants to date securing more than \$100 million to be used solely for drug abatement in San Francisco over the next several years. The resolution adds that “a prudent and appropriate use of abatement funds would be to scope, develop and implement a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained citywide plan like San Francisco Recovers.” Further financial recoveries are also expected in City Attorney Chiu’s opioid litigation against Walgreens.

The 21-page resolution and accompanying resolution digest will be introduced at the Board of Supervisors later today to begin a process aimed at forging requisite political consensus in scoping the citywide strategy that will address fatal drug overdoses, open-air drug scenes and associated harms in the following respects:

- By incentivizing and better supporting recovery from substance-use disorders (SUDs);
- By ending street-level drug dealing, open-air drug scenes, and associated harms and public nuisances; and
- By requesting more than two-dozen city departments and commissions to report to the Board of Supervisors as specified to identify existing resources, needed resources, current policies and practices, and barriers to progress.

As envisioned in the proposed resolution, San Francisco Recovers' approach closely follows strategies employed in several European and American cities — all referenced by footnotes in the proposed board resolution — that have successfully mitigated open-air drug-markets and their myriad harms like those now plaguing San Francisco. It also takes action to finally implement five recommendations of the 2021 S.F. Street-Level Drug Dealing Task Force. The resolution's strategic scoping exercise organizes proposed and existing programs into five categories that San Francisco Recovers will center, which owing to various factors may then be prioritized for near-term, medium-term or long-term implementations:

1. Public health objectives and programs
2. Criminal justice objectives and programs
3. "Right to Recovery" programs
4. "Sober New Deal" programs
5. Enhanced transparency objectives and programs

In addition to designating opioid litigation recoveries as seed funding for San Francisco Recovers, the resolution also urges the establishment of recovery by any evidence-based route as the primary objective of public health policy for those diagnosed with substance-use disorders in the City and County of San Francisco, and further provides that harm-reduction strategies may be appropriate and necessary incremental interventions in support of the city's primary public policy objective for SUDs.

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