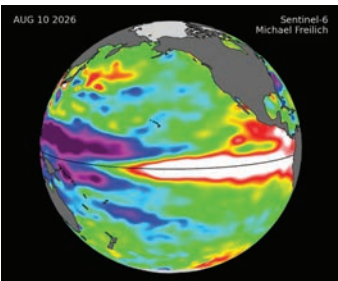


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Go Bucs!



Mission Bay cheerleaders encourage the crowd during the Buccaneers' home-opening 25-20 loss to Imperial on Aug. 21. Mission Bay visits Patrick Henry next at 7 p.m. on Aug. 28. See more on page 15. (Photo by Steve Sidell/Special for Times of San Diego)

COVER STORY

Ordinance that guarantees free beach and bay parking clears Rules Committee

A push to guarantee free parking at more than 50 city-owned beach and Mission Bay lots moved forward on Aug. 26, with the San Diego City Council's Rules Committee voting unanimously to advance an ordinance on it to the full council. The vote came one day after the citywide Community Planners Committee voted 22-2 in support of the effort to allow for city-run parking at lots in San Diego's beach communities to continue to cost nothing but the gas and time it takes to get there. The ordinance applies only to city-owned lots that provide beach or Mission Bay access. **PAGE 4**

SPORTS

Volleyball players win point in dispute for early start time

The issue began in late April, when regulars at the South Mission Beach volleyball courts said a park ranger warned them they could be cited for playing before 8 a.m., the start time set by municipal code. But earlier this month, the city agreed to move the allowable start time for beach volleyball from 8 a.m. to 6 a.m. **PAGE 14**



EDUCATION

Mission Bay High's whole site modernization underway, scheduled for completion by 2030

The overall footprint of the school will not change during the Phase 1 modernization project over the next four years. But classroom spaces will be upgraded and modernized with new flooring, wiring, lighting, painting, and window treatments. **PAGE 6**



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Amazon says it 'screwed up' using Crown Point Park as transfer site

By Tessa Balc
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — A video of Amazon workers using a parking lot at a public park as a package transfer site has been circulating on the internet, and is adding fuel to one councilmember's rallying cry for residents.

Crown Point resident Tom Lemmon took the video of Amazon workers setting up their trucks to complete distribution. It began circulating on Saturday.

The footage caught the attention of former California Assemblymember Lorena Gonzales Fletcher, now president of the California Labor Federation, along with Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera. He decided to take a stand against the online giant's potential encroachment on public land, particularly when the city has been cracking down on local residents who try to host gatherings without proper permits.

The brouhaha is over Amazon's new "walkers" program, in which delivery workers grab packages from nearby staging areas — Crown Point Park on the day Lemmon shot the video — and hoof it to take them to customers in high-density communities.

Multiple other locations like New York City have rolled out the on-foot delivery system, setting up staging areas on both public and private property.

Amazon spokesperson Austin Stowe, however, said Wednesday that the company "screwed up," explaining that there was a misunderstanding over communications between the company and City Hall regarding stipulations for operating its new program within city limits.

He said the company already has corrected the error. There have not been any additional reported sightings of Amazon using public spaces for distribution.

But Elo-Rivera isn't buying Amazon's explanation.

"No one accidentally runs a distribution operation out of a park," he said at a Wednesday press conference at Crown Point Park. "It wasn't a mistake. Amazon made a calculation that nobody noticed

and if someone did nobody would do anything about it.

"They got caught so they called it an accident."

Despite the issue with the video, and Amazon's quick claim of responsibility, the row among residents, online observers and local leaders resurfaced a consistent concern for the District 9 representative — that corporations, not residents, often come first.

He's taken up this mantle against a range of corporate giants, including Waymo, which is launching driverless service in San Diego, and Airbnb, which fought his failed attempt to tax certain short-term vacation rentals.

He's now, in light of the Amazon development, considering how the city helps San Diegans navigate issuing permits for the use of park space. From yoga teachers and remote-work hosts to DJs and influencers, the city has stepped in to pause free events as they have grown popular and attracted crowds that require organizers to obtain permits.

In one case in particular, DJ Daniel Joseph went back and forth with the city on obtaining permits after a few too many people showed up to a set. He's been able to continue on account of his popularity — although this is also what gets him into trouble — and the connections he's developed by cooperating with City Hall.

Wynyl Club, a meet-up for those who love wine and vinyl records, wasn't so lucky.

Recently, the group posted a video on its social media directly calling out the city for indefinitely stalling events. Wynyl Club essentially waved a white flag, telling supporters to organize gatherings on their own.

Chris Walker, the co-founder of Wynyl Club, joined Elo-Rivera at the press conference, along with representatives from labor groups.

Walker now sees benefit to entering the political arena, especially if he wants to rebrand the club and once again try organizing events. This time, he said, he



Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera speaks at a press conference Wednesday, Aug. 19, to object to Amazon's use of a public park to transfer packages. (Photo by Tessa Balc/Times of San Diego)

would better educate attendees on the requirements for hosting a city-sanctioned event — both in terms of cash and conduct.

His main focus, for now, is creating a space for San Diegans to be outside together.

"As long as we have that be the main focus, I think having (to) kind of be political can definitely help and open more doors," he said.

But for Walker, it's frustrating to see an out-of-town company using a park to maximize profits, especially when it is difficult for San Diegans to obtain access to city parks in the first place.

"People like us, artists, DJs, community organizers have to go through permits, lack of communication and, of course, stuff that doesn't always get shown right away. Because of that, we have to jump through these hurdles to put on free events for the community. It leads me to ask this question: if these spaces are for the public, then why isn't there more accessible pathways for the public to use them?"

Permits or written permission could also be granted to a business like Amazon to lawfully continue operations from parks like in Crown Point.

Stolen vehicles decrease in San Diego, except for Pacific Beach

By Dorain Hargrove
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – Vehicle thefts fell across most San Diego neighborhoods in 2025, according to data obtained by Times of San Diego.

San Diego recorded 3,390 motor vehicle thefts in 2025, down from 4,172 in 2024, a nearly 19% year-over-year drop. Eighty-one of the city’s 122 neighborhoods reported fewer vehicle thefts than in 2024, while eight saw no change.

San Ysidro recorded the largest decrease, while Pacific Beach posted the biggest increase.

In San Ysidro reported vehicle thefts fell from 229 in 2024 to 102 in 2025, a decline of 127.

Other neighborhoods also saw major drops.

In Mission Valley West, police received 46 fewer reports. In Otay Mesa West, the number dropped by 40, followed by Kearny Mesa (35 fewer), Bay Terraces (34), University Heights (29) and North Park (27).



Jeep Wranglers are the most stolen vehicle in San Diego. (Photo by Tessa Balc/ Times of San Diego)

Despite the citywide decline, some neighborhoods recorded increases in vehicle thefts.

Pacific Beach reported the highest year-over-year increase, with 173 stolen vehicles reported in 2025, an increase of 34 from the year before.

Other neighborhoods with notable increases included Mission Hills, up 13 thefts; Midway District and Mission Bay Park, each up 12; Emerald Hills, up 11; and Talmadge, up eight.

NEIGHBORHOODS WITH THE MOST VEHICLE THEFTS

While San Diego saw a steep drop in the overall number of stolen vehicles, some communities still see a high number of vehicle thefts.

Otay Mesa still sits at the top of the list for stolen vehicles.

In 2025, vehicle owners who parked in Otay Mesa reported 419 vehicles stolen, only five fewer than in 2024 when people reported 424 thefts.

The second highest number of stolen vehicle reports came from Pacific Beach (173), followed by North Park (117), San Ysidro (102) and Midway (96).

So, which street did car thieves target the most?

Siempre Viva in South San Diego had the most reports with 124. Otay Pacific had the second highest with 43, only one higher than Admiral Boland Way — which is where rental cars are parked.

San Diego Police spokesperson Ashley Nicholls vehicle thefts have now declined for a third consecutive year,

and SDPD is also seeing a decline in reports of property theft from vehicles.

She credited increased usage of automated license plate readers and other technological tools as “undoubtedly a contributing factor to the decrease.”

“When you get car thieves off the streets and hold them accountable, that can have an impact on other crimes that are committed in our communities,” she said. “Often the stolen vehicle is a means to help them commit other crimes without it being traced back to them.”

JEEP WRANGLERS MOST-STOLEN VEHICLE

For the third year straight, Jeep Wranglers remain the top stolen vehicle in San Diego — but Honda Civics are in a virtual tie.

San Diego police received 173 reports of stolen Jeep Wranglers in 2025, just one more than Honda Civics.

But there were 54 fewer reports of stolen Wranglers stolen in San Diego in 2025 than in 2024, reflecting the overall decline in reports of stolen cars.



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Free beach and bay parking ordinance clears Rules Committee

By Karen Pearlman

SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – San Diegans love the beaches and bays and the freedom to park for free – unlike the fee-needing neighbors to the north (Laguna Beach and Santa Monica, and also closer to home, Del Mar and Oceanside).

A push to guarantee free parking at more than 50 city-owned beach and Mission Bay lots moved forward on Aug. 26, with the San Diego City Council's Rules Committee voting unanimously to advance an ordinance on it to the full council.

The vote came one day after the citywide Community Planners Committee voted 22-2 in support of the effort to allow for city-run parking at lots in San Diego's beach communities to continue to cost nothing but the gas and time it takes to get there.

As introduced by City Council President Joe LaCava and Councilmember Raul Campillo at Wednesday's Rules Committee meeting, the ordinance would add a section to the San Diego Municipal Code that would prohibit the city from charging parking fees at city-owned lots that provide access to city beaches and Mission Bay.

Presentation materials shared from LaCava and Campillo's offices initially asked that the ordinance run through Dec. 31, 2036 – a 10-year sunset date that was chosen to align with a separate, recent California Coastal Commission approval allowing the city to close certain beach and bay lots overnight in that same time period.

But several speakers at the meeting as well as Councilmember Kent Lee said they were not comfortable with the 10-year frame.

During public comment, Tom Darby, a Linda Vista resident, told the committee he supported the ordinance but wished it went further.

"My preference would be free parking in perpetuity," Darby said, adding that he was disappointed

the city had let the situation reach a point "where charging for the beaches in Mission Bay is even conceivable."

After discussion, behind Lee's championing of no end date for the measure, the ordinance to be presented to the full City Council for final approval was changed to reflect that.

Jillian Andolina of the city's Independent Budget Analyst office told the committee that IBA wasn't taking a position against the ordinance but that the office "typically encourages council to preserve financial flexibility."

Andolina said that if the city pursued paid parking at beach and bay lots, it could generate more than \$10 million annually.

Comparably, Del Mar projected \$1.35 million in annual paid-parking revenue as of its most recent published figure from 2024; Santa Monica officials estimated in 2025 that it would make \$9 million in parking revenue, but that figure is citywide and includes other structures as well as beach lots.

FROM OB TO LA JOLLA

The ordinance applies only to city-owned lots that provide beach or Mission Bay access – a list that includes Kellogg Park at La Jolla Shores, Windansea, Tourmaline, Fiesta Island, Mission Beach and Ocean Beach parking lots, and multiple Mission Bay-area lots such as Crown Point, De Anza Cove and Ski Beach.

It would not apply to on-street parking meters, or to city-owned lots leased to outside entities such as SeaWorld or Mission Bay-area hotels. The ordinance would not affect the city's ability to issue parking citations, manage or operate the lots, regulate commercial activity, or issue permits for special events.

In addition to amending the sunset date of the ordinance, the Rules Committee voted to narrow the ordinance's scope to apply only to

city of San Diego residents, rather than the general public.

Campillo raised concerns about the residents-only framing, noting that it could result in county residents living just outside city limits being treated the same as out-of-state visitors under the new rules.

Campillo has been at the forefront of beach and bay parking issues.

In March he brought a ballot measure proposal to the Rules Committee, asking the city to place a question before voters this November that would guarantee free parking at beaches and bays. (The Rules Committee voted 3-2 to support moving forward with it with LaCava, Campillo and Vivian Moreno in favor; Lee and Sean Elo-Rivera were opposed.)

The ballot-measure path was later abandoned in favor of the ordinance approach.

LaCava said several times during Wednesday's Rules Committee meeting that repositioning the plan from a ballot measure to an ordinance was an opportunity to save taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"Advancing this proposal ensures that these prized public parking spaces will be available at no cost to San Diegans," he said after the meeting.

Campillo said the city has learned from the recent Balboa Park parking debacle.

The city of San Diego began charging for parking at Balboa Park on Jan. 5 as part of the city's effort to close a budget shortfall. The move drew immediate backlash, and Balboa Park museum attendance reportedly dropped about 20 percent in the program's first weeks. Parking kiosks around the park were vandalized and mayors from neighboring cities publicly chastised for charging entry fees to a regional asset.

(The paid-parking program was ultimately rolled back as part of a broader legal resolution over the city of San Diego's separate trash-collection fees. Under the

deal, the city agreed to eliminate Balboa Park parking fees entirely by Jan. 1, 2027, in exchange for homeowners dropping their trash-fee lawsuit and a related ballot repeal effort.)

Campillo said he brought the beach and bay parking fees item forward "to make sure the city learns from the lessons that the parking fees at Balboa Park pointed out."

INSIGHT FROM INSIDERS

The Rules Committee vote followed a 22-2 vote of support on Tuesday night, Aug. 25 from the Community Planners Committee, the citywide body formed of representatives from San Diego's individual community planning groups.

Victoria LaBruzzo, the Community Planners Committee chair, told the Rules Committee that the CPC members pulled up the ordinance text directly and reviewed comments submitted by the Pacific Beach Planning Group before voting. North Park and Downtown cast the two dissenting votes.

"San Diego's coastline belongs to the entire city – public access shouldn't depend on whether you happen to live at the beach," LaBruzzo said on Wednesday. "We need to maintain the free parking, and we appreciate this ordinance and support it."

The Pacific Beach Planning Group formally backed the ordinance in a letter to the Rules Committee from its chair, Marcella Bothwell.

In the letter, Bothwell wrote that the group appreciated "the careful scope of the measure," including that it applied only to city-owned property, excluded leased sites, and left parking meters and citation enforcement untouched.

"Mission Bay Park is a regional park that serves residents from across the entire city of San Diego, not only those who live in Pacific Beach," Bothwell wrote. "Free, accessible parking on city-owned lots is essential to equitable public access for San Diegans citywide including families, workers, seniors, and visitors from every neighborhood who rely on these coastal resources for recreation, health and community life."

“San Diego’s coastline belongs to the entire city...”

Victoria LABRUZZO

Community Planners Committee

Residents upset about Turquoise Tower give Rep. Scott Peters an earful

By Tessa Balc
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

PACIFIC BEACH — A Wednesday evening town hall featuring Rep. Scott Peters — who serves the 50th district, which spans the coastal areas, then veers into Escondido — brought out residents who simply do not want to see a 23-story development in Pacific Beach.

Residents crammed into Crown Point Junior Music Academy, fanning themselves with leaflets from Neighbors for a Fair California that read “23 Stories. 239 Feet.” The fliers referred to the height of the Vela Project, known locally as the Turquoise Tower.

The project is in its sixth cycle of city staff review. Planners have requested revisions from the developers for nearly three years now. To put it lightly, some residents are not happy with the proposal.

Peters told the room that the meeting, also convened by the Pacific Beach Town Council and Pacific Beach Planning Group, was spurred by a “mean letter” from a resident named Tom, who was present in



Activist group Neighbors for a Better California sells ‘No Turquoise Tower’ signs at the meeting on Aug. 26. (Photo by Tessa Balc/Times of San Diego)

the room and stood up. He said the letter detailed that he did not vote for Peters, precisely because of the fact that a project like this could be considered.

“I’ve really recognized this over the years in elected office, you know when a community is pissed off,” said the former council member, council president and congressman in his seventh term.

As a result, Peters sent a letter to Mayor

Todd Gloria personally asking him to deny the project’s application.

While he detailed his opposition to the project, he clung to a core belief he has adopted that guides his legislative goals: California needs more housing.

The crowd, though, wasn’t buying it.

During the primary question-and-answer section of the town hall, one question arose, drawing applause — whether Peters would ever rethink his position that increasing the housing supply brings down prices.

He answered that it’s a matter of supply and demand.

That answer didn’t appease the angrier members of the crowd, but part of the temperature of the room could be attributed to the demographics, the majority of those in attendance being well above their 40s.

“Look, I think these are the homeowners trying to protect their neighborhood,” Peters told Times of San Diego.

“I think what I wanted to say to them is that young people feel like we’re pulling up the ladder behind us,” he said, explaining that this disconnect means that things

must change, namely regarding how San Diego approaches housing.

One solution he proposed to increase home ownership was incentivizing older San Diegans to sell their homes through higher exemptions on capital gains taxes. Another was the 21st Century Road to Housing Act that Congress passed in June, specifically Title 9, the portion that places restrictions on how much housing stock corporate entities can own.

Another question for Peters was why he has thrown his support behind SB 79, a state law that incentivizes development near transit. The crowd wasn’t particularly interested in his answer — that it gives people the chance to be in a position to live near and take advantage of taxpayers’ billion-dollar investment in trolley cars and transit stations.

One person asked how to rein in density when the infrastructure to support it isn’t present. The crowd was more receptive to his answer on this one: current city procedure, not keeping development impact fees within the specific community where the project is located, is a bad idea.

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Mission Bay High's whole site modernization underway

By Cyril A. Reinicke

SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

PACIFIC BEACH – When Mission Bay High reopened for classes on Monday, Aug. 10, students were met with Phase 1 of the school's whole site renovation and modernization. Mission Bay High School Principal Dr. Eric Brown estimates the entire campus renovation and modernization will be completed by 2030. "Mission Bay originally opened in September 1953. It was part of a broader expansion of educational facilities in the area during the post-World War II population boom. It has undergone improvements and additions throughout the years. But now, much of the campus is being renovated and upgraded," Brown said. Last spring, temporary classroom buildings were brought in and placed near the tennis courts on the west side of the campus. These buildings will serve as space for the classrooms that have been closed while the campus renovation continues. The overall footprint of the school will not change during the modernization over the next four years. But classroom



Last spring several temporary classroom buildings were installed on the west side of the campus near the tennis courts. (Photo by Cyril A. Reinicke/Special for Times of San Diego)

spaces will be upgraded and modernized with new flooring, wiring, lighting, painting, and window treatments. The renovation will also include a complete makeover of the auditorium to include new seating, ADA accessibility,

dressing rooms, a ticket booth, and new sound and lighting systems for the stage.

Phase 1 includes:

1. Moving four teachers from their classrooms into temporary rooms near the tennis courts.

2. Renovating and remodeling those same four classrooms into temporary main office workspaces. The main office, including the principal, associate principals, secretaries, counselors, attendance and health offices, will move into these four classrooms in the winter. Then the major remodel of the front office and upgrades to the front of the school along Grand Avenue will begin.

3. On the east side of the campus, the older natural grass multi-purpose field has been removed in preparation for installing a new synthetic grass multi-purpose field. The finished field will be marked for football, soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse.

4. The girls' locker room is being remodeled to include new showers, restroom facilities, new changing areas, lockers, team rooms and painting. Currently, the girls' PE changing room is in a larger temporary building near the tennis courts.

5. Moving the Junior ROTC program from their classrooms into temporary buildings and upgrading their main campus classroom space.

New lower speed limits rolling out with student safety a priority

By Drew Sitton

TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – Two events in the 2025–2026 school year reshaped how officials at all levels are moving to protect students on city streets with youngsters and teens back in class.

The first was the death of 11-year-old Andrew Olsen last October, and the injuries suffered by his siblings after a car hit the trio. They were crossing Jackson Drive in San Carlos on the way to Pershing Middle School.

The second was a law passed by the state legislature making way for local cities to lower their speed limits in critical zones, an action that once was banned.

LOWER SPEED LIMITS

Subsequently, the San Diego City Council passed an ordinance lowering speed limits on 20% of the city's streets, including school zones, business

districts, places with a history of fatalities and those with high traffic from pedestrians and cyclists. The plan accounts for 679 miles of the city's roads.

"There's a lot to implement in the plan," said city spokesperson Anthony Santacroce. "We think school zones are most important to implement first."

Limits for the school zones will fall to 15–20 miles per hour around the schools, then 25 miles per hour in areas between 501 to 1,000 feet away from schools.

The effort to implement that ordinance began in July, with signs now in place to reflect the lower speed limits near schools in San Ysidro, Otay Mesa, and Nestor.

The city is continuing to update signs, moving in a general south to north direction. In August, crews are adding new signs in Southeast San Diego, and parts of downtown and adjacent areas like Barrio Logan. The peninsula, too, may

get its signs this month. The next goal, for September, will be parts of mid-city, including City Heights, North Park and College Area.

Although transportation crews may face delays due to anticipated El Niño storms, the general plan is for all school zone speeds to be updated by the end of the school year.

Once the school zones are finished, the city will decide what to prioritize next, among the fatal corridors, business districts and high-pedestrian-traffic areas.

"We are glad that the city took the Vision Zero coalition's recommendation to prioritize reducing speeds in school zones first," said Anar Salayev of Bike SD. "From there, we want to see similar treatments made on corridors that have a history of injuries and fatalities. Ultimately, we want to see material change made in these zones — beyond mere changes to speed limit signs."

SAN DIEGO UNIFIED'S SURVEY

As the city worked on its plan to reduce speeds, the San Diego Unified School District began its own efforts to protect students traveling to and from school.

After Olsen's death, Superintendent Fabi Bagula surveyed every principal in the district, asking for recommendations on how to improve student safety.

"We believe that (the) road is a part of overall student wellness. If they don't feel safe in their commute to come to school, then we believe that impacts their wellness," said her chief of staff Enrique Ruacho. "The safest road in any city should be the road to school."

A few of the principals included in the survey, as well as parent organizations, had already advocated road improvements with their city council members. Bringing their changes into a comprehensive plan helped principals throw the might of the school district behind them.

City's aging stormwater system requires repairs before El Niño

By Drew Sitton
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – As warnings of a potentially historic El Niño mount, city crews are fast at work preparing for the unknown.

Workers in the city's Stormwater Department are tasked with clearing a record number of stormwater channels to prepare for potential flooding, along with replacing flood control gates in Mission Beach and conducting emergency repairs on stormwater pumps and generators.

On Aug. 20, city directors for the Office of Emergency Services, Stormwater and Infrastructure updated councilmembers on the Environment Committee about their departments' work to try to prepare the city for what could be a historic El Niño weather pattern.

Assistant Chief Robert Rezende from the Office of Emergency Services noted that sharing the plan with the council was the first step in the city's preparation for what would be the strongest El Niño since before 1950.

"This is not the culmination or the end point of the preparedness that we're doing," Rezende told committee members. "It's not that it's done. It's really just getting started."

Preliminary preparations began in June, when the city formed a large working group with employees from 24 departments. The group was tasked with identifying gaps in past flood responses and preparing the city as much as possible for potential floods. The working group, said Rezende, also used an audit of the city's response to floods in January 2024 that destroyed dozens of homes in South San Diego.

During the Aug. 20 Environment Committee meeting, department leaders said the working group has identified 50 projects and is working towards improving communication and coordination between departments, agencies and the public.

At least one councilmember on the committee expressed concern that the city needs to focus on infrastructure needs.

"The city has launched a website. A



Flooded and road closed signs in Mission Valley. (File photo by Adrian Chidress/Times of San Diego)

website is not gonna solve the city's inadequate storm drain system," said council president Joe LaCava.

One of the most concerning obstacles the city faces, however, is finding the funds needed to pay for the preparations and improvements.

Those budget constraints can be seen clearly in the case of the "sandbag working group." While the group has prepared a plan, found a vendor and secured a storage area to fill 100,000 sandbags to hand out to residents, it has yet to find \$300,000 to execute the plan, which will take two months to complete.

That is only one of many El Niño-related projects that face budget uncertainties.

Despite using low-interest federal loans, known as WIFIA, to design a replacement for the city's largest stormwater pump in Old Town, the city does not have funds to actually replace it. In addition, the Jamacha Waterway Revitalization Project is in the design phase too, but the city needs \$100 million to complete the project.

The stormwater department, meanwhile, began inspecting and clearing important stormwater drains when the fiscal year began.

Much of the maintenance focus has been on areas fixed around Chollas Creek that were reconstructed after the January 2024 flood.

Despite this, stormwater director Todd Snyder had a grim outlook on the upcoming winter weather. Snyder noted that very few of the city's channels and drains have the capacity to handle a 100-year storm, which is a measure of a large amount of rainfall within a short period of time, such as two inches within three hours in San Diego.

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'Super' El Niño – what scientists know now and what to learn

By Thomas Murphy
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – As San Diego city workers prepare for a potentially historic “super” El Niño, some scientists say it’s still too early to tell if San Diego and Southern California are in for historic rainfall and flooding.

Scientists at UC San Diego’s Scripps Institution of Oceanography have been studying the formation of this El Niño. Researchers published a new, multi-part FAQ guide explaining what El Niño is, why this year’s event could be unusually strong and how scientists are tracking it.

For San Diegans, El Niño can mean more rain, bigger surf, coastal flooding and warmer ocean temperatures. But scientists say it’s still too early to know exactly what this year’s event will mean, particularly when predicting rainfall and flooding.

Historically, El Niño has increased the odds of wetter weather across Southern California, but the strength of an El Niño and actual rainfall in San Diego are not always intertwined.

One thing researchers do agree on is that forecast models reveal a moderate-to-large El Niño this year, with some suggesting it could be the largest in the 150-year historical record.

So, what exactly should San Diegans expect this year?

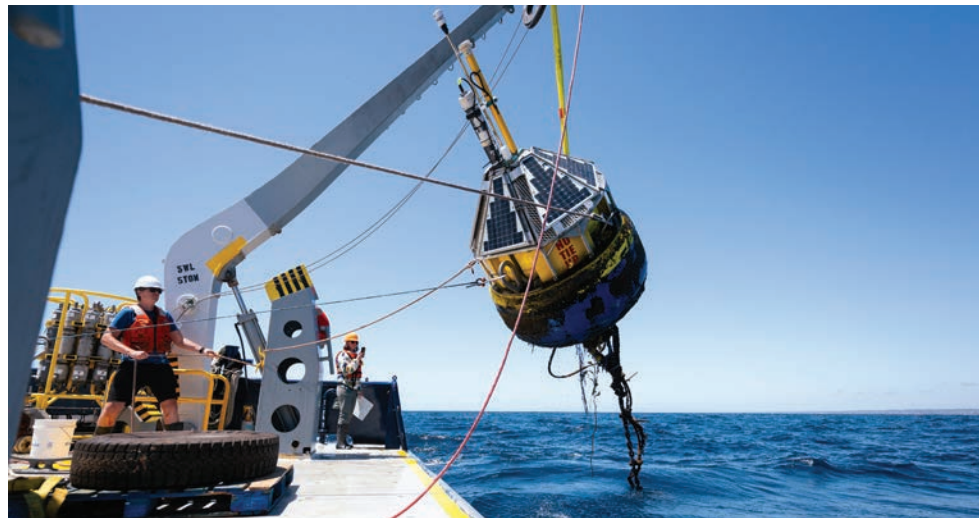
WHAT IS THE EL NIÑO-SOUTHERN OSCILLATION?

El Niño is a natural climate pattern that begins thousands of miles away in the tropical Pacific Ocean. When water near the equator becomes unusually warm, it can alter weather patterns around the world.

El Niño is one of two dominant weather patterns in the Pacific. While El Niño occurs when warm water builds up, the opposite pattern, La Niña, occurs when cooler water gathers in the region.

Southern California typically experiences drier conditions during La Niña. The two patterns are part of a larger climate cycle known as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation.

In the case of El Niños, rising temperatures weaken the east-to-west trade winds that normally push warm



Graduate students in Scripps Institution of Oceanography retrieve a mooring off the coast of Del Mar, which measures the temperature and salinity of the ocean.

(Photo by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego)

surface water westward across the Pacific. As those winds weaken, warmer waters remain and build up in the east. Higher ocean surface temperatures affect the air above, creating more intense storms.

“The tropics are like the engine room of the Pacific,” Shang-Ping Xie, a Scripps professor of climate science, wrote. “Heat in the tropics drives global atmospheric circulation. In that sense, variations in the tropical Pacific like El Niño can have huge impacts on global weather patterns.”

One key measure is whether sea-surface temperatures in specific areas of the Pacific on the equator remain at least 0.9 degrees Fahrenheit above average. Those sea-surface temperatures are now what federal agencies are monitoring.

Sea-surface temperatures in the region are 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit above average, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, putting the odds of a very strong El Niño during fall and winter at greater than 90%.

While the presence of an El Niño is a certainty, its impact on Southern California and beyond is not as certain.

“It does not necessarily mean that the event will have a huge impact on our own weather in the U.S. during the upcoming fall and winter,” said Scripps researcher Art Miller. “Calling this a Super El Niño simply refers to the magnitude of the event in the tropical Pacific.”

More often than not, El Niños have resulted in stronger and more frequent

winter storms for San Diego County.

“We’re keenly interested in this 2026–27 strongly developing El Niño because some previous strong cases, like the massive events in 1982–83 and 1997–98, were among the wettest years on record in California,” Scripps climate researcher Dan Cayan wrote.

“While we might partially attribute elements of individual storms to El Niño, we are left with statistical odds, rather than precise yes or no characterizations,” Cayan continued.

For residents along Chollas Creek in Southcrest — a neighborhood that suffered severe flooding during the January 2024 storms — another strong El Niño raises concerns that San Diego could see similar flooding again.

Preparations are already underway.

The Office of Emergency Services has formed an El Niño working group with representatives from city departments and public safety agencies to coordinate how the city prepares for storms, responds to emergencies and communicates with the public.

COASTAL FLOODING

Potential heavy rainfall is not the only danger of the oncoming El Niño. Changes in ocean temperatures, waves and storm patterns can increase coastal flooding and accelerate erosion, particularly during high tides.

Scripps scientists will map California’s coastline before and after this year’s El

Niño to monitor coastal changes and infrastructure damage.

Sea levels along the California coast can temporarily rise by as much as 13 inches during strong El Niño events, according to Scripps coastal geologist Adam Young, so this research can help predict how future sea level rise will impact the coast.

Those effects are occurring against a backdrop of unusually warm ocean temperatures. San Diego is already experiencing a marine heatwave, which led to dead seabirds lining beaches in March. This year has seen 42 record-high ocean surface temperatures at the Scripps Pier in La Jolla.

El Niño also sends subsurface waves along the coast that push warm surface water downward and suppress the normal upwelling of cold, nutrient-rich water. That can warm coastal waters while reducing the nutrients available to the base of the marine food web.

“Decreased vertical mixing can suppress nutrients from reaching the sunlit upper ocean, which fuels the base of the food chain and can thereby lead to less food availability for birds, sea lions, whales and other marine life,” Miller wrote.

WHAT SHOULD SAN DIEGANS DO NOW?

City officials recommend that residents make an emergency plan, prepare an emergency kit, sign up for emergency alerts and check whether their homes are in or near flood-prone areas.

These areas include Chollas Valley, Sorrento Valley, Mission Valley and the Tijuana River Valley, according to city maps.

The city says 15,000 acres and more than 6,900 structures are located in FEMA-designated flood-hazard areas. Officials also warn that flooding can occur outside those designated zones.

Residents should also know their evacuation routes and never attempt to drive or walk through floodwater.

The Office of Emergency Services has launched an El Niño preparedness webpage with information about flood risks, emergency preparation and alerts.

But it does mean there is enough uncertainty — and enough potential for extreme weather — that officials will continue preparing before the first major storm arrives.

City leaders urge residents to prep for flooding due to El Niño

By Drew Sitton

TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — It's here, and it's big: 2026 is the year of the potentially record-breaking Super El Niño.

Nearly every city department was on hand at Balboa Park on Tuesday to explain the city's preparations for heavier-than-normal storms and flooding — while urging residents to do their own readiness work, too.

"The city is doing everything we can to be prepared, and we're asking for your partnership in doing the same," Mayor Todd Gloria said. "You do your part. We do ours."

The Office of Emergency Services, Police, Fire-Rescue, Transportation, Stormwater, Homelessness Strategies and Solutions, Environmental Services, Performance & Analytics, and Communications, among others, were in attendance alongside elected officials.

In other words, the entire city is preparing in case of a potential natural disaster.

"The leaders and subject matter experts behind me represent our city's unified approach to preparedness," said Fire Chief Robert Logan. "But preparedness doesn't start and stop with city departments. We're asking San Diegans to prepare with us."

The cross-section of department officials reflected the city-wide action being taken ahead of expected extreme weather conditions this fall and winter, with the warm water in the Pacific from El Niño expected to drive heavy rains and fast flooding.

"If you've seen flooding in the past in your neighborhood, expect the same, or perhaps even worse during El Niño," said Council President Joe LaCava. "We need residents and businesses to take steps now."

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Partners from other jurisdictions were in attendance too, including the county's emergency response team.

In addition, Assistant Fire Chief Robert Rezende announced that a meteorologist from the National Weather Service, Felix Castro, will also be embedded in the Office of Emergency Services.

"(Emergency planners) have worked



Fire chief Rob Logan addresses the media during a press conference on preparing for El Niño weather. (Photo by Drew Sitton/Times of San Diego)

tirelessly alongside staff from nearly every city department to get us ready for El Niño, to ensure a citywide preparedness to handle whatever comes our way. We're not taking this weather event lightly," Rezende said. "Residents need to take steps to stay ready too."

He urged residents to research whether they are in a FEMA flood zone, build a to-go kit with three days of supplies, create an evacuation plan and stay informed by signing up for Alert San Diego emergency notices. Then, when the storms hit, never drive or walk through flooded areas and move to higher ground if flooding is a threat.

"If an evacuation order is issued, that is not the time to make a plan. It is the time to execute your existing plan," Rezende said.

The city launched an El Niño webpage to detail how to prepare for the expected extreme weather and connect residents with resources.

"Preparedness is a shared responsibility because when we prepare together, San Diego is stronger and safer," Logan said.

The fire chief said he was proud that OES reorganized to fall under the Fire-Rescue department because it "strengthens the connection between citywide emergency planning and operational response."

During storms, transportation and stormwater staff will patrol neighborhoods, ready to address clogged drains or other issues that arise.

First responders also have heavy-duty equipment on hand for rescues.

INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE

One aspect of getting ready for heavy rains is clearing drains and maintaining stormwater channels, pipes and pump stations.

"We've really accelerated maintenance on all of those," said Todd Snyder, director of the city's Stormwater Department.

Before 2024, he said the city typically cleared four stormwater channel segments per year. In the budget for fiscal year 2027, the department plans to clear 67 segments, accounting for 20 miles. To do that, crews are out six days a week for 12 hours per day.

"That's historically far and above anything that we've ever done before," Snyder said.

After the January 2024 floods, San Diego increased its investment in the stormwater system. Multiple capital improvement projects are underway to replace aging infrastructure.

Long-term, the city is upgrading an aging system.

The city took out a \$733 million low-interest federal loan from the Environmental Protection Agency to pay for upgrades to the system, but those dollars are expected to run out long before the system is fully upgraded. Those take years though, with current stormwater systems not up to the task.

"Our stormwater system faces a \$5 billion funding gap over the past five years," LaCava said. "But I have never seen a city hall under this leadership move more quickly to understand the nature of stormwater, our infrastructure and the potential impact to residents and our

businesses."

However, even with the boost in maintenance, as well as several ongoing capital improvement projects in the stormwater system, it won't be enough amid the scale of predicted rains and how old the system is.

"If we get a storm of the magnitude that we saw in 2024, we are going to have areas flood, regardless of how much maintenance is happening," Snyder said. "I went and inspected those channels yesterday. They are as clear as a whistle, but they will flood if we get enough rain."

Snyder urged residents to pay attention to whether they're in the flood zone, which covers 15,000 acres in the city.

LESSONS FROM 2024

The fumbled response to the January 2024 flooding that drove people out of their homes for months at a time was top of mind for city leaders looking to improve preparedness this time around.

"The actions being taken now really are a reflection of the way that that sat with all of us," San Diego City Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera said. He echoed others that the city had never prepared so thoroughly for a flood event before now.

And while the city was not prepared in 2024 for long-term recovery, Elo-Rivera praised community members for helping each other in the wake of the floods. He emphasized that the community needed to prepare again, and be treated as a stakeholder in the city's response.

"When the system fell short, our community stepped up," Elo-Rivera said, describing the response to the floods as the most moving experience he's had while in office. "The people who live along these channels can see the problems first and can be part of the solution."

Elo-Rivera announced the creation of a community task force made up of many of the people and organizations that responded to the 2024 floods, now with designated roles for the next round of extreme weather.

"We're reactivating that 2024 network, reaching out now to those who were there in the moments immediately after, and the months that follow that flood, so we have a plan in place before the rain to prevent, mitigate response, or recover from any flooding," he said.

LEGAL ADS

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9016819 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. Collin Kinder and Co, 12912 Pomard Way, Poway, CA 92064 registered by the following: a. Collin W. Kinder by: an Individual The first day of business was: N/A Registrant Name: a. Collin W. Kinder Title of officer Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor a The statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: August 03, 2026 ISSUE DATES: August 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2026

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9014577 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. The Bold Exchange, 2180 Garnet Avenue, Pacific Beach, CA 92109 registered by the following: a. Lisa Romstadt by: an Individual The first day of business was: 05/09/2026 Registrant Name: a. Lisa Romstadt Title of officer Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor a the statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: July 01, 2026 ISSUE DATES: August 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2026

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME; CASE NO 26CU041432C SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF San Diego; Superior Court of California, County of San Diego, 330 West Broadway, San Diego, CA 92101, Hall of Justice TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: 1. Petitioner (name) a. Kelly James Clayton Filed A. Petition With This Court For A Decree Changing Names As Follows: Present Name: a. a. Kelly James Clayton To Proposed Name: a. Kelly James Mangold THE COURT ORDERS That All Persons Interested In This Matter appear before the court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that indicates the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing. NOTICE OF HEARING a. Date: Sep-

tember 22, 2026: 8:30 AM DEPT: C-61; a. A copy of this Order to show cause shall be published at least once each week for four consecutive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county (specify newspaper): La Jolla Village News, Beach & Bay Press & Peninsula Beacon. Date: 08/03//2026 by M. Guyot, Deputy Clerk. Judge Michael S. Groch, Judge of the superior court ISSUE DATES: August 14, 21, 28 & September 4, 2026.

NO HEARING WILL OCCUR ON THE DATE SPECIFIED IN THE ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE. The Court will review the documents filed as of the date specified on the Order to Show Cause for change (JC Form #NC-120) If all requirements for a name change have been met as of the date specified, and no timely written objection has been received (require at least two court days before the date specified), the petition for change of name (JC Form #NC-120) will be granted without a hearing. One certified copy of the Order Granting the Petition will be mailed to the petitioner. To change a name on a legal document, including a birth certificate, social security card, driver license, passport, and other identification, a certified copy of Decree Changing Name (JC Form #NC-130) or Decree Changing Name and Order Recognizing Change of Gender and for Issuance of New Birth Certificate (JC Form #NC-230) may be required. Contact the agency(ies) who issues the legal document that needs to be changed, to determine if a certified copy is required. A certified copy of Decree Changing Name (JC Form #NC-130) or Decree Changing Name and Order Recognizing Change of Gender and for Issuance of New Birth Certificate (JC Form #NC-230) may be obtained from the Civil Business Office for a fee. Petitioners who are seeking a change of name under the Safe at Home program may contact the assigned department for information on obtaining certified copies. If all the requirements have not been met as of the date specified, the court will mail the petitioner a written order with further directions. If a timely objection is filed, the court will set a hearing date and contact the parties by mail with further directions. A RESPONDENT OBJECTING TO THE NAME CHANGE MUST FILE A WRITTEN OBJECTION AT LEAST TWO COURT DAYS (excluding weekends and holidays)

BEFORE THE DATE SPECIFIED. Do not come to court on the specified date. The court will notify the parties by mail of a future hearing date. Any Petition for the name changes of a minor that is signed by only one parent must have this Attachment served along with the Petition and Order to Show Cause, on the other non-signing parent, and proof of service must be filed with the court.

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9015477 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. Carevider b. Carevider. com, 8895 Towne Center Drive, STE 105, San Diego, CA 92122 registered by the following: a. Neos Management, Inc by: a corporation The first day of business was: 05/18//2026 Registrant Name: a. Neos Management, Inc Title of officer Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor Eric Tucker, CEO the statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: July 14, 2026 ISSUE DATES: August 14, 21, 28 & September 4, 2026.

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9016739 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. Mission Control Systems, 4102 Via Del Rey, Oceanside, CA 92057 registered by the following: a. Colello Consulting, LLC b. Salgado Consulting, LLC, JR Automation, LLC by: a General Partnership first day of business was: N/A Registrant Name: a. Colello Consulting, LLC b. Salgado Consulting, LLC, JR Automation, LLC Title of officer Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor Jesus Salgado Gallaga, President the statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: July 31, 2026 ISSUE DATES: August 14, 21, 28 & September 4, 2026.

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9017140 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. OT with LB, 5550 Mildred St, APT 11, San Diego, CA 92110 registered by the following: a. Lindsay Ann Barrows by: an Individual first day of business was: N/A Registrant Name: a. Lindsay Ann Barrows Title of officer Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor the statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: August 6, 2026 ISSUE DATES:

August 14, 21, 28 & September 4, 2026.

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9016485 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. San Diego Hot Tub Repair, 9920 Pacific Heights Blvd #150, San Diego, CA 92121 registered by the following: a. Action Spa Repair LLC by: a Limited Liability Company first day of business was: N/A Registrant Name a. Action Spa Repair LLC Title of officer Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor Jorge Sanz Povar, Manager the statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: July 29, 2026. ISSUE DATES: August 14, 21, 28 & September 4, 2026.

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9017960 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. Nathan Manor & Associates, 7979 Ivanhoe Avenue, Suite 420, La Jolla, CA 92037 is registered by the following: a. Nathan Manor Tax, LLC business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company. The first day of business was: N/A Registrant Name: a. Nathan Manor Tax, LLC This Title of Officer, if Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor Nathan Manor, Member The statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Jr. Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: August 18, 2026 ISSUE DATES: August 28, September 4, 11 & 18, 2026.

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JAG Real Estate offers estate sales for those downsizing or retired

By Dave Schwab
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

PACIFIC BEACH – JAG Real Estate in North Pacific Beach believes their industry is about relationships, not transactions.

This is one of many reasons why their firm is holding a grand estate sale featuring treasures from five distinct properties on Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 29-30, from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Palm & Sage Estate Sales.

The team of JAG Real Estate consists of Jason Coleman, Gizem Keskin, Jackie Guterrez, and Sanja Sullivan.

Coleman talked about the genesis of JAG and of the estate sales arm of their business, Palm & Sage Estate Sales.

“Sanya and I joined forces last year, and both of us had been talking about family members who basically were not getting the services that they need as they aged,” said Coleman. “We discovered a lot of our clients in real estate were having the same problems. So, we would call and try to organize some kind of estate sale for people who were downsizing, retired, or who had lost a family member. We decided we just wanted to build something that bridged that gap.”

Once she became a senior real estate specialist, Sullivan became sensitized to the growing number of aging baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964 who had special needs peculiar to their age group going unmet.

She said one of those needs was “to sell lots of good quality stuff they’ve accumulated during their lifetimes.”

Sullivan added, "When you talk about baby boomers and accumulation, they tend to have bigger homes. Now those homes are not practical for their lifestyle. So our clients are looking to downsize or, if they have to go into assisted living, their adult children, who might not be living here, are crushed to assist their parents in selling or renting their homes -- and they don't know what to do with all their items."

Sullivan noted downsizing for seniors is especially a problem in La Jolla and parts of Pacific Beach because of restrictions by HOAs, private homeowners associations that make and enforce rules for planned



Palm & Stage Estate Sales, owned by JAG Real Estate in Pacific Beach (Photo by Dave Schwab/Special for Times of San Diego)

communities, like condo buildings.

“Because of HOA restrictions in the community, they’re not allowed to do the estate sale at their home,” she said, adding that reality ultimately led to the creation of Palm & Sage Estate Sales, which allows clients to sell their furniture and other goods on consignment with JAG, which takes a small percentage for hosting their estate sale.

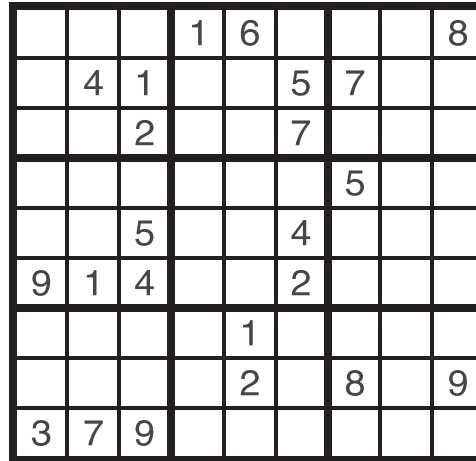
"We go to their house, organize everything and help the family decide what they want to keep, sell, donate or trash, and then we help them price it, and we prepare an estate sale for a weekend to help them liquidate," explained Sullivan, adding, "Luckily, there was a space available for rent and we were able to lease it."

"It's all senior services-related," pointed out Coleman about the estate sale process. "That's what we're trying to do."

Sullivan talked about what is happening behind the scenes for the Aug. 29-30 estate sale they're hosting that weekend for five different clients at Palm & Sage Estate Sales. "We're probably going to have people who are looking for things that they can resell," she said. "We're trying to make it convenient."

Explaining how consignment works for estate sales, Sullivan said: "If you have things you want to sell, we look through it together, we sign an agreement, we tell you what we think your things are going to sell for, and then we keep it in the store for up to 90 days. Whatever doesn't sell after 90 days, you can choose if you want to donate it, junk it, or leave it."

SUDOKU

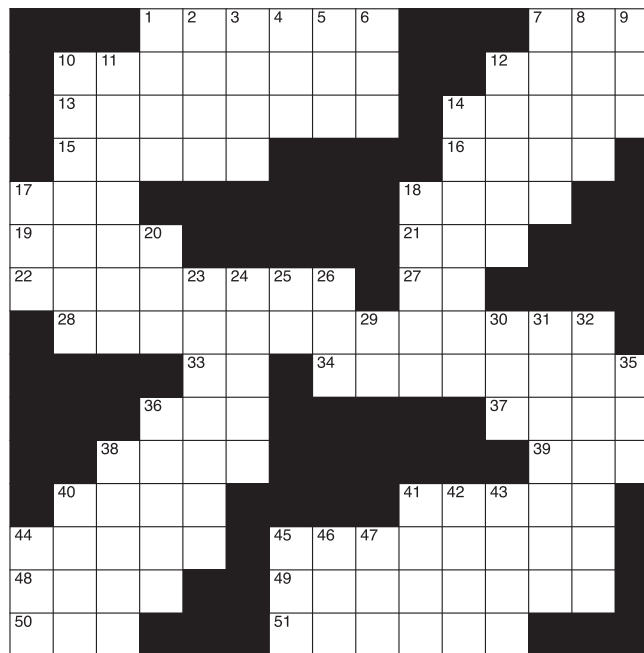


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CROSSWORDS



CLUES ACROSS

1. A vast desert in Africa
7. Reciprocal of a sine
10. Type of phone
12. Biblical figure
13. One who renounces a religious belief
14. Warren and Monroe are two
15. Wild ox
16. Dismounted a horse
17. Cave dweller
18. Where infants sleep
19. Popular type of shoe
21. Clumsy large person
22. Evil-like
27. Integrated circuit
28. Austin-based athlete
33. Postscript
34. Follows 18
36. People of Gambia
37. Popular actor Nicolas
38. Platform for a lecturer
39. Taxi
40. American songwriter Sammy
41. Iranian city

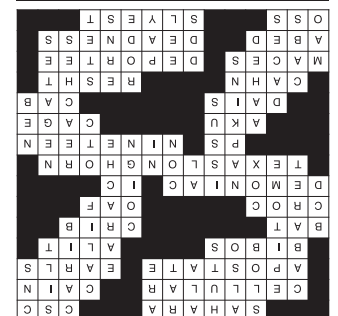
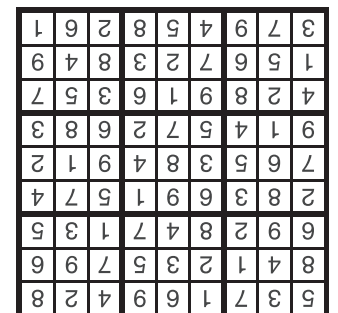
44. Heavy clubs
45. One who is expelled
48. In bed
49. Lifelessness
50. Former CIA
51. Most slick

CLUES DOWN

1. Slovenly person
2. In addition
3. Hovels
4. Pie ____ mode
5. Subway rodent
6. They ____
7. Indigenous S. American people
8. Fine sand
9. Central nervous system
10. Nightclub entertainment
11. The perfect example of something
12. Supreme Islamic leader
14. Pain
17. Binary-coded decimal
18. Projecting corner of an angle
20. "Succession" actor Brian
23. Dinner table decor

24. Ancient settlement in modern Turkey
25. You can call Paul Simon this
26. Opposite of a pro
29. Atomic #28
30. Type of drug (abbr.)
31. Arrives at
32. Nullifies
35. Bird's beak
36. Partner to "oohed"
38. Ray-finned fishes
40. Taxis
41. Sat on and controlled
42. Sea eagles
43. Remain as-is
44. Chinese revolutionary
45. Tooth caregiver
46. Snakelike fish
47. Compensate

ANSWERS



Mr. Charlie's vegan knockoffs of McDonald's put to the taste test

By Frank Sabatini Jr.

SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

PACIFIC BEACH — The difference between unleashing your inner glutton at McDonald's versus doing so at its vegan counterpart, Mr. Charlie's, is that the latter doesn't leave you feeling as though a tidal wave of saturated fat, salt and oil is racing through your veins. You exit with the same spring in your step as when you entered.

In three visits since the growing Los Angeles-based chain rolled into Pacific Beach earlier this year with its cheerfully loud red-and-yellow motif, I've sorted out my personal hits and misses when comparing them to the nostalgic grub at McDonald's. (The eatery recently opened in central Hillcrest as well.)

My unexpected favorite item is the Mr. Rack. It beckons to the famous McRib sandwich, which looks notoriously unappealing when seeing the processed meat naked without its blanket of viscous barbecue sauce. Yet in terms of flavor, half of the world loves them, and Mr. Charlie's would have been remiss in avoiding a vegan take.

Here, you'll find a nicely textured slab of faux pork along with a few chunky pieces of onions, sliced pickles, and house-made barbecue sauce that isn't too sweet or overly tangy. The sauce's subtle pith of smokiness might seem flimsy to die-hard pit masters. But for this palate, it is a fine example of culinary balance while allowing me to comfortably forget about the horrors and virtues of an actual McRib.



The Mr. Chuck burger with fries. (Photo by Frank Sabatini Jr./Special for Times of San Diego)

All of the mock meats at Mr. Charlie's are soy-based. That becomes slightly evident in the various burgers because of their softer mouthfeel.

But it's hardly a deterrent.

The Mr. Chuck is built to mimic a Big Mac complete with two thin "meat" patties and a middle bun. It also features two slices of vegan cheese, crispy shredded lettuce, Thousand Island-type sauce, and freshly diced onions, which are not of the reconstituted ilk used at McDonalds. (Although admittedly, I like them.)

Kudos to the Mr. Chuck for also coming in at full size opposed to the noticeably shrunken Big Macs of today. In addition, the special "Mr. Chuck" sauce is honorably creamier and the pickle factor tastes a notch higher.

Both the single burger (called "Not a Burger") and the "Double Not Cheeseburger" (a McDougle lookalike) are also commendably heftier compared to their McDonald's cousins.

On the downside, some consumers — especially non-vegans — might take issue with the plant-based cheese used here. It's sourced from the prominent company called Follow Your Heart. The non-GMO product is made with coconut oil, potato and modified food starches. It's healthy stuff and melts fairly well, but it's as sticky as glue. If you get even a small speck of it on your fingers, you'll need a few wet napkins to wipe it off. It sits rather thickly on the palate as well.

Sunflower oil is used for the fries, which very closely resemble those at McDonald's in terms of appearance. The only flavor difference is that they are about 25% less salty. I'm not a salt fanatic, but I applied a few pinches of it from mini salt packets provided by the friendly staff.

Franchisee George Bond said the lower sodium content in most of the food at Mr. Charlie's is deliberate because "vegans are very sensitive and particular about their food."

Breakfast items are served all day. And the Mr. Charlie's version of an egg-sausage-cheese McMuffin was gratifying, although the mock sausage patty could withstand a little more sage, fennel and salt in its construct. Otherwise, the sandwich hits the mark for authenticity with its fresh English muffin and convincing egg substitute.

Fans of McDonald's Chicken McNuggets will easily wolf down Mr. Charlie's "Not Chicken Nuggets" with a fair degree of gusto — and without guilt. They come in seven-piece quantities and could trick

MR. CHARLIE'S

Where: 1560 Garnet Ave., and 3896 Fifth Ave.

Info: mrcharlies.co.

some into thinking they're eating chicken. Dipping options include an excellent green cilantro-jalapeno sauce, a mediocre sweet and sour, and the zesty "Mr. Sunday sauce," which Bond compares to the house sauce at Chick-fil-A.

Coming soon is a spicy chicken sandwich that Bond says is nearing final development. The menu currently offers a "Not Chicken Sandwich" with lettuce and vegan mayo.

Also, customers can cool down with either chocolate or vanilla soft-service ice cream made from soy and cassava potatoes. I could barely detect the absence of dairy.

"We sell a lot of it," Bond added.

Mr. Charlie's debuted in 2022 in Hollywood, and it has since branched out into other locations in the Los Angeles area, San Francisco, Sydney, Australia and soon, London. The menus are the same at each location.

Co-founder Taylor McKinnon, a British transplant with a creative knack for marketing, runs the company on progressive, diversity-driven principles.

"In our hiring process, we never judge anyone based on their past struggles or where they come from. It takes all of us to make this work."

Best beach bites — Satisfy your coastal cravings for National Beach Day

By Frank Sabatini Jr.

SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — With nearly 20 miles of public shoreline within the city of San Diego, we hardly need a cue for plopping down a towel or chair on our beaches with a cooler of food.

But since National Beach Day is looming on the near horizon, the unofficial Aug. 30 "holiday" got us thinking about best and easiest sustenance for toting onto the sands.

Below are some favorite beach bites from nearby eateries that are worth defending from observant seagulls.

Breakfast burritos and fruit cups from Kono's Café, 704 Garnet Ave., Pacific Beach. Morning beach goers will find five different types of neatly wrapped breakfast burritos at this long-established cafe, which sits a stone's throw from the water. Fillings include sausage with avocado; bacon with potatoes and cheese; and vegetarian-friendly green

chilies with cheese. Handy fruit cups containing melon, pineapple and banana are also available as perfect sustenance after a swim.

Roast beef sandies from Big Jim's Roast Beef, 4508 Cass St., Pacific Beach. Yes, roast beef is doable for sand-side dining. Leave it to Big Jim's to send customers to the beach with a variety of sandwich choices that require a few extra napkins.



Whole pizzas in sturdy boxes are ideal for beach picnics. (Photo by Frank Sabatini Jr./Special for Times of San Diego)

Continued on page 13

San Diego bids goodbye to heavy metal haven Brick by Brick

By Tessa Balc
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

BAY PARK — Kyta Priphasouk knows many of the people who came through Brick by Brick on Aug. 12. She's a familiar figure at the club. A tattoo of Hello Kitty decorates the side of her neck. It greets everyone as she turns to the side to look inside a bag, or examine an ID.

But with those she knew, she added an extra line to each exchange.

"Are you coming tomorrow night?"

"I know, the boys are so sad as well."

"I haven't seen you in so long."

It's the second-to-last time she'll be standing out front of this community in the Morena district. Thursday night will be the last. She found out the same way most people coming to the show did: in an Instagram post.

CLOSING, FOR REAL

Brick by Brick titled its Aug. 5 post, "Bye Bye Buenos." The ambiguous messaging left room for a glimmer of hope. "Our chapter on Buenos Ave. is coming to an end."

One employee said they learned about the closure a couple of weeks ago. There had been talk of moving but nothing was certain. He was surprised by the post's message. Another employee offered a blunter interpretation: it's closing down, for real.

"I don't know if they're moving — which I hope so — but I don't know," Priphasouk said.

Frequent fliers at the venue aren't sure what to make of the announcement. There are some who have read into it, allowing themselves to wonder for a few moments where it will move. But many are taking the announcement at its word — Brick by Brick as they know it will be gone.

"That's why it's sad, nobody is going to step up and create what this already is.

It's possible if the owner happens to sell it, maybe the new buyer can keep it going, but that's all I can hope for," Justin Nordquest said as he waited in line to head in for a final time. He has been going to Brick by Brick since the early 2000s. Without batting an eye, he says he's seen hundreds of shows there.

"Venues have been dropping like flies. The smaller, more independent venues are disappearing and the only ones left are like the big conglomerates."

Neither Jordan Mancino nor Shannon Joy Wiles, the owners of Brick by Brick, responded to Times of San Diego's repeated request for comment via email and social media. When dialed, Brick by Brick's listed phone number prompts the caller for a remote access code, and the general information email inbox is disconnected.

The pair have run the venue for 12 years. Before that, Max Paul took ownership in 1995 and transformed the former Spirit of '76 club into Brick by Brick.

Under Paul's ownership, the venue started to become known as a metal club. In the late '90s there were certainly metal bands coming through, but Brick by Brick also offered a rock-adjacent selection, ranging from post-metal like Neurosis to Elliot Smith's indie rock and even Suzanne Vega's folk sound.

Bookings gradually shifted throughout the early 2000s to a consistent slate of metal acts.

Clayton Payne has been at Brick many times and he can't place the first show he saw, but he can recall the first show he played. It was a "disastrous" set with a singer-songwriter who was mistakenly booked there, but after that he played drums in a local metal band called Scar'd Sanity.

He looks the part. He wears a long black



Inside Brick by Brick, a neon red sign glows with the concert hall's logo (Photo by Tessa Balc/ Times of San Diego)

skirt with green Doc Martens. A denim vest littered with pins and patches fits like armor over his black-and-white band tee. The black flat cap he wears makes the outfit seem like something picked out of a hardcore Scotsman's closet.

"Even in the early '90s, late '80s, that stereotype of what a Southern Californian was, both punk and metal, were one of those few communities where you didn't need to dress the part, you could come here and be welcome," Payne said.

There were two distinct camps of fans at Aug. 12's show. Those in black, decked out in adornments, and metal fans in band tees. Another half of the crowd wore neon colors with shirts displaying Transformers. The headliner, The Cybertronic Spree, dresses up as characters based on the iconic toys and comics while performing songs with more of an '80s New Wave style.

They're a departure from the style Brick by Brick is most known for, but the club will host a more familiar slate Thursday. The venue's final show is a roundup of local metal acts, like Blackcast and Helsott, known well by those in the San Diego metal scene.

"There are other venues where heavy

acts will play but that sense of community that you get in metal only really happens here," Payne said.

Priphasouk agrees. She also works security for Live Nation. Some days she'll be at The Observatory or Music Box. But she says she does not have the same experience with concertgoers at other venues. She meets a lot of people at Brick, and has made a handful of friends. People know her.

"Here it's more family, from the door person to the bartender to the sound guy to even some of the bands."

It's a common theme. Selah Saldivar is quick to mention her connections to the place. Her husband's dad stopped at Brick while his band S.N.A.F.U. was on tour with Pantera. She is standing alone in line, but is meeting up with a friend inside who she met at the venue.

She admits she knows nothing about who's playing. Thursday's show was sold out, and she had to be here one last time.

"I hope there's not going to be some stupid like luxury apartment here in like a year."

There's a big question mark around the future for the space on Buenos Avenue, but also around how the loss of Brick by Brick will affect the tight-knit metal scene.

The consensus is that their favorite bands will likely end up playing Tower Bar in Chollas Creek — but that's a spot for punks, and it's a bar, not a dedicated space for music. Saldivar lives in North Park. The Observatory is closer to her, but she prefers Brick for its "grit." She also factors in the shows being relatively affordable at Brick.

"I don't know what's going to happen. [Metal music] is just going to have to go to bigger venues and it's going to be less accessible to the people who help build the scene."

Continued from page 12

The "super duper beef" sandwich is a doozy that boasts 16 ounces of meat, barbecue sauce, and white American cheese on a grilled onion bun. The menu offers a five-ounce version to keep the kids sated. Also, the steak-and-cheese sandwich using top round comes on a

manageable hoagie roll and beckons to a Philly cheesesteak.

Smoothies and acai bowls from Blue Palm Mission Beach, 2912 Mission Blvd., Mission Beach. Some of the tastiest and healthiest takeaways from this humble coffeehouse are the fresh-fruit smoothies made with berries and tropical fruits. The acai bowls are also beach-worthy. They're

extra hearty if opting for additions such as cocoa nibs, bee pollen and almond butter.

Pizza shout-outs, Pizza Cassette, 1459 Garnet Ave., and Prince Street Pizza, 4505 Mission Blvd., Isola Pizza Bar, 7734 Girard Ave., Pizzeria Luigi, 5001 Newport Ave. San Diego's beach communities are loaded with pizzerias. Our favorites listed above cover several

styles such as wood-fired Neapolitan pies made at Isola and Pizza Cassette; thin and crispy New York pizzas slung from Luigi's; and hefty Detroit-style sheet pizzas found at Prince Street. Except for Isola, each offers the option of pizza by the slice, although whole, boxed pizzas work very well for keeping pesky sand from interfering.

Volleyball players win point for South Mission Beach early start time

By Karen Pearlman

SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

MISSION BEACH — Nearly four months after a city of San Diego park ranger's warning threatened to block South Mission Beach's early-morning beach volleyball scene, athletes who gather at dawn along the sand in front of the 2600 block of Ocean Front Walk have won their point.

Joya Patel, director of strategic communications and spokesperson for Mayor Todd Gloria, confirmed that following a late-July conversation between Gloria, the city's Parks and Recreation Department and representatives for the South Mission Beach volleyball regulars, the city has agreed to move the allowable start time for beach volleyball from 8 a.m. to 6 a.m.

Patel said the decision was communicated to players on Aug. 10.

"To ensure consistency, the revised start time will apply to the city's other beach volleyball locations as well," Patel said, referring to courts at Ocean Beach near Spray Street, Pacific Beach near Crystal Pier and at La Jolla Shores near Kellogg Park.

The decision effectively grants the ask behind a change.org petition launched by the South Mission Beach volleyball community including Sharon Hsia, Alfredo Vejar, Dan Palenchar and Anne Luempert. The effort has drawn nearly 3,000 signatures.

But it comes with an asterisk.

The Mission Beach Town Council in July had conditioned its support for the earlier hours on relocating the two South Mission Beach courts closest to the boardwalk so they will be farther from residences. But the city now says it isn't pursuing that relocation.

Hsia said she was pleasantly surprised at the news, despite what she called "opposing messages from the Mission Beach Town Council."

"I'm happy that the city listened to its residents," Hsia said. "I love that they support volleyball as part of the culture of San Diego."

HOW IT STARTED

The issue began in late April, when regulars at the South Mission Beach volleyball courts said a park ranger warned them



Some of the South Mission Beach volleyball players who start playing at 6 a.m. daily. (Photo courtesy of Lauren Duran)

they could be cited for playing before 8 a.m., the start time set by municipal code. Players traced the sudden warning to noise complaints from nearby short-term rental guests, and said it threatened a routine some described as their only window to exercise before work or school.

As many as 50 players arrive at the 14 South Mission Beach courts daily, as early as 5:30 a.m. They start play at 6.

Regulars like Lauren Duran, a South Mission Beach resident who has played in the early morning for about six years, and Hsia, who lives in Solana Beach but drives to South Mission for early play, said the courts operated for decades on an unofficial sunrise-to-8-a.m. honor system without enforcement or complaint.

"I think most residents don't know that it's happening," Duran said. "I spend a lot of time with residents, a lot of homeowners and an older community. Most people don't even know that volleyball's going on. And most of the people we see are out walking and seem to love watching us play."

Hsia said the early-start rule singled out volleyball while overlooking louder early-morning disruptions common to the beach — like maintenance equipment, sand tractors and planes taking off from San Diego International Airport. She also noted that surfers face no comparable restriction on when they can be in the water.

Hsia said that she was part of a month-long study of sound data at the beach done with a sound decibel meter. It showed that the ocean itself is louder than the



South Mission Beach resident Lauren Duran (right) and Sharon Hsia, from Solana Beach, are beach volleyball regulars. (Photo courtesy of Lauren Duran)

volleyball play. The volleyball courts have deep roots in San Diego beach culture: the first nets went up in 1965, and the count grew to 14 in 1977 with a push from the late NBA Hall of Famer Bill Walton, a beach regular.

The courts sit between the sand and the paved pedestrian boardwalk that starts near the jetty and the South Mission Beach Park parking lot, facing west toward the ocean. Residential cottages, condominiums and homes line the boardwalk to the east.

THE NEIGHBORS

The change.org petition gathered more than 1,000 signatures in its first 12 hours in April and continued climbing through the spring due to word of mouth and social media exposure. But a more consequential venue was the Mission Beach Town Council, the resident-led group that advocates for the community and serves as a direct line to city decision-makers.

In June, Hsia and other volleyball players presented research and information to the town council, laying out arguments for and against an earlier start time, along with the noise study and proposed solutions.

Town council President Larry Webb

said one proposal that came out of that process was to relocate the two courts closest to the boardwalk, creating more distance from residences. Some players were open to it, Webb said, but others — including Hsia — said any relocation needed to come with additional courts to make up for what would be lost near the boardwalk.

Webb said the board wouldn't support that trade.

"Our board, the official decision is that we would support a 6 a.m. start if the two courts that are closest to the boardwalk were moved further to the west, away from residences," Webb said.

THE CATCH

That same condition showed up in writing from the city on the same day players got their answer. Karen Dennison, assistant director of Parks and Recreation, wrote in an Aug. 10 email to Hsia that the city would "only support a 6 a.m. start time if the two courts closest to the boardwalk are moved further west and no additional courts are added."

Dennison called the no-new-courts condition non-negotiable, telling Hsia she wanted to see whether there was "any room for movement" on the relocation itself. She said city staff had determined internally that new courts could not be added "at this time."

Duran said those two courts already differ from the rest — their nets sit about seven inches lower than the other 12, since they're designated for women's play.

City officials have previously said that any formal, permanent change to the court hours would ultimately require an amendment to the municipal code, a process that runs through the city council rather than Parks and Recreation alone.

WHERE IT STANDS

As for the courts themselves, the city has since made clear the relocation isn't happening — at least not soon. Patel said the city is not pursuing construction of additional courts or relocation of the existing ones "at this time," noting that adding courts would trigger additional regulatory review, including a Coastal Development Permit from the California Coastal Commission.

Mission Bay football looking for another standout season

By Hector Trujillo
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

PACIFIC BEACH – Despite suffering a nail-biting 25-20 loss to Imperial in the regular season opener on Friday, Aug. 21, Mission Bay looks to build on its 2025 season, when it finished 10-1 overall.

The Bucs ended up losing in the CIF San Diego Section Div. II playoff semifinals to San Diego High after an undefeated regular season, but have only gained in experience since, with over a dozen starters returning on the offensive and defensive side.

“We have a tough schedule with a lot of new pieces,” said head coach Greg Tate. “We are getting these guys up to speed as quickly as possible, so we can compete every week.”

Mission Bay’s next two opponents will be on the road starting on Friday, Aug. 28, versus Patrick Henry followed by a meeting at Olympian on Sept. 3. The Bucs did not face Olympian last season but did face Patrick Henry in what turned out to be one of its closest games by coming out



Mission Bay defensive end Weston Cortez (3) makes a tackle against Imperial last Friday. (Photo by Steve Sidell/Special for Times of San Diego) on top 28-21.

Among the players to watch for in 2026 are senior co-captains Nereo Kraft and Sean Lander, along with Cash Kalauli-Martin and Justin Tiop.

“Those guys set the example and showed how to be leaders of a team,” Tate added. “This is something that the seniors are trying to emulate this year. They are learning every week and that is something that



Buccaneers quarterback Austin Stefl throws a pass in the loss against Imperial on Aug. 21. (Photo by Steve Sidell/Special for Times of San Diego)

can carry on.”

Mission Bay will play its next home game on Sept. 11 against University City, followed by a road match on Sept. 25 against Montgomery, which gave the Bucs everything they could handle last year in a 21-20 defeat.

Mission Bay will open the second half of the season at home versus Canyon Hills

on Oct. 2 and will look to get revenge on the road Oct. 9 against the Cavers. The Bucs will then play their next two matches at home versus Cathedral Catholic and Lincoln on Oct.16 and 23. Mission Bay’s regular season finale will be against cross-town rival Point Loma on Oct. 30.

“Every game is circled as important on the calendar week to week,” Tate said.

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Pacific Beach Arts Center to hold groundbreaking celebration

By Dave Schwab
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

PACIFIC BEACH – The transformation of the old Pacific Beach Library into a new community arts center is underway.

A groundbreaking celebration for the renovation of the former library is set for 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 2, in the outdoor commons area.

The groundbreaking ceremony will include music and light refreshments, recognition of major donors, remarks from elected officials, community leaders and community partners, along with hard hat tours of the project's ongoing indoor remodel.

The community arts project represents a new chapter for a familiar community landmark. The former library building is morphing into a center designed to support and celebrate the arts while creating new opportunities for the beach community to learn, create and perform.

The renovation effort is spearheaded by beautifulPB, a grassroots group committed to building a more sustainable and

equitable community by promoting arts, mobility and green space.

The group's latest mission is to turn the former library building, a 1950s mid-century modern structure, into the home base and gateway for a proposed Pacific Beach Arts District. Pacific Beach's old library operated there from 1951 to 1997 before moving to Cass St.

The vision for the new Pacific Beach Arts Center is for it to become an accessible, affordable destination for arts, culture, creativity and wellness. Through classes, workshops, exhibitions, performances and community events, it aims to provide opportunities for people of all ages to learn, create and thrive through the arts.

Re-imagining the new arts center and bringing it to life is a tall task, noted beautifulPB members Chris Olson, Jennifer Nowak and Jennifer Tandy.

"San Diego Unified School District used it for various purposes as a resource center, for storage, etc.," said Tandy, co-chair of PB Arts Center Philanthropy



An artist's rendering of the new PB Community Arts Center. (Graphic by Steve Pomerence/beautiful PB)

Committee.

She added, "Our entire capital campaign is \$1.25 million. That's the whole package. We've gotten to about the halfway point, so we've met our Phase 1 funding goal, which is to get this building habitable."

BeautifulPB's co-founder, Chris Olson, said just getting the building to a functional and habitable place was no easy task.

"Heating, air conditioning, painting, some minor plumbing and electrical,"

said Olson about first-phase building improvements. "The point of phase one, half of \$600,000 in funding, is to get us in the building so we can start using it. That's what we're working on now, to get us into the space."

Concerning the timeline for Phase 1 building construction, Olson said, "We hope to have all this done by the end of the year, so that in 2027 we can start doing programming."

The second phase of the building's rehab is "to do more enhanced capabilities like pottery, putting in a kiln and building out the kitchen," said Olson.

"Every single thing that has happened to this point has been volunteer-based," said Nowak, chair of PB Arts Center Steering Committee. "We're now getting to the part where we need to start serious programming and see what we really are going to do with the building?"

Added Nowak: "All the community groups can meet here. There are things we can start to slowly phase in as we move along."

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PB FUN FACT:

Did you know? Local's Summer is by far my favorite time in PB. Most of the tourists are gone, kids are back in school, beaches aren't as crowded, water is warm and there's usually fun to good surf on tap. "Local's Summer" is September through October and then leads into my favorite time of year, Fall.