



City Manager Message

Greetings,



Hello 2024! As we step into the new year, I am happy to reflect on the remarkable achievements and progress made throughout 2023. The grand reopening of Loma Verde Community Center was the perfect finale to 2023, culminating months of hard work and dedication. The completely remodeled center is now equipped with two pools and splash pad, as well as recreation rooms, a basketball court, and a playground. The center is already hosting an inclusive variety of recreational activities for the community to enjoy. Read more about the team behind the Loma Verde Community Center featured in the Employee Spotlight.

This past year, the City achieved a great deal, with the completion of numerous long-term projects and the commencement of many more initiatives that will be essential for community prosperity. You can read more about the many accomplishments in the [Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report](#). These achievements are a direct result of our hard-working City employees and their dedication to bringing these initiatives to fruition. I also want to express my gratitude to the community for their ongoing support, engagement, and enthusiasm. It is instrumental to the City's achievements. Additionally, I want to extend my thanks to all our community partners who collaborate with the City in various capacities.

As we enter 2024, I am excited about the prospect of new projects that will contribute to our continued growth and enhancement. We are dedicated to making our City an even better place to live, work, and thrive. Thank you for being a part of our vibrant community.

For daily updates on City happenings don't forget to follow us on social media @ThinkChulaVista. Enjoy this month's edition. Please [contact me](#) if you have any questions or comments. Wishing you all a prosperous and joyful new year!

~Maria V. Kachadoorian, City Manager



CVFD FUELS CREW

The Chula Vista Fire Department (CVFD) is one of the first local government agencies in California to now have its own designated Fuels Crew. What is a fuels crew, you ask? Chula Vista's team, which was formed last month, is made up of 13 specially trained employees who remove vegetation such as brush or trees that could turn into hazardous fuel for a fire in open space areas surrounding homes. This proactive approach increases our readiness and safety when it comes to wildfire risk.

Chula Vista is home to over 10,000 acres of undeveloped open space. Over the years, vegetation in these areas has grown extremely dense and close to residential structures, exacerbating the wildfire threat to our communities. Many of these areas have received minimal vegetation management, but with the establishment of the CVFD Fuels Crew, the City is now able to address the fire threat in the many open spaces and canyons surrounding homes in an ongoing way. The Fuels Crew is funded by the Measure A sales tax for public safety.

Gabe Cruz is one of the new members of the Fuels Crew. He brings to the team previous experience working for the U.S. Forest Service and then as an Emergency Medical Technician with CVFD. "I enjoy the camaraderie," he said, describing the team as having a family-like feel. "I like using all my skills to complete the job."

In collaboration with the City's Public Works Department, Open Space and Parks, the Fuels Crew is selecting open spaces and canyon areas for work that pose the greatest risk to homes. Prior to performing any clearance activities, an Environmental Biologist surveys the potential area for animal habitats, endangered plant/tree species, and to ensure a healthy ecosystem is being maintained.



On a recent day last month, a neighbor named Claudia said she was thrilled to have the Fuels Crew maintain the canyon behind her home. She said the area had become so overgrown with dead trees and vegetation, that some unsheltered people were setting up camps in the area.



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Since the cleanup, Claudia said that there are no more dead leaves in her yard, there is more light coming into her home and the unsheltered individuals are gone. She was so happy with the operation, she even brought the crew snacks!

Another member of the Fuels Crew is Chula Vista native Melanie San Nicolas. She previously worked on the hand crew with the Los Angeles Fire Department and she is thrilled to get to work in her home city. "It's not a job," she said. "It's just what I love doing. It feels good to be able to do this work."

The Fuels Crew can also be activated in response to City emergencies to do work such as removing downed trees and other debris, or preparing sandbags. [Learn more about the fuels crew on the website.](#)

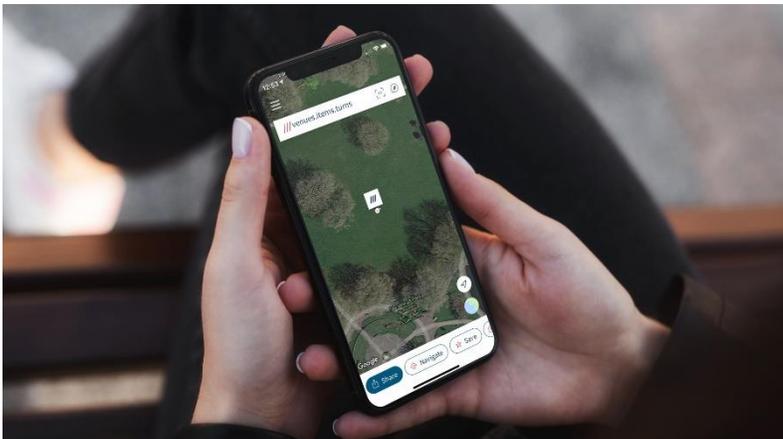
[For information on wildfires, visit the CVFD Ready, Set, Go! webpage.](#)



CVPD Incorporates what3words

The Chula Vista Police Department is excited to be using a new software program called what3words to more accurately identify the locations of emergencies for quicker responses. It's a simple way to describe exactly where help is needed using, as the name indicates, just three words.

Emergencies can happen anywhere, from a remote hiking location to the side of a highway. Being able to describe precisely *where* help is needed is critical and yet can be challenging in rural or less developed areas. Yet quickly pinpointing a location saves time and can save lives. When you share an incident's what3words address with emergency services, personnel can quickly find the *exact* location and send life-saving resources where they are needed.



How Does what3words Work?

Software application what3words divides the world into 3-meter squares, each with unique, three-word names called a what3words address. For example,

///kite.chats.dine, is a precise 3-meter square in a field next to the River Ouse in York, UK. It's free to use what3words as an app for iOS and Android, or online at [what3words.com](https://www.what3words.com). The system also works without an Internet connection, making it ideal in areas with an unreliable data connection.

During an emergency, just follow these steps:

1. Open the what3words app and tap the "Locate Me" icon. The what3words address for your current location will be displayed at the top of the screen.
2. When you call 911, read out the three words to your emergency call taker. For example, if you're at ///index.home.raft simply say: 'My what3words address is index home raft'
3. The emergency service will use the what3words address to see exactly where you are and send help.

Always be prepared and download the free what3words app. [Click here to learn more and download the app.](#)



Employee Spotlight: Loma Verde Staff

On December 9, hundreds of community members celebrated the City's grand reopening of Loma Verde Community Center. Users were amazed at the beautifully remodeled recreation and aquatics center funded by Measure P, the half-cent sales tax approved by voters in 2016. No one was more excited than the Loma Verde staff who work at the facility! They were continuously involved in construction details and logistics throughout the nearly two-year project. Led by Aquatics Supervisor III Karina Craig, along with Aquatics Supervisor II Caroline Lechner, and Recreation Supervisor II David Ramos, the employees are thrilled with the results.

Craig began working at Loma Verde as a lifeguard at age 16. "I love my job and being able to give back to the community," she said. "I grew up in Chula Vista and took swim lessons and swam on a club team at Loma Verde. This was my second home!"

Lechner, a 15-year employee, also grew up playing water polo and swimming at Loma Verde. "For me, getting to see this new facility is amazing," she said. "I'm so excited to see the next generation of children use this gorgeous new facility. It gives them a lot of pride in their community."

Ramos has been employed in Recreation for 21 years having been at Otay Recreation Center, Norman Park Senior Center, Heritage Community Center and now Loma Verde. He states, "the programming we can do will excel us. The new equipment and spaces that we didn't have previously will bring in large crowds. Residents from all over the City can enjoy the facility." Loma Verde now offers programming for basketball, pickleball for adults and kids, as well as other indoor sports. *Pictured above, Craig, Lechner, and Ramos.*



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Essential to maintaining two new pools and a splash pad is the dedicated City Public Works Pump Crew. Members of the crew worked tirelessly to make sure the pools and splash pad were ready for opening day and beyond. The City is fortunate to have them, enabling the facility to stay open and functioning as much as possible. Pump crew personnel check the pools every day and are on call as needed. Special thanks to Supervisor Joe Allshouse, Elmer Lucero, Pedro Martinez, Michael Stromp, Robert Thompson and Gabe Torres. "These are the men behind the scene that keeps Aquatics running," exclaimed Craig.

The community center consists of a new multi-purpose gymnasium, rooms for dance, crafts, fitness, and games, as well as restrooms, pool shower/changing rooms, and classrooms. The center previously offered one pool. Aquatics features a new recreation pool, a 50-meter competition pool, a splash pad, and classroom/party room. The recreation pool is ideal for swim lessons and water play, while the competition pool is fully equipped to host swim and water polo competitions, as well as lap swimming.

[Visit the webpage to see all the recreation and aquatic programming at Loma Verde.](#) Thank you to the great staff at Loma Verde and Public Works! We appreciate you.

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Long-Term Financial Plan

The City's Finance Department recently presented the Fiscal Years 2025-2034 General Fund Long-Term Financial Plan (Plan), a long-range fiscal planning tool to identify financial trends, project budget surpluses or deficits, and encourage discussion to proactively address the City's long-range needs.

The City's General Fund departments provide the core community services such as public safety, parks and recreation, library, public works, and engineering as well as support services such as financial, legal, and human resources. These core services are primarily supported by the City's

major revenues (Property Tax, Sales Tax, Measure P Sales Tax, and Measure A Sales Tax).

The Plan presents a baseline scenario for the City's General Fund resources over a ten-year period, including information for planned expenditure commitments and maintenance of current service levels and financial reserve targets. Staff reviewed historical and current data, conducted economic research, and worked closely with experts from Beacon Economics to develop assumptions for the City's major revenues.

The Plan provides the City Council, City departments, key stakeholders, and the public an overview of the fiscal health of the

City's General Fund based on various financial and service-level assumptions over the next 10 years.

Based on baseline projections required to maintain current service levels in the General Fund, growth in expenditures is anticipated to outpace the growth in revenues from Fiscal Year 2025 (FY 2025) to Fiscal Year 2027 (FY 2027). This structural shortfall is projected in the first three years of the 10-year period. The overall General Fund shortfall is projected to fluctuate beginning in FY 2025 at approximately \$2.1 million and ending in FY 2027 at approximately \$0.7 million. General Fund surpluses are projected for FY 2028 at \$1.1 million through FY 2034 at \$7.5 million. Should projected expenditures exceed projected revenues in any given year, the City Manager will identify steps to mitigate the shortfalls prior to presenting a balanced budget to the City Council for consideration during the annual budget development process.





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A detailed table is provided in the full Plan report which can be viewed on the City's [website](#).

Staff monitors Plan projections throughout the year and provides regular updates on the City's current financial performance to City Council via quarterly financial reports. The Plan will also serve as a guideline in the development of the Fiscal Year 2025 General Fund budget to be released in April.



Community Partner Spotlight: Live Well San Diego

The County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) *Live Well San Diego* is a vision for a region that is building better health, living safely, and thriving. For 13 years, the *Live Well San Diego* vision has unified the efforts of individuals, organizations, and government to help San Diego County residents live well. Over 550 organizations throughout the County have made a formal commitment to partner with *Live Well San Diego*. This includes the City of Chula Vista which recently marked 10 years as a *Live Well San Diego* recognized partner and has been essential in promoting and supporting well-being.

With a shared interest in equity and well-being, HHSA-Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities (HSEC) collaborates with the City on efforts that reflect the needs of the region, providing culturally and linguistically relevant community engagement. The HHSA-HSEC provides resources and support to address the needs of traditionally under-resourced and vulnerable groups, immigrant and refugee communities, and people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Through collective efforts, HHSA-HSEC has connected Chula Vista residents to community resources and information to improve their health and well-being. In 2023, some of these efforts included:

- Working together to promote the federal Affordable Connectivity Program which is designed to increase residents' access to quality and affordable internet. Efforts included leveraging HSEC-Community Health Workers to help eligible residents navigate language barriers, provide access to the technology, and educate residents on how to register.
- Teaming up with the City Homeless Outreach Team on weekly coordinated outreach to assist people experiencing homelessness within the community. Together, the team provides direct access to public benefit programs, housing resources, and connections to services.
- Collaborating with County Parks and Recreation to host a kinship corner at the Holidays at the Lake event in Chula Vista at which families had the opportunity to enjoy arts and crafts, play lawn games, take photos, and connect with vital resources for kinship care.

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- The Intergenerational Games bring older adults and elementary school children together to encourage physical activity, impart information about nutrition and healthy behaviors, and foster intergenerational relationships among active seniors and children through an inspiring half-day of fun and fitness. In 2023, over 90 active participants participated in the games at the City's Monteville Park.
- Love Your Heart (LYH) is an annual event in which organizations from across the U.S. and Mexico join to provide free blood pressure screenings to the public. Love Your Heart helps tens of thousands of people get to know their blood pressure numbers and take charge of their heart health. Hundreds of Chula Vista residents checked their blood pressure during last year's LYH campaign. Residents also received free blood pressure monitors and vital heart health information.
- The *Live Well San Diego* vision led to the creation of collaborative groups across the County known as *LWSD-Community Leadership Teams*. The *LWSD-South Region Community Leadership Team* serves as a platform to bring together dedicated cross-sector partners, providers, and thoughtful leaders. The group has over 90 members committed to a collective mission of improving the well-being of the South Region community through collaboration and policy, and changes to the system and environment that promote equitable, healthy, safe, and thriving communities.

Thank you to each member, partner, and collaborator who has contributed across the region. To learn more, visit [Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities \(sandiegocounty.gov\)](https://sandiegocounty.gov) and [Live Well San Diego | Home \(livewellsd.org\)](https://livewellsd.org)





Community News

Good to Know

At the December 19 City Council meeting, the Council directed City staff to prepare and return with a plan to move forward with improvements at **Harborside Park** with the goal of reopening.

At the January 9 City Council meeting, City staff will present an analysis of staffing needs and a request for funding as appropriate. Improvements to the park would include permanent fencing, turf replacement and repair of the irrigation system, basketball court resurfacing, lighting and security camera repairs, restroom facility repairs, general clean-up, removal of the amphitheater and landscape, and purchase and installation of a ranger station. The ranger station would be staffed during future open hours.

The estimated timeline for these improvements is approximately eight months with a cost of \$1.1 million. Once improvements are completed, the park will reopen from 7 a.m. to sunset and closed overnight. Stay tuned for future updates.

Extreme weather events in California and the western United States have emphasized the need for utilities to better prepare for and adapt to climate hazards. SDG&E is researching how these changes – including extreme heat, drought, wildfire, sea level rise and the frequency and intensity of storms may impact communities and the energy grid.

SDG&E wants to know what you and your community need in the face of climate change. Your input will be used to help determine SDG&E's future investments in climate adaptation. [To complete the SDG&E adaptation survey, please visit the webpage.](#) [For more information on SDG&E's adaptation efforts, please visit the website.](#)

The Norman Park Senior Center recently received two grants from the San Diego Seniors Community Foundation. The first grant for \$3,500 went towards providing engaging senior activities during the holiday season. The second grant, totaling \$12,600, will help cover the cost of extending the Center's evening hours. Longer hours will allow the Center to offer programs in the evening and meet the demand for the popular Pickleball courts.

Things to Do

The Civic Center Branch Library has several fun things planned in January...especially for kids! January's **STEAM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) offers hands-on activities every Thursday at 6 p.m. for hands-on activities that teach kids ages 7-12 fun ways to apply principles. Materials are provided on a first-come, first-served basis while supplies last.

Calling all fans of the **Pokémon trading card** game! Gather your cards to trade, play, and learn the rules of the game with other players every Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. We'll now be streaming anime while we play!

Need some homework help? Children in Kindergarten through 8th grade can stop by on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

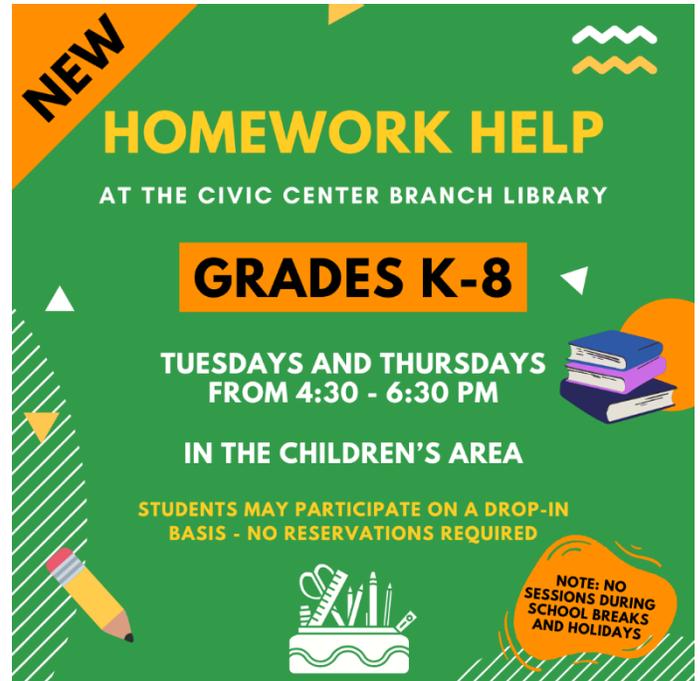
Other events include Bilingual Storytime on Monday at 11 a.m., Ready-to-Read Storytime on Wednesday at 11 a.m., and Move to the Music on Thursday at 5 p.m.

The Chula Vista Fire Department has announced dates for the 2024 free car seat installation checks at the Otay Ranch Town Center and the Chula Vista Shopping Center. Both events will take place in front of the Macy's entrances. The checks are offered to parents, grandparents or child caregivers to teach proper car seat installation and keep your child safe! [Check out the dates on the webpage.](#)

Get Involved

Start the new year by getting involved in your community! There are several vacancies on the volunteer City Boards and Commissions. [Learn more on the webpage.](#)

San Diego Community Power (SDCP) is looking to fill the open Chula Vista seat on its Community Advisory Committee. The purpose of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is to advise the SDCP Board of Directors on the organization's operations. Committee members represent the diversity, cross-section interests and skill sets in SDCP's seven member jurisdictions. The CAC is made up of two representatives from each member agency, for a total of 14 members. Applicants for this particular position must be residents (property owners and/or renters), business owners, employees or representatives of a community-based organization within Chula Vista. After an appointment is made by the City representative to the SDCP board and approved by the full SDCP Board of Directors, each member may serve up to two, three-year terms. SDCP is Community Choice Aggregator (CCA) that buys electricity on behalf of its member agencies and partners with SDG&E to distribute that electricity to its residential and business customers.



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The CAC is expected to meet in person at the City of San Diego Metropolitan Operations Complex Auditorium, located at 9192 Topaz Way, San Diego, every second Thursday of the month at 5:30 p.m. For more information or to submit an application, please [click here](#).

Neighborhood Beautification

OPERATION PRIDE continues monthly clean ups with assistance from Alpha Project and McAlister Institute's Work for Hope program. In December, the team's efforts resulted in the collection of 22,900 pounds of trash and 89 shopping carts. Work for Hope continues to paint at Rohr Park, and Alpha Project Take Back the Streets collected 13,840 pounds of trash in December. Thank you for your continued efforts!



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Meetings/Events

The City Council will meet on **Tuesday, January 9, 16, and 23** at 5 p.m. Members of the public are invited to provide e-Comments on any agenda item. Check the website www.chulavistaca.gov/councilmeetings for details. A Spanish-language video stream is available and interpretation services for Spanish speakers are provided during each City Council meeting. Members of the public can watch the meeting [via livestream](#). Chula Vista City Council meetings are video recorded and aired live on Cox Cable channel 24 (only in Chula Vista). Recorded meetings are also archived on the City's website.

All City offices and facilities will be closed for the **Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday on Monday, January 15**. Trash service in the City will not be affected by the holiday.

