



The City of San Diego

Staff Report

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TO: Community and Neighborhood Services
Committee

FROM: Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Come Play Outside 2024

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Council District(s): 3, 4, 7, 8, 9

OVERVIEW:

This report is an information item on the 2024 Come Play Outside Program.

As part of Mayor Todd Gloria's "Summer for All of Us" initiative, Come Play Outside (CPO) began as a response to the long-term COVID-19 pandemic closure when many public facing amenities such as parks, schools, recreational amenities, programs, and aquatic facilities in the City of San Diego saw temporary closure due to public health orders related to the pandemic. Park closures resulted in youth remaining indoors, which resulted in a significant decrease of physical and social activity.

CPO targets youth in historically underserved communities, identified as Communities of Concern in the 2021 Climate Equity Index. In 2024, three years after lengthy closures, communities and recreation centers began rebuilding their programs through this initiative. CPO has persevered in providing youth and adults with opportunities to engage in outdoor activities, connect with their peers, and improve their overall health in a safe environment. Normalcy and well-being in these communities persisted with the continued opportunities of open public spaces and recreational programs, particularly for children and families who may still be impacted by economic hardships or lack of resources. Since its inception, CPO has had a remarkable impact on the community, reaching over 153,733 individuals, including youth, adults, and seniors.

DISCUSSION OF ITEM:

Come Play Outside Programs

In 2024, CPO focused on expanding programs over the summer at twenty-four recreation centers and four aquatic centers in San Diego's most underserved communities, which are located in Council Districts 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9. The initiative provided a variety of programs and events aimed at connecting youth with the nature, enhancing mental and physical well-being, and promoting overall wellness. CPO activities included summer day camps, outdoor movies nights, deep-sea fishing excursions, PLAY Golf, nature camps, free swim lessons, Teen Nite, specialty camps, enrichment classes, and Parks After Dark. Goals of the planned events were to provide increased access to recreational programs and offer activities that were reflective of the communities' interests and requests.

In its' third year of implementation, the 2024 CPO program offered over 300 classes and 149 weekly summer camps, as well as 60 Teen Nite events across 10 locations and 29 movies in the park. These efforts demonstrate the program's growing impact and its commitment to offering enriching, accessible activities for all.

- To ensure successful implementation of Come Play Outside programming, the Department needed to prepare and implement various measures:
- Robust outreach, coordination, and contracting efforts to onboard vendors and recreation service providers.
- Receipt and management of grants and other non-City funds to support the expanded free programs.
- Staff training on CPO programs, budget and reporting.

More details on each of the 2024 CPO programs is further described in the Come Play Outside 2024 Report.

Funding and Partnerships

CPO programs and events are possible because of dedicated Fiscal Year 2025 city funding, grants, and donations to support the free to low-cost activities. In 2024, the CPO program received \$2,192,000 in funding, 36% increase from the previous year. These additional funds allowed for a 13% growth in programs and events, which resulted in a 15% rise in attendance. These investments enhance community engagement and expand opportunities for participation in CPO activities. The city continues its partnership with the San Diego Parks Foundation, the County of San Diego, Price Philanthropies and Prevent Drowning Foundation of San Diego to bring CPO programs to underserved communities. Through these partnerships, community-based organizations and service providers came together with the City and County to make CPO a success.

Goals and Outcomes

The Department established a measurement of success for the Come Play Outside program, that in addition to the Department's Tactical Equity Plan, provides an evaluation resource to identify goals and outcomes of this program. Table A below summarizes the goals and outcomes for 2024, with more detail to follow below.

Goal	Objective	Outcome
Increase physical and social activity in CoC's	Increase attendance by 20% from previous year	15% increase in attendance from previous year
Increase CPO funding	Increase funding by 5% from previous year	36% increase in funding by from previous year

- Goal 1: Increase physical and social activity in youth and adults in Communities of Concern through expanded free to low-cost programs and events.
- Objective 1: In 2023, the CPO program saw an increase of 37% in attendance over the inaugural year. The objective for 2024 was to increase program and event attendance by 20% from 2023.
- Outcome 1: This year the CPO brought in a 15% increase in attendance from the prior year, just shy of the 20% objective. There was a total of 51,919 participants, an increase of 7,191 total program participants from 2023. The Department, along with its partners, plan to strategically implement and market programs and events to maximize awareness and attendance for next year.
- Goal 2: Increase funding to support the expansion of free to low-cost programs and events in Communities of Concern.
- Objective 2: In 2023, the CPO program saw a reduction of 16% in funding over the inaugural year. With that in mind, the objective for year 4 was to increase funding via grants, partnership, and donations by 5% from 2023.
- Outcome 2: In 2024 the program saw an increase of 36% in funding. This increase in funding allowed for a 13% increase in programming and events and 15% increase in attendance overall. The Department, along with its partners, plan to strategically implement and market programs and events to maximize awareness and funding for next year.

Program Evaluations

Department staff coordinated with the Performance and Analytics Department (P&A) to generate the 2024 Come Play Outside Annual Report by assessing the overall satisfaction and participant demographics of the CPO programs. Surveys were distributed to all participants using a QR code and an email through the online registration software. Based on the survey findings, P&A identified various demographic and enrollment data to evaluate the Overall Satisfaction (OSAT) level of the CPO programs. In 2024, CPO programs served 55,919 youth and adult participants, a 14.7% increase compared to 2023, while the OSAT level saw a slight increase from 78% to 79.4% compared to the previous year.

In addition to the survey for CPO, Price Philanthropies coordinated with the University of California at San Diego to evaluate the impacts of the Parks After Dark Program in the communities of Linda Vista, City Heights, Memorial, and Skyline Hills. Electronic surveys were conducted during most of the events in English, Spanish, Somali and Vietnamese.

This year's overall average stood at 4.7, which is the highest rated Parks After Dark series to date, up 0.2 points from the previous year. Other findings from the survey also showed the following:

- Crime statistics reflect that police calls for service saw its lowest number of calls per week during the PAD events of 2024
- 48% of attendees had a household income of \$35,000 or less
- 72% of respondents across all locations stated they felt "Very safe" during PAD events

Overall, CPO programs and events in 2024 proved to be well received by participants. In both program evaluations it was reflected that participants want to see more activities, whether that be special event activities and food, or sports programs at their local recreation centers. CPO programs continue to provide a positive impact on the communities in which they are provided and should continue expand to meet the needs of each community.

Conclusion

The CPO program has proven to be an essential resource for community members of all ages, offering opportunities to connect with neighbors, activate parks, and engage in meaningful programs. Thanks to the support of Mayor Gloria, the City Council, the County of San Diego, the San Diego Parks Foundation, Price Philanthropies, and Prevent Drowning SD, the Department has successfully provided high-quality summer programming to communities in greatest need.

Looking ahead, the Department aims to expand the CPO program to reach more families and improve facility operations in ways that were previously unattainable. However, with a challenging budget year on the horizon, this growth may not be feasible without sustained resources. A reduction in funding could lead to fewer programs, limited staffing, and decreased access to safe, enriching activities—particularly in Communities of Concern where programs are heavily subsidized.

Amid these uncertainties, the Parks and Recreation Department, in collaboration with the San Diego Parks Foundation, is committed to ensuring that recreational programs remain accessible to all. The Department will continue efforts to maintain or expand its partnerships, onboard new program providers, and enhance marketing and language access initiatives, utilizing social media, radio, and television to reach a wider audience.

With robust community support, the Department is devoted to providing meaningful programming and aspires to offer another year of engaging activities that bring families together and enrich San Diego's neighborhoods.

City Strategic Plan Priority Area(s)/Outcome(s):

Priority Area: Protect & Enrich Every Neighborhood

San Diego is an extraordinary place to live, and every San Diegan should have access to a safe and secure environment, along with a variety of core amenities that improve quality of life.

This program aligns with the Strategic Plan's Priority Area & Outcomes as follows:

- San Diegans in all communities are connected to neighborhood assets that anchor community life, foster interaction, and promote well-being.
- Every San Diegan has access to arts and culture opportunities on their own terms. Visitors are able to discover and experience local culture.
- San Diegans benefit from accessible, convenient, safe, and comfortable recreational spaces in their communities.

Fiscal Considerations: This is an informational item with no expenditure of funds.

Charter Section 225 Disclosure of Business Interests: N/A; there is no contract associated with this action

Environmental Impact: N/A

Climate Action Plan Implementation: N/A

Equal Opportunity Contracting Information: N/A

Previous Council and/or Committee Actions: The Park and Recreation Board is scheduled to hear an update on the Come Play Outside program at its April 17, 2025 meeting.

Key Stakeholders and Community Outreach Efforts: Key stakeholders include all San Diegans who participate in the listed activities and events as well as key nonprofit partners such as the San Diego Parks Foundation, County of San Diego, Price Philanthropies, and others.

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