

MISSION TIMES COURIER

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SDSU building non-student housing



San Diego State University plans to build 250 apartments for seniors, ranging from independent living to assisted living and even includes 26 memory care units near Snapdragon Stadium. Read more on page 3. (Photo courtesy Pink Media Productions/San Diego State University)

COVER STORY

College-Rolando Library will lose parking spaces as construction begins next door

College-Rolando Library leaders are bracing for a situation similar to 2017 when parking spaces were reduced. The property owner next door, in a partnership with Houston-based The Dinerstein Cos., is developing the former church site and shared parking lot into a five-story building that shares 25 parking spots with the library. “We are in great angst here,” said Jan Hintzman, president of the College-Rolando branch Friends of the Library. The College-Rolando area does not have a community center, so the library takes on that role, with a summer lunch program, weekly produce distribution, after-school homework assistance and a voting center. PAGE 2

DINING

Health inspectors closing more restaurants for vermin violations

Twice as many eateries were closed last year compared to just four years ago, according to public records obtained by Times of San Diego. The increase has led to high-profile closures of everything from fancy restaurants in luxury hotels to San Diego's oldest bar, to its only lesbian bar, and even new venues. PAGE 8



PARKING

Parking tickets on the rise at Cowles Mountain

San Diego's Municipal Code requires drivers who park on streets with grades of 3% or more to turn their wheels toward or away from the curb, depending on whether the vehicle is pointed downhill or uphill. Nowhere else in the city are parking officers more likely to issue violations than at Cowles Mountain, which has been the top spot for the violations since 2025. The 889 wheel-cramping citations issued on Golfcrest Drive so far this year have generated an estimated \$79,565 in fines, based on the city's \$86.50 penalty for the violation. PAGE 4



Loss of parking at College-Rolando Library may keep patrons away

By Drew Sitton
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — 2017 was a hard year at the College-Rolando Library.

Circulation dropped by two-thirds. Community groups shifted meetings to a now-shuttered church. Visits dropped by 30%. Use of children's programs at the library, the only public space in the community other than a 1.4-acre park, also fell by half, according to Friends of the Library documents.

The drop can be attributed to a single cause: Lack of parking.

In December 2016, a new property owner purchased the lot next to the library and put up fencing that blocked access to the Montezuma Road entrance and dozens of parking spots that library patrons previously used.

When the fencing came down thanks to a new joint-use agreement, library visits bounced back.

But now library leaders are bracing for a situation similar to 2017 as green fences go up once again. The property owner, in a partnership with Houston-based The Dinerstein Cos., is developing the former church site and shared parking lot into a five-story building that shares 25 parking spots with the library.

"We are in great angst here," said Jan Hintzman, president of the College-Rolando branch Friends of the Library.

The College-Rolando area does not have a community center, so the library takes on that role, with a summer lunch program, weekly produce distribution, after-school homework assistance and a voting center. It also serves as a cool zone during heat waves, which is particularly important to elderly College-Rolandans who lack air conditioning in older homes.

"The reality is that a lot of these programs are not going to work without parking," said Julie Hamilton, president of the College Area Community Council. "It's a hub. It's all we have, frankly."

The library, located at 6600 Montezuma, has a parking lot and private driveway designed in 2002. That year, the city struck a joint-use agreement with College Lutheran Church once located at 6650 Montezuma to build a 31-spot parking lot and exit that could be shared. The



A sign redirects library patrons to another entrance of the College-Rolando Library due to repairs. (Photo by Drew Sitton/Times of San Diego)

joint-use agreement included an option for the city to buy the property if it went up for sale. Library patrons could also use an additional 72 spaces around the church if other spots were full.

The library, and its \$156,000 city-constructed parking lot, opened in 2005. Library visitors used that shared church parking except during its temporary closure in 2017, but that will stop once this year's construction begins.

That's expected in mid-August, according to library spokesperson Caleb Olsen, with plans to keep close to 30 library parking spaces open through all stages of construction. It would start with a sewer project on city property before the construction site is rearranged after a few weeks to begin building on the private property side for the next two years.

The start date could be pushed back. The city's Department of Development Services is actively reviewing an amendment for small changes made to the plans, including eliminating one elevator.

The original permit, issued in June 2025, was for a building consisting of 125 extended-stay rental units (hotel non-transient units) and 57 multi-family apartment units. CBRE, which facilitated the agreement between the property owner and Dinerstein, described its use as student housing in a mixed-use building.

The Dinerstein Cos., which specializes in student housing nationwide, could not be reached for comment.

Hintzman believes the project includes 160 indoor resident-only parking spots

and an additional 25 outdoor parking spots that library patrons may use.

But Friends of the Library are concerned that once construction ends, an influx of residents sharing the same driveways to Montezuma and Mohawk Street will compromise library access. Residents might use those spots too.

"There's going to be all these people trying to use this little bit of parking," Hintzman said. "This is going to affect this library forever after... How do you share something when there's nothing to share?"

Street parking is limited on nearby streets, including Montezuma and El Cajon Boulevard.

"When people say, 'well I can't find a place to park, where should I go?' What do we tell them?" Hintzman said. "There isn't any place."

Hamilton noted that the closest trolley station is technically within walking distance, but is a steep trek on a busy corridor.

"You'd be hard pressed to walk your child up it, or your grandma," Hamilton said.

There is a nearby bus station, but not everyone would be willing to take public transportation to pick up books, media items and meals from the library.

Hamilton wishes the city pushed for a reciprocal easement for the development to use the library driveway on Mohawk, and the library to use the Montezuma driveway as a way to negotiate for better parking terms for the 25 spots.

"(The city) had so many opportunities

to require this project to provide parking, and they just didn't do it," Hamilton said.

Complaints over how the city neglected to put the public and its library first trace back to 2016, when the church alerted the city it was selling the Montezuma site. The city had the option to buy because of the money it invested in building the parking lot and could have added a park or community center or expanded the library for a neighborhood with few public amenities.

However, the city did not buy the property, which is "a terribly, horribly bad, awful, stupid decision," Hintzman said.

Despite residual frustration over the decision, and the city's later lack of attention to creating better parking access, Hintzman is trying to move forward. That includes communicating with the public that the library is still open and looking for long-term solutions for new parking.

"(The developers) have an interest in having a good project, just like we have an interest as a public in having a library," Hintzman said. "So, let's bring these interests together."

By some metrics, the College-Rolando Library is punching above its weight. The branch serves 52,000 people, the fifth-highest number of any library in the city. That population has a median income of \$51,567, making it the fourth-lowest of any library population in the city.

The library, which serves more people and a poorer population that is quickly diversifying, had the highest circulation rate of the five branches with the lowest median family income level. In fiscal year 2023, 78,000 items were checked out, or 1.5 items per person.

In summer 2026, the library had about 500 visitors per day, or 62 entries per hour. Friends of the Library leaders worry construction, and the new development, will cut into that success.

"They think we're exaggerating because we love our library. We're little old ladies," Hintzman said. "We can't get attention (to) the fact that we are a big library serving a lot of people, and we're serving them really, really well. And you're destroying it because there's no parking."

SDSU to build senior housing — for older adults, not students

By Drew Sitton
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — Many seniors at San Diego State University take time to reflect on what they have experienced, build fond memories and prepare for the future.

But seniors in their final year of school aren't the only group in that same transition period. A new housing project will bring a very different group of seniors, made up of older adults, onto SDSU's Mission Valley campus to relive their cherished youth.

In partnership with senior living facilitator Merrill Gardens, developer Pillar Properties, and Solana Beach-based healthcare real estate developer PMB, San Diego State University plans to build 250 apartments for seniors, ranging from independent living to assisted living and even includes 26 memory care units.

"The vision for this project is rooted in SDSU's commitment to serve our intergenerational SDSU community," said SDSU President Adela de la Torre in the school's media center. "We can't wait to see SDSU alumni, retired faculty, and so many others take advantage of this unique living environment to deepen their relationship with SDSU."

In addition to apartments, the project includes a restaurant and bistro, a community room, a fitness center, a rooftop deck, a pool and an outdoor courtyard.

The seven-story building is awaiting approval from the California State University governing Board of Trustees.



The seven-story project includes amenities like a restaurant and fitness center, as well as memory care units. (Rendering courtesy Ural Architecture/San Diego State University)

Construction may begin in 2027, with residents able to move in as early as 2030.

SDSU students will have the opportunity to intern or work at the senior housing project, as well as join an intergenerational community.

The older adults will have access to campus programming and lifelong learning opportunities. Plus, they will be living in an intellectually stimulating environment in a walkable neighborhood with transit and other amenities.

"A senior living community can not only integrate seamlessly into a university master plan, but also enhance campus vibrancy, catalyze additional development, and promote meaningful intergenerational relationships among residents, students, faculty and visitors," Nolan Weinberg, senior vice president of development at PMB, said in a press release. "We believe this is a model worth replicating."

The development is part of a growing trend nationally of universities either partnering with or building retirement communities. A lot of the incentive is financial: it brings new and diverse revenue to colleges that may be facing declining enrollment.

Plus, it fills a growing housing need amid a boom in seniors— and seniors facing homelessness.

There are social benefits as well, as young and old adults develop intergenerational ties. Seniors gain access to campus amenities like sports events, theater shows and lectures. Those types of opportunities, as well as taking classes and being a lifelong learner, can slow cognitive decline.

The university is building the senior housing as part of the major redevelopment of SDSU Mission Valley approved by voters in 2018. The plan includes 4,600 housing units, a hotel, retail space, research and innovation space, and 80 acres of parks and open space surrounding Snapdragon Stadium.

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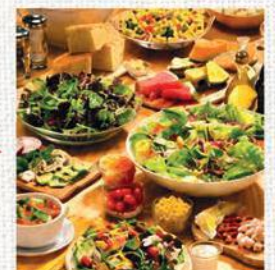
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Cowles Mountain hikers getting parking tickets for not cramping wheels

By Dorian Hargrove
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN CARLOS — From early morning to sunset, hikers' cars fill both sides of Golfcrest Drive at the base of the city of San Diego's highest peak, Cowles Mountain in San Carlos.

And while Cowles boasts the city's highest elevation, it also has the highest number of parking tickets issued to drivers who fail to "cramp" their wheels.

San Diego's Municipal Code requires drivers who park on streets with grades of 3% or more to turn their wheels toward or away from the curb, depending on whether the vehicle is pointed downhill or uphill. Nowhere else in the city are parking officers more likely to issue violations than at Cowles Mountain, which has been the top spot for the violations since 2025.

Parking officers have issued 889 citations there since January, according to

city data. That's 367 more than at La Jolla Shores Drive, the second-highest location for wheel-cramping tickets this year.

The 889 wheel-cramping citations issued on Golfcrest Drive so far this year have generated an estimated \$79,565 in fines, based on the city's \$86.50 penalty for the violation.

The rise in wheel-cramping violations at Cowles Mountain began in 2024.

In 2023, Golfcrest did not rank among the city's top 10 locations. That year, parking enforcement officers issued 155 wheel-cramping citations, ranking Golfcrest 11th citywide.

That changed in 2024.

The number of wheel-cramping tickets soared, climbing nearly fourfold to 572 citations, making it the third-highest spot behind Juan Street in Old Town and La Jolla Shores Drive.

In 2025, 1,128 wheel-cramping citations were issued on Golfcrest Drive, 225 more



Wheel cramping sign on Golfcrest Drive at the base of Cowles Mountain (Photo by Dorian Hargrove/Times of San Diego)

than at Juan Street in Old Town, the second-highest location.

From January through Aug. 1, Golfcrest remains at the top of the list for wheel-cramping tickets.

While hikers at Cowles Mountain received the highest number of tickets, parking enforcement officers throughout San Diego have been cracking down on

drivers who fail to curb their wheels.

Last year, parking officers issued 19,086 wheel-cramping citations, the highest number of parking violations in at least five years, resulting in \$1,565,571 in fines.

So, what is driving the increase? San Diego Police Lt. Cesar Jimenez says it has more to do with staffing than anything else, and in no way is it a response to the city's tenuous finances.

"While we cannot know the exact cause of an increase in citations, we can say there was an increase in the number of parking enforcement officers in recent years. In 2024, there were 55 parking enforcement officers; currently, we have 74," Lt. Jimenez wrote in an email to Times of San Diego.

"San Diego Police Department officers and parking enforcement officers have not been directed to increase enforcement to increase revenue nor to hit any type of enforcement quotas, which are illegal," added Jimenez.

Mountain lion seen on camera near hiking path at Mission Trails Park

By Tessa Balc
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — A Point Loma Nazarene University research team captured an image of a mountain lion at Mission Trails Regional Park, a situation officials said is under review, along with other recent sightings.

Mike Mooring is the leader of a student summer research team at PLNU. They monitor 20 cameras of their own within the park. The Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation runs nine cameras concurrently. There are six other cameras scattered nearby by

the San Diego National History Museum.

A still of a mountain lion was captured on a trail camera on June 29, according to the city of San Diego, and multiple other sightings have been reported.

Last month, the city of San Diego, along with Mission Trails Regional Park, put out a notice warning park users and nearby residents of the confirmed report of a sighting on July 23 in Suycott Valley.

Mountain lions are native to the area and generally avoid contact with humans. However, the city's post cautioned hikers to be aware of their surroundings, and to not wear headphones that would impair hearing.

Mission Trails Regional Park, clocking in at about 8,000 acres, is the largest regional park in California, and one of the PLNU team's goals is to identify what large- and medium-sized mammals currently inhabit it.

Mooring said that mountain lions have been spotted near or around the park before, but this is the first sighting the team has had during their observations this year and last. Their camera capture has been the only mountain lion sighting this year.

He and the students were excited to see the mountain lion on camera he said, "both because they are an apex predator

and are seldom seen in San Diego."

Despite hikers' low chances of coming across the "elusive and rare" creatures, it's still good to know what to do. If you see a mountain lion, keep children and pets close, and make yourself look big to scare it off. Do not run the opposite way — it will likely give chase. In the event of a mountain lion attack wildlife experts encourage fighting back.

Call 911 in an emergency. All non-emergency encounters, though, can be submitted through the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Incident Reporting System.

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Proposed Del Cerro multi-story mixed-use building shifts owners

By Nicole Abrams
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — A new developer has taken over plans to build a multi-story mixed-use building located off Del Cerro Boulevard and Madra Avenue.

Jakob Ventures, a San Diego-based venture capital firm, acquired the site from Jeff Katz Architecture in 2025.

In 2022, Katz announced plans to demolish the two buildings in the area, one home to a longtime deli and liquor store and the other a former gym, to build a mixed-use development with over 100 apartment units.

However, the buildings have since sat vacant and construction has not begun. With a new owner, that soon may change.

Times of San Diego reached out to Kevin Woo, the co-founding principal of the family-owned Jakob Ventures, via email to get some updates on the project and learn more about his plans for the development.

In an extensive email response, Woo said that while Jakob Ventures is the new

owner, plans for a multi-story mixed-use project remain unchanged.

“Jakob Ventures acquired the property approximately one year ago with a clear objective: to transform a long-vacant, underutilized site into a thoughtfully designed mixed-use community that provides much-needed middle-income housing, neighborhood-serving retail, and long-term value for Del Cerro,” Woo said.

Woo said that they submitted their building permit application to the city in December and recently received the city’s first round of review comments.

“Our architects and engineers are actively addressing those comments while continuing coordination with SDG&E and our civil, structural, electrical and stormwater consultants,” Woo said.

Woo said that he is unable to provide a specific construction start date until they have completed the engineering coordination as well as the permitting process.

“Our team remains committed to moving the project forward as efficiently as possible,” Woo said.

Woo said that instead of moving forward



The Del Cerro building project was acquired by Jakob Ventures in 2025.
(Photo by Dorian Hargrove/Times of San Diego)

with the previous plans for the building, they took a step back to work through the technical requirements for the project.

Woo said that they made sure to speak with Friends of Del Cerro, Voice of Del Cerro, local business owners and Councilmember Raul Campillo during the process and presented their plans to the Navajo Community Planners.

Woo provided the Navajo Community Planning Group with an update on the development in a November meeting last year.

“At the planning group, we have endeavored to be very fair and to provide a fair

opportunity for everyone—both neighborhood residents and developers—to come in and speak about projects,” Hoy said.

John Hoy, the chair of the Navajo Community Planning Group, said that Woo received a strong negative reaction from neighbors.

Hoy said that the neighbors were concerned about the size of the project, the impact of a project of that magnitude in a single-family neighborhood, and the impact on parking and nearby schools.

“We appreciate the community’s patience throughout this process and remain committed to maintaining an open dialogue as the project continues to move forward,” Woo said.

“Our vision is to create a thoughtfully designed mixed-use community that provides homes for middle-income San Diegans—including teachers, healthcare professionals, first responders, young professionals, and others who increasingly find it difficult to live in the communities they serve—along with neighborhood-serving retail that complements Del Cerro,” Woo said.

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New UCSD study shows exponential rise in e-bike collisions

By Nicole Abrams
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – E-bike collisions have increased exponentially in California, according to a new study from UC San Diego.

Reported e-bike collisions increased from two in 2018 to 1,506 in 2024, according to the study. A larger proportion of injured riders were 14 years old and younger, the study says.

The study also shows that moderate to severe injuries were more common among e-bike riders than traditional bicyclists.

E-bike riders are also more often at fault with unsafe speeds and improper turns cited as notable violation patterns, the study says.

John Austin, a general surgery resident at UCSD and the first author of the study, said that a lot of trauma, injury and epidemiology research involves looking around the community and trying to identify issues.

This study is one of the largest statewide analyses of e-bike injuries to date, according to a release. UCSD researchers analyzed data from the California Highway Patrol's Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System and examined e-bike and traditional bicycle collisions from 2018 through 2024, according to the release.

"I think if you've lived in San Diego long enough, you will recognize that there are a lot of people on e-bikes nowadays," Austin said. "Depending on who you ask, they can be a huge benefit, they can be a fun tool, they can be a nuisance or they can be outright dangerous."

Austin said that in seeing an increase in e-bike usage, the surgeons who worked



Children in La Mesa on e-bikes. La Mesa is one of the local cities that has strengthened e-bike regulations. (Photo by Adrian Childress/Times of San Diego)

on the study wondered if it was connected to a rise in e-bike injuries.

Electric bikes are separated into three classes. A class 1 e-bike is a "low-speed pedal-assisted electrical bicycle", a class 2 e-bike is a "low-speed throttle-assisted electric bicycle" and a class 3 e-bike is a "speed pedal-assisted electric bicycle," according to the California Vehicle Code.

California law does not impose any age requirements on class 1 and class 2 e-bikes, but prohibits anyone under the age of 16 from riding class 3 e-bikes. Although state law does not enforce it, multiple cities in San Diego County enforce a ban on children under 12 from riding e-bikes.

California law also requires children 17 and under to wear a helmet on traditional bikes and type 1 and type 2 e-bikes. Anyone riding a type 3 e-bike must wear a helmet.

Austin said that their biggest takeaway from seeing the data on how many kids are getting injured is that they need to focus on protecting younger e-bike riders and unhelmeted riders.

"It is our onus as both physicians and also influencers of public health to educate the public and also encourage helmet use and encourage parents to understand exactly what they're buying for their children," Austin said.

Austin said that if a collection of general and trauma surgeons come together to say that they have identified an issue in the community, it should be cause for concern.

"Now, the process starts in a collaboration between the medical community, citizens of the community, as well as politicians, to come together and say, 'We think this is going to be the best data-driven evidence in order to help protect the people of San Diego County,'" Austin said.

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San Diego sues engineer over faulty Mission Valley road connector

By Dorian Hargrove
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — The decades-long quest to extend Hazard Center Drive under State Route 163 to serve as a connection to and from Fashion Valley Mall is now a reality and the subject of a new lawsuit from the city of San Diego. The city is suing AECOM, a global infrastructure engineering firm, for negligence and misrepresentation in its design of a concrete channel underneath the Hazard Center Drive connection.

In a non-conformed copy of the lawsuit, obtained by Times of San Diego, attorneys for the city say AECOM errantly designed the Hazard Center Drive Westerly Extension and then allegedly tried to downplay it to city engineers. The faulty design and failure to properly address groundwater intrusion and other issues have resulted in early cracking and groundwater seepage in the concrete slabs and walls.

“After construction was complete, cracking began to appear within the reinforced concrete channel slabs and related structural elements,” reads a portion of the city’s lawsuit.

While the city says the design was faulty, attorneys say it was AECOM’s subsequent haphazard investigation that added to what could be more severe repercussions.

In the complaint, attorneys say in response to the cracks, AECOM agreed to investigate the design and the construction.

After two years’ worth of investigation,

“

‘It is in the very nature of concrete that it cracks.’

From AECOM’s investigation

the complaint alleges AECOM sought to convince the city that the cracking was expected.

“It is in the very nature of concrete that it cracks,” reads an excerpt from AECOM’s investigation cited in the lawsuit. “The shrinkage cracks that the channel has experienced will have no effect on its current or future integrity. Groundwater seepage through the walls and floors will not compromise the structures, affect the function of the structures, cause premature degradation of the reinforcing steel, or shorten the expected life span of these structures.”

The city claims AECOM agreed to keep monitoring the cracking.

In 2022, the company updated the city on what was said to be extensive cracking. At no time, according to the complaint, did AECOM inform the city that the cracking was not expected and was possibly due to faulty design and resulted in a shortened life span than was agreed on.

In 2023, the city commissioned an outside firm to conduct another study of the roadway. That study determined the cracking was due to possible “engineering concerns” that extended beyond routine maintenance.

In its lawsuit, the city now seeks to hold AECOM responsible for the project, any future maintenance and operational costs, as well as other damages.

AECOM did not respond to Times of San Diego’s request for comment in time for publication.



Hazard Center Drive Westerly Expansion. (Photo by Adrian Childress/Times of San Diego)

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Health inspectors closing more restaurants for vermin violations

By Drew Sitton
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — You aren't imagining it. There's been a dramatic spike in the number of San Diego County restaurants shut down by health inspectors.

Twice as many eateries were closed last year compared to just four years ago, according to public records obtained by Times of San Diego.

The increase has led to high-profile closures of everything from fancy restaurants in luxury hotels to San Diego's oldest bar, to its only lesbian bar, and even new venues like the Black Bear Diner in North County, which was closed for health code reasons less than a month after opening.

During annual health inspections, San Diego County inspectors temporarily shut down 524 restaurants in 2025. It was a slight increase, from 508 in 2024, but a much larger jump from 2023, when inspectors red-tagged 374 eateries.

The increase comes even though the county's inspection number and process did not change during that period, according to county spokesperson Donna Durckel.

Inspectors close establishments when they find major health code violations like vermin infestations, lack of potable hot water, sewage issues and other sanitation concerns. Some restaurants were closed multiple times in a year, but those instances were only counted once per year in this analysis that looked at the county's 30,000 annual inspections.

"Our role is to ensure facilities have a plan in place to maintain a vermin-free facility and take steps when they find an infestation in their facility," Durckel said.

The rise of vermin

What is driving the increase in restaurant closures? Vermin.

From 2022 to 2025, vermin-related closures doubled from 211 closures to 442.

Of the 285 restaurant closures in 2022, three-quarters were shut down due to vermin infestations. Vermin were the most common reason for closure every year, accounting for 78% of 374 closures in 2023. In 2024, the number of vermin-related closures jumped to 413, making up 81% of that year's 508 closures. Last year saw the highest number of restaurant closures from infestations, with officials closing 442 food establishments out of 524, 84% of the total closures.

In those cases, health inspectors issued a "major" health code violation after finding active infestations of rodents, insects, birds, or other animals that pose an imminent threat to human health. Evidence of an infestation can include seeing live or dead rodents, live cockroaches, or even signs of their presence, like gnaw marks or droppings.

If an infestation is found, business owners must act before reopening. In some cases, this means sealing entry points where rodents or pests are entering, performing deep cleaning, or hiring a pest control service.

'We just don't know' | The holes in the data

The data provided to Times of San Diego does not indicate what type of infestation, whether rodent, insect, bird, or other animal, is present when closing a restaurant.

While the data does not specify the exact reason for the closure, one thing is certain: an increasing number of restaurants and



Health inspectors are temporarily closing a growing number of San Diego restaurants, often over vermin violations. (Graphic by Drew Sitton/Times of San Diego)

eating establishments are infested with vermin. The two most likely culprits are cockroaches and rats, with the latter being the most likely unwanted kitchen guest.

"If there's more restaurants being closed because of rats, then it's not that big of a leap to assume that there may be more rats," said Niamh Quinn, the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Area Vertebrate Pest Advisor who is based at a research center in Irvine.

The problem, says Quinn, is that many counties, San Diego being one of them, do not track rodent populations.

"We're very bad at measuring how many rats are in our urban areas. So, when we do have outbreaks, like potentially what we have now — potentially — we just don't know, because we've nothing to compare it to," said Quinn.

One international scientific study, published in 2025 in the journal Science Advances, found rat populations grew in many urban areas around the world. The researchers used health inspection data, public complaints and other indicators to show rat populations rose in 11 cities over seven years. While San Francisco and

Oakland were part of the study, San Diego was not because it did not differentiate between rats and other vermin.

Without adequate tracking, experts can only go on reports of infestations. So, exactly what is driving the increase in rodents and insects inside San Diego County kitchens?

"While we don't have proof that instances of rats are going up and down, we do know that we have these changes in chemistries, and changes of climate," said Quinn.

The changes in "chemistries" that Quinn points out are a 2024 ban on an anticoagulant rodenticide, or blood thinner used on rats, which was outlawed due to its impact on predators eating rats and other environmental concerns.

Rodenticide ban

While changing climate patterns is a major contributing factor, recent laws aimed at outlawing the anticoagulant poison that harms the environment might have a more immediate impact.

On Jan. 1, 2024, a new rodenticide ban went into effect in California, collapsing the use of a popular rat poison.

That bill, AB 1322, banned a second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide over wildlife and environmental concerns.

Data from Southern California's agriculture commissioners show that the chemical banned in 2024 was already being used less in 2023 in anticipation of the ban.

That year did see a growth in public health closures, but nothing like what happened in 2024 when the ban went into effect.

There are other rat poisons available, but switching to a fast-acting alternative forced businesses to rework how they manage rat populations.

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Casting a global net: King's Fish House delivers fresh seafood from around the world

By Robin Dohrn-Simpson
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

MISSION VALLEY — Step into King's Fish House in Mission Valley and you slip into New Orleans and the Bayou. The architecture makes you feel like you're in a houseboat in the backwaters enjoying Cajun-inspired food and drink. Black filigree ironwork both on the rooftop and the patio, with lazily rotating fans, reinforces the laissez les bons temps rouler (let the good times roll) vibe.

Although you feel like you're in the Big Easy, this restaurant group started in Southern California, not Louisiana. "We have seven guiding philosophies, of which the most important one is 'guests first'. We offer an unconditional guarantee that we will replace a dish if you don't like it. This way we encourage people to try different foods," Manager Steve Ewing said.

King's has their own distribution system in Santa Ana. Crabs, oysters, lobster, and fish are the highlights of the menu. All fish are purchased from family fishermen and local fishermen as much as possible. "We also get our fish from South America, New Zealand, Florida, Mexico, and Australia. We serve at least ten types of oysters from both the Pacific and Eastern USA," Ewing said.

Currently, the Fish House is featuring the Columbia River Salmon Season. You can enjoy Cedar Plank Wild Salmon, which is dry-rubbed with creole BBQ sauce, or Pan Seared Wild Salmon served with Farro, asparagus, and oyster mushrooms in a garlic cream.



King's Fish House is known for its variety of fresh crabs. (Photo by Robin Dohrn-Simpson)

KING'S FISH HOUSE

Where:
825 Camino De La Reina.

Info:
Reservations are recommended and can be made on [Opentable.com](https://www.opentable.com).
To see the daily menu, visit [kingsfishhouse.com/](https://www.kingsfishhouse.com/).
619-574-1230.

During lobster season, they serve Wild California Spiny Lobster. They also feature Dungeness Crab steamed or with garlic. Ten sushi rolls are on the menu, with the specialties being Yellowtail Carpaccio and Spicy Tuna.

The extensive fish menu offers Yellowfin Tuna, Atlantic Salmon, Mahi Mahi, Mississippi Catfish, Colombian Tilapia, Eastern Sea Scallops, and Swordfish. "All of our fish can be served four ways: char-broiled, baked, fried, or blackened. Our top two popular dishes are the macadamia-crusted halibut and the Miso Yaki Chilean Sea Bass," Ewing said.

They do have gluten-free and vegetarian menus. All fish dishes can be served gluten-free. There are salads, chicken, and a variety of side dishes for those who don't prefer seafood.

Every month there is a Bartender's special craft cocktail and mocktail, made from their own syrups. July's specialty cocktail is "Summer Harvest," which is tequila, muddled raspberries, hibiscus syrup, and Allspice dram - a sweet rum-based liqueur spiced with crushed allspice berries.

July's Zero-Proof cocktail is "Basil & Bloom," which is Lyre's no-alcohol Dry London, basil, lemon, elderflower, and honey.

"We offer a King Crab Honey Blonde beer brewed especially for us by Lost Coast Brewing in Eureka," Ewing said.

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Mark Twain appearing at the San Carlos Branch Library



SAN CARLOS BRANCH LIBRARY

David Ege

Mark Twain will be appearing in person at the San Carlos Branch Library. Join us on Aug. 21 at 2 p.m. for a special presentation of American Literary Heroes by Write Out Loud. This unique program highlights iconic American writers who have left a lasting impact on the social consciousness of the United States, as well as across the globe.

A prolific writer and humorist, Mark Twain has been called “the father of American literature.” Actor, Paul Maley, will bring Mark Twain to life using selections of Twain’s works and bits of his life.

Brain Balance will present Brain Health for Adults on Aug. 28 at 2 p.m. You have heard of neuroplasticity, right? No matter what age, profession, or stage of life

you are in, you will learn about the top pillars of brain health and the best practices to enhance your cognitive, physical, social, and mental well-being for optimal functioning.

Come join us for our Lego Builder Club program on the second and fourth Saturday of every month from 10:30-11:30 a.m. We will be meeting on Aug. 22 to learn, play, and create with Lego bricks. Explore new ideas and share concepts with other attendees. Each creation will be displayed in the library for two weeks. Lego bricks contain small objects, so this program is for children aged 6 and over. Parental supervision is suggested.

Our Youth Chess program is for children ages 18 and under and meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month from 5-7 p.m. Whether you’re new to chess or already know the game, join us to learn rules and strategies, practice your skills, and enjoy friendly matches. Chess helps build focus, problem-solving skills, and confidence — and it’s a ton

of fun to play! Our teen volunteers have worked with children of all ages. Sessions will be held on Aug. 25.

The Junior Innovators STEM Club is a program for elementary and middle school students that is held on the third Tuesday of each month at 4 p.m. Children will work hands-on on a variety of science and math activities. Join us on Aug. 18 for fun and engaging STEM presentations and projects hosted by the Patrick Henry High School Junior Innovators Club.

The San Carlos Friends of the Library Used Book Sale is held on the first Saturday of each month from 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Come buy books and support the Friends of the Library. Ask for a membership envelope from the book sale cashiers to join or donate to the San Carlos Friends of the Library. We are in need of your gently used book donations, which are accepted any time during library open hours.

David Ege is the branch manager for San Carlos Branch Library.

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Wildlife: What to know when you encounter our wild neighbors



MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK

By Jennifer Morrissey

If you’ve been following the news lately, you may have heard about recent mountain lion sightings at Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP).

While an encounter with a mountain lion can certainly be startling, the presence of mountain lions and other wildlife at Mission Trails is also a great reminder that the park provides important habitat for native species in the middle of our urban region.

Of course, there’s much more to Mission Trails wildlife than mountain lions. At more than 8,000 acres, Mission Trails is home to an incredible variety of wildlife. Depending on where and when you visit, you might see mule deer, coyotes, bobcats, rabbits, road-runners, hawks, owls, snakes and many other animals that depend on the park’s open space for food, water and shelter.

Sometimes, the evidence of that wildlife is impossible to miss. I recently walked out onto the terrace at the Visitor Center and found what looked like a tiny crime scene: a trail of black crow feathers and white droppings scattered across the cement. A murder of crows is one thing. This appeared to be a murder of just one crow. We never saw exactly what happened, but it was a vivid reminder that nature at Mission Trails is not always neat or pretty. Animals are hunting, eating and surviving here every day.

And sometimes, wildlife gives us a good laugh. One of our trail cameras recently captured a coyote stopping directly in front of the camera to scoot its backside along the ground. The video quickly took off on social media, earning more than 1.5 million views on Instagram and giving one Mission Trails coyote a very unexpected five minutes of internet fame.

We at the nonprofit Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation (MTRP Foundation) have had an especially interesting window into that wildlife through research cameras placed throughout the park. The cameras have captured everything from coyotes and bobcats to mule deer and,



A mountain lion at Mission Trails Regional Park. (Photo courtesy of Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation)

yes, mountain lions.

Most of this activity happens without park visitors ever knowing it.

That’s one of the things that makes Mission Trails so special. Millions of people live just a short drive from the park, yet wildlife continues to live, hunt, nest and move through this protected open space.

Of course, sharing the park with wildlife also means knowing how to safely enjoy their habitat.

Mountain lions generally avoid people, and encounters are uncommon. If you do see one, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife advises that you do not run or turn your back. Face the animal, make yourself appear larger, make noise and give it a clear way to leave. Keep children close and pets leashed, and never approach a mountain lion or other wildlife.

Those are good practices for encounters with wildlife throughout the park: observe animals from a safe distance, never feed them and give them plenty of space.

Visitors can also help protect wildlife by staying on designated trails and keeping dogs on leash. These simple actions help reduce disturbances to habitat and to the animals that call Mission Trails home.

Preserving that habitat is an important part of the work we do at the MTRP Foundation in partnership with the City of San Diego. Through land acquisition, habitat restoration, environmental education, trail projects and other initiatives, the Foundation works to help preserve, protect and improve Mission Trails for both people and wildlife.

The recent attention surrounding a mountain lion at Mission Trails has understandably generated a lot of interest. We hope it also gives our neighbors another reason to appreciate what an extraordinary resource we have in our own backyard.

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- 21. Nonclerical
- 24. Indonesian island
- 25. Educational environment
- 26. Namibian peoples
- 27. Bring out or develop
- 31. Moves into a place of thought
- 32. Out of the way
- 34. Loads a ship
- 35. Beloved Hollywood alien
- 36. Distinguishes
- 40. The ancient Egyptian sun god
- 41. Secondary or explanatory title
- 45. Relating to a wing
- 47. One who gives a speech
- 48. In the middle
- 52. Loop with a running knot
- 53. Airborne (abbr.)
- 54. Sweet persons
- 56. Put into play
- 57. Small cattle breed
- 59. Millisecond
- 60. Revolutions per minute
- 61. They ____
- 62. Moon crater
- 63. A place to stay the night

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Midway between south and south-east
- 4. Fathers
- 9. Wine grape
- 14. Al Bundy's wife
- 15. Derived from ammonia
- 16. Venezuelan state
- 17. Interest rate
- 18. Experts
- 20. Vascular tissues
- 22. Smooth and glossy
- 23. Administrative region in S. Korea
- 24. One from Damascus
- 28. Special interest group
- 29. It cools your home
- 30. Oh, God!
- 31. Intestinal pouches
- 33. Men
- 37. Twelfth star in a constellation
- 38. Former CIA
- 39. Arrange in grades of size
- 41. A baglike structure in a plant or animal
- 42. "The Great Lakes State"
- 43. Having earlike appendages
- 44. Momentarily stop
- 46. Ancient kingdom
- 49. Of I
- 50. White clerical vestment

CLUES DOWN

- 51. Songs to one's beloved
- 55. Charges
- 58. Computer application originator
- 59. A place to dock a boat
- 60. One guided by reason
- 64. Slang for cigarette
- 65. Sailboats
- 66. "Jerry Maguire" actor Zellweger
- 67. Screen type
- 68. Country legend Haggard
- 69. Puts together in time
- 70. When you anticipate arriving

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Involuntary muscular contraction
- 2. Eastern US transit agency
- 3. Leaves a place
- 4. Cease to participate
- 5. Current units
- 6. Cease to exist
- 7. General's assistant (abbr.)
- 8. Earth vibration
- 9. Very strong winds
- 10. For each one
- 11. A bog
- 12. The creation of beautiful or significant things
- 13. Affirmative
- 19. Pie ____ mode

ANSWERS

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Comic-Con announces 2027 dates, plans to increase programming

By Luis Monteagudo Jr.
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — As San Diego Comic-Con ended last month, officials announced plans to do more programming at the Comic-Con Museum to entertain fans year-round.

The museum will launch Con-style panel programming that will take submissions from fans, said Eddie Ibrahim, senior director of programming. The goal is to have multiple panels in one day.

“Our hope is to get it started this year,” he said. No details on the submission process have been announced.

The museum, located in Balboa Park, introduced a new exhibit on Sunday — “Center Stage: The Art of Mel Marcelo,” showcasing the late San Diego artist’s work.

Marcelo, who passed away in 2022, specialized in original work created for historic concerts, sporting events, and cultural moments hosted at Pechanga Arena throughout the venue’s 60-year history.

The exhibition is up now and is running through March 2027. The arena is sponsoring the exhibition, which showcases about 20 of his pieces. Some of the pieces have been in storage and out of public view.

“This is crazy, that this has never been on display,” said Taylor Henderson, Pechanga’s director of marketing and public relations.

Sunday marked the end of the annual pop culture convention, capping a star-studded week.

Marvel Studios brought the big star power on Saturday night with a presentation featuring actors from the upcoming blockbuster “Avengers: Doomsday.” The event generated massive lines to get into Hall H for the presentation. Some fans complained that they were unable to get into the hall.

Fans crowded around downtown noticed that the giant Gaslamp sign on Fifth Avenue was covered over with a sign promoting the film, which comes out on Dec. 18.

Meanwhile, studios and companies tried to outdo each other with elaborate offsite displays, referred to as activations.

Cartoon Network’s “Adult Swim” programming block set up a carnival with



Cartoon Network’s ‘Adult Swim’ set up a carnival behind the convention center with a mechanical bull-type ride. (Photo by Thomas Melville/Times of San Diego)



Spider-Man reads the latest copy of Daily Bugle with a ‘Spider-Man Sighted’ headline. (Photo by Adrian Childress/Times of San Diego)



The Joker and Harley Quinn on the Embarcadero on Saturday. (Photo by Thomas Melville/Times of San Diego)

a spinning bucket ride, a mechanical bull-type ride, and a small miniature golf course to promote its shows.

At the New Children’s Museum, Nickelodeon set up a slime station to douse fans with the ugly green slime



Three people cosplay as Doctor Doom, the villain in the upcoming ‘Avengers: Doomsday’ advertised behind them. (Photo by Adrian Childress/Times of San Diego)



The cast of ‘Super Troopers 3’ promotes the upcoming installment at an activation in the Gaslamp Quarter. (Photo by Adrian Childress/Times of San Diego)

the network is known for dumping on celebrities and guests on its shows.

As usual, there were surprises, including a pop-up concert at Gallagher Square at Petco Park by Billie Joe Armstrong, lead singer of Green Day.

As for next year, the dates have already been announced for Comic-Con. It will be held July 22–25, 2027, with a preview night on July 21. Registration for returning fans is scheduled for Oct. 17 and open registration is Nov. 14.

San Diego State football aims high, seeks Pac-12 title

By Mark Nero
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — When San Diego State kicks off its 2026 football season against Portland State on Sept. 5, it'll be the official dawn of a new era for the Aztecs.

As in, a new conference and new rivalries, not to mention new players in the rotation.

The biggest change, long anticipated, is that San Diego State is no longer part of the Mountain West Conference. On July 1, the school's athletic programs officially joined the reconfigured Pac-12 Conference (which, despite the name, only has eight football-playing members, for now).

Four other Mountain West schools — Boise State, Colorado State, Fresno State and Utah State — also left the conference for the Pac-12, joining holdovers Oregon State and Washington State, plus Texas State, which defected from the Sun Belt Conference.

Due to the other four other former MWC schools, the experience of playing in the

new Pac-12 won't be completely unfamiliar for SDSU. But although the Aztecs' 11-game 2026 schedule includes all the aforementioned Pac-12 schools, the first four matchups are against non-conference games.

After SDSU plays Portland State at home on Sept. 5, the Aztecs play UCLA — a former Pac-12 team — James Madison and Toledo the next three Saturdays. Of the four schools, James Madison could be the biggest challenge, as it had a 12-2 record last season and made the College Football Playoff (but lost to the No. 5 Oregon Ducks).

The other three schools, however, were a combined 12-25 last year.

The season opener will only be the second time in history that the Aztecs and Portland State have played each other. In the previous matchup, which was also in San Diego back in 2007, SDSU quarterback Kevin O'Connell threw for a career high 443 yards and five touchdowns — including four in the first half — as the Aztecs rolled over the Vikings 52-17.

The upcoming matchup has similar



San Diego State held its first fall practice on Aug. 5, a month before their season opener against Portland State. (Photo by Justin Truong/Special for Times of San Diego)

blowout potential. The Vikings were 1-11 last season and ESPN Analytics gives SDSU a 98.6% chance of victory.

Part of the reason why the Aztecs are so heavily favored is that they have some continuity on offense via three returning seniors: starting quarterback Jayden Denegal and two San Diego natives: running back Lucky Sutton and wide receiver Nathan Acevedo.

However, the team is also welcoming in new blood on both sides of the ball.

On offense, incoming players include redshirt freshman quarterback Stone Saunders, a transfer from Kentucky who's expected to back up Denegal, who had shoulder surgery in the offseason.

Another newcomer to watch is special teams player Noah Serna, a senior transfer placekicker vying to replace Gabe "the Hefty Lefty" Plascencia, an NFL free agent after achieving the best field goal percentage in school history during his three years as an Aztec.

On defense, the team is reloading after losing a couple of impact players in the offseason: cornerback Chris Johnson, taken by the Miami Dolphins in the first round of the NFL draft, and star defensive end Trey White, a Chula Vista native, who transferred to Texas Tech.

But transferring in are senior linebacker Sione Hala, a Los Angeles native who played for Weber State last season and before that, Boston College for two years; center Issac Lucas, who played the previous three years at Ball State, including as a starter last year.



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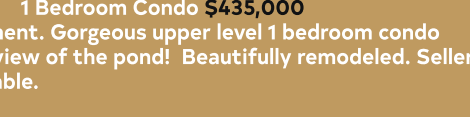
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San Carlos Little League's 9-11 boys team has historic run

By Sean Monney
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN CARLOS — The San Carlos Little League 9- to 11-year-old All-Stars went on a historic run to place third in the Southern California state tournament on July 31.

A total of 423 Little League teams compete in Southern California, and the San Carlos team went undefeated in district and section play to qualify for the state tournament.

Their run ended with a loss against Claremont Little League, tying the program's best finish at third place, which was achieved two years ago for the first time.

Grant McDevitt, the team's center fielder, said that when the All-Star season began in May, he wasn't expecting to make it so far.

"I knew we were good, but I didn't know that we were going to state," McDevitt said. "Only a few San Carlos teams have ever even gone to the tournament."

But the team kept winning, first in District 33, where 14 local teams compete,

and then in their section, which includes much of San Diego County.

"It was very exciting," said left fielder Eli Avraham. "It got louder and louder every game."

The team's biggest moment came in the second game of the state tournament, when they found themselves down a run in the bottom of the sixth inning, the last inning in Little League, with two outs.

Shortstop and pitcher Elliott Friend then hit a walk-off two-run home run, giving San Carlos an 8-7 victory and sending them to the semifinals.

"We all went crazy," Avraham said.

He also said it felt good to represent his district and section at the state tournament, and he was grateful to be a part of the team.

Head coach Zach Friend, Elliott's father, said he was focused on creating a culture of respect for the game by teaching the players to lose well and win humbly.

"We wanted to create an environment that they could grow both as people and as baseball players," Friend said.

Friend grew up playing in the San



The San Carlos Little League 9- to 11-year-old All-Stars pose for a photo after winning the Section 6 championship hosted at the Ecke Sports Park, Encinitas, on July 14. (Photo courtesy of San Carlos Little League)

Carlos Little League, alongside Frankie Busalacchi, another coach on the All-Star team. They both have a son on the team.

"To watch our kids go even further than we were able to take it was a very beautiful full-circle moment," Friend said.

It's official: Lozano exits San Diego, on loan from SDFC to LA Galaxy

By Hector Trujillo
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — Months of speculation about where San Diego FC forward Hirving "Chucky" Lozano would land ended Friday. The answer: Los Angeles.

SDFC and LA Galaxy made it official, announcing that LA acquired the 31-year-old on loan through December, with a permanent trade option.

The worst-kept secret in Major League Soccer over the last few weeks focused on Lozano's fate – whether he would end up in Los Angeles or back in Liga MX with Cruz Azul, Pachuca or Chivas de Guadalajara.

"Hirving is a player whom we tried to acquire three years ago, so this feels like something of a full-circle moment," said Galaxy general manager Will Kuntz. "He is a fierce competitor with an excellent track record of performing on teams that have competed for titles in multiple leagues, including his debut season in MLS."

Lozano has been a champion in every league he played in before arriving in San Diego for its inaugural season last year.

With Liga MX, he won the 2016 Clausura title with CF Pachuca. In Eredivisie of the Netherlands, he won league titles in 2017-18, 2023-24 and 2024-25 with PSV Eindhoven. In Serie A of Italy, he won the 2022-23 scudetto — little shield in Italian — with Napoli.

"As we evaluated opportunities to strengthen our roster for the stretch run of the season, it became clear that Hirving was the right player for the moment we are in as a club," Kuntz added. "We have a talented group, a strong locker room, and a clear objective over these final 15 games of the season, and we are thrilled that Hirving and his family are joining the Galaxy."

Lozano made his senior debut for the Mexican national team in 2016, recording an assist in a 2-0 victory over Senegal in his first appearance. His career defining moment would come



Hirving 'Chucky' Lozano of SDFC in happier times with the club in July 2025. (File photo by Chris. Stone/Times of San Diego)

in the 2018 FIFA World Cup when his goal against Germany secured a historic victory for El Tri over the defending world champions.

Lozano made 34 appearances for SDFC, recording 11 goals and nine assists as part of a club that reached the Western Conference final in 2025. It was one of the most successful inaugural campaigns

in MLS history, but it ended on a sour note between Lozano and SDFC, which announced in January that he would no longer be part of the squad.

"We have been working with Hirving and his side to find the right opportunity for him to get him back on the field," San Diego Sporting Director Tyler Heaps said. "We appreciate his contributions during our record-setting inaugural season and wish him well as he continues his career."

Yet San Diego will see him again — and soon.

SDFC and LA Galaxy have two more meetings during the regular season, the first at Snapdragon Stadium on Aug. 29, then on Oct. 17 in Carson.

Lozano will occupy a Designated Player (DP) roster spot for the Galaxy for the rest of 2026 while he earns a guaranteed salary of \$9.33 million, with San Diego FC covering a significant portion of it. The exact percentage or amount has yet to be announced.

Learning, leading and growing at San Carlos Community Garden



SAN CARLOS COMMUNITY GARDEN

Kelly Wood

This summer, the San Carlos Community Garden brought its mission of “Growing Community” to life through two summer-long programs that engaged young people at different stages of learning: the Youth Ambassador Service program for local high school students and Playtime in the Garden for children ages 3–6.

These programs demonstrated the powerful role that youth volunteers can play in educating, serving others, and creating a more engaged and connected community.

Through the Youth Ambassador Service program, Patrick Henry High School students participated in nine weeks of hands-on lessons about soil health, botany, native plants, beekeeping, orchard care, seasonal gardening and sustainability.

Students also experienced lessons in nonprofit leadership by attending one of the San Carlos Community Garden’s board meetings and supporting the garden’s community give-back activities, such as its monthly produce swap and Stuff the Pantry Summer Concert Series.

Leading the program for the second consecutive summer was Payton DeGroote, an environmental studies college student whose enthusiasm for ecology and experiential learning helped bring each lesson to life.

For DeGroote, one of the program’s greatest strengths is its emphasis on learning by doing.

“I love how this program exposes the youth ambassadors to real-world examples of foundations in ecology and sustainable

food production through our weekly sessions,” she explained. “But what makes this program worthwhile is that the ambassadors get to apply their knowledge to better all areas of the garden and then take these lessons out into the world.”

The Youth Ambassador Service program also helps give students a sense of ownership, confidence and pride in their abilities. Jack, one of the Patrick Henry High School ambassadors, said he valued learning about soil and plant health, developing relationships and seeing how his work made a visible difference.

“Working in the garden every Saturday and learning from so many different experts taught me the importance of teamwork, patience, and taking care of the environment,” Jack said.

“Knowing that I was giving back to my community was a real positive takeaway.”

One of the ambassador’s weekly lessons was working with James Hyde, San Carlos Community Garden’s resident volunteer soil-scientist who works for the USDA as an Agronomist focusing on soil management, plant growth and crop production. Hyde also helps maintain the San Carlos Community Garden’s orchard.

“During our time in the orchard, we explored several priorities that directly influence tree health and crop production, including irrigation, nutrition and overall plant health,” said Hyde. “The Youth Ambassadors measured tree canopy dimensions to better understand water demand, recorded soil moisture levels based on the existing irrigation schedule, and tested soil pH and salinity to evaluate nutrient availability and potential salt-leaching needs. I was pleasantly surprised by how strong the results were—a true reflection of the heroic investment of our volunteers that supports a healthy and productive orchard.”



Youth ambassadors prepare soil for garden plot renovation. (Photo by Payton DeGroote/Special for Times of San Diego)

Added Hyde, “Healthy soil is the foundation of a productive orchard. By building soil rich in organic matter and beneficial microorganisms, we help our fruit trees develop stronger roots, retain water and nutrients, and produce healthier, more abundant crops for our community.”

Jasper, another Patrick Henry High School ambassador who will attend UC Davis in the fall to study entomology, said the program changed how he views community and individual impact. He was especially inspired by a beekeeping lesson that showed how one person’s dedication to a natural phenomenon can bring people together.

Playtime in the Garden, led by Lily Wood, a second-year college student pursuing her degree in early childhood education, was just as stimulating for its younger participants (3–6 years), with weekly nature-based and garden-themed activities.

“This opportunity has reaffirmed my interest in early elementary education,” Wood said, explaining that the most rewarding part was working directly with the children.

“Most came to our program every week,



Lily Wood with Playtime in the Garden participants. (Photo by Lily Wood/Special for Times of San Diego)



Youth ambassadors receive hands on backyard beekeeping lesson. (Photo by Michael Land/Special for Times of San Diego)

excited to play and explore new things in the garden,” she said. “I love seeing their excitement and curiosity blossom when they discover new blooms from the fruits and vegetables growing throughout the garden — and, of course, they love finding bugs.”

DeGroote, who supported both programs — Youth Ambassador Service and Playtime in the Garden — believes the value of these experiences extends far beyond gardening.

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SDSU Chabad House demolition to make way for student housing

By Drew Sitton
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — A former Jewish student center on Montezuma near San Diego State University is set to be demolished and redeveloped into an eight-story student housing building.

The plan has been in the works for four years, according to developer Weston Harmer, who presented a rendering of the incoming building at a College Area Community Planning Group meeting on Monday, Aug. 10.

It comes amid a spate of student housing construction around SDSU, including University Towers East, the lot next door to the College-Rolando Library, and a comprehensive redevelopment effort at SDSU Mission Valley.

While other colleges face declining enrollment, SDSU has had record-setting class sizes, with over 40,000 students enrolled in 2025.



The base of the Chabad House menorah sits behind fencing on Tuesday, Aug. 11. (Photo by Drew Sitton/Times of San Diego)

The lot, which also includes a single-family home next door, is located on the corner of Montezuma and Rockford. Eight of the 78 incoming units in the building will be designated affordable.

The redevelopment, known as Maison, will not include parking. An early rendering shows a driveway with a loading zone

for student drop off and a student shuttle service.

"This is the kind of development we want here. I hope we can get more like this near SDSU in the future," said Lindsay Rodriquez, a board member of the College Area Community Planning Group, during a presentation from Harmer on Monday.

The Jewish student center will still operate out of the first story of the development, once construction ends.

The Chabad House opened in 1977 as a synagogue and center for Jewish student life at SDSU. It has been the target of vandals in recent years, including the destruction of a large menorah out front.

Community members fundraised for a new, sturdier 1,500-pound menorah made of steel. The base of that 22-foot structure sits inside the construction fencing. It will be donated elsewhere in San Diego.



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