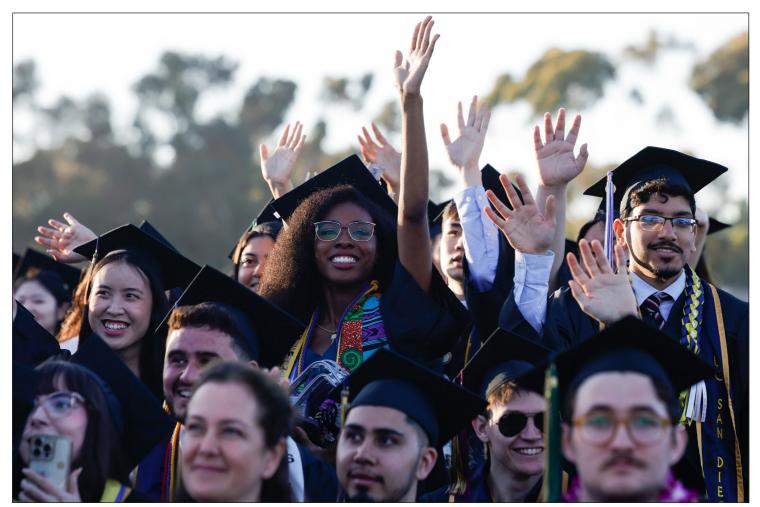


# The San Diego Union-Tribune

\$2.77 | SUNDAY, JUNE 16, 2024 | SANDIEGOUNIONTRIBUNE.COM

## **CATCHING A WAVE**



Roughly 3.000 UC San Diego students and 6,000 spectators were at RIMAC Field on Saturday for the first major night commencement in school history, with keynote speaker former Vice President Al Gore. Comparatively few attendees wore or showed political messages despite pointed campus tensions after Chancellor Pradeep Khosla directed a pro-Palestinian encampment be dismantled in May. Story, A2. MEG MCLAUGHLIN/U-T

### Questions arise about practices of e-bike operation

Pedal Ahead target of 3 investigations, including state DOJ criminal probe

By Jeff McDonald & Tammy Murga

The operator of an electric bike program aimed at reducing car trips and greenhouse gas emissions is the subject of at least three investigations, including a criminal probe being conducted by the California Department of Justice.

Pedal Ahead, which has been awarded millions of dollars from public agencies across San Diego County and the state, was removed as administrator of the e-bike initiative launched two years ago by the San Diego Association of Governments.

The management change came after questions were raised about participation reports Pedal Ahead filed with the regional planning agency known as SANDAG after receiving a grant worth approximately \$440,000.

"The pilot program is currently under review to ensure the consultant was meeting its contract requirements," SANDAG said in a statement. "This review started on February 15, 2024."

The nonprofit, which was listed as delinquent by the state Attorney General's Office until last week, also is the subject of an ongoing California Air Resources Board probe, according to documents obtained by The San Diego Union-Tribune.

A spokesperson for the state air board declined to comment on the internal investigation but said in a statement that Pedal Ahead was awarded \$10 million in 2022.

The nonprofit subsequently was set to be paid an additional \$3 million, although most of those funds have yet to be turned over, the spokesperson

"Pedal Ahead is receiving payment as work is completed, which to date has been around \$1 million that has been focused on program readiness,' Air Resources Board spokesperson Lys Mendez said by email.

The San Diego nonprofit was restored to its current status last week, days after the Union-Tribune asked state and SANDAG officials See **E-BIKES** on Page A10

### City's budgeting for 2 homeless shelter sites is only a beginning

Path forward for Kettner warehouse, H Barracks full of unknowns



The H Barracks property would provide a place for homeless people to sleep in their cars. The door has been left open to erect tents as shelters. KRISTIAN CARREON / FOR THE U-T



The San Diego City Council hopes to convert a vacant warehouse on Kettner Boulevard into the city's largest-ever homeless shelter. NELVIN C. CEPEDA / U-T

#### By Blake Nelson

After hours of testimony, multiple news conferences, marathon closed-door meetings and angry protests from residents, the San Diego City Council finally agreed with the mayor to direct millions of dollars toward a pair of projects that could offer varying levels of shelter for the region's growing homeless population.

Does this make the two initiatives a done deal? Nope.

At the same time, several existing shelters are slated for closure. Will the city definitely and quickly lose access to hundreds of beds? Maybe.

The council's approval Tuesday of a \$2.15 billion budget includes funding to help Mayor Todd Gloria fulfill a pledge to create 1,000 new beds for homeless residents while simultaneously marking the start of an uncertain period for the region's overtaxed shelter system.

Top of mind is the empty warehouse by Kettner Boulevard and Vine Street. The council did budget \$6 million to renovate the structure so it could potentially hold 1,000 people. But before any money changes hands, those same leaders must approve a lease.

Council members met again in private Monday morning to discuss a number of issues, includ-See **SHELTER** on Page A14

## 8 Israeli soldiers killed in attack in Gaza

Deadly blast comes in southern city of Rafah, a Hamas stronghold

By Jack Jeffery

JERUSALEM - An explosion in southern Gaza killed eight Israeli soldiers, the military said Saturday, making it the deadliest attack on Israeli forces in months.

The attack, coming more than eight months into a grinding war that shows few signs of ending soon, was likely to fuel new calls for a cease-fire by Israeli protesters. It also came as the government confronts widespread anger over exemptions from military service for young ultra-Orthodox men.

Israel launched an air and ground invasion of Gaza in response to an Oct. 7 cross-border attack by Hamas and other militants that killed some 1,200 people and took 250 others hostage. The Israeli offensive has killed over 37,000 Palestinians. It also has unleashed a humanitarian disaster in Gaza, where over 80 percent of the population has been displaced and Israeli restrictions and ongoing fighting have hindered efforts to bring in humanitarian aid, fueling widespread hunger.

Saturday's explosion took place in Rafah, a southern city that Israel has identified as Hamas' last major stronghold. It sent in ground troops to the city in early May and has given no indication when the operation will end.

See GAZA on Page A10



K.C. ALFRED / U-T

**BUSINESS** 

### **Bayfront RaDD** development faces hurdles

The project that comprises six downtown blocks of the former Navy Broadway Complex IQHQ's bayfront Research and Development District (RaDD), and its lender are facing a rough leasing market as construction nears completion. C1

### Hundreds of vacancies on S.D. city and county panels

Unfilled spots can hobble missions, delay work

By Jeff McDonald & Emily Alvarenga

Nearly 7 percent of political appointments across the San Diego County government are vacant, either because the terms expired, they were abandoned by seat holders or they are languishing while elected officials ponder fresh nomi-

And persistent vacancies on San Diego city boards and commissions are even more widespread, with nearly one in five positions available for public appointment vacant, an analysis by The San Diego Union-Tribune has found.

Both of the sprawling bureaucracies rely on an army of civic-minded volunteers to perform much of the legwork that elected officials and department heads consider in their

everyday decision-making. And the hundreds of vacancies across every sector of the city and county governments have prompted delays in policymaking, enforcement and land-use planning, among other routine duties, interviews and records show.

Sometimes board vacancies are more than an inconvenience.

The county Citizens' Law Enforcement Review Board, for example, had to cancel its meeting last Tuesday due to the lack of a quorum.

It was not the first time the civil-See **BOARDS** on Page A7



#### **DIGITAL ACTIVATION**



#### Television . . . . . . . E11



## Defending diversity, equity and inclusion

"I'll wash your mouth out with soap!" As a kid, that threat was enough to keep me from telling a lie or using certain four-letter words. Your parents may have pledged to do the same.

Today, it's not a four-letter word but a three-letter acronym that's eschewed: DEI, which stands for diversity, equity and inclusion.

After the 2020 murder of George Floyd, companies around the country eagerly made pledges and promises declaring their commitment to DEI. Departments were established, helmed by new chief diversity officers. Training programs were implemented in an effort to build more inclusive workplace cultures.

According to The Washington Post, America's 50 largest public companies and their foundations collectively committed nearly \$50 billion to address racial inequality in the year following Floyd's murder.

Now a large and vocal chorus is questioning the need for those investments.

Opponents of DEI say it causes — rather than cures - discrimination, calling it "anti-White." On his platform X, Elon Musk declared, "DEI must DIE. The point was to end discrimination, not replace it with different discrimi-

Conservative legislators in 29 states have launched efforts to defund or prohibit diversity-related programs in schools and universities, government agencies and private companies.

Already, 10 states have restrictions in place. The anti-DEI crusade is expected to continue, fueled by last year's Supreme Court decision to strike down affirmative action in college admissions.

Data confirms the need for DEI initiatives. Earlier this year, the San Diego County Office of Equity and Racial Justice released its first Equity Indicators Report. It covers 34 different indicators grouped according to themes, such as jobs and health, and is based on 2019-2022 data from a variety of sources.

The report revealed some stark differences: In San Diego County, people of color were more likely to be living below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Their children experienced poverty at more than twice the rate of White children. They were more likely to be enrolled in SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), and had less access to mental health, dental, and primary care. Their rates of home ownership were half those of White and Asian house-

holds. Even if racial disparities are inarguable, execution of DEI initiatives has been

Recently, The New York Times reported that the Arts and Sciences division at Harvard Univer-

Conflict Resolution Center will host a 30-minute webinar called "DEI Pulse Check: Where Are(n't)." NCRC Director of External Relations Ashley Virtue will be speaking with S. Mitra Kalita, cofounder and publisher of URL Media and Epicenter NY, who has written widely about DEI. For information or to register, visit NCRConline com

This Tuesday, the National

sity no longer will require job applicants to submit diversity statements. Instead, finalists for teaching jobs will be asked to describe how their work has strengthened academic communities and what they will do to encourage idea sharing among students.

Harvard called the change an "updated approach" that still considers a candidate's efforts to promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

I am struck by the inelegance of our DEI-speak. We are still uncomfortable

talking about it. And we still find it hard to embrace change that seems fair and right, as though it means giving something up, rather

than making progress. This came to light for me a few weeks ago, in a conversation I was having with a nonprofit executive on the East Coast. It was right after the announcement of the inclusion of Negro League statistics in Major League Baseball official records.

We celebrated the news, but lamented the reaction from upset fans who questioned the legitimacy of the decision.

I understand the emotions at play: If Ty Cobb was your lifelong baseball hero, it could be hard to see him drop from No. 1 to No. 2, hitting-wise. Cobb was displaced by Josh Gibson, who played in the Negro Leagues, as the all-time

It was the right thing to do — an acknowledgment of the contributions of

Black players to the game of baseball.

Already, MLB had officially designated the Negro

Leagues as "Major League." The blowback is rooted in a belief that programs and initiatives intended to level the playing field for the most marginalized among us create some sort of unfair advantage. It's fixedpie thinking: If some people gain, others must lose.

Until and unless that changes, we can't turn away from DEI efforts.

Without them, organizations may fall back into patterns that create unhealthy work cultures, driving away diverse employees and customers alike.

*Dinkin is president of the* National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit ncrconline.com.

## Grading resumes for Oceanside's wave resort

By Phil Diehl

OCEANSIDE — Grading has resumed and will continue another six months for Oceanside's long-anticipated artificial wave lagoon, resort hotel, retail shops and nearly 700 homes proposed on the former site of an old drive-in movie theater in the San Luis Rey Valley.

No firm dates have been set for construction or completion of the 92-acre project, called Ocean Kamp, but some early milestones are approaching, said Jon Corn, an attorney and CEO of N4FL Worldwide, the partnership developing the site.

'Step 1 is to obtain city permits to allow construction of roads, utilities, and other infrastructure items," Corn said in an email Wednesday.

"We're hopeful to have these permits in hand this year, and to start construction of the infrastructure," he said. "Financing is in place. It's possible that we may be able to commence wave pool construction at the same we are installing roads and utilities."

Plans for the commercial properties are being refined and will be presented to city officials for approval, probably later this year. Most of the overall proposal remains the same, including the 300-room hotel, the wave pool and other features.

cool golf-oriented venue to round out the experiential and family fun aspects of the development," Corn said.

Encinitas-based Zephyr Partners bought the property in 2018 and developed the Ocean Kamp plan based on an artificial wave

Then in 2020, Zephyr handed control of the project to N4FL Worldwide, also known as N4FL development, with offices in Encinitas and Rancho Santa Fe. Grading of the property began in late 2019 with plans to import as much as 10 feet of fill material to raise some areas, just south of the San Luis Rey River, above the flood plain.

Earth-moving was suspended after the local nonprofit Preserve Calavera and another group filed complaints challenging the environmental aspects of the proposal. The second group — San Diegans for Sustainable, Economic and Equitable Development (SD  ${\tt SEED)-which\,represented\,local}$ labor unions, later dropped its challenge.

Preserve Calavera reached a settlement with the developer that reduced the number of homes from a maximum of 700 to no more than 667, added on-site affordable housing, and required all-electric facilities and other concessions.

The site for many years was home to the Valley Drive-In and a retail stores, boutiques, a health



Grading, shown here being done on Thursday, has restarted at the site of the 92-acre Ocean Kamp project. PHIL DIEHL/U-T

closed in 1999. The movie screens rants. were demolished in 2016. The swap meet ended in 2019.

The city approved a different project for the property in 2008, a big-box shopping center called The Pavilion that was never built. The Pavilion was to be Oceanside's largest shopping center, with 4,000 parking spaces and 19 commercial buildings, including mostly big-box

No details have been released about what type of surfing lagoon would be built. Various technologies are available. Drawings show a rectangular pool with a wall at one end that would push waves toward an artificial beach at the other end.

A climbing wall, stand-up paddle-board pool and trails for hiking and biking are part of the plan. Surfboard shops, bicycle weekend swap meet. The drive-in club, a movie theater and restau-stores and purveyors of outdoor philip.diehl@sduniontribune.com

gear and clothing would complement the activities.

A few Oceanside residents have expressed concerns about traffic and other issues related to the project, including the location next to the city's small airport. Some have questioned the logic of building an artificial surf lagoon so close to the ocean.

However, Oceanside's business community and many locals, including surfers, support the development, which would provide much-needed housing and jobs.

"A one-of-a-kind project such as Ocean Kamp will further solidify Oceanside's reputation as a Southern California destination," Oceanside Chamber of Commerce CEO Scott Ashton said in 2022.

Surfable wave pools are not a new idea. Disneyworld in Florida has had one of the world's largest since 1989, generating a 6-foot-tall wave every 90 seconds.

Waco, Texas, and Lemoore, Calif., in the state's Central Valley, also have successful wave pools. A new artificial wave expected to open this year at the Palm Springs Surf Club in Palm Springs, Calif., has been delayed by reported mechanical problems.

A single spot in an hour-long public surf session in Palm Springs ranges between \$60 and \$200, according to the club's website.

### Encinitas to explore staircase idea for Beacon's Beach again

By Barbara Henry

ENCINITAS - Encinitas will see if the third time actually can be the charm when it comes to winning approval for a staircase project at Beacon's Beach.

On Wednesday, the City Council voted to obtain a new staircase design and see if this version can find favor with the general public. The proposed staircase would stretch from the clifftop down toward the beach, providing an alternative access route when landslide activity closes the area's much-loved dirt trail.

This will be third staircase proposal that Encinitas has considered in recent years.

In early 2018, the city's Planning Commission rejected plans for a soaring concrete staircase. Opponents described that design as a "Las Vegas-style skywalk" and said it was would get to the point where totally inappropriate for the rustic, funky Leucadia area.

A replacement proposal plans for a wooden staircase

– also failed to win commission approval later that year. Some commissioners said at the time that it didn't seem that much different than the first option.

"It looked just as massive as (the first proposal); it was just wood," Councilmember Bruce Ehlers, who was on the Planning Commission at the time, recalled Wednes-

However, public attitudes toward building a staircase may be shifting, the city's mayor and a council member who represents the Leucadia area said.

"Having an alternative (to the trail) would be ideal," given the recent forced closures of the trail because of landslide activity, Councilmember Allison Blackwell said.

Mayor Tony Kranz, who lives in Leucadia, agreed.

"Everybody knew we we would be losing access if we didn't get stairs," and it's now happened twice, he said.

The popular dirt trail,

which zigzags down the which received state Coastal cliff, has just reopened after being closed for months. In January, city officials blocked access to the route after winter storms restarted an existing landslide problem and caused part of the trail to collapse. The same monthslong closure due to landslides also occurred in 2022.

In addition to debating the staircase issue Wednesday, council members voted to obtain construction bids to relocate the tiny, clifftop parking lot back away from

Commission approval earlier this year, involves reconstructing the parking lot and installing new fencing, bike racks and sidewalks.

City employees said they expect to seek construction bids this summer and bring back the winning proposal for council approval in August. Construction activity would begin after Labor Day weekend and likely would conclude before the end of the year, they said.

the bluff edge. That project, Henry is a freelance writer.



A section of Beacon's Beach trail after it was damaged by a landslide on Jan. 12. HAYNE PALMOUR IV / FOR THE U-T





By donating your body for medical science. Donations are made to the UCSD Body Donation Program, which covers the cost of cremation and scattering at sea after study is completed.

> For information, call: (858) 534-4546 or visit: bodydonations.ucsd.edu



The San Diego Union-Tribune



### Join the celebration!

The San Diego Union-Tribune will honor the 2024 Top Workplaces. Be a part of something special. Nominate your company.

sandiegouniontribune.com/nominate

