

## LOCAL

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF SAN CARLOS  
San Carlos Mayor Sara McDowell receives a proclamation honoring the city's centennial from San Mateo County Supervisor Ray Mueller.

## Celebrating 100

San Carlos centennial focuses on planning for the future and bite-size celebrations

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San Carlos spent the year celebrating its past 100 and approving plans that will bring the city into the next century, resulting in a packed calendar for Mayor Sara McDowell who said her biggest takeaway is that families have always loved to raise their kids here.

"This whole year has been a really amazing time to reflect on our history and appreciate all our community voices and celebrate our past, while also working on a lot of really important initiatives for our future too," McDowell said.

McDowell's favorite thing throughout the year was not a particular event or piece of San Carlos history she was proud to learn of. Rather, it was seeing how young parents and families have always recognized San Carlos as an ideal place to raise and grow their families.

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"A key indicator of the health of a city is how many kids there are," McDowell said. "Are people still coming, putting roots down, and that has always been a driving force of San Carlos. That common thread is really heartwarming."

A special luncheon at the Adult Community Center celebrating the city's older adult population kicked off the centennial in January, and a movie night featuring a documentary film about the history of San Carlos recapped the event-filled year.

The San Carlos History Museum put together the film, which included interviews of local historians who spoke about their own memories growing up in San Carlos and how they've seen the city grow and change.

"That was really special, I really enjoyed that movie," McDowell said.

The viewing party, held Nov. 15, also included short clips from the project conducted by StoryCorps, a nonprofit that maintains the largest archive of human voices in the country, stored in the U.S. Library of Congress and an online archive.

StoryCorps interviewed 21 pairs of people about San Carlos, and five were highlighted at the movie night — including McDowell's favorite.

An interview between a former school teacher, 94-year-old Dulcie Morrison-Findlay and her former student Dan Young shared a story about a teacher's influence on a child and the impact students have on their teachers, even 40 years later.

The various events throughout the year catered to and invited residents of all ages to take part in the celebration. The popularity of each event was expected, McDowell said — the residents of San Carlos are particularly prone to be involved, and proud to be involved.

"We always joke that the Hometown Days parade always seems to have more people participating in the parade than watching from the sideline," McDowell said.

The goal was to celebrate the city's centennial throughout the entire year, rather than one major event, McDowell said.

"It has been so fun, really busy, but it's been really fun,"

McDowell said. "It's been nonstop but it's been so fun to celebrate our centennial across the whole year to make sure everyone could find a place to be included."

A special centennial-themed kit was available for anyone hosting a neighborhood block party — which San Carlos residents can get a free permit — which allowed families to throw their own mini-centennial parties, McDowell said. The mayor's own neighborhood hosted their 14th annual party with all the festive works.

"The community really celebrated in a lot of big ways, and in a lot of hyper-local ways through block parties," McDowell said.

The celebrations were scattered throughout McDowell's calendar in between the regularly scheduled City Council meetings that were in large part focused on finalizing plans for the city's growth in the next two decades.

"The reason it's taken so long is because we've wanted to consult with the community so deeply," McDowell said.

At McDowell's last full-length meeting as mayor Nov. 24 — before the annual ceremonial meeting in December where councilmembers rotate their positions — the City Council approved the final guideline document for downtown San Carlos.

This year, San Carlos has worked on specific plans for multiple neighborhoods throughout the city, street improvement plans for a more pedestrian-friendly downtown, improvements to the Holly Street/Highway 101 interchange and incentivizing child care facilities.

Finalizing the various planning documents has taken a few years, but that's because of the City Council's emphasis on involving the community in key decisions about San Carlos' future, McDowell said.

A major draw of San Carlos is its small-town charm, but even as development occurs throughout the city, the people who make San Carlos what it is will keep that charm, McDowell said.

"Our residents care so deeply about our town, and they pay attention and they're engaged and they fill out the surveys," McDowell said. "The people in our community make this city what it is. I love that about San Carlos."

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