

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

# THE ELECTION OF 2020: WHAT LESSONS HAVE WE LEARNED?

As I write this column, the outcome of the 2020 presidential election is still unclear. Races in states such as Pennsylvania and Arizona have yet to be called. The narrow path to victory — whether it belongs to President Donald Trump or former Vice President Joe Biden — means a lot of hard work ahead, to unite a divided country.

Still, there is much to cheer about. According to Michael McDonald of the U.S. Elections Project, this year's vote tally will easily exceed 150 million, a participation rate of more than 66 percent. In 2016, just under 139 million people voted. Americans also took to early voting with zeal: More than 100 million of us cast ballots even before Election Day.

And we can celebrate the fact that in-person voting on Tuesday proceeded without the long lines, equipment failures, and widespread intimidation attempts that officials feared. The slowness of the ballot count is also a positive development — a sign that every voter's voice is

being heard.

So, at least when it comes to voting, it appears that Americans managed to outmaneuver a host of obstacles — including the coronavirus.

I asked members of the Union-Tribune's Community Advisory Board and staff at the National Conflict Resolution Center what lessons they learned from this peculiar election.

Here is some of what they had to say:

1. "The old saying goes that people are entitled to their own opinions but not their own facts. Well, in 2020, people do have their own set of facts, and they only listen to narratives that reinforce their opinions, biases and worldview. As an electorate, we have a duty to become better informed — including the consideration of different and even uncomfortable ideas."

2. "Armed with 'alternative facts,' (a phrase coined by former Trump aide Kellyanne Conway) friends of mine make different voting decisions — and

not because they have different values or goals. That can be frustrating. Information can be wildly different depending on which source we trust. How will we ever be able to make good decisions if we can't even agree about the basic facts of a situation?"

3. "Here's the truth about the adage 'all politics are local': It's even smaller than that. All politics are *personal*. There is nothing I can do about the daily chaos at the national level. Those issues are beyond my reach. Instead, I should pay attention to the people, needs, circumstances and realities that confront me directly — and then hope and pray that what I do is enough, and that it ripples forth to have broad effect."

4. "When something is an issue and creates a rift in a relationship, exercise the humility to take a second look. Have the empathy and compassion to step aside from arguing a point and focus instead on your deep care for the other person. When we operate in debate mode, it

can be hard to realize the harm we are causing, especially when a person feels their identity and values are threatened. Once this relational line is crossed, returning can be difficult."

5. "Political parties need to focus on the needs of the people, and not the needs of the parties, in order to preserve voter confidence. Voting should not be a matter of survival, but rather, an expression of liberty. Disruption of our political process is needed so that citizens can turn to a neutral organization that is trusted to give us not just the candidates' pros and cons, but the unfiltered consequences of their positions."

Here is a sixth lesson: We must do even more to diversify our slates of candidates, at all levels of government, to better represent the population at large. White people, who make up 60 percent of the U.S. population, hold 78 percent of congressional seats. Women, on the other hand, are underrepresented: They make up 51 percent of the population, but only 24

percent of Congress.

It's usually about money. According to OpenSecrets.org, 521 candidates in House and Senate races this year raised \$100,000 or more (of 857 candidates who raised any money at all) — a figure that's legitimate, but not considered enough to win a race. The average amount of money raised by candidates in primary races was \$1.4 million, prior to their victory. And generally, candidates of color — especially women — come up short.

We can always do better. Yet, in this election, our citizenry was engaged and voted in record numbers. And our states did their part, ensuring that every ballot was counted. So, for now, let's celebrate — and then catch our breath for the ride ahead.

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

## FUTURE • Architects say it's risky when buildings are abandoned

FROM B1  
nite at the vacant buildings. Both cottages were set ablaze in June 2002 by a suspected arsonist, causing some damage before flames were put out.

"Any time you have a property or a building that has been abandoned, there are all kinds of risk to it," said Heath Fox, executive director of the La Jolla Historical Society. "They were the victims of the worst thing that can happen to historic buildings and that is, they are abandoned. And they are not restored and reused for something that people today need it for."

When he heard about the fire, Heath jumped in his car and rushed to inspect the damage.

He wasn't alone. Architect Wayne Donaldson was in Yuma when he heard about the fire. Donaldson worked to save and revitalize dozens of historical landmarks in San Diego before taking on the job as state historic preservation officer in 2004 and moving to Northern California.

He, too, raced to the coast, arriving while it was still light. What he saw left him feeling depressed.

"Those poor buildings are really pieces of monumental architecture that date back to the turn of the century. There are very few of those left in La Jolla," he said. Seeing the damage up close was an emotional experience.

"When I was in there I could smell the burnt embers and the structure was creaking," Donaldson said. "I just had to see for myself if anything was salvageable. Even the floor was burnt... Going through the house I felt lonesome, I felt cheated. I felt like something in La Jolla's heritage has been stolen again."

The owners of the property have indicated a desire to restore and reconstruct the cottages — but some fear the fire could mean the end of Red Rest.

"Based upon my 45 years of working in historic preservation, normally what happens when buildings are lost like this and you are able to build something new,



**The cottages, built in the late 1800s, were among a handful of homes from La Jolla Cove's early days as an art colony. They were named national and historic landmarks in the mid-1970s.**

normally the owner does not opt to reconstruct their building," Donaldson said.

Arson investigators went through the home to look for clues but have not been able to determine a cause of the fire, said San Diego police Sgt. Rick Pechin, who is on the city's Metro Arson Strike Team. No video surveillance of the incident was located. He said if any clues emerge, the investigation could begin again.

Within days, workers erected chain-link fences around the two homes to protect them from trespassers or any further damage. Items like sinks and bathtubs were intact and could be salvaged, along with undamaged wood and bricks from the home's fireplace.

Architect Tony Ciani, active in San Diego preservation fights in the past, said he will advocate for the two cottages to be stabilized,

protected and reconstructed in their original setting. Architectural historians have called the bungalows "monuments of American architecture" and said they represent fundamentals of our American heritage, he said.

The cottages not only are La Jolla's oldest buildings on their original site but represent the arts and crafts style of construction in La Jolla's early period and were a prototype to the California bungalow-style that became prominent in the 20th century, Fox told the La Jolla Light.

While there is little left of Red Rest in terms of original materials, Ciani said the structure has been well documented in drawings and photographs. He said it is possible to reconstruct it relying on the records and using the same methods and materials.

City officials say it is too soon to

say what will happen to the cottages, but they want residents to know that the community "is going to have ample opportunity to provide input on what happens with that site," said Scott Robinson, a spokesman with Development Services.

Architects working on the project met with city staff Friday and were told to return Monday with detailed plans on how they intend to better secure and protect the structures, including protecting them from wind and rain. They also need to provide a timeline for their proposal, said Gary Geiler, assistant director of the city's Development Services Department.

The cottages were used as residences up until the 1970s when they were purchased by Heimburge, the owner of the hotel next door. The property was acquired by Denver-based Apartment Investment and

Management Co. in 2014 and sold in 2018 to a group of investors in the hotel business after litigation that prohibited development was resolved, according to the La Jolla Light.

On its website, preservationist group Save Our Heritage Organization described the lengthy fight to save the two La Jolla cottages as "one of the most frustrating challenges in SOHO history," and noted that despite being listed on historical registers they have "suffered greatly" as restoration and development plans have been stalled.

"Before they became dilapidated, they were character-defining features of the early La Jolla beach community and the cove," Bruce Coons, executive director of the organization, said in an email. "I think everyone that passed them wondered what it would have been like to live there and sit on their great open verandas overlooking the cove after a day at the beach."

The new owners contacted Coons after the sale went through to say they planned to restore and incorporate the buildings into their development plans for the site. He is hopeful that work will still occur.

Paul Benton, an architect representing the owners of the property, said planning for rehabilitating the cottages had been under way long before the fire. While plans are not yet being made public, Benton said they center on a goal of creating a useful building that "not only respects the heritage" of the site but is a "new center of attraction" for the area.

"They really intend to take good care of it, and this is quite a setback," Benton said, adding that the owners were appalled to learn of the fire. "They were quite upset."

"It has been a real dilemma, how do we go about preserving something like this ... There is no intention to demolish any of them. Everyone recognizes the value in these."

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## PLAN Incentives for low-income housing

FROM B1  
housing or commercial project.

Allowing that money to be spent elsewhere, particularly in low-income areas that lack parks, will boost social equity across San Diego, city officials say.

At least 50 percent of the money would have to be spent in low-income "communities of concern."

City officials also said in recent interviews that they

have made several adjustments to the proposal this fall in response to community feedback.

"We've accepted a boatload of feedback," said Almis Udrys, the city's chief assistant operating officer under outgoing Mayor Kevin Faulconer.

The proposal has been endorsed by the San Diego Planning Commission and the City Council's Land Use and Housing Committee. The City Council is scheduled to approve it on Monday.

The new incentive aiming to spur construction of more low-income housing near transit would be the largest developer incentive for such housing the city has ever approved, officials said.

Among recent changes to the proposal are safeguards against gentrification of low-income areas, and a requirement that city officials closely monitor the impact of the overall proposal so they can amend it if it leads to overbuilding.

Officials have also adjusted the criteria the city will consider when approving parks, such as whether the park will have a shade and an adequate tree canopy.

To prevent gentrification, the proposal includes a measure that would prevent upscale new development from displacing existing residents.

In some cases, developers would also be required to analyze the incomes of nearby residents and agree

to rent restrictions.

Another criticism of the proposal is the lifting of building height limits in some circumstances.

Officials said that would only be allowed in transit areas where high-density projects are being encouraged, and particularly tall buildings won't be allowed directly adjacent to single-family neighborhoods.

San Diego's goal is having dense projects built near transit and existing infrastructure, to help reduce the congestion that comes with sprawl and to help the city meet the greenhouse gas reduction goals of its climate action plan.

The complete communities proposal also incorporates new state laws, includ-

ing legislation that requires traffic evaluations of proposed developments to be based on how many miles typical residents will have to travel by car to work.

Before the new law, SB 743, housing projects were evaluated by the impact they would have on nearby traffic congestion. The city proposal makes it easier for developers to comply with the new law, officials said.

While the parks component of the new law would be binding citywide, the housing and mobility components are only incentives that developers can choose to embrace or reject.

Mike Hansen, the city's planning director, said city officials expect the incentives to appeal primarily to

developers of smaller-scale projects and subsidized projects for low-income residents.

Mayor-elect Todd Gloria said Friday he supports the goals of the complete communities proposal, but he has some concerns about the changes to height limits and some other elements.

Gloria said that if the council approves the proposal Monday, he and the new City Council could eventually repeal or adjust parts of it in the future if problems arise.

Monday's council meeting is scheduled to start at 11 a.m. It can be livestreamed on the city's website, [sandiego.org](http://sandiego.org).

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## TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, Nov. 8, the 313th day of 2020. There are 53 days left in the year.

### Today's highlight

On Nov. 8, 2016, Donald Trump was elected America's 45th president, defeating Hillary Clinton in an astonishing victory for a celebrity businessman and political novice. Republicans kept their majorities in the Senate and House.

### On this date

**In 1793**, the Louvre began admitting the public, even though the French museum had been officially open since August.

**In 1861**, the USS San Jacinto intercepted a British mail

steamer, the Trent, and detained a pair of Confederate diplomats who were enroute to Europe to seek support for the Southern cause. (Although the Trent Affair strained relations between the United States and Britain, the matter was quietly resolved with the release of the diplomats the following January.)

**In 1864**, President Abraham Lincoln won re-election as he defeated Democratic challenger George B. McClellan.

**In 1923**, Adolf Hitler launched his first attempt at seizing power in Germany with a failed coup in Munich that came to be known as the "Beer-Hall Putsch."

**In 1950**, during the Korean War, the first jet-plane battle



**Broward County, Fla., canvassing board member Robert Rosenberg examines a ballot in Nov. 2000.**

ALAN DIAZ AP

took place as Air Force Lt. Russell J. Brown shot down a North Korean MiG-15.

**In 1960**, Sen. John F. Kennedy defeated Vice President Richard M. Nixon for the presidency.

**In 1966**, Edward W. Brooke, R-Mass., became the first Black candidate to be elected to the U.S. Senate by popular vote. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a measure allowing the merger of the American and National Football Leagues.

**In 1974**, a federal judge in Cleveland dismissed charges against eight Ohio National Guardsmen accused of violating the civil rights of students who were killed or wounded in the 1970 Kent State shootings.

**In 2000**, a statewide recount began in Florida, which

emerged as critical in deciding the winner of the 2000 presidential election. Earlier that day, Vice President Al Gore had telephoned Texas Gov. George W. Bush to concede, but called back about an hour later to retract his concession.

### Today's birthdays

Singer Bonnie Raitt is 71. TV personality Mary Hart is 70. Actor Alfre Woodard is 68. Singer-songwriter Rickie Lee Jones is 66. Singer-actor Leif Garrett is 59. Chef Gordon Ramsay is 54. Actor Courtney Thorne-Smith is 53. Actor Parker Posey is 52. Singer Diana King is 50. Actor Gretchen Mol is 48. ABC News anchor David Muir is 47. Actor Matthew Rhys is 46. Actor Tara Reid is 45. TV personality Jack Osbourne is 35.

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