Different realities at top and bottom of housing market

As the economy suffers amid the pandemic, California’s housing crisis has come into sharper focus, highlighting disparities in income and housing security. Even as many San Diegans struggle to pay the rent, housing prices are reaching record highs, most recently a median of $650,000 according to the San Diego Union-Tribune, amid tough competition for the few homes on the market. While

In-person performances return to boost civic engagement

With COVID restrictions still in place, many artists are only holding events virtually but a few groups have found creative ways to bring their audienices outside while maintaining safety precautions. Blindspot Collective and Fern Street Circus both held creative in-person events that promoted civic engagement.

In lieu of its typical neighborhood tour, Fern Street Circus brought its performers out to meal distributions at local

Early results in election shore up Democrats’ power in SD

The election results will not be certified for another month but early leads, some of them insurmountable, paint a picture of who will potentially be representing Uptown and Downtown’s neighborhoods next year.

While this area has been consistently Democrat for years, some of the other areas in San Diego County shifted blue. After eight years of Republican Mayor Kevin Faulconer and a much longer Republican majority on the County Board of Supervisors, that office and the board flipped blue thanks to Terra Lawson-Remer defeating incumbent Supervisor Kristin Gaspar. City Council will have a Democrat super-majority.

State Senator Toni Atkins, City Attorney Mara Elliott and Assembly member Lorena Gonzalez all won their re-election bids handily.

While late ballots being counted could boost Council member Barbara Bry's campaign, Assembly member Todd Gloria had a healthy lead in the mayoral race. However, like in the primary, that could change.

District 3 Council member Chris Ward will replace Gloria in the 78th Assembly District. Then, Democrat Stephen Whitburn, favored to win from the start, was elected to the District 3 seat with a huge portion of the votes. Sean Elo-Rivera had similar returns in District 9 and will replace Council President Georgette Gomez.

Gomez failed in her campaign to fill the House seat vacated by
Housing market
CONTINUED FROM Page 1

local and state governments added some protections to ensure people remain sheltered, worry remains that this just pushes an eviction crisis into next year.

Despite a slight decrease in rents since the pandemic began and new regulations, San Diego remains an enticing market for real estate investment. Cain International, a multi-national real estate investment firm, entered the San Diego market for the first time by purchasing the recently renovated historic Spreckels Building at 625 Broadway in February. By the end of September, about one-third of the units were full. Chris Nickerson, Senior Vice President of Cain International, said the apartments are not filling as fast as they would pre-pandemic but those numbers are still good.

"Frankly, relative to some other markets, in our view, San Diego is doing quite well... and then San Diego has a lot going for it in terms of weather and quality of life to attract people moving from some of those other markets," Nickerson said.

He referenced one trend San Diego homeowners are seeing: significant interest from Bay Area tech professionals working remotely looking for relatively cheaper places to live.

San Diego’s booming life science industry is expanding Downtown. In September, IQHQ real estate investment group acquired five-blocks of a bayfront development to create a biotech campus.

Council member Chris Ward said Downtown has long seen a reverse commute from residents in Downtown going to Carmel Valley and other areas each day for their jobs. He said moving some of those jobs to Downtown will cut down on commutes so the city can meet its climate goals. As the industry grows, he is not concerned that housing those professionals could exacerbate the housing crisis.

"We have an abundance of luxury housing Downtown that’s already built, some of which — it’s really difficult to pin down the number — may not ever be filled right now, don’t even have residents down there. So we don’t see a net replacement of affordable housing units that are in the Downtown area," Ward said.

He added that any new developments will have either affordable units in them or putting money towards the affordable housing trust fund because of inclusionary housing requirements. He said incentivizing building affordable housing will be key to meeting the shortages at the lower end of the housing market.

While luxury apartments are plentiful, affordable housing is limited. Even pre-pandemic, those who qualified for Section 8 housing vastly outnumbered the stock available, with a waiting list for housing eight to 12 years long.

To some on the ground, those shortages have gotten even worse during the pandemic.

"The overall need has definitely increased and the inventory is low," said Stacie Perez, the housing and clinical services director at Uptown Safe Haven.

Uptown Safe Haven provides transitional housing to seriously mentally ill people with a history of homelessness. In the home-like environment, 19 clients are housed instead of winding up back on the street. According to Ward, by October there were 700 individuals at the convention center who had already existed through a positive connection — either a family member or placed in a home. Another 400 will be moved to hotels converted into housing within the next few months.

In addition to buying hotels to convert into housing, the city has provided rental assistance to families at risk of being evicted or falling into homelessness. Still, demand is much higher than what was provided.

For some activists, this is not enough. The crisis renters are facing has spurred several protests and organizing actions. In a Sept. 30 town hall ahead of eviction filings restarting in October, activists said housing is a human right, not an investment.

During the pandemic, Ward said he has not heard of any affordable units going offline — need just outpaces availability.

According to reporting by Voice of San Diego, San Diego’s voting patterns show they are looking for dramatic solutions to the housing crisis. Although it likely fell short of being approved according to current counts, a majority of San Diegans voted for Measure A which would raise taxes to fund affordable housing. Still, the new mayor, city council and county board could change the trajectory of the housing crisis.

Even without their action, many developments are slated to be complete in 2021 with affordable housing units.

—Kendra Sitton can be reached at kendra@sdnews.com.
Analysis: Poorer neighborhoods receive slower response to graffiti

KENDRA SITTON | Downtown & Uptown News

A new analysis of reported graffiti in San Diego has interesting findings about the city’s response to vandalism, including that wealthier neighborhoods like La Jolla and Pacific Beach had faster clean-up times than poorer areas like Mid-City.

Defense Attorney George H. Ramos, Jr. And his firm partnered with data visualization firm 1Point21 Interactive to build a map based on all the removal requests of graffiti from 2018 to September 2020 on the Get It Done app.

While the city aims to send crews to clean graffiti within five days of a request, the group found that the average time between when a report is made and when the city sends a team to clean up the graffiti is 23.5 days, a number that includes cases that are still in process. In some areas, the wait time for a crew to come was much longer. In Pacific Beach, it took an average of 17.8 days to respond to a request compared to 42.7 days in Mid-City.

“The data shows very clearly shows that graffiti in wealthier areas is cleaned up much faster than in lower income areas; in fact, almost twice as fast,” Sam Larson of 1Point21 Interactive said.

The pandemic has affected removal requests. The report found that since lockdown began, removal requests fell by 27% compared to the same period in 2018.

In total, the analysis found that in the two-year period there were 85,841 requests to remove graffiti. The largest portion, 11,794, were in Mid-City: City Heights. While a complaint-based system of solving issues can favor wealthier areas, in this case, the area with the most complaints still had a slower response than wealthier areas — suggesting not enough resources may be allocated to address the need there.

View the interactive map bit.ly/3mSUbmX.

—Kendra Sitton can be reached at kendra@sdnews.com
Military connections in West End
San Diego street names: Part seven of the series

Past Matters
KATHERINE HON

As discussed in earlier Past Matters columns, many 1870s San Diego pioneers lost their street name honors in North Park in 1899 and 1900. The original street names from present-day Alabama Street to Pershing Avenue were discussed in previous columns. This time the focus is on original names of north-south streets in the West End tract, which extends from present-day 28th to Ray streets and was formed in 1873 by William Jefferson Gatewood (1830-1888). Gatewood was born in Illinois and came to California by 1850, when the federal census recorded him as a miner living in Sacramento. Two years later, the California state census recorded him as a miner living in San Andreas, Calaveras County and working as a lawyer. Starting in 1867, he edited and published a newspaper there, called the San Andreas Register. He moved to San Diego in 1868 at the urging of Philip Crosthwaite — a San Diego resident since the 1840s. Crosthwaite wanted Gatewood to publish the first issue of his San Diego Union newspaper in 1868 at that name is that Gatewood was an ardent Unionist, while Pemberton fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. If prominent merchant Nash provided the name, he may have wanted to recognize Pemberton, who was born in Ireland in 1833 and came to the U.S. in 1838. In 1870, Mark Pemberton was living in Los Angeles. He became involved in contacting businesses and residents to subscribe to that growing city’s first directory. The San Diego Daily Union’s December 16, 1871 issue mentioned “Los Angeles Items” that “M. Pemberton, who has commenced canvassing for a Directory, is meeting with encouraging success. We understand that the Directory will embrace...Anaheim...and other places in the county and will be a most valuable publication for all business men.”

As the actual person behind the Pemberton street name is conjecture, there is no doubt that Pemberton named Winder Street for William Andrew Winder (1823-1871) for his Old Town compatriot and the fascinating subject of this 2019 book by Civil War author, researcher and lecturer Jane Singer. (Photo book by Katherine Hon)

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The Onyx Hotel Building today (Photos by Sandee Wilhoit)

Liquor, lockers and lively music

SANDEE WILHOIT
Gaslamp Quarter Historical Foundation

This property, like all others, was originally owned by Alonzo Horton. In 1868, he sold the lot to another notable early San Diegan, Capt. Samuel S. Dumnells, for $500 in gold coin. Capt. Dumnells is credited with building the first hotel in Newtown (San Diego) in the early 1850s. Throughout the years, the property exchanged hands on a regular basis, with the only buildings on the site being a series of frame, one-story structures, which housed various businesses. These included a millinery store/residence run by Mrs. Artie A. Cooper, a jeweler, real estate office, two restaurants, barbers, a photographer and a cigar store. The most consistent businesses, however, were the Mercantile Restaurant and Fashion Dye Works.

Finally, in 1910, the property was sold to S.W. Grier and Arthur and Louise Cosgrove. The new owners initially hired contractor T.W. Coates to construct the current building, but a contract dated two weeks after Coates was hired indicates that the actual commission was awarded to the Standard Iron Works. Coates was to have constructed an adjoining building, also with a 50-foot facade, for a different owner, who also replaced Coates with Standard Iron Works. It was additionally noted that the new building would replace the last frame landmarks on the Fifth Avenue business corridor. The cost for the combined buildings was $55,000.

The structure was designed in the modern commercial style, which was beginning to be the norm in the burgeoning commercial district. It was said to be patterned after the nearby Fritz Building on Fifth and F streets. The three-story building was built of cream-colored pressed brick with prism glass and plate glass fronts. As the building was intended for commercial use, the large plate glass windows allowed for maximum display opportunities. On the interior ground floor, located between two 25-foot storage areas, was a stairway leading to the upper floors. The upper floors were divided into rooms and apartments. The central doorway was crowned with decorative stained glass. As the earliest and longest tenant was the Onyx Hotel, the words “The Onyx” were outlined in green and white tiles in the inside of the main entrance, as well as on the stained glass above the entrance.

From 1911 through 1938, the Onyx Hotel operated on the upper floors. Throughout those years, it had several proprietors and managers, and several who had auxiliary enterprises on the premises.

Things were not always peaceful at the Onyx. In 1917, under the direction of Mayor Louis Wilder, a police squad raided the hotel. It was widely rumored that the current owner/manager, Mrs. Alexandrea (Ramon) Garcia, was illegally selling alcohol to servicemen. Indeed, numerous sailors and soldiers were caught at the hotel, and bottles of beer, wine, gin and whiskey were confiscated. Later, it was rumored to be a “locker club,” where servicemen could keep a locker with their civilian clothes to change into before embarking on a night on the town. The 1921 Sanborn Fire Map clearly reveals steel trusses built to hold up lockers and labeled as such. In 1939, the Onyx became the Rex Hotel, and in 1941, it became the Gates and remained so until 1956. It later became SRO affordable housing under the ownership of Mrs. Zondra Schmidt, a local pioneer in the modern Gaslamp revitalization and restoration.

The downstairs of the building housed a variety of businesses that were more stable in longevity than the earlier businesses in the frame structures. Robert Cleator operated a retail shoe store from 1911 through 1915, and Smith’s Clothes for Men would sell you a new Fall suit for $15.00! From 1917 until 1925, San Diego Gas and Electric occupied the lower floor. They were followed by an optometrist, an insurance company and several attorneys.

The most recent incarnation for this historic structure is the Onyx subterranean nightclub, boasting music, local DJs, international talent and the best in the Gaslamp. Unfortunately, it is now temporarily closed due to the COVID 19 pandemic restrictions.

—Sandee Wilhoit is the Historian and Lead Tour Guide for the Gaslamp Quarter Historical Foundation. She can be reached at swilhoit@gaslampfoundation.org.

The Onyx Hotel Building 1910
852 Fifth Avenue
Architect: Unknown
Architectural Style: Modern Commercial

The Onyx Hotel Building today
Q’Anon threatens to unravel the work to end human trafficking

By DR. JAMIE GATES

Part of an $80 million underground illicit sex economy in San Diego alone, human trafficking is hiding in plain sight in our community. It impacts thousands of people from all ages and backgrounds. At the same time, our mobile phones ping with notifications throughout our day; we are constantly filtering social media messages, determining what’s important and what we need to see. Now a duplicitous and even dangerous string of messages has cropped up: an attempt by Q’Anon sympathizers and supporters to co-opt the fight against human trafficking.

The work to end human trafficking in San Diego is a decades-long collaborative effort supported by multi-sector partnerships. Our community identifies those who are exploited, provides services to restore victims and track down and prosecute traffickers. A critical part of this effort is public awareness, helping our community understand what human trafficking is, how and where it happens in San Diego and what each one of us can do to end it.

Q’Anon’s social media messaging of Q’Anon supporters and promoters, luring people into a web of lies that threatens to distract, mislead, divide and tear apart diverse groups, is identified by those who are working in the fight against human trafficking.

While human trafficking is an intractable social issue, it consistently distracts citizens’ attention from the Trump administration and past administrations’ funding services and visibility that has done much to advance the cause. Q’Anon’s entrance to the conversation about human trafficking threatens to unravel this critical collaboration across the aisle of political rivalry. Q’Anon, once a fringe phenomenon, is now a rapidly spreading set of conspiracy theories flooding social network platforms.

Q’Anon supporters and sympathizers are using people’s passions about the atrocities of human trafficking as bait to lure those sympathetic to the anti-trafficking cause into their broader and more diffuse disinformation campaigns. Q’Anon is no different. In four centuries elsewhere, “Marx” Andre Argentino, a Ph.D. candidate at Concordia University who is studying human trafficking, is diverting essential attention and selves as anti-child trafficking organizations. André Argentino, a Ph.D. candidate at Concordia University who is studying human trafficking, is diverting essential attention and selves as anti-child trafficking organizations.

According to City Life Church Pastor Dale Huntington, “There’s a lot of wisdom we can gain from people in these neighborhoods. For the longest time I thought that I needed to speak up on behalf of people, and now I’m trying to learn how to speak up for people to listen to other people. We need to have a learning posture from all of us.”

As communities close with common beliefs and values, churches are ideally situated to foster open and honest conversations about race. Esplia agrees. “I don’t agree, one of the things we need to cultivate is learning to listen to ‘the other,’” says Esplia. “There are a lot of assumptions, prejudices, judgments, and that means that there is fear and ignorance about ‘the other.’ We need to learn to listen with empathy and respect.”

Mid-City Church of the Nazarene in City Heights takes this principle one step further, ensuring that multiple ethnicities are represented in the church’s leadership. “I think the beauty in the multi-cultural model is how we make decisions together and govern together when it comes to ministry or responses to, say, Black Lives Matter or the Mid-City Pastor Becky Modesto. ‘Because you have so many different cultural perspectives, you have to really sit there, talk, time to time to have people who are different than you at the table is really important.’

During recent protests in San Diego to police brutality, Mid-City didn’t unilateral take action to express its opinions. Instead, they reached out to the local stakeholders to hear what they felt would be most helpful from the church. “I called several leaders here and just asked, ‘how can we walk best alongside you?’” says Modesto. “It’s about listening to people’s stories, that empathy of just sitting there, just listening and understanding.”

Empathetic conversation with people who are not like us or with whom we disagree, however, is not easy. “One of the problems is that we’re not willing to see if perhaps we’re participating in systemic racism and benefiting from it,” says Huntington. “We’re just going to be guilty of that.” And there’s so much more digging to do.

Overt racism is easy to spot and easy to correct. It’s the subtle biases, the things we think and say and do without even realizing it, that are most insidious.

It goes into an elevator, a white woman is going to hold her purse tighter. When I go shopping at Nordstrom’s, I’m going to get followed. Those things have got to be really recognized and dealt with,” says Vines.

Esplia believes that the kind of dialogue that makes a real difference requires humility. “Humility is the one characteristic that would allow us to see ‘the others’ the way God sees them. Humility would be the prerequisite.”

With humility and empathy as the guiding principles, Esplia and Solana Beach Presbyterian Church held monthly meetings on hot-button immigration issues. “Many ministers are aware of these things, but they are scared of what their congregation is going to do,” he told me. After a year of complex human immigration conversations, they decided to ask a parishioner named Pedro who had migrated to the United States to share his story with the church body. “When he presented his testimony, the congregation started to applaud and stood up.” No one, not even Esplia, expected that kind of gracious response.

“Churches need to find their voice, and they need to be the nourishing environment where open, honest, humble, and respectful conversations occur.”

Today, the local church has an opportunity — some would say a responsibility — to step up and make a tangible difference in the lives of people in our communities who feel unheard, unvalued, and often unwelcome. The time has come to open our minds, our hearts, and our front doors to empathetic and humble conversations about racism in San Diego.

— David Edward Cummings, PhD is a professor of biology at Point Loma Nazarene University and author of “Everybody’s Got Bears,” available on Amazon.
Annual holiday traditions return to Little Italy

The time has come to start spreading a little holiday cheer! Little Italy remains determined to support its local businesses and residents while attempting to maintain a sense of normalcy with public health and safety at the forefront. While we may be celebrating a little differently this year, Little Italy is still shining bright and looking forward to another spectacular holiday season—with a few changes.

Get started on your holiday shopping during Small Business Saturday on November 28. Boutiques, galleries, restaurants and other locally owned businesses in Little Italy will be offering in-store specials and discounts for shoppers to enjoy. Businesses will be extending their hours to help you find those perfect gifts for everyone on the list from fashion accessories and home décor to good eats and gift cards. For more information, visit LittleItalySD.com.

The annual Little Italy Tree Lighting Ceremony kicks off December virtually with the Little Italy Holiday Special that will be streaming on Saturday, December 5th at 5:30 p.m. One of the most anticipated events of the year, Little Italy will shine bright during this 45-minute “Hallmark-style” broadcast. The Special will include the tree lighting ceremony of the 30-foot tall live Christmas tree in the Piazza della Famiglia led by the Little Italy Association leadership with an Italian countdown initiated by Father Joe Tabigue of Our Lady of the Rosary and exciting performances including a musical performance by Our Lady of the Rosary Choir in the historically renovated Church, a reading of Twas the Night Before Christmas by Santa & Mrs. Claus, and much more. For more information, visit LittleItalySDTreeLighting.com.

Amici House celebrates the Italian-American experience

Amici House in Little Italy—through its own revamping of the Italian American experience—has become a touchstone for celebrating the Italian-immigrant story in recognition of its value to the foundations and fabric of our nation and for emphasizing the Italian component in the abundant multicultural landscape of our city. At Amici House, we celebrate the Italian American way. To provide a better experience for our visitors, we have redesigned our indoor and outdoor space: Inside, you will find new images covering the walls, celebrating all things Italian as well as honoring the past through local historical photographs donated by community members. Outside, our new patio deck houses our caffè—Little Italy’s only nonprofit coffee bar—providing an abundance of beverages and snacks. Proceeds help to support our arts, culture, and heritage programs as well as supporting unsheltered and at-risk children at Washington Elementary in the neighborhood. Stop by, grab your favorite beverage, learn more about our nonprofit work, and feel good about supporting the community!

ITALIANSANDIEGO—RELAUNCHING THIS MONTH!
We are hard at work on relaunching the updates to our networking program, Italian San Diego, a virtual piazza of resources in our Italian community and a variety of special offers for community members. This free online resource will provide a directory of local Italian links to restaurants, retailers, and organizations in one convenient location. An event calendar will

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SEE HOLIDAY TRADITIONS, Page 9

SEE AMICI HOUSE, Page 9

SEE LITTLE ITALY, Page 9
Notes from Toni

By TONI G. ATKINS

Thanks! That is a word that is increasingly in our minds and hearts when November rolls around.

While the upcoming holiday season will be different than usual—as everything in 2020 has been—there are many things that will stay the same, including the gratitude we feel for the blessings in our lives, blessings that shine through even in tough times.

I know I am grateful for the privilege of serving some of the finest communities in the world in the 39th Senate District—and I am grateful to serve a region whose agricultural bounty helps grace the nation’s Thanksgiving tables with crops valued at almost half a billion dollars—and that’s just considering our avocados, citrus, vegetables and vine crops and fruit trees.

I am grateful for the first responders, medical professionals, teachers, grocery and pharmacy workers, and small businesses who have been working so hard to keep us safe and providing as much “normalcy” as possible during this pandemic.

I am grateful for the opportunity I recently had with my colleagues, Assembly member Todd Gloria and Congress member Scott Peters, to hand out 2,500 boxes of fresh food provided through the U.S. Department of Agriculture for families in need. And I am grateful for California’s Office of Emergency Services for introducing me to COPE Preparedness, so that we could facilitate the distribution of donated masks and hand sanitizer along with the food, as well as with accurate public health information in an effort to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

I am also grateful for the hard-working members of my staff here in San Diego who, in addition to their regular work load, helped with that event and have successfully aided more than a thousand constituents navigate issues involving the Employment Development Department and other agencies during this pandemic.

Our goal is to keep advocating for solutions that will make it unnecessary for folks to go outside of these agencies for assistance, but we remain here to help.

I am eternally grateful for the love and support of my spouse Jennifer and our friends and family, including the two furry members of our household, who are generally adorable, and only occasionally divas when yet another Zoom meeting comes along to delay their walk or snack needs.

Of course, while having “thanks” in our minds and hearts is terrific this time of year, it’s even better when we have “thanks” on our lips and in our wallets as well. So I hope we can all go out of our way to say thank you to all those who provide the blessings in our lives, and that we can express our gratitude by shopping small businesses and supporting local restaurants for take-out meals to make the holidays special. Filling the shelves at our local food banks and shelters. Maybe even changing the life of a senior pet and bringing them to their new forever home for the holidays. There are so many ways we are blessed. And so many ways we can help others.

Wishing you and your loved ones all the best as the holiday season ramps up!

—Toni G. Atkins is President pro Tempore of the California Senate. Having previously served as Speaker of the California Assembly, she began her tenure in the Senate in 2016. As Senator for District 39, she represents the cities of San Diego, Coronado, Del Mar and Solana Beach. Website of President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins: Senate.ca.gov/Atkins

Pay your bills, not scammers

By SUMMER STEPHAN

Pay your bills online is very common, but unfortunately even something as mundane as paying a utility bill can become a roller-coaster ride now that scammers frequently pose as utility companies. The scam involves a bad actor calling the victim and pretending to be the representative of a utility company and claiming to have encountered a problem with address information or payment method. Using this excuse, the scammer asks the victim for sensitive information that allows the scammer to open a fraudulent bank or credit account using the victim’s information. Additionally, the scammer will often ask the victim to buy gift cards or to wire money directly to them in order to pay a “late fee” or “overdue balance.”

Professional scammers are very good at pretending to be legitimate companies and encouraging a mistake on a bill is not out of the ordinary, so it’s easy to fall prey to this scam. Keep these tips in mind to avoid getting swindled.

• If you suspect you received a phony utility company call, hang up and contact the company directly using publicly available phone numbers to verify they were trying to reach you.

• Utility companies may not change your service unless they provide advanced notice. If a company is going to disconnect a service, they will typically let you know at least a few weeks in advance by writing a letter or email. If you receive any phone call claiming an imminent and immediate shut-off of a service, it is a scam. Hang up and contact your utility company directly.

• Some scammers have gone so far as to mail customers fake checks claiming to provide a refund for an overpayment on the account. This is a common scam and individuals should be on the lookout for such fake letters. If you receive one, contact your utility company directly and verify that your account has not been compromised.

• A common tactic scammers use is asking victims to buy gift cards or wire money in order to pay an overdue balance. A utility company will never ask you to buy a gift card or wire money and immediately hang up on any caller asking you to do so.

• Finally, don’t let yourself be fooled because a scammer calls from a number matching your
Downtown San Diego residents invited to review Revised Draft of Port Master Plan Update

Downtown San Diego residents are invited to review the Port of San Diego’s Revised Draft of the Port Master Plan Update and learn about proposed changes that would affect future hotel development, view corridors, access to the waterfront and height limits.

Continuing robust public outreach efforts for its Port Master Plan Update (PMPU) process, the Port of San Diego has invited the public to review and provide feedback on the Revised Draft PMPU. This document will guide future waterfront business uses, public access and development of water and land within the Port’s jurisdiction on and around San Diego Bay.

The PMPU has something for everyone who enjoys San Diego Bay. A major milestone, this latest draft considers and reflects extensive and valuable community input received on the Discussion Draft released in April 2019. At this step, the Port encourages and welcomes additional public feedback.

In response to extensive public input, there are sections that may be of interest to Downtown San Diego residents in the Revised Draft PMPU. Looking ahead, the plan will allow for redevelopment of the area that includes the Wyndham San Diego Bayside and the Navy property at 1220 Pacific Highway. With any future development, the Port will protect all view corridors that are contemplated in the Downtown Community Plan. Responding to resident concerns, the Port has ensured that any new development will provide the porosity necessary to allow the public to traverse between Downtown and the waterfront, with activated pedestrian corridors. In addition, the Port codified “visual porosity,” through view corridors, setbacks and strict height limits.

The Port also reduced projected hotel rooms to ensure an appropriate transition in density from the urban core to the water. The result is a vision for improving and activating this area with amenities for residents, workers and visitors to Downtown, while protecting the beautiful views of the bay.

Key components of the Revised Draft PMPU that concern the North Embarcadero Subdistrict include:

- Building heights lowered – The Port’s Discussion Draft released in 2019 proposed limit heights based on the adjacent jurisdiction, which would have allowed structures up to 450 feet. Responding to community input, the Revised Draft PMPU proposes much stricter building heights than originally proposed in the area bounded by Ash Street, B Street, Pacific Highway, and North Harbor Drive. The maximum building height is now proposed to range between 80 feet and 200 feet in this area.
- View corridors expanded – The 2019 Discussion Draft proposed to establish and preserve View Corridor Extensions at Hawthorn Street, B Street, West Broadway, and E Street. The Revised Draft PMPU expands the establishment and preservation of View Corridor Extensions to several additional locations, including Hawthorn Street, Grape Street, Ash Street, A Street, B Street, C Street, West Broadway, E Street and F Street. Hotel rooms reduced – The 2019 Discussion Draft proposed the addition of up to 1,400 new hotel rooms in the North Embarcadero. After extensive community dialogue, the Revised Draft PMPU has been revised to reduce that number to 950 new hotel rooms that would be allowed between Ash Street and Broadway. This will also include 30,000 square feet of retail, restaurant, and/or meeting space.
- Waterfront access improved – The reconnection of A Street and B Street will establish porosity and greater ease of access to the waterfront.

Navy Pier’s future – In the Revised Draft PMPU, the Navy Pier is assigned the Recreation Open Space designation, setting the stage for a future park.

Window to the Bay Pier/waterfront destination park – The Revised Draft PMPU includes a vision for adding more green space and connection to a public pier. This will include synergy with the iconic County Waterfront Park.

To review the Revised Draft and provide feedback, go to portofsandiego.org/pmpu. Feedback will be accepted through Tuesday, November 17, 2020.

Holiday traditions

running every Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. through the month of December, with the exception of December 23rd. Located in the Piazza della Famiglia, you can once again find your favorite farmers, artisan food producers, local crafters, and gifts all within the heart of the community. The Holiday Market will be operating under similar COVID-19 guidelines as the Little Italy Mercato including restricting the number of people allowed inside at one time and asking that shoppers wear facial coverings and maintain proper social distancing with a minimum of six feet between them and the vendors.

Spread some cheer to a child in need during the 10th Annual Little Italy Toy Drive. Over the past decade, the Little Italy Association has hosted the annual toy drive benefitting the foster children of New Alternatives, Inc. and has brought in over 6,000 toys. Participating restaurants, retailers and the Little Italy Mercato will host drop-off boxes where guests can drop off new, unwrapped toys for children ages 1 to 18. The Little Italy Toy Drive will go from November 2nd to December 14th.

Little Italy will be “decking the halls” of the neighborhood with festive décor and embellishments as a way to spread holiday cheer and spirit throughout the season. The Little Italy Association also plans to introduce several other activities on its social media and other platforms.

As Little Italy begins to slowly and safely reopen, the Little Italy Association is constantly looking for new and creative ways to allow people to enjoy the neighborhood and experience some of the best shops and eateries in San Diego. This holiday season, more than ever before, we must be there to support one another and lend a hand to those in need.

—For the latest updates on Little Italy, please visit us at LittleItalySD.com or follow us on Instagram @littletylittlesandiego, Twitter @LittleItalySD and Facebook @LittleItalySD. Christopher Gomez has been Little Italy’s District Manager since 2009. Reach him at christis@littleitaly.net.

Amici House

link to all the goings-on in our community, while our blog will highlight noteworthy updates in the community. Be on the lookout for the launch this month by following us: @italiansandiego.

ITALIAN HONORARY CONSULATE IN SAN DIEGO

The office of the Italian Honorary Consulate is located at Amici House in Little Italy. The office has been closed temporarily due to the pandemic, but assistance is still available through the Web or by phone. For more information, please visit sditalianconsulate.org or call 619-808-7974.

—Tom Cesarkin is the executive director and founder of Convivio and also serves as the Italian honorary consul of San Diego. Convivio cultivates community and fellowship, advances Italian cultural identity, and fosters multicultural awareness across myriad disciplines through education and research, social enrichment, and innovative programming. Visit: convivioconsulate.org | Follow: @conviviosociety

A view of the Coronado Bridge from Seaport Village (Photo courtesy Port of San Diego)
The San Diego International Film Festival occurred digitally like so many of San Diego’s biggest events this year. Instead of crowding into theaters, participants, including me, could watch dozens of feature films, documentaries and shorts from their homes. A few major films showed as drive-in movies in La Jolla’s UTC mall although I skipped those. A dizzying array of film options were available for live streaming or on demand, as well as conversations with filmmakers. Screened at the festival was Oscar-bait movie “Nomadland” starring Frances McDormand, which won an Audience’s Choice award. Other award winners at the festival may not be in contention for Academy Awards but still impressed the judges and audience. “Drunk Bus” won best feature film. “MLK/FBI” won best documentary and “150 Million Magical Sparrows” won best international feature.

The film festival also highlighted the work of many local filmmakers with several shorts blocks and a handful of feature films, including one made during the quarantine. After a year of stress, depression, financial crises and anxiety, each time I scrolled through the feature films options, I was only drawn to comedies. Despite all the options, I avoided thrillers, documentaries and dramas—genres I typically enjoy. What I wanted from this festival was unadulterated escapism, even if I would later have to write about it for work.

To that end, there were plenty of feature-length comedies to choose from including “Eat Wheaties!” starring Tony McHale (“Arrested Development”), which won for best comedy, coming-of-age dramedy “The Miseducation of Bindu” and wickedly sharp dark comedy “Ms. White Light.” Short films brought their own hilarious moments, with the LGBTQ section being particularly potent. I watched the campy musical “Romance is Dead” directed by former SDSU student Todd Jackson on repeat as each time I noticed a new delightful detail.

Among the comedies worth your time was “The Outside Story” from debut writer and director Casimir Nozkowski. In his first lead role in a feature, Brian Tyree Henry (“Atlanta”) stars as student Todd Jackson on repeat repair his relationship. Through his attempts to get back into his apartment to meet a deadline, he befriends many of the neighbors he had previously avoid-ed. The film is good-hearted and funny as neighbors slowly help Henry lighten up and repair his relationship.

The people Charles interacts with are burgeoning stars in their own right. In a Q&A session, director Nozkowski explained that he thought getting Henry in the role was a longshot but reached out to his agent anyway. When Henry enthusiastically came on board, the cast quickly filled out with Sonequa Martin-Green, Sunita Mani, Olivia Edward, Asia Kate Dillon and others in a screenplay that calls for over a dozen leading speaking roles.

Henry gives an excellent performance with understated physical humor punctuated with bursts of action. The effervescent Sunita Mani (“GLOW”) delivers an anxious and enthusiastic performance as a pedestrian parking enforcement cop.

Unlike many films and shows set in New York City, this was actually filmed in the Big Apple. Nozkowski is a life-long resident of the state, which perhaps informed his decision to subvert a New York stereotype about rude-ness to show how neighborly many are. The cast is very diverse which brings more verisimilitude to a story set in New York. While the film is warm-hearted and certainly believes that more human interaction is beneficial, it is not under the illusion that all people are good. Some minor characters like a group of bullies and a controlling mom are clear villains without much in the way of positive attributes. In the tight 85-minute film, there are many hilarious moments, including Henry repeat-edly interrupting a threesome in the upstairs apartment, teaching an elderly neighbor how to use online dating apps and accidentally dropping a water balloon on an enraged Officer Slater (Mani). Overall, keeping the movie short without prolonged comedic scenes with diminishing returns was a smart choice. The only scene that comes across as too short is between Asia Kate Dilllard (“Billions”) and Rebecca Naomi Jones as partners who discover they both cheated on each other. In his Q&A, Nozkowski admitted that their quick recollaboration verges on unrealistic. That is an understatement but the point of the scene is achieved: Charles needs to learn to lighten up in his own relationship.

Despite its few flaws, “The Outside Story” about neighborliness among cache of relevant comedies for this dark time is very diverse which brings more verisimilitude to a story set in New York. The film is particularly timely as many people find themselves isolated at home. As the cast interacts in close quarters without masks, it is downright utopic. Other aspects have aged poorly between the filming and its release after a summer where people have protested against the ill treatment of Black people by police. Police aggression is played for laughs over and over in some of the funniest scenes in the movie, “I couldn’t hear you over the injustice.” Charles says to a cop mumbling an apology in one of the movie’s final scenes. It requires cognitive dissonance to watch without also thinking of the many ways a police officer targeting a large Black man could go in real life. Sami’s Officer Slater has the best redemption arc in the film and her performance is still heartfelt. Henry does get several quips about his treatment by the police even as some of the scenes are unintentionally cringy. Despite its few flaws, “The Outside Story” gives Henry a chance to show off his acting chops on the big screen (well, small in this case) and shows audiences should look out for future Nozkowski projects.

—Kendra Sitton can be reached at kendra@sdnews.com.
Hola Swim keeps the summer going in style

By DIANA CAVAGNARO

Hola Swim is a local business operated by Aida Soria and Synectica Maestas. These two have been lifelong friends here in San Diego and decided to start a company when they couldn't find swimswear that they liked. Soria received a communications degree from San Diego State University and Maestas received a business degree at Parsons, The New School for Design.

When I interviewed them many years back their business was called Dos Caras Swimwear. People had trouble pronouncing it so they changed it to Hola Swim which reflects their Latino heritage. Hola means 'hello' or 'wave' and communicates a warm feeling. Last year they opened an adorable storefront on Logan Avenue and currently are open by appointment only. The store is very intimate currently are open by appointment only. The store is very intimate

In March, many operations were halted which left them with a lot of leftover fabric. They found that it was taking too much time bringing their new line from the pattern maker, and then to the cutter, and onto the sewer. These small businesses here in the US were too slow and they found that everything was delayed. Soria and Maestas felt their next option was to make small capsule collections in a factory in Bali that will do everything for them. Now they won't have to wait and wonder if the cutter will complete the job in time to give it to the sewers. It will all be done with this one company. Since this is a second job for both of them this will take away a lot of stress and they will be able to meet their orders now.

In 2018 they had rare reviews when they showed a collection at Fashion Week San Diego. In February 2013 they went to NOCHIA at New York Fashion Week and then again in February 2019 they showed at Pier 52 with small emerging brands. There was a lot of press there which led to being featured in Vogue Paris and Cosmo Latina. A pivot in their life was going to the Small Business Counseling Development Center. They helped them to come up with a plan to help grow their business. Since they moved online, their business has grown remarkably.

In addition to online sales, they also sell wholesale. These swimsuits are very versatile and multifunctional. Their swimswear can be worn day or night and appeals to a much larger audience. If you would like more information about this rapidly growing business contact them at holoswim.com.

—Diana Cavagnaro is an internationally renowned Couture Milliner based in Alpine, California. Learn more about our Hat Designer, Teacher & Blogger at DianaCavagnaro.com.

AVOIDING FUTURE TRUST OR WILL CONTESTS

By: Dick McEntyre and Chris von der Lieth, Attorneys at Law

Although most trusts and wills contain a “no contest clause,” disgruntled persons, especially one’s children, who feel they were improperly left out of a decedent’s disposition of property, may still vigorously challenge the provisions of the decedent’s document in question following the deceased person’s death. The grounds for such a challenge can be: (1) alleged fraud or undue influence exacted by the taker under the trust or will; (2) purported lack of mental capacity of the trustor or testator resulting in the estate going to the “wrong beneficiary”; or (3) especially in the instance of children, when a child believes he or she was inadvertently left out (“forgotten”) of the trust or will. Such challenges can slow up the administration of the trust or estate, cause anxiety, and be very costly to all parties involved.

To help avoid such a future challenge, when a trustor of a trust or the testator of a will believes there may be future disputes among his or her children, he or she should strongly consider having a before-the-fact meeting with the children and advise them of his or her intentions regarding the future disposition of the trust and/or estate. While such a meeting may be uncomfortable, in the long run it could be beneficial, since it may well allow the trustor or testator to die in peace, knowing that there should be no challenge to his or her estate planning disposition, with its attendant delays, costs, and anxieties. Further, such a meeting may provide for a reconciliation of those presently estranged children. Another idea, which may be helpful is making a videotape of the trustor’s or testator’s signature of the trust or will along with such trustor or testator making a statement of why he or she is making the disposition in the manner he or she is making it.

The above statements are not to be taken as legal advice for the reader’s particular situation. Dick McEntyre practices law in the area of estate planning and administration, having served the San Diego community as a lawyer for over 40 years. Chris von der Lieth is Dick’s associate lawyer, having worked with Dick for over 15 years. Affordable rates. House calls available.

Our office is conveniently located at 2615 Camino Del Rio South, Suite 101 (in Mission Valley just east of Ruby’s restaurant) (Telephone (619) 221-0279)

www.richardfmcentyre.com

—District Attorney Summer Stephan has dedicated more than 29 years to serving justice and victims of crime as prosecutor. She is a national leader in fighting sex crimes and human trafficking and in creating smart and fair criminal justice solutions and restorative justice practices that treat the underlying causes of addiction and mental illness and that keep young people from being incarcerated.
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**Miscellaneous**

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**Sudoku**

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**Crossword Puzzles**

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**Evolution of this offer to obtain discount**

Free Fries and Soft Drink With Any Menu Item

Casual eating with a drive-through serving vegan burgers, bratwursts, and shakes.
Q’Anon threatens — CONTINUED FROM Page 6

and sympathizers confuse the public with misleading human trafficking statistics, misleading characterizations of the nature and scope of human trafficking (sex trafficking in particular) and misleading claims about the fundamental causes and sources of this heinous crime.

Oppositionists are blurring the lines between legitimate human trafficking data and conspiracy theories around the Q’Anon conspiracy morass. In a twisted logic, the concern for human trafficking victims itself becomes a dog whistle for politicians interested in wooing the votes of Q’Anon sympathizers. The bogus anti-trafficking statistics and stories promoted by Q’Anon are making their way into current political campaigns. It is incumbent upon those of us that know better to call out the false human trafficking statistics and theories in the mouths of public figures. The influence of Q’Anon-related ideologies continue to grow. Recent reports out of the United Kingdom highlight the growth of Q’Anon beyond U.S. shores. Twitter and Facebook are scrambling to prevent Q’Anon and related ideologies from spreading any further, but Facebook, at least, is increasingly losing this battle. Shutting down the conspiracy pages and hashtags has seemed to cause some of the opposite effect, invigorating the claims that there is a conspiracy against them.

At Point Loma Nazarene University we are more than casual observers of the anti-trafficking movement. A Christian University with a strong commitment to educating and resourcing the community, PLNU and its Center for Justice & Reconciliation have played a central and leading role in studying and engaging against human trafficking in San Diego County since 2005. The Beauty for Ashes Scholarship for survivors of human trafficking and the kNow MORE! Anti-trafficking curriculum are critical pieces of the puzzle to prevent exploitation and empower victims to heal. We also coordinate quarterly meetings and annual conferences for researchers of human trafficking, PLNU professor Dr. Jamie Gates, with Dr. Ami Carpenter (USD), co-authored the groundbreaking study measuring sex trafficking in San Diego County in 2016.

In particular, we are deeply troubled by signs of how deep Q’Anon is spreading through Christian communities across the U.S. Christians in particular have been on the front lines of the anti-trafficking movement, and people of faith have been a driving force building the current anti-trafficking infrastructure that we have. It has been a hard road bringing light into this darkness, sorting out truth from lies in an industry that is built on lies, intentionally bridging communities that don’t necessarily see eye-to-eye with one another like activists and law enforcement agencies and the judicial system, people across many faith traditions, Democrats and Republicans. Lies that masquerade as truth have the danger of unravelling decades of carefully nurtured cross-ideological collaborations as they thrive on aggrieved mis-trust while they drive people and communities further apart.

Those who are passionate about doing and being good in the world can sometimes fall into acting more out of passion than wisdom. This tendency has not been uncommon in our fight against trafficking, but we have worked hard to educate our communities on the facts, to bring disciplined thinking and discernment to tackling one of the most complicated crimes in our midst. It is time to mobilize our community to work harder at seeking truth, and to continue the real fight instead of being distracted by the shadows of conspiracy theories.

—Dr. Jamie Gates is a sociology professor at Point Loma Nazarene University and Kim Berry Jones is the Director of the Center for Justice & Reconciliation at Point Loma Nazarene University.

San Diego residents are no strangers to the uphill battle being faced by the hospitality industry in their neighborhoods. They have watched as many of the familiar storefronts, venues and restaurants have temporarily closed, pivoted their services and innovated to continue operating.

The Downtown San Diego Partnership knows that it is those same coffee shops, restaurants, hotels and more that help give our neighborhoods their unique character and make Downtown San Diego an amazing place to live and visit. They are part of what drew so many people to call Downtown home in the first place and what will continue to bring us together safely as a community.

As the voice of Downtown, we have been in constant conversation with residents, stakeholders and businesses since the beginning of the year to hear what challenges they’re experiencing and what needs they’re seeing in their neighborhoods. The feedback we heard from residents and stakeholders as stay-at-home orders continued was clear. They wanted to help support the businesses in their neighborhood but weren’t sure of the best way to do so.

At a time where that kind of support from the community could mean a world of difference to help small businesses and others to stay open, the Downtown San Diego Partnership came up with a unique way for people to get involved. The Downtown Loyalty store was created to leverage philanthropic funding from corporate and personal donors to subsidize discounted digital gift cards to participating businesses. For each $25 a customer spent, they could get an additional $10 of philanthropic funding to spend at their Downtown favorites and the entire $35 went immediate-ly to support their business of choice.

“It has been nothing short of remarkable to see the grit and dedication of Downtown’s business over the past several months. We know they’re doing everything they can to hang on, but we were certain we could find a way to match the generosity of our community with a creative idea to provide them some direct revenue alongside our other efforts to promote economic prosperity and cultural vitality in Downtown,” said Betsy Brennan, President & CEO of the Downtown Partnership. “The success of the Downtown Loyalty store thus far has been a testament to the level of support there is for these businesses in our community.”

The first sale of the Downtown Loyalty store launched in July and the second sale wrapped up in September. Each sale sold more than 600 gift cards in less than a week, contributing nearly $50,000 in direct economic impact to participating businesses.

“We had a feeling the store was going to be popular, but we were blown away by the community’s response during both sales,” said Alex Gutierrez, director of special districts for the Downtown Partnership and manager of the store project. “What has been especially rewarding is seeing some of these smaller businesses pivot into the digital world for the first time to participate and the opportunity we have had to help them explore opportunities to connect with new customers.”

The next sale of the Downtown Loyalty store is stepping up to support another part of the hospitality industry and give the gift we know is most in-demand this year, a vacation away from home! Stay tuned during the holiday season for updates on the staycation packages being designed especially for the Downtown Loyal. You can find updates at downtownsandiego.org/downtown-loyalty.

While the store is closed for now, there are still a lot of ways the Downtown community can support these businesses. You can order take-out for your next outdoor picnic, leave a positive review, try a new activity, or even reshare their social media content with your friends. Now is as good a time as any to check off “become a regular” from your bucket list and explore the neighbors so many of us know and love.

—Sarah Brothers is the Director of Marketing & Communications at Downtown San Diego Partnership.
program that provides bilingual behavioral health services to children age five and under in the South Bay. The program has grown from a small office to serving nearly 250 children and their families every year. ECS Head Start remains one of the largest providers of Head Start and Early Head Start services in the South Bay area of San Diego, increasing the number of children served by nearly 25% since 2007 and last year added State Preschool for 128 children.

The Juniper-Front Community Garden
The American Society of Landscape Architects, San Diego Chapter (ASLA-SD), has selected Juniper-Front Community Garden to receive its 2021 $5,000 Community Grant to redesign and renovate two garden areas and showcase this project during our 40th-anniversary celebration. This $5,000 grant is crucial seed money in our community garden’s desire to be good neighbors and stewards of the natural environment.

The two-part renovation plan will enhance the natural environment by creating a sustainable landscape through the use of indigenous plants that require less water and are drought-tolerant, and require minimal maintenance. Highlights of the upgrade plans include removing the street-side planting areas (those that neighbors interact with the most) into public education gardens and upgrading a series of tree terraces on the west side of the property that need to be stabilized. Given its 40-year history in the neighborhood, the garden’s new public education spaces will highlight landscape architecture’s pivotal role in designing sustainable environments and the benefits of using indigenous pollinator plants.

Pollinator plants, essential components of the agricultural growing cycle, will attract bees, butterflies, birds, and other pollinators, ensuring a vibrant, healthy environment for the garden’s year-round crops of vegetables, fruit and flowers.

PUBLIC ART INSTALLATION AT NORTH PARK GALLERY
The PGK Dance Project (Peter G. Kalivas, Founding Artistic Director) is pleased to announce that the Company’s 2020 season will continue with PGK Dance For Film – Public Art Installation, a filmed version of Peter Kalivas’ original choreographed work PERSEPCTIVES, will play as an installation from Nov. 5-8, 2020 in the front facade windows of the Art Produce Gallery in North Park San Diego (in partnership with MEDA ARTS San Diego film production). The Art Produce Gallery is located at 3119 University Ave., San Diego, CA 92104. For more information, visit thepgkdanceproject.org/upcoming-events.

The sound score will be audible via mounted speakers on the top of the façade. Surrounding the LED screen, the other Art Produce windows will display fifteen 22” x 34” images captured by photographers Denis Bloom Meeder and Elwood Nickerson during the PERSEPCTIVES creative process.

Finally, Mr. Kalivas and the dancers will be present in person for Meet-And-Greets on Thursday, November 5 and Friday, Nov. 6 from 6:30-8 p.m., and on Saturday, Nov. 7 and Sunday, Nov. 8 from 2-6 p.m. Sparkling cider and light bites will be served, and there will be a book available for attendees to record their personal reflections about the installation.

UP NEXT, The PGK Dance Project will present live performances of PERSEPCTIVES and Ollin on Sunday, Nov. 8, 2020 at 3:30 p.m., as part of Mission Federal Credit Union’s ARTWALK Little Italy. The performance will take place on the corner of Grape and India Streets.
In-person events
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People listening to the production of “Good Trouble.” (Photos by Kendra Sitton)

When the Supreme Court allowed census counting to end sooner than advocates wanted, the circus pivoted to promoting another form of civic engagement: voting.

Meanwhile, local theater company Blindspot Collective toured its original audio production of “Good Trouble.” The play, titled from late Rep. John Lewis’ famous words, was an oral history of sorts about the protests and activism of this summer in San Diego.

Since Lewis began his activism early in life, the play focused on current experiences of youth activists who are following in his legacy.

“I am so hyper-aware that the people we are interviewing now are the age that John Lewis was when he became an activist. For us, there is a direct sort of lineage of activism... you can trace from the Civil Rights movement and figures like John Lewis to today,” “Good Trouble” co-writer Blake McCarty said.

Returning to in-person performances came with challenges. After its first pop-up event, Highkin felt the performers were too crowded together. The next time, they moved to sidewalks across the street from the school so there was more space to spread out.

Blindspot Collective decided against having live performers at its tour. Instead, audiences gathered in a public park to listen to a stream of the pre-recorded play on their individual devices. After the stream finished, the audience gathered in a large circle to discuss what aspects of the play were meaningful to them. The stream called for audience participation, including clapping, singing, standing, raising a fist and, at the end, dancing.

“It was a bit experimental and we weren’t sure how it would work,” the co-founder of Blindspot Collective, Catherine Hanna Schrock, said.

As people sat on their own blankets and chairs throughout the park while participating in a collective experience, it felt similar to a group meditation as the words of the activists washed over them. The co-writers decided against holding a live performance because of the ever-changing COVID restrictions but still wanted to provide an opportunity where people could at least lay eyes on other humans amid the isolation.

“At least we can gather as a community and be in physical solidarity,” McCarty said.

The pre-recorded play was unique in that it sounded much like a series of interviews with activists interspersed with songs and sounds of the protest. In reality, the entire play was scripted and performed by actors. The playwrights interviewed 40 young activists in San Diego about their experience then created a handful of composite characters based on those interviews. Voice actors were hired to play each of the characters.

“A lot of the actors who were drawn to this were already activists. One of the actors was an interview subject herself. There was a communal vibe during the rehearsal process because they would reflect on how much things resonated for them,” Schrock said.

Blindspot Collective and Fern Street Circus both pay their performers, which is especially important as artists face significant income loss during the pandemic. The Los Angeles Times reported in October that an estimated 284,000 creative jobs have been lost since March.

“To be able to employ artists — that’s a real key thing for us. We believe that artists need to be paid, that we have to pay them and that that is a way that we’re able to contribute to the economies of quite a number of people,” Highkin said.

Highkin said no one is getting paid at this time. Artists are being paid to uplift their communities.

Blindspot Collective co-founder Catherine Hanna Schrock leads a discussion after the performance.

The Fern Street Circus at an elementary school (Photos by Gary Payne Photography)