

LONG BEACH

BUSINESS JOURNAL

An edition of the Long Beach Post



Cheantay Jensen / Business Journal

The western section of Second Street in Long Beach's Belmont Shore neighborhood.

'Restaurant Row': Belmont Shore

embraces a new post-pandemic identity

By Kat Schuster

There was the now-bygone 24-hour Shore House Cafe and the faux-snow-covered North Woods Inn.

There was the 1970s disco dancing craze, and then the ghost town spurred by the one-two punch of

soaring commercial rent and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Belmont Shore is no stranger to change.

Now, in 2023, the seaside Second Street corridor is finally waking from its pandemic and inflation-induced slumber as it sees foot traffic grow and the lights turn on in many long-darkened buildings.

Enter "Restaurant Row," as Heather Kern has dubbed the street's latest evolution.

"For 15 blocks, we have [more] restaurants than any one-street corridor in the city," Kern, executive director of the Belmont Shore Business Association, told the Business Journal.

Kern says that Second Street has long lacked a variety of higher-end dining options.

"As a lifelong Long Beach resident, traditionally a lot of the 'special moment, night out' restaurants have been in Downtown, with some in Naples," she said.

By the end of the year, that will change as the corridor acclimates to and ushers in a mixture of 15 new and relatively new establishments, 10 of which are places where you can eat and drink.

Kern says the street is shaping

up to reflect what folks want: "an elevated bar scene or elevated night out...they want to be in a nice-looking, chic establishment." A slew of places fit for Instagram, she said.

The newly opened Viaje, Yasu and Sushi Nikkei are the evidence of that. Later this year, more eateries are expected to open: Louie's on 2nd, Breakfast Republic, L'antica Pizzeria da Michele, South of Nick's, Agita's and Dave's Hot Chicken.

Stereoscope Coffee, a burgeoning Southern California cafe chain, also opened on the street, as well as some new shops: Shara Bits & Pieces, Nu Du Salon, Hummingbird Heart, Nuyu Wellness. Plus, there is talk of a new Turkish restaurant, a macaroon shop and perhaps a small sushi place that could go into the old Z Pizza corner, Kern said.

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Long Beach Business Journal
211 E. Ocean Blvd., Ste. 400
Long Beach, CA 90802

Editorial Deadline:

Two weeks prior to publication. Email press
releases to editor@lbbj.com.

Advertising Deadline:

Wednesday prior to publication.

See editorial calendar at
lbbusinessjournal.com/advertise.

 LongBeachBusinessJournal

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Second Street

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Kat Schuster / Business Journal

The team behind Viaje, a new upscale Mexican restaurant, hopes the new venture will bring a metropolitan Mexican dining experience to Second Street.



Kat Schuster / Business Journal

Viaje's bar is stocked with a wide variety of Mexican spirits.

Belmont Shore's Viaje serves 'true' Mexican cuisine from Jalisco to Oaxaca

The new restaurant is a metropolitan Mexican dining experience, a wide departure from the previous Ensenada-style taco joint.

By Kat Schuster

Five years after Julio Gutierrez closed Baja Fish Tacos in Belmont Shore, he was finally able to unveil his reimagined upscale Mexican restaurant in the same location.

Viaje—which roughly translates to “journey”—was conceptualized by Gutierrez in 2018, after he realized that the Second Street location of his franchise wasn't taking off the way his other locations did in Orange County.

The neighborhood “needed something different,” Gutierrez told the Post on Thursday evening under amber lighting inside Viaje, which opened for its first day of service on Dec. 30.

Viaje is a dramatic departure from the Ensenada-style taco spot. A row of cash registers has been replaced with a craft cocktail bar, and casual cafeteria dining was scrapped for a Mexican metropolitan luxury dining atmosphere.

It's “the dining experience you get when you go to a big city—Mexico City or Guadalajara,” said Sergio Alvarez, Viaje's general manager.

The pandemic forced Alvarez and Gutierrez to put the new concept on hold, but ultimately it gave them years to gather all of the recipes that would define Viaje's region-based menu. The pair, along with head chef Ricardo de la Vega, want their menu to take customers on a tour through Mexico, with authenticity as their main focus.

Alvarez said he tried a burrito for the first time when he moved to the

U.S. from Mexico City.

“That's not true Mexican cuisine,” Alvarez told the Post.

When Alvarez was a child, he remembers going on vacation with his family to Santa Barbara and Palm Springs. But no matter how far they drove across California, the

restaurants that were supposed to represent his country all seemed to offer the same roster of items, he said.

“If you fly to Mexico, anywhere in Mexico, and you drive a couple hours in any given direction the food is going to change,” Alvarez said. “Here in the States it's like 10 things that

people think are Mexican cuisine. Chips and salsa? Fajitas? That's Mexican food in the states.”

Alvarez has worked nearly every restaurant position imaginable since 1993 and decided to team up with Gutierrez after becoming enamored with the idea of dispelling

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Sushi Nikkei earned a prestigious distinction—and has now opened a Second Street location



Sushi Nikkei opened its second location in Belmont Shore and is one of four Long Beach restaurants to be recommended by the famed Michelin Guide.



Leading the “Sushi Nikkei tasting” entree are the delectable parmesan scallops followed by “tuna power,” Asian Shiromi and sweet salmon at the new Belmont Shore location.

By Magnolia Lafleur

After opening their first restaurant in Bixby Knolls less than a year ago, a local husband and wife team has now opened a second Sushi Nikkei location in Belmont Shore—thanks to a loyal following of customers and a write-up in the world’s most prestigious culinary guide.

Owner Eduardo Chang Ogata, who runs Sushi Nikkei with wife Daiwa Wong Olano, said a reviewer from the famed Michelin Guide visited his Bixby Knolls establishment “incognito” in September.

Sushi Nikkei didn’t earn a starred rating, but it is now one of just four establishments in Long Beach that is officially recommended by Michelin, which means the food is “above average,” according to the France-based rating organization. (The other Long Beach restaurants on the list include Chiang Ra, The Attic and Heritage.)

The new location on Second Street opened Dec. 22, just eight months after the Bixby Knolls site. Ogata said the restaurant has had nothing but busy tables and lines around the corner, and the new location is already overwhelmed with bookings of over 100 reservations some days.

Sushi Nikkei offers food lovers a blend of traditional Japanese charm and cuisine variety mixed with the colorful flare of Peruvian flavors.

Four years ago, when Ogata came to Long Beach from Lima, Peru, it was his dream and his wife’s dream to open a Peruvian restaurant on Second Street.

With 15 years of experience under his belt, including owning two restaurants in Peru, Ogata and his staff, many who are Peruvian, are excited for the quick expansion.

“We are very fortunate,” Ogata said in Spanish.

The Japanese term “Nikkei,” which means “Japanese outside of Japan,” is traditionally used to refer to Japanese people who plant their roots in other countries. In Peru in the late 19th century, a swell of Asian

migrant laborers from China and Japan immigrated to Peru, forever changing the landscape.

After immigrating to the United States 10 years ago, Luis Valencia became the manager at Sushi Nikkei, working alongside his brother, Mauricio. He recently transferred from the Bixby Knolls location and is now working to ground Sushi Nikkei in its new spot.

“The thing with Peruvian food, the reason why it’s known throughout the entire world is that we use spices from different parts of the country,” Valencia said. “The coast, the sierra and the jungle, every single part has its own flavors.”

Valencia said that Sushi Nikkei does not use any frozen products, with fresh produce arriving every single day.

The menu includes blue crab, yellow tail and striped bass hand rolls, alongside appetizers like grilled scallops and shishito peppers.

A good starter and fan favorite is the “Sushi Nikkei Tasting,” which offers a sampling that includes salmon, tuna, white fish and scallops.

Don’t skip the “Tuna Power,” made with the Parrillera sauce, aji amarillo (a chili paste) and chalaquita (imagine the taste of red peppers in wine juice instead of pico de gallo), which together give it a lemony kick while highlighting the taste of fresh tuna.

The walls of Sushi Nikkei in Belmont Shore give patrons a view into history through black-and-white charcoal drawings of Peruvian artist Rodolfo Castro with a large mural of Japanese immigrants’ arrival into Peru, while in the air the music of Buena Vista Social Club can be heard serenading guests.

“We want people to realize that when you mix two different cultures, you can truly come up with something very tasty,” Valencia said. “Here we offer you the elegance of Japan with the home feeling of Peru. And that’s where you find the magic, in coming together.”

Most dishes range from \$10 to \$30.

Sushi Nikkei is located at 5020 Second St. and in Bixby Knolls at 3819 Atlantic Ave. ■



George Stavros and his family have brought all of their favorite dishes that they’ve tried around the world under one roof. Yasu offers unique takes on everything from sushi to pork chops.

Yasu ties the ‘whole world’ into a single dining experience

Even the restaurant’s name has multiple interpretations—with a different spelling, “yassou” means “hello” in Greek, Stavros explained.

By Kat Schuster

Anyone taking a stroll along Second Street lately may have noticed a relatively new boutique restaurant with a Japanese name: Yasu.

At first glance, one might assume that Yasu is a Japanese steakhouse, or perhaps a sushi restaurant. Is it? Let’s just say that owner George Stavros is well-traveled.

From New York to Mykonos, he’s brought his family’s favorite dishes from around the world to Yasu, which he and his two sons, Dimitri and Ted Stavros, opened in the heart of Belmont Shore over the summer.

Even the restaurant’s name has multiple interpretations—with a different spelling, “yassou” means “hello” in Greek, Stavros explained.

“We brought the whole world into one restaurant,” Stavros told the Business Journal.

All of the menu items are personal. Many were drawn from international cuisine the Stavros family has tried somewhere along their travels, others, like the “teddy roll,” are family creations.

For now, Yasu is a sleek nighttime restaurant. It’s where

you’ll find low lighting, shining monochrome flooring, decor with color contrasts and uptempo music as soon as the patio and doors open at 5 p.m. In February, Stavros said he and his sons will begin brunch service on Saturdays and Sundays.

Yasu’s menu is partially organized by temperature. Under “cold,” you’ll find adventurous takes on sushi rolls, tacos as well as Greek and Italian inspired small plates. The “strawberry roll” packs a unique punch of flavors, combining salmon with shrimp tempura, cucumber, avocado—and strawberry, of course.

Under the “hot” section, patrons can peruse a whole other spectrum of unique offerings from fried chicken to mussels. The Spanish octopus—with chorizo, hummus, butternut squash and achiote marinade—was based off of a dish he tried in Marbella, Spain. Yasu’s pork chop comes from a trip to New York City and is served with a cauliflower mash with mushrooms.

The filet mignon, with truffle ponzu, crispy onion and kale chips, was inspired by a dish Stavros’ family tried at a Japanese restaurant in Greece—a subtle hint to where the name Yasu (or Yassou) was drawn from.

Yasu also offers a beer, wine and Champagne selection as well as a list of craft cocktails made with Sabe vodka, Sabe tequila and Sabe rum—distilled spirits with sake blended down to the legal limit of beer and wine, Stavros said.

“You can’t tell the difference,” he said of the spirits within cocktails like the island dream, strawberry

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Viaje

Continued from page 3

misconceptions about Mexican food.

“That was my dream,” he said. “I don’t have the money to open my own restaurant but I can be part of it.”

Gutierrez, who opened his first Baja Fish Tacos location in 1996, said he’s venturing into unknown territory with Viaje. But he’s excited nonetheless to have brought

something he believes is unlike any other restaurant in Long Beach.

Viaje’s menu offers recipes from Jalisco to Oaxaca and beyond. Alvarez said the team tried more than 70 dishes, embarking on their own flavor crusade before narrowing it down to Viaje’s minimalistic menu.

Meanwhile, the bar offers a wide selection of Mexican spirits and lots of familiar cocktails with fresh ingredients and syrups made from scratch. Take for example, Viaje’s Paloma, which is made with

clarified juices.

So far, Barbacoa de Cordero, a lamb shank dish that originated in Mexico City, is Viaje’s most popular plate. To Alvarez, it’s a beloved dish that he grew up with.

For Gutierrez, who hails from Jalisco, it’s Viaje’s Enchiladas de Mole that brings back memories.

“Growing up, mole was on the table,” he said.

Viaje is located at 5224 Second St. and is open from 5 to 10 p.m. every day except Monday. ■



Barbacoa de cordero, a dish that originated in Central Mexico, is Viaje’s most popular.

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‘Restaurant Row’

Continued from cover

Aside from a roster of new storefronts, Kern said those traipsing the corridor will soon see a new gateway sign, new plants in the median, possibly some new murals and hanging flower baskets.

Mike Rhodes, owner of Long Beach’s oldest restaurant, Domenico’s, is among some of the street’s longest-standing business owners who have kept a watchful eye on the corridor’s ups and downs.

Rhodes says he’s seen a lot of restaurant closures over the last two decades.

“Only a handful of restaurants have survived,” Rhodes, who has owned Domenico’s for 19 years, told the Business Journal.

Despite everything, Domenico’s, which opened in 1954, had its busiest month on record in December 2022.

Belmont Shore “has made a nice comeback,” Rhodes said. “I think a lot of people in Long Beach are re-exploring the Shore, and they’re excited to see some of the new businesses and restaurants that are going in.”

The biggest transformation, Kern says, is that the neighborhood lost a lot of its big corporate businesses, which have been replaced by local independent businesses or chain restaurants. That is, with the exception of Pet Food Express, which took up four previously empty storefronts.

“During COVID, we certainly found ourselves with a lot of vacancies,” Kern said. “And now we’re almost full.”

Page Henley has also kept his finger on the pulse of Second Street’s revolving door of businesses, having owned McCarty’s Jewelry for the last 41 years.

When Henley bought the

jewelry store with a previous business partner in 1982, he remembers a corridor of privately owned mom-and-pop businesses and a center median lush with towering trees.

Belmont Shore has also always been a popular bar-hopping area for students of Cal State Long Beach. As a student there in the 1970s, Henley recalls the Shore’s disco dancing boom and a time in which he could rent an apartment for \$85 a month.

He’s also watched as the street’s retail sector dwindled against “exorbitant” rents and the advent of e-commerce. Even the Shore’s corporate retail spaces like Gap, Banana Republic, Buffalo Exchange and Lucky Brand have folded over the last several years.

“I’d love to see more individual owners come in and open stores up, but it’s too difficult,” he said. “The big pet store just opened up and took over an entire block...it’s not quite the same as going into a nice men’s or women’s clothing store.”

While Henley said he loves the street’s up-and-coming dining experience, he admits his favorite for the past 40 years has consistently been Cafe Gazelle, Belmont Shore’s Italian hole-in-the-wall.

McCarty’s, which opened in 1932, has—like Domenico’s—stood the test of time, even as the other business sectors endured a see-saw of changes. For Henley and Rhodes, the key is in the community.

Henley says he’s made sure that McCarty’s, which has a strong grandfathered-in customer base, participates in 30 to 40 charities and fundraising events per year.

“For me personally, it’s about caring for other people and being involved with society,” Henley said. “The kind of personal things I feel about the world and how people should give back.”

As for the city’s oldest restaurant, Rhodes says he was fortunate enough to remain open for take-out



Cheantay Jensen / Business Journal

An aerial view of Second Street in Belmont Shore.

throughout the pandemic and keep every single one of his employees. Coming off the busiest month he’s ever had, he’s optimistic that a bustling new era could be in store for the neighborhood.

“I’m hoping that all the activity draws more people and it becomes a hotspot for people in town,” he said. “Four or five years ago, things weren’t looking nearly as good as they are now.” ■

Yasu

Continued from page 5

lemon drop, spicy margarita and rum old fashioned.

Stavros also advises patrons not to skip over some of the more familiar menu items, like the cheeseburger, which is basically a blend of beef and bacon.

“This cheeseburger is out of control,” he said. “I own fast food restaurants and I’ve always wanted an amazing burger” on this menu.

Stavros has been in the food business since he was 20 years old, when he first got involved in building restaurants as a contractor. Now, he owns two fast food restaurant chains—Hot Off The

Grill and Mr. Pete’s Burgers—which have eight locations throughout Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Having grown up in Belmont Heights and Huntington Beach, Stavros has warm memories of frequenting Second Street with his family. Yasu was something he felt strongly about bringing to the seaside dining corridor.

Yasu “brings a vibe ... it’s hip, it’s chic. We wanted to make it a boutique-type restaurant that people could dress up or not, have a nice date night or celebratory family night,” he said. “It’s just something that I felt was needed on Second Street.”












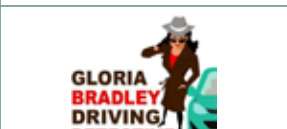


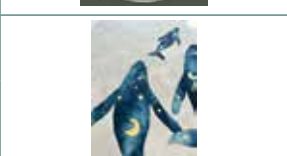
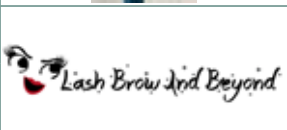

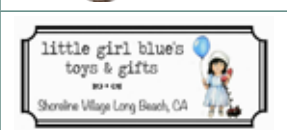
Yasu, at 5201 Second St., is open from 5 to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 5 to 11 p.m. Friday through Sunday. Brunch service will start in February on Saturdays and Sundays. ■





















Brandon West / Vision 360 Media

King Salmon with a teriyaki glaze served on a bed of garlic-chili broccolini.

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	service(s) provided: General Construction		# of employees: 2	name(s): Kenneth Yablonsky	website: N/A
	company name: A&M Window Coverings	street address: 1856 Lime Ave. Long Beach, CA 90806	year founded: 2018	title(s): Boss	phone number: (562) 726-9879
	service(s) provided: Blinds		# of employees: 1	name(s): Aaron Lemos	website: amwindowcoverings.com
	company name: Allied Projects	street address: 3702 E. Anaheim St. Long Beach, CA 90804	year founded: 2018	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 382-6233
	service(s) provided: Interior Design		# of employees: 5	name(s): Alexander Petrakos	website: alliedprojectsinc.com
	company name: Amber M Aesthetic	street address: 509 E. Broadway Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2021	title(s): Esthetician/Owner	phone number: (562) 612-0873
	service(s) provided: Hydrafacials		# of employees: 4	name(s): Amber Miller	website: ambermaesthetics.com
	company name: ANCHOR HomeSupport	street address: Remote Office Long Beach, CA 90803	year founded: 2013	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 395-3580
	service(s) provided: Non-Medical Home Care		# of employees: 15	name(s): Lara Davini	website: wecarelongbeach.com
	company name: Antonio's Barber Supply	street address: 742 Pine Ave. Long Beach, CA 90813	year founded: 2018	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 437-2305
	service(s) provided: Barber Shop Supplies		# of employees: 2	name(s): Marina Barcenas	website: antoniosbarbersupply.com
	company name: Ash Bay Soap Co	street address: 440 E. First St. Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2007	title(s): Owner	phone number: (213) 505-3386
	service(s) provided: Artisan Natural Soaps and Skin Care		# of employees: 1	name(s): Cathleen Cleveland	website: ashbaysoapco.com
	company name: Assistance League Thrift & Vintage	street address: 2100 E. Fourth St. Long Beach, CA 90814	year founded: 1991	title(s): Manager	phone number: (562) 434-7121
	service(s) provided: Thrift and Vintage Shop		# of employees: 3	name(s): Tammy Kline	website: allb.org
	company name: bark! bark!	street address: 325 Atlantic Ave. Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2008	title(s): Founder	phone number: (562) 437-3655
	service(s) provided: Dog Boarding, Grooming and Training		# of employees: 12	name(s): Vivian Dominguez	website: barkbarkdaycare.com
	company name: Beachrunners' Inn Bed & Breakfast	street address: 231 Kennebec Ave. Long Beach, CA 90903	year founded: 2003	title(s): Owner/Innkeeper	phone number: (562) 856-0202
	service(s) provided: Lodging, Hospitality		# of employees: 3	name(s): Patricia Reed and Courtney Day Claverie	website: Beachrunnersinn.com
	company name: Bixby Knolls Wellness Center	street address: 4301 Atlantic Ave. Suite 5 Long Beach, CA 90807	year founded: 2018	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562)-219-4200
	service(s) provided: Health and Wellness Services		# of employees: 10	name(s): Anna Pearl, DC	website: bixbyknollswellness.com
	company name: Burke Mercantile	street address: 435 E. First St Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2018	title(s): Owner, Curator & Creative Director	phone number: N/A
	service(s) provided: Independent Retail		# of employees: 1	name(s): Maggie Stoll	website: burkemercantile.com
	company name: Camp Design	street address: 1347 Loma Ave. Long Beach, CA 90804	year founded: 2010	title(s): Creative Director	phone number: (562) 277-1140
	service(s) provided: Commercial Interior Design and Branding		# of employees: 10	name(s): Daniel Rossiter	website: camp.design
	company name: Cielo Roth Photography	street address: Remote Office Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2011	title(s): Owner/ Photographer	phone number: (562) 857-6795
	service(s) provided: Photography		# of employees: 1	name(s): Cielo Roth	website: cielorothphotography.com
	company name: Code of Harmony	street address: 2001 E. Fourth St. Long Beach, CA 90814	year founded: 2017	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 349-0775
	service(s) provided: Skin Care		# of employees: 4	name(s): Janet Schriever	website: codeofharmony.com
	company name: Commune Communication	street address: 425 E. Fourth St., Unit E Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2016	title(s): Co-Founders	phone number: (562) 366-0080
	service(s) provided: Advertising and Design		# of employees: 12	name(s): Ryan La Rosa, James Whale	website: communecommunication.com/
	company name: Confidential Coffee	street address: 137 W. Sixth St. Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2018	title(s): Owner	phone number: (323) 684-4433
	service(s) provided: Coffee & Tea		# of employees: 4	name(s): Denise Maldonado	website: confidentialcoffee.com
	company name: Crystal Clear Learning Center	street address: 909 Pine Ave. Long Beach, CA 90813	year founded: 2019	title(s): ECE Specialist, Consultant/ Philanthropist	phone number: (562) 980-0206
	service(s) provided: Day Care Resources and Solutions		# of employees: 3	name(s): Crystal Cherie Jones	website: crystalclearlearningcenters.com

LONG BEACH BUSINESS LIST SMALL BUSINESSES					
LOGO	COMPANY + SERVICES	WEBSITE + STREET ADDRESS	YEAR+ EMPLOYEES	LEADERSHIP	PHONE + EMAIL
	<i>company name:</i> David Younan, DDS: Long Beach Dental Wellness <i>service(s) provided:</i> Dentistry	<i>street address:</i> 249 E. Ocean Blvd. Suite 102 Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2018 <i># of employees:</i> 8	<i>title(s):</i> Dentist/Owner <i>name(s):</i> David Younan	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 432-1022 <i>website:</i> longbeachdentalwellness.com
	<i>company name:</i> Ding Tea Long Beach <i>service(s) provided:</i> Boba Tea Shop	<i>street address:</i> 3908 Atlantic Ave. Long Beach, CA 90807	<i>year founded:</i> 2022 <i># of employees:</i> 11	<i>title(s):</i> Owners <i>name(s):</i> Darren Espina & Frederick Ulanday	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 588-9320 <i>website:</i> N/A
	<i>company name:</i> Dolman Architecture <i>service(s) provided:</i> Architectural Design	<i>street address:</i> 309 Pine Ave. Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2015 <i># of employees:</i> 1	<i>title(s):</i> Principal Architect <i>name(s):</i> Corrie Dolman	<i>phone number:</i> (805) 215-8373 <i>website:</i> dolmanarchitecture.com
	<i>company name:</i> Dopey's Dog House <i>service(s) provided:</i> Dog Treats, Accessories	<i>street address:</i> 419 Shoreline Dr. (Kiosk on Boardwalk) Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2021 <i># of employees:</i> 2	<i>title(s):</i> Business owner <i>name(s):</i> Janine Solano	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 286-4994 <i>website:</i> dopeysdoghouse.com
	<i>company name:</i> Drinking Buddy <i>service(s) provided:</i> Japanese Snacks and Adult Beverage Accessories	<i>street address:</i> Online Business Long Beach, CA 90814	<i>year founded:</i> 2019 <i># of employees:</i> 1	<i>title(s):</i> Founder & Owner <i>name(s):</i> Frank Rodgers	<i>phone number:</i> (714) 202-7521 <i>website:</i> thedrinkingbuddyshop.com
	<i>company name:</i> East Village Cafe <i>service(s) provided:</i> Coffee Shop	<i>street address:</i> 443 E. First Street Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2020 <i># of employees:</i> 7	<i>title(s):</i> Owner <i>name(s):</i> Emelida Garcia	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 253-0044 <i>website:</i> evclb.com
	<i>company name:</i> Environ Architecture, Inc <i>service(s) provided:</i> Architectural and Interior Design Services	<i>street address:</i> 100 Oceangate, Suite P200 Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 1992 <i># of employees:</i> 10	<i>title(s):</i> President <i>name(s):</i> Alan Burks	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 495-7110 <i>website:</i> environarch.com
	<i>company name:</i> Essencial Studio <i>service(s) provided:</i> Skin Care	<i>street address:</i> 3550 Long Beach Blvd. Suite F Long Beach, CA 90807	<i>year founded:</i> 2012 <i># of employees:</i> 4	<i>title(s):</i> Esthetician <i>name(s):</i> Carol Rodriguez	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 492-9258 <i>website:</i> essencialstudio.net
	<i>company name:</i> Ethikli Sustainable Market <i>service(s) provided:</i> Sustainable, Vegan Groceries	<i>street address:</i> 352 E. Fourth St. Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2022 <i># of employees:</i> 1	<i>title(s):</i> Founder/Owner <i>name(s):</i> Katy Impellizzeri	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 612-3647 <i>website:</i> ethikli.com
	<i>company name:</i> Fine Feathers Kombucha Company <i>service(s) provided:</i> Kombucha	<i>street address:</i> 2296 Long Beach Blvd. Long Beach, CA 90806	<i>year founded:</i> 2012 <i># of employees:</i> 3	<i>title(s):</i> General Manager <i>name(s):</i> Brandon Sugano	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 552-6692 <i>website:</i> finefeatherskombucha.com
	<i>company name:</i> Fuller Management Corporation <i>service(s) provided:</i> Small Business Development and Professional Coaching	<i>street address:</i> 200 Pine Ave., Suite 503 Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2010 <i># of employees:</i> 4	<i>title(s):</i> Owner, Executive Director <i>name(s):</i> Kena Fuller	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 269-8691 <i>website:</i> FullerPros.com
	<i>company name:</i> Gloria Bradley Driving Detective <i>service(s) provided:</i> Drivers Education	<i>street address:</i> P.O. Box 18564 Long Beach, CA 90807	<i>year founded:</i> 2020 <i># of employees:</i> 1	<i>title(s):</i> Owner <i>name(s):</i> Gloria Bradley	<i>phone number:</i> (626) 818-8920 <i>website:</i> DrivingDetective.com
	<i>company name:</i> GTFOverland <i>service(s) provided:</i> Camping/Overland Gear	<i>street address:</i> 1178 E. Anaheim St. Long Beach, CA 90813	<i>year founded:</i> 2018 <i># of employees:</i> 5	<i>title(s):</i> CEO <i>name(s):</i> Curt Thompson	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 305-2887 <i>website:</i> GTFOverland.com
	<i>company name:</i> Homespun Long Beach <i>service(s) provided:</i> Seasonal Porch Decorating and Plant Delivery	<i>street address:</i> N/A Long Beach, CA 90808	<i>year founded:</i> 2022 <i># of employees:</i> 1	<i>title(s):</i> Owner <i>name(s):</i> Elizabeth Jackson	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 548-2273 <i>website:</i> homespunlb.com
	<i>company name:</i> Jess Weymouth <i>service(s) provided:</i> Artist	<i>street address:</i> Online Business Long Beach, CA 90803	<i>year founded:</i> 2014 <i># of employees:</i> 2	<i>title(s):</i> CEO <i>name(s):</i> Jessica Weymouth	<i>phone number:</i> (661) 472-7978 <i>website:</i> jessweymouth.com
	<i>company name:</i> Lash Brow And Beyond <i>service(s) provided:</i> Eyelash Extensions	<i>street address:</i> 3605 Long Beach Blvd. Suite 331 Long Beach, CA 90807	<i>year founded:</i> 2017 <i># of employees:</i> 1	<i>title(s):</i> Owner <i>name(s):</i> Georgette Hubbard	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 786-5095 <i>website:</i> LashBrowAndBeyond.com
	<i>company name:</i> LB Holistic Tree <i>service(s) provided:</i> Holistic Tree Care	<i>street address:</i> Remote Office Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2016 <i># of employees:</i> 1	<i>title(s):</i> President <i>name(s):</i> Ben Fisher	<i>phone number:</i> 562-270-5463 <i>website:</i> lbholistictree.com
	<i>company name:</i> Little Girl Blue's Toys and Gifts <i>service(s) provided:</i> Toys	<i>street address:</i> 419 Shoreline Village Dr. Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2015 <i># of employees:</i> 3	<i>title(s):</i> Business owner <i>name(s):</i> Janine Solano	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 286-4994 <i>website:</i> None

LONG BEACH BUSINESS LIST SMALL BUSINESSES					
LOGO	COMPANY + SERVICES	WEBSITE + STREET ADDRESS	YEAR+ EMPLOYEES	LEADERSHIP	PHONE + EMAIL
	<i>company name:</i> Makersville <i>service(s) provided:</i> Makerspace and Maker-Created Activities	<i>street address:</i> 419 Shoreline Village Dr., Suite Q Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2012 <i># of employees:</i> 3	<i>title(s):</i> President <i>name(s):</i> Patricia Tsoiasue	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 225-9589 <i>website:</i> makersville.net
	<i>company name:</i> Margaux Agency, LLC <i>service(s) provided:</i> Social Media Marketing Services	<i>street address:</i> 120 E. Third St., Suite 203 Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2015 <i># of employees:</i> 8	<i>title(s):</i> Founder & CEO <i>name(s):</i> Monica Garrett	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 317-4844 <i>website:</i> margauxagency.com
	<i>company name:</i> MASAYA <i>service(s) provided:</i> Retail shop offering mens and unisex styles in clothing, accessories, homewares and more	<i>street address:</i> 501B Pine Ave. Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2022 <i># of employees:</i> 1	<i>title(s):</i> Owner/Shopkeeper <i>name(s):</i> Rich Rodriguez	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 317-3685 <i>website:</i> masayastore.com
	<i>company name:</i> MEOW <i>service(s) provided:</i> Vintage Clothing	<i>street address:</i> 2210 E. Fourth St. Long Beach, CA 90814	<i>year founded:</i> 1986 <i># of employees:</i> 2	<i>title(s):</i> Owner <i>name(s):</i> Kathleen Schaaf	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 438-8990 <i>website:</i> meowvintage.com
	<i>company name:</i> Oh La Vache <i>service(s) provided:</i> Cheese Shop	<i>street address:</i> 2112 E. Fourth St. Long Beach, CA 90814	<i>year founded:</i> 2020 <i># of employees:</i> 2	<i>title(s):</i> Owners <i>name(s):</i> Jessica Sarwine & Erika Ponzo	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 434-2112 <i>website:</i> ohlavachecheese.com
	<i>company name:</i> Outlook Home & Building Inspections <i>service(s) provided:</i> Residential and Commercial Inspections	<i>street address:</i> 5318 E. Second St. Suite 869 Long Beach, CA 90803	<i>year founded:</i> 2021 <i># of employees:</i> 2	<i>title(s):</i> Owner <i>name(s):</i> Jason Tennant	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 527-9900 <i>website:</i> ohbinspections.com
	<i>company name:</i> Pacific Business Partners <i>service(s) provided:</i> Business Strategy	<i>street address:</i> 5318 E. Second St. Suite 395 Long Beach, CA 90803	<i>year founded:</i> 2014 <i># of employees:</i> 2	<i>title(s):</i> Founder <i>name(s):</i> Angelica Wheaton	<i>phone number:</i> (510) 393-8119 <i>website:</i> pacifcbp.com
	<i>company name:</i> Pet Waggin' Pet Care <i>service(s) provided:</i> Pet Care - Dog Walking and Pet Sitting	<i>street address:</i> 375 Redondo Ave. Suite 479 Long Beach, CA 90814	<i>year founded:</i> 2006 <i># of employees:</i> 12	<i>title(s):</i> Business Owner <i>name(s):</i> Mary Ellen Hobbs	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 626-6544 <i>website:</i> petwaggin.net
	<i>company name:</i> Pigeon's Roller Rink <i>service(s) provided:</i> Roller Rink	<i>street address:</i> 6400 Pacific Coast Highway Long Beach, CA 90803	<i>year founded:</i> 2021 <i># of employees:</i> 20	<i>title(s):</i> Owner <i>name(s):</i> Shayna Meikle	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 980-0006 <i>website:</i> pigeonsrollerrink.com
	<i>company name:</i> PIPPi + LOLA <i>service(s) provided:</i> Plants, Home Goods, Accessories, Consultation, Interior Landscaping, Landscape Design, Workshops, Education	<i>street address:</i> 2630 E. Fourth St. Long Beach, CA 90814	<i>year founded:</i> 2020 <i># of employees:</i> 4	<i>title(s):</i> Owner <i>name(s):</i> Dynelly Del Valle	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 588-9500 <i>website:</i> pippiandlola.com
	<i>company name:</i> Plantiitas <i>service(s) provided:</i> Retail Houseplants	<i>street address:</i> 2011 E. Fourth St. Long Beach, CA 90814	<i>year founded:</i> 2019 <i># of employees:</i> 6	<i>title(s):</i> Owner/Founder <i>name(s):</i> Kevin Alcaraz	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 400-5452 <i>website:</i> plantiitas.com
	<i>company name:</i> Primo Plumbing and Heating Inc. <i>service(s) provided:</i> Plumbing	<i>street address:</i> 2005 Palo Verde Ave. Long Beach, CA 90815	<i>year founded:</i> 1995 <i># of employees:</i> 4	<i>title(s):</i> Co-Owner <i>name(s):</i> Jordan Barile	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 429-1221 <i>website:</i> facebook.com/PrimoPlumbingandHeating
	<i>company name:</i> Rainbow Lagoon Swan Boats by Wheel Fun Rentals <i>service(s) provided:</i> Swan Boat rentals and Swan Boat Night Rides	<i>street address:</i> Corner of Shoreline Drive at Pine Avenue Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 1989 <i># of employees:</i> 13	<i>title(s):</i> Director of Operations <i>name(s):</i> Mike Ullerick	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 522-6147 <i>website:</i> wheelfunrentals.com/LBSwans
	<i>company name:</i> Riviera Advisors, Inc. <i>service(s) provided:</i> Human Resources Management Consulting and Training	<i>street address:</i> 5050 E. Second St., #41446 Long Beach, CA 90803	<i>year founded:</i> 2001 <i># of employees:</i> 8	<i>title(s):</i> Managing Principal <i>name(s):</i> Jeremy M Eskenazi	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 856-5787 <i>website:</i> RivieraAdvisors.com
	<i>company name:</i> Scholars Collective <i>service(s) provided:</i> Tutoring and Youth Enrichment	<i>street address:</i> 236 E. Third St. Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2020 <i># of employees:</i> 8	<i>title(s):</i> CEO <i>name(s):</i> Angela Macias	<i>phone number:</i> (323) 413-7856 <i>website:</i> aboutscholars.com
	<i>company name:</i> Shore Doggs <i>service(s) provided:</i> Pet Care	<i>street address:</i> Remote Office Long Beach, CA 90803	<i>year founded:</i> 2014 <i># of employees:</i> 4	<i>title(s):</i> Owner/Operator <i>name(s):</i> Victoria Ayash	<i>phone number:</i> (310) 303-8947 <i>email address:</i> victorianstation@gmail.com
	<i>company name:</i> Smile For The Birdie <i>service(s) provided:</i> Family Entertainment	<i>street address:</i> 423 Shoreline Village Dr. Long Beach, CA 90802	<i>year founded:</i> 2008 <i># of employees:</i> 3	<i>title(s):</i> Owner <i>name(s):</i> Joe W. Stupor	<i>phone number:</i> (626) 221-0395 <i>website:</i> smileforthebirdie.com
	<i>company name:</i> Stalks and Blooms Florist <i>service(s) provided:</i> Florist	<i>street address:</i> 4102 Orange Ave. Suite 126 Long Beach, CA 90807	<i>year founded:</i> 2014 <i># of employees:</i> 3	<i>title(s):</i> Owners <i>name(s):</i> Richard and Miguel Shenefield	<i>phone number:</i> (562) 612-4266 <i>website:</i> stalksandblooms.com

LONG BEACH BUSINESS LIST SMALL BUSINESSES					
LOGO	COMPANY + SERVICES	WEBSITE + STREET ADDRESS	YEAR+ EMPLOYEES	LEADERSHIP	PHONE + EMAIL
	company name: Steady Brewing	street address: 2950 Clark St. Long Beach, CA 90815	year founded: 2017	title(s): Owners	phone number: (562) 982-4046
	service(s) provided: Brewery & Tasting Lounge		# of employees: 6	name(s): Aaron Henderson, Dennis Russo, Robert Booth, Monika Henderson	website: Steadybrewing.com
	company name: Sushi Maſa	street address: 649 E. Broadway Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2019	title(s): Manager	phone number: (562) 269-0119
	service(s) provided: Sushi Restaurant		# of employees: 18	name(s): Suphatphong Sutheerasak	website: thesushimafia.com
	company name: Tenni-Moc's Shoe Store	street address: 6536 E. Spring St. Long Beach, CA 90815	year founded: 1962	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 429-7777
	service(s) provided: Shoe Store		# of employees: 5	name(s): Alexandra Maltezos	website: tenni-mocs.com
	company name: The Hangout	street address: 2122 E. Fourth St. Long Beach, CA 90814	year founded: 2018	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 676-6810
	service(s) provided: Retail & Cafe		# of employees: 5	name(s): Melissa Carpenter	website: shopthehangout.com
	company name: The Hippea	street address: 2023 E. Fourth St. Long Beach, CA 90814	year founded: 2016	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 343-7722
	service(s) provided: Restaurant		# of employees: 4	name(s): Vered Azari	website: thehippea.net
	company name: The Packaging Company	street address: 2310 E. Fourth St. Long Beach, CA 90814	year founded: 1986	title(s): Founder	phone number: (562) 434-5583
	service(s) provided: Packaging		# of employees: 15	name(s): Michael Salemi	website: thepkgco.com
	company name: Thee Smithington	street address: PO Box 8061 Long Beach, CA 90808	year founded: 2019	title(s): Owner	phone number: (424) 233-5331
	service(s) provided: Creative Consulting		# of employees: 5	name(s): Dionna Sharay Smith	website: theesmithington.com
	company name: Third Eye Records	street address: 2234 E. Fourth St. Long Beach, CA 90814	year founded: 2002	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 472-4366
	service(s) provided: Vinyl Records New/Used Buy/Sell		# of employees: 3	name(s): Gary Farley	website: thirdeyerecordslb.com
	company name: Tinsel & Bow	street address: 5318 Second St. Suite 278 Long Beach, CA 90803	year founded: 2015	title(s): Founder	phone number: (562) 342-3131
	service(s) provided: Corporate Gifting & Hospitality		# of employees: 2	name(s): Kathryn Wells	website: tinselandbow.com
	company name: Tito's Restaurant	street address: 1107 E. Fourth St.	year founded: 1998	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 432-7272
	service(s) provided: Restaurant		# of employees: 8	name(s): Norberto Cruz	website:
	company name: ToursX, LLC	street address: 429 Shoreline Village Dr. Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2019	title(s): President and CEP	phone number: (562) 235-5403
	service(s) provided: Evotours on a Glass Bottom Boat in Long Beach Harbor		# of employees: 5	name(s): Nilda Parrado Langston	website: theseaviewcruises.com
	company name: Vector Green Power, LLC	street address: 369 Coronado Ave. Long Beach, CA 90814	year founded: 2016	title(s): CEO	phone number: (530) 636-3994
	service(s) provided: Microgrid (solar / battery / controls) design and consulting.		# of employees: 1	name(s): Pete Marsh	website: vectorgpm.com
	company name: Vida Plant Shop	street address: 324 Elm Ave. Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2021	title(s): Founder	phone number: (562) 317-5200
	service(s) provided: Interior plant design, repotting services, plant arrangements, ceramics, gifts		# of employees: 1	name(s): Sasha Pace	website: vidaplantshop.com
	company name: Vino Jova	street address: Remote Office Long Beach, CA 90804	year founded: 2021	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 343-6102
	service(s) provided: Mobile Bartending		# of employees: 1	name(s): Vanessa Hernandez	website: mobilewinebarsocal.business.site
	company name: Wheel Fun Rentals - Shoreline Village	street address: 429-G Shoreline Village Dr. Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 1989	title(s): General Manager	phone number: (562) 951-3857
	service(s) provided: Bike Rentals & Specialty Cycle		# of employees: 15	name(s): Vicente Martinez	website: wheelfunrentals.com/shoreline
	company name: Whole Person Therapy	street address: 444 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 800 Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2012	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 888-1856
	service(s) provided: Psychotherapy Services		# of employees: 1	name(s): Helen Caldwell	website: helencaldwell.org
	company name: Wide Eyes Open Palms (WEOP)	street address: 416 Cherry Ave. Long Beach, CA 90802	year founded: 2013	title(s): Owner	phone number: (562) 386-2031
	service(s) provided: Coffee / Bakery		# of employees: 10	name(s): Angie Evans	website: wideeyesopenpalms.com
		It's a new year, and the Long Beach Business Journal is busy bringing you all-new features like <i>The List</i> to keep you informed and connected with your business community. Subscribe today to get 26 issues a year delivered to your home or office, plus unlimited digital access to the local business news you can't find anywhere else.			
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Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

A Southwest Airlines plane takes off from Long Beach Airport.

Southwest to launch route from Long Beach to Kansas City

By Brandon Richardson

Southwest Airlines announced last week that it will offer daily nonstop flights from Long Beach Airport to Kansas City International Airport in Missouri beginning March 9.

The daily flights will depart Long Beach at 1:20 p.m. and arrive at the Show-Me State at 6:30 p.m. Return flights will depart Missouri at 11:25 a.m., landing in Long Beach at 12:40 p.m.

The March launch will coincide

with the completion of a new 39-gate terminal at the Kansas City airport—the single-largest infrastructure project in the city’s history, according to officials. The \$1.5 billion terminal features dedicated arrival and departure levels, an adjacent parking garage, moving walkways and consolidated checkpoints for a better passenger experience.

Construction on the roughly 1 million-square-foot terminal broke ground in April 2019.

“We welcome Southwest adding

more flight options for LGB travelers and providing a connection between Long Beach and the beautiful new facilities being unveiled at Kansas City International Airport,” Long Beach Airport Director Cynthia Guidry said in a statement.

Southwest began flying out of Long Beach in 2016 and became the airport’s largest carrier following the departure of JetBlue in 2020. Since then, the airline has continued to accrue additional flight slots and introduce new routes.

Kansas City is the latest in a string of new routes Southwest has unveiled for Long Beach. Earlier this month, the airline began service to New Orleans and Salt Lake City. In July, the carrier will begin its first East Coast route out of Long Beach when it begins service to Orlando.

Southwest currently holds 40 of the airport’s 53 allocated daily flight slots, with nonstop service to 18 U.S. cities. The carrier is likely to acquire several more when five additional slots are allocated in the coming months. ■

Historical Society of Long Beach to open new exhibit on Black Student Union Elders Association

By Tess Kazenoff

Over the years, the Historical Society of Long Beach exhibitions have chronicled local traditions, the impact of World War II on the city’s residents and the formation of Long Beach’s LGBTQ community.

According to executive director Julie Bartolotto, the Historical Society of Long Beach contains a “treasure trove of information”—within the organization’s Bixby Knolls location. There, visitors can find a collection of California women’s chapter newsletters, an extensive newspaper collection,

a crown from the oldest LGBTQ+ organization in the city, the Imperial Court, and a scrapbook documenting films produced at Long Beach’s silent film studio, which was located at the Museum of Latin American Art’s current site from around 1913 to 1920.

Beginning Feb. 3, spectators will be able to discover another piece of Long Beach history through the Historical Society’s new exhibition featuring the Black Student Union Elders Association.

“It’s something we’ve been talking about since March 2020,” said Bartolotto. “We’re excited to finally get to show this collection and help people to understand this history,

demonstrate that we are interested in all of Long Beach history, and share this great partnership we’ve been developing.”

With multiple banners and timelines displaying five sections of approximately 50 items total, including photographs, newspaper articles and other documents, visitors will learn about the history of both the educational opportunity program and the Black Student Union at Cal State Long Beach.

Its current exhibition, “A Woman’s Place,” will still be on display, albeit condensed, and contains biographical sketches and photographs of women from

throughout Long Beach history, collected both from community outreach, through a partnership with the Long Beach Suffrage Group and through the Historical Society’s own collection, Bartolotto said.

Expanding, organizing, and archiving the Historical Society’s extensive collection has been a labor of love for Bartolotto, who first began as a part-time staff member while in graduate school at Cal State Long Beach, before taking on a full-time position in 1996.

Bartolotto knew she had her work cut out for her. “There were impressive photos on display, but most weren’t even described,” she said.

Long Beach’s new first-time homebuyer assistance program to offer \$20K grants

By Tess Kazenoff

After losing her home in June 2009, North Long Beach resident Melvalyn Priddie is ready to possibly purchase a home again.

“It’s just been a constant building, building, building, since then, working here, working there, and just trying to get back on track,” Priddie said. “It just takes that long.”

For Priddie, who is a tax preparer, and her husband, who works with Los Angeles Unified School District, cost is the biggest barrier—and the city’s new homebuyer assistance program, set to open to applications in the coming months, could offer some much-needed relief.

“We’ve seen the prices in Long Beach are just out of control,” said Priddie, who has also begun to explore manufactured homes as a more affordable alternative.

Although she has lived in Long Beach since the ‘90s, her family may consider moving elsewhere due to challenges finding an affordable home in, she said.



A home for sale in the Harte neighborhood in North Long Beach.

Through the city’s new First-Time Homebuyer Assistance Program, made possible through Long Beach Recovery Act funds, 100 eligible families could receive up to \$20,000 in down payment and closing cost assistance, in the form of a grant, rather than as a loan or mortgage service.

While home costs are still very high, rising interest rates have made getting mortgage assistance even more difficult for low-to moderate-income homebuyers, and hopefully this assistance will provide some needed relief, said Meggan Sorensen, Housing Development Officer for the

city of Long Beach.

“We are hoping to at least take off the burden for those who have a down payment saved but don’t realize how much closing costs are going to be, or for those who thought that they were in the market, but now because of rising interest rates thought that homeownership was no longer an option,” Sorensen said.

While the city launched its website in October, with applications expected to open in “early 2023,” a date has not yet been announced regarding when applications will be open.

However, city officials expect the application to open around the spring of this year.

In the meantime, the city plans to host informational sessions to familiarize prospective buyers with the eligibility requirements as well as with the process. Dates for those sessions are expected to be released in the coming weeks, city officials said.

The program’s eligibility requirements include a household income that does not exceed 150% of the Los Angeles County Area median income, meaning a family of

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Uduak-Joe Ntuk resigns from CalGEM position, will remain on LBCC board

By Alicia Robinson

A Long Beach Community College District trustee who also oversaw the state’s oil and gas operations has stepped down from that powerful governor-appointed position.

Since 2019, Uduak-Joe Ntuk was the oil and gas supervisor at the California Geologic Energy Management Division, or CalGEM. He resigned earlier this month “to focus on the personal needs of my family as I move forward to the next phase of my career,” he said in an email.

“I am grateful to Governor Newsom for the opportunity to serve as the first African American State Oil & Gas Supervisor in the history of California. It has been an honor to be a trailblazer in this capacity, and a privilege to serve our residents,” Ntuk’s email said.

Ntuk said he’ll remain on the community college district board, where he has served since his election in 2018. He also teaches in the Chemical Engineering Department at Cal State Long Beach.

His tenure in both his elected and appointed positions has at times been rocky.

Ntuk weathered some criticism last fall when he alleged a fellow college trustee “traffics in QAnon conspiracies and misinformation,” and he was part of a board majority that voted to fire former Long Beach City College Superintendent-President Reagan Romali after she accused him and another trustee of ethics violations and retaliation.

Romali is now suing the district for \$10 million, alleging wrongful termination. Ntuk has denied any wrongdoing in his role as a trustee and called Romali’s allegations baseless.

Both Long Beach and the state have a fraught relationship with the oil and gas industry, and that appears to be reflected by how Ntuk was received as oil and gas supervisor.

Environmental advocates were often critical of him as being too friendly to the industry he was supposed to regulate (he formerly worked for Chevron).

“Let’s hope Ntuk’s exit is the start of the transformation California’s oil and

gas regulator desperately needs,” Hollin Kretzmann, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity’s Climate Law Institute, said in a statement.

“Gov. Newsom’s climate policies can’t keep being undercut by his own agency rubberstamping new oil and gas projects,” the statement continued. “Newsom needs to appoint a regulator that helps him get the state off polluting, climate-heating fossil fuels, starting with ending new oil and gas permits now.”

But earlier this month, under Ntuk’s leadership, CalGEM approved emergency rules to prohibit new oil wells within 3,200 feet of homes, schools, parks and other sites considered sensitive. State Sen. Lena Gonzalez, whose district includes Long Beach, passed a bill creating the buffer zone, but its implementation was halted amid a ballot drive that could allow voters to overturn the law in 2024.

“I’m incredibly proud of our work at CalGEM over the past three years, especially enacting the nation’s strongest regulations for protecting communities of color from the

impacts of oil drilling, moving towards ending the practice of fracking in California, and securing more than \$100 million in state and federal funding to address the state’s century long challenge of orphan oil wells,” Ntuk said in his statement.

The fight between environmental interests and the petroleum industry puts Long Beach in a tight spot.

Research has tied air pollution from oil operations to asthma and other health problems—issues city leaders have said they want to clean up. But Long Beach officials also have bemoaned the potential loss of as much as \$20 million in annual revenue if the 3,200-foot buffer law goes into effect this year.

Newsom’s office didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment on Ntuk’s departure or when a replacement might be appointed, but the Bakersfield Californian reported that Gabe Tiffany, chief deputy director of the state Department of Conservation, will take over in the interim.

Staff writer Jason Ruiz contributed to this report. ■

How Medi-Cal coverage could impact doula accessibility



Angela Dixon-Hamlett, program supervisor of the Long Beach Health Department’s Black Infant Health Program, demonstrates the proper method of swaddling a baby using a doll at the agency’s office.

By Tess Kazenoff

Just five years ago, when family health advocate Stephanie Fields would ask a woman receiving services at the city’s Black Infant Health program if they had a doula, more often than not, they would reply by asking what a doula is.

Nowadays, the situation is quite different—and most reply by saying, “Yes, I want one,” Fields said.

Awareness around the benefits of doulas, particularly for women of color, who face numerous health disparities compared to their White counterparts, has risen significantly in recent years, although for many, accessibility remains an issue.

However, this month, Medi-Cal took a step toward improving access and expanded its coverage to include doula services, encompassing all pregnancy and postpartum outcomes, such as abortion and miscarriage.

“We have to start somewhere, where this becomes a regular part of medical care, a regular part of prenatal and pregnancy care, because women deserve it, and they need it,” said Fields, who who first joined the Black Infant Health program as a client and has since worked with the organization for about 25 years.

Fields has been pregnant seven times, although five did not survive, she said.

“I did have someone there, my mom, but just imagine having additional support from someone who could have explained to me the different procedures that I needed to go through,” Fields said. “It takes the fear and the stigma out of those things, so that you can go through

with confidence and just know that you’re gonna be OK.”

‘Humanity versus racism’

Black women, specifically, face the largest health disparities and experienced maternal mortality rates three or four times higher than all other racial and ethnic groups in California from 2011 to 2019, according to the California Department of Public

Health. Black infants die at three times the rate as White babies, before reaching the age of 1.

While many factors can contribute to the stark variability in risk of death, access to care, quality of care, structural racism and implicit biases, are primary causes, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Health disparities, particularly among Black Americans, can be linked to generational stressors that trace back to American slavery, and the trauma not just of slavery itself, but of the residual effects of racism, said Gwendolyn Manning, Black Infant Health program coordinator.

“Our priority with Black Infant Health is to expose that reality ... and then try to implement or infuse

their life with tools to help them to reduce stress,” said Manning.

Through group sessions focused on community, connection and empowerment, and other support sessions such as life planning and case management, connecting participants to doula care is a cornerstone at the Black Infant Health Program, which serves pregnant or postpartum Black women at least 16 years old who live in

“Now people are seeing that no, doulas aren’t a luxury, they’re actually a necessity.”

- Stevie Merino, Doula and Executive Director of Birthworkers of Color Collective

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“Our priority with Black Infant Health is to expose that reality ... and then try to implement or infuse

Long Beach or a surrounding area.

“I think about doulas in terms of humanity versus racism,” said Manning, who noted that she was born with the help of a midwife. “History just continues to repeat itself in regard to some of the social dynamics around a woman having to advocate for herself. ... We’ve seen this in real time with this program. I’ve seen it in my family.”

Doulas have been proven to improve both maternal and infant health outcomes, said Angie Dixon-Hamlett, a social worker and Black Infant Health program’s team supervisor as well as doula-in-training.

“You want to see someone who looks like you, so that you can feel comfortable at a time when you’re very vulnerable, and you’re scared,” Dixon-Hamlett said. “The time is

now to start bringing back what we probably should have never let go, you know, is having people around us that are going to support us throughout our pregnancy, as well as in postpartum.”

Doulas can play an important role in helping people feel seen and heard in medical care, and with doulas now at the forefront of conversation, there is an opportunity for even more progress, Dixon-Hamlett said.

“It’s that real opportunity to further empower Black women who have been so invisible in so many ways,” Dixon-Hamlett said. “Now they’re going to be really seen and heard.”

Increased accessibility, but an imperfect system

Although Medi-Cal coverage promises to improve accessibility for marginalized communities, a complicated process and low reimbursement rates could remain a barrier.

“Because it’s still in the infancy stages, we have yet to see how fast things will be in terms of reimbursement and the application and medical providers getting on board,” said doula and executive director of Birthworkers of Color Collective Stevie Merino. “But we’re remaining optimistic.”

For doulas who apply to be a provider, approval could take up to 180 days, and then they must also connect with specific insurance companies, Merino said.

For doulas interested in providing services to those with Medi-Cal, being a part of an established organization rather than operating independently will be beneficial when it comes to the administrative side of the process, Merino said.

“This process might be a heavy lift for people who are doing this on their own,” Merino said.

Merino estimates that the Medi-Cal reimbursement rate for doulas will be around \$1,200, broken down by specific services, which is quite low, particularly considering the cost of living in LA County, she said.

The average rate in the area typically starts at \$1,500, depending on experience, training and skills, with some doulas charging upward of \$3,000, Merino said.

“I know that a lot of people were advocating during this process to make it as accessible and easy as possible, but the reimbursement rate definitely should be increased,” Merino said. “I hope and I know that we will be a part of really advocating for that, as this continues to roll out.”

At Birthworkers of Color, many doulas including Merino offer sliding scale services, and services at the city’s Black Infant Health program are also free.

“So many people that I know, especially doulas of color, have been providing these services for free or lower than what the Medi-Cal rate is, so hopefully this will help to offset the work that they were already doing in a

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LBG passenger volumes fell in November

Throughout November, 287,558 travelers passed through the municipal airport, up 14.8% from the same month last year but down 6.8% from November 2019.

By Brandon Richardson

After months of inching closer to pre-pandemic levels, passenger volumes at Long Beach Airport slipped slightly in November, according to data released Jan. 12.

During that month, which typically marks the beginning of the busy holiday travel season, 287,558 people passed through the municipal airport, up 14.8% from the same month last year but down 6.8% from November 2019. The figure marks a significant 412% increase from November 2020, when only 56,143 travelers were served as the coronavirus began its first winter surge.

Nationwide, total passenger volumes remained down 5.7% in November compared to the same month in 2019, according to Transportation Security Administration data. Across the U.S., nearly 64.4 million travelers passed through TSA checkpoints compared to nearly 68.3 million before the pandemic.

Back in Long Beach, the airport served just shy of 3 million passengers through the end of November, which is 8.2% lower than in November 2019.

December figures have not been released, and while airport staff expected strong holiday travel around the Christmas holiday, winter storms and the Southwest Airlines' meltdown caused over 160 flights to be canceled late in the month.

The facility lost an estimated \$500,000 due to the mass cancellations.

"As we continue on the road to recovery, we are excited about our passengers taking full advantage of all the new nonstop destinations, providing additional options to meet their travel needs," Airport Director Cynthia Guidry. "2023 looks promising."

On Jan. 8, Southwest began weekly nonstop flights to New Orleans that depart Long Beach every Sunday through at least July. The week before, the airline began daily nonstop service to Salt Lake City. ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

The operator of George's Greek Cafe on Second Street has submitted an application to make its parklet permanent.

Community input limited in parklet permitting process

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach neighborhood groups will no longer be able to block a permit from being issued for a permanent parklet after the City Council voted Jan. 17 to amend its municipal code to make community input just one part of the process, rather than the deciding factor.

The council had requested the change to the code in December because the language allowed for community groups like neighborhood associations and others to block a permit from being issued by opposing a business's application for a permanent outdoor parklet.

Changes made this month will now require the city to post public notices that a business is applying for a permanent parklet, similar to when a business is applying for an alcohol license, and any opposition received during that 30-day noticing period would trigger a hearing before the City Council.

The council will be the ultimate decision-maker in parklet permits that are sent to a hearing before the body.

Councilmember Kristina Duggan, who was recently elected to represent the city's 3rd City Council District, where some residents have been vocal in their opposition

to the proliferation of parklets on Second Street in Belmont Shore, said the changes would allow people to be able to come to City Hall and advocate with their own voice.

"I don't think it's good practice to give veto power to one group," Duggan said of the previous wording of the municipal code.

Temporary parklets spread across the city during the pandemic as restaurant owners and other businesses tried to keep their businesses open while complying with state and regional bans on having customers indoors.

At one point, the city had nearly 130 temporary parklets, but all of them will be taken down by the end of January.

Public Works Director Eric Lopez said Tuesday that the city had issued seven permits for permanent parklets to businesses that had temporary installations, and there are another 26 businesses that turned in applications that are under review. Seventeen of those are in the 3rd City Council District.

Permanent parklets would have to meet more stringent design and construction standards that were laid out in a 2018 law adopted by the council that allowed for permanent installations to be built in the city. However, the locations where they can be built are limited by a number of things like pedestrian safety and

whether the parklet would interfere with access to public utilities or storm drains.

While a hearing during the notice period would be triggered by any opposition at no cost, anyone who decides after that period to appeal a recommendation to approve or deny a permit would need to pay city fees that could range between \$1,000 and \$2,310.

The vote to change the language came over objections from some residents who said businesses were being given too much power and were being gifted public parking spaces for their own financial gain.

Julie Dean, president of the Belmont Shore Residents Association, said the parklets have created a number of accessibility issues and pose a potential safety issue to people walking on the sidewalk who have to contend with waitstaff crossing the sidewalk to deliver food and drinks to people dining in the parklets.

"The sidewalks do not belong to the businesses, but they're acting like it, in addition to taking over the parking spaces," Dean said. "If these restaurants, bars and gyms want more outdoor dining space, they should have leased a piece of land with more outdoor dining space. Instead, they're just being greedy and using the free land of our city." ■

Sommelier to share 'secrets' of sake in new Downtown shop

By Kat Schuster

Sake consists of the same four to five ingredients and there are no exceptions, according to Japan's purity laws for craft sake. As it turns out, there's a wide array of flavors that can be derived from this minimal formula—the pages of Greg Beck's craft sake menu prove this, as it details dozens of flavors in his selection of about 80 unique bottles from Japan.

Beck—a certified sake sommelier and owner of Sake Secret in Long Beach—is on a mission to share the gospel of this ancient alcoholic beverage.

"What you know as the flavor of sake is likely just one possible thing. It's usually rice-y booze-y, overheated—that's what we're used to drinking here," Beck told the Post. "That's just one spot on a wide spectrum" of flavor."

After running his successful pop-up for more than a year—tucked inside Long Beach Beer Lab on the Westside—he signed the lease of Sake Secret's future brick-and-mortar on Wednesday: 460 Pine Ave., which previously housed Romeo Chocolates. He expects it to open this summer, of course, after a laundry list of permits and bureaucratic to-do's are checked off.

Landing the Downtown location came after Beck spent years living in Japan, where learned how to speak Japanese fluently while working for



Kat Schuster / Business Journal

Greg Beck aims to share Japanese sake with Long Beach, a beverage that he says offers a window into Japanese history and has flavors ranging from fruity to umami.

the Japanese government. He's taken a slow and fiscally careful approach to get here. But now that he's got the storefront and funding from both his Kickstarter campaign, which raised \$64,030 of its \$50,000 goal, and a grant from the state of California, he's eager to educate Long Beach about the ancient beverage.

In and around Long Beach, Beck will tell you that there are plenty of breweries and wine bars to go around. But his pop-up shop, Sake Secret, is the only one of its kind in Los Angeles County.

"Any tiny town in Japan is going

to have a sake shop, no matter how tiny the village is. And any big city in Japan is going to have Western wine shops," Beck explained from behind his sake bar on Thursday evening. "You come here and any tiny town in America is going to have a wine shop. But in all of L.A. County there isn't a single sake shop? Isn't that weird?"

One might argue that Beck's specialty shop is not much of a "secret" now, as he has gained quite the following, but he says the name is mostly tongue and cheek.

"People often feel sheepish and embarrassed when they ask questions

as if they should know more about it already. It's almost treated like a secret," he said. "'Sake Secret' rolls off the tongue easily but it's also a metaphor, sake shouldn't be a secret, the secrets of sake are free."

Beck encourages anyone who wants to learn more to visit him at his pop-up bar. From dry to sweet, from junmai-shu to ginjo-shu, from hot to cold, there are several different types of sake, or nihon-shu as it's referred to in Japan. "Sake," in Japanese simply refers to all alcoholic beverages.

"When it comes to selection throughout Southern California, there really isn't any place that can rival what Greg does and that's just from a product standpoint," said Eric Imamura, a fellow sake sommelier sitting behind Beck's bar on Thursday.. "When it comes to the person that's actually presenting the product, nobody has this guy's passion, his knowledge, and really the ability to connect."

Beck organizes the pages of his extensive menus by flavor profile rather than style.

"Most people are beginners and they don't know one style from another, so what matters to them are the flavors," he said, flipping through the pages. For example, he says "bright, juicy and plush are more for a craft beer drinker like someone who's used to having big bold, less refined flavors that kind of hit you in the face with a big punch of flavor."

When Beck first arrived in Japan as a 20-year-old exchange student,

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Vast enters Long Beach's aerospace arena

By Brandon Richardson

The world's first artificial-gravity space station will be built in Long Beach following the announcement by Vast Space that it is relocating its headquarters to the city, joining the bustling space economy.

"Every day, new companies are choosing Long Beach to be their primary place of business," Mayor Rex Richardson said during his first State of the City address Jan. 10, where he presented Vast as the city's latest space company.

Founded in Berkeley in 2021, Vast is developing a 100-meter-long space station that can house more than 40 people, according to the company's website. The station spins to provide artificial Earth gravity, which will alleviate body deterioration during long-duration human space flight.

The station also will provide various microgravity environments, including Mars, moon and asteroid analog, which are necessary for many space-based

activities such as manufacturing.

Vast is in the early design phase for its space station and expects to launch a scaled demo module in the next three to four years, Vast Chief Legal Officer Krystle Caponio told the Business Journal earlier this month.

The firm is moving from its 7,000-square-foot facility in El Segundo, which it moved into shortly after its founding, and into two buildings at a newly constructed industrial complex at the corner of Spring Street and Orange Avenue. The buildings total nearly 115,000 square feet. The move and setup are expected to be completed during the first quarter of this year, according to Caponio.

The expanded digs will be necessary as the company projects to staff up from its roughly 40 employees to 700 by the end of 2027. The positions will primarily be engineering and manufacturing, Kyle Dedmon, vice president of construction and facilities, said during the mayor's event.

In the future, when the first



Courtesy of Vast

Mayor Rex Richardson shakes hands with Kyle Dedmon, vice president of construction and facilities for Vast Space, after he announced the company was the city's latest aerospace company during his State of the City address.

astronauts are aboard a Vast space station, Dedmon said he hopes Long Beach residents feel as much pride as the company does.

"We couldn't be more excited for Long Beach to be our new

home," Dedmon said. "A project like this is only really possible in Long Beach because of the talent pipeline, the startup ecosystem, the transportation and infrastructure, and other initiatives." ■

Doula Accessibility

Continued from page 13

more sustainable way,” Merino said.

For doulas who work with particular providers or insurance companies, there will likely be a consistent stream of clients, due to the need for doulas, Merino said.

“We do want there to be an overwhelming interest,” Merino said. “This is a career, and you can make this a career—there can be financial sustainability and security.”

Growing interest in doula services

Medi-Cal coverage could play an important role in changing the perception of doulas, Merino said.

As celebrities have shared their experiences using doulas, contributing to doulas’ popularity, it has also created a misconception that doulas are a luxury for the most privileged, Merino said.

“Now people are seeing that no, doulas aren’t a luxury, they’re actually a necessity, and they’re something that anyone who wants one should be able to access, because we all deserve support, right?” Merino said. “I think that that’s really beautiful.”

Insurance providers are estimating that there will not be enough doulas to meet the rising interest, but Merino hopes that

Birthworkers of Color, which has a doula training program, will see an increase in people interested in becoming doulas, she said.

As for how many doulas end up signing to be Medi-Cal providers, it remains to be seen if low reimbursement rates and the complicated process will be a deterrent, Merino said.

“I think there’s still a lot more advocacy to be done, and we have to see what this process is like,” Merino said. “But community doulas and organizations are definitely monitoring and are going to continue to advocate as needed.”

Need for more support

Uplifting culturally competent doulas and organizations through forming partnerships and providing funding is a necessary step towards reducing the health disparities that exist within Long Beach, Merino said.

For an upcoming Birthworkers of Color doula training in March, over 100 people reached out for financial assistance or scholarship opportunities, Merino said.

“We offer as many as we can, but we also often take a financial loss from that,” she said. “I think the next step in this medical benefit, but just in general, is funding culturally relevant doula trainings that are coming from community organizations—that is going to be so important for this work and for this

benefit to be sustainable.”

The Black Infant Health Program, which is a statewide program and has had a location in Long Beach since its 1989 inception, received a multi-million dollar funding increase in July 2022—a promising step towards combating the health inequities across the state. Of that increase in funding, the Long Beach program received \$816,800.

“As engaging and uplifting and wonderful as doulas are, they can’t do it all,” Dixon-Hamlett said. “We can’t do it all, we need a systemic reinvention to really address all of these inequities.”

The Long Beach center has used its portion of the funds to increase its capacity and services, Manning said.

Although the additional funding went into effect for a year, program staff will be looking for ways to standardize that funding, said Manning.

“Our whole community, not just the Black community, but our whole entire city, state, nation—we cannot say we’re well until all parts of our society are well,” said Dixon-Hamlett. “This is one of the things that I think Black Infant Health does and doulas do, is it helps to remind people that there are things that we can do, there are preventable aspects of labor and delivery and postpartum and prenatal that we really can intervene on.”

Next steps

For those who may be interested

in utilizing doula services through Medi-Cal, they should start self-advocating and discuss options with a medical provider, Merino said.

Currently, a referral from a care provider is needed, although it is not limited to OB-GYNs, Merino said.

“There’s a long list of providers who are able to essentially sign off on this,” Merino said.

Some medical providers don’t even know that this medical reimbursement exists yet, and some are very “anti-doula,” Merino said.

“I think that was one of the reasons why community doulas really advocated to make sure that the list of providers was very broad, so that no one person or one individual would be able to stop someone from receiving the doula care that they deserve and that they want,” Merino said.

But in the meantime, many of the doulas at Birthworkers of Color Collective have already signed up or are in the process of becoming Medi-Cal providers, and are eager for next steps, Merino said.

Many clients, as well as numerous medical providers and insurance companies have also already reached out to the collective regarding the new coverage.

“I’m sure there will be hiccups and bumps in the road,” Merino said. “But hopefully, there’ll be a lot of good that will come from this.” ■

In 1st State of the City, Richardson vows progress on homelessness crisis, jobs



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

During his first State of the City address, Long Beach Mayor Rex Richardson said one of his primary focuses will be on the homelessness and housing crisis across the city.

By Jason Ruiz

In his first State of the City address on the evening of Jan. 10, Mayor Rex Richardson outlined a broad agenda that included tackling the city’s homelessness crisis and looking to the future of the city by rethinking its economy and investing in the community.

Richardson, who was elected mayor in November, inherited a city that has multiple active housing construction sites, but has struggled to create the kinds of jobs required to afford market-rate housing or keep pace with the number of affordable units needed to stave off a growing housing affordability crisis that city officials say has contributed to a homeless population that grew by 62% in 2022.

The City Council declared a state of emergency for homelessness earlier Tuesday, something that could allow city management to move more quickly into agreements to help provide services for the unhoused in the city, but could require the City Council to make tough budgetary decisions because the funding would likely have to come from within the city, not from

Southwest begins service to New Orleans out of LGB

By Brandon Richardson

A New Orleans brass band greeted passengers as they boarded Southwest’s inaugural flight to the Big Easy out of Long Beach Airport on Jan. 8.

The airline will operate the flight through at least July 10, making for easier travel for Long Beachers and residents in nearby cities who plan on celebrating Mardi Gras next month.

The nonstop service departs Long Beach at 12:30 p.m. every Sunday, arriving in NOLA at 6 p.m. The return flight, also on Sundays, departs New Orleans at 4:55 p.m. and arrives at LGB at 7:15 p.m.

The route is one of several new destinations Southwest will begin

servicing this year. On Jan. 5, the carrier began daily service to Salt Lake City.

The company will begin its first nonstop service to the East Coast out of Long Beach with weekly flights to Orlando on July 11.

Southwest is Long Beach’s largest carrier, holding 75% of the airfield’s 53 daily flight slots. In November, the airline was awarded two more slots bringing its total to 40.

Routes for several of the company’s flight slots have not yet been announced.

In December, city officials announced it would add five daily flights, bringing the total number of allowable fights to 48. The slots have not been allocated to airlines, but Southwest is likely to receive several



Courtesy of Long Beach Airport

A brass band welcomes passengers boarding the first Southwest Airlines flight from Long Beach to New Orleans.

The waitlist for slots includes Breeze Airways, which recently relinquished its only daily flight, Swoop Airlines, which declined an offered slot, and American Airlines, which recently informed airport staff it would cease

operations out of Long Beach. American currently holds three daily flight slots, which also will be awarded to the remaining carriers, which now consist of only Southwest, Delta and Hawaiian airlines. ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

A Long Beach Health Department staff member watches an educational video as part of doula training for the agency’s Black Infant Health Program.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Angela Dixon-Hamlett, program supervisor of the Long Beach Health Department’s Black Infant Health Program, swaddles a doll at the agency’s office.

Virgin Orbit’s 1st international mission fails to reach orbit

By Brandon Richardson

Virgin Orbit’s first-ever international launch earlier this month saw the company’s LauncherOne rocket breaching the Earth’s atmosphere and entering space, but the rocket then experienced an “anomaly” and failed to deliver its payload to orbit, according to officials.

Cosmic Girl, the company’s modified Boeing 747, took off from Spaceport Cornwall in the United Kingdom before releasing the rocket shortly after 3 p.m. Long Beach time on Jan. 9. In addition to serving as Virgin Orbit’s first international launch, the event also marked the first-ever orbital launch from UK soil by any company.

“While we are very proud of the many things that we successfully achieved as part of this mission, we are mindful that we failed to provide our customers with the launch service they deserve,” CEO Dan Hart said in a statement.

“We will work tirelessly to understand the nature of the failure, make corrective actions, and return to orbit as soon as we have completed a full investigation and mission assurance process,” Hart added.

Jim Spornick, an aerospace veteran who helped in the development and operations of the Atlas II, III and V launch systems as well as operations of the Delta II and IV systems, and Chad Foerster, chief engineer and vice president of technology for Virgin, will lead the investigation.

This was Virgin Orbit’s fifth mission since January 2021 and the first that failed to deliver its payload

to orbit. The Long Beach-based company has delivered over 30 satellites to orbit in the last two years.

Once the LauncherOne rocket was released, it went hypersonic and successfully reached space. The flight completed a successful stage separation before igniting the second stage.

During the firing of the second stage engine, with the rocket traveling over 11,000 mph, the system experienced an “anomaly,” ending the mission prematurely, according to the company.

The mission, dubbed “Start Me Up” after the 1981 Rolling Stones song, was a joint mission between the U.S. and U.K. governments. LauncherOne had a target of delivering eight satellites to a 555-kilometer sun-synchronous orbit, including:

- IOD-3 AMBER: The first of more than 20 such satellites developed by Satellite Applications Catapult and Horizon Technologies, and built by AAC Clyde Space, that will provide space-based maritime data.
- Prometheus-2: Two CubeSats—owned by the U.K. Ministry of Defense (MOD) and co-funded with Airbus Defence and Space, which are also designing them jointly with In-Space Missions—will support the MOD’s science and technology activities in orbit and on the ground.
- CIRCE (Coordinated Ionospheric Reconstruction CubeSat Experiment): A joint mission between the U.K.’s Defense Science and Technology Laboratory and the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory.
- DOVER: A pathfinder for global navigation satellite systems developed by RHEA Group,

co-funded through the European Space Agency’s Navigation Program and built by Open Cosmos.

- ForgeStar-o: A returnable and reusable platform to enable in-space manufacturing developed by Space Forge of Wales.
- AMAN: An earth observation satellite meant to demonstrate the future feasibility of a larger constellation of satellites, which was developed after a memorandum of understanding among the Sultanate of Oman, Polish small satellite manufacturer and operator SatRev, Poland-originated AI data analytics specialists TUATARA and Omani-based merging technology innovator ETCO.
- STORK-6: The next installment of SatRev’s STORK constellation, for which Virgin Orbit has previously launched two spacecraft.



Courtesy of Virgin Orbit
Crews prepare to mount the LauncherOne rocket to Virgin Orbit’s Cosmic Girl at the United Kingdom’s Spaceport Cornwall.

“We are so incredibly proud of everything we have achieved with our partners and friends across the space industry here in the UK and in the US – we made it to space – a UK first,” Matt Archer, director of commercial spaceflight at the UK Space Agency, said in a statement. “Today we inspired millions, and we will continue to look to inspire millions more. Not just with our ambition but also with our fortitude. Yes, space is hard, but we are only just getting started.”

Despite its recent setback, Virgin is moving forward with preparations for its next launch, the company stated, which will originate at the Mojave Air and Space Port. The company said it plans to return to Spaceport Cornwall for additional launches as early as this year. ■

Ongoing egg scarcity has Long Beach restaurants considering price increases

Avian flu outbreaks and fluctuating feed costs are fueling a nationwide shortage of eggs.

By Alicia Robinson

Spiking egg prices, caused by avian flu outbreaks that began last year, have left Long Beach food businesses scrambling to find supplies and worried they may have to charge their customers more.

The first known cases of bird flu to hit the U.S. in five years emerged in January 2022 and have so far affected more than 57 million birds in 47 states, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That has led to an ongoing nationwide shortage of eggs, at times causing retailers to limit purchases or to leave shelves bare.

The situation is an added challenge for Long Beach’s Egg



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal
Rito Garcia builds an omelet at Egg Heaven in Long Beach.

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LBG suffers \$500K loss amid mass holiday cancellations



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal
Passengers stand in line at Long Beach Airport as Southwest Airlines cancels many of its flights Tuesday, December 27, 2022.

By Brandon Richardson

The last week of 2022 was rife with travel nightmares as winter storms surged across the country and airlines canceled flights en masse, and Long Beach was not immune.

The local airfield had a total of 166—or 44%—outbound Southwest flight cancellations from Dec. 23 through Jan. 1, according to spokesperson Kate Kuykendall. The

result was high stress for workers and travelers, alike, and the loss of an estimated \$500,000 in revenue.

“We do anticipate that we will be able to recover those losses,” Kuykendall said, noting that officials expect strong spring and summer travel seasons.

Kuykendall said, however, the losses are not “hugely significant” compared to the overall budgeted revenue for the 2022 fiscal year, which began Oct. 1. The budget

estimated \$48.3 million in revenue, which is on par with pre-pandemic levels and breaks down to an average of just over \$4 million per month.

The airport is one of few city departments that is self-sustaining, using only revenue generated through its own operations as well as government grants. One source of revenue is a \$4.50 passenger fee for each ticket sold for flights departing Long Beach. In the event of cancellations and subsequent refunds, however, the airport loses that revenue.

Other sources of revenue include landing fees, parking, car rentals and concession sales, among others.

When the cancellations first started, Kuykendall said many passengers were not being notified, which resulted in long lines and agitated customers.

“Especially in the very beginning when it wasn’t clear what was happening, passengers were confused how ... the nation’s weather was affecting their flight in warm and sunny Long Beach,” she said.

Airlines’ networks are interconnected, which means the plane and crew that is slated to fly passengers from Long Beach could get stranded in another part of the country due to inclement weather.

This can cause a ripple effect that cancels or delays several other flights as airlines scramble to adjust staff and aircraft.

In the case of Southwest Airlines, Long Beach’s largest carrier, its archaic system crumbled amid the disruptions, which resulted in more cancellations than other carriers with more modern systems. The system is typically used to track the locations of the crew and craft.

The airline canceled thousands of flights during the busy holiday travel season.

Early amid the Southwest meltdown, the long lines and uncertain passengers already through security were still purchasing concessions, Kuykendall noted. Once it became apparent that the issues would continue, the airport became a relative ghost town—save for hundreds of bags that became stranded at the airport’s baggage claim area, many of which Southwest had to mail back to customers.

“Our number one concern is really the impact on our passengers,” Kuykendall said. “This impacted them during a really important holiday season and we’re really pleased to see that Southwest is making efforts to work with all the affected travelers.” ■

State of the City

Continued from page 17

to expand park space in park-poor areas of the city and call on the Port of Long Beach to speed up the deployment of clean vehicles used at its facilities and to invest in public charging stations.

The city’s economy

One of the bigger announcements of the night was that of Vast Space opening in Long Beach, adding to the “Space Beach” collection of companies in the growing space exploration sector in the city.

Vast is trying to develop artificial gravity technology that would allow humans to visit space for longer periods of time without the biological deterioration that happens from prolonged exposure to weightless environments. Vast is opening shop

at a campus located north of Willow Springs Park in the center of the city.

Richardson noted that in order for the city to move forward, it must change the types of revenues the city has historically relied on like oil, which the city says will be phased out by 2035. It’s phase-out, and the city’s budget retraction because of it, could be sped up by a new state law that has yet to go into effect.

City jobs could become easier to land for area college students through Richardson’s proposed Public Service Pathways Program that could give hiring preferences and provide waivers or exemptions to students who want to work for the city after college.

The program would apply to graduates of Cal State Long Beach, Long Beach City College and Cal State Dominguez Hills, where Richardson graduated.

“Every day thousands of Long Beach residents who live in our community, they attend world-class

institutions in our city. We should hire them,” Richardson said.

Richardson also pledged to visit 100 small businesses in 100 days to assess their needs and what the city can do to help, and said he would push city departments to aim for “substantially higher” procurement rates from small businesses in the city.

Investing in Community

While on the City Council, Richardson championed a number of programs that were aimed at providing youth with greater opportunities, including those that diverted young offenders away from the court system and into job training and taxing oil production to fund youth programs.

Richardson doubled down on that approach Tuesday night, pledging to work to remove employment barriers created by prior offenses that were committed before the age of 25 for people applying for work with the city.

He said he would also propose agreements with trade schools and other apprenticeship programs that would guarantee admission to LBUSD students who meet certain academic requirements.

The Opportunity Beach plan also calls for the creation of internships and fellowship programs for youth looking to work in the city as well as the exploration of creating a youth council and the potential creation of a \$1 million youth fund.

Richardson said he would also host a citywide meeting of neighborhood association leaders to create a shared vision and understand what communities’ priorities are.

“This summit will engage a rich network of neighborhood associations to identify policy needs and opportunities that the city can act on and offer civic engagement training to our residents so they can speak up for themselves,” Richardson said. ■

Recent trends in sales tax, other revenue could shrink Long Beach’s \$43M budget deficit

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach officials are optimistic that the city’s budget deficit could be significantly smaller than the \$43 million hole they thought they’d have to fill before approving next year’s budget in September.

The City Council held a study session last week to get a high-level preview of the city’s budget outlook before a more formal report is presented in March.

Grace Yoon, the city’s budget manager, said that while new contracts for the city’s police and fire personnel bumped a projected deficit from \$27 million to \$43 million, recent trends in sales tax and other city revenue sources suggest the deficit could get smaller.

“It is expected there will be a shortfall, but it will decrease significantly,” Yoon told the council at its Jan. 17 meeting.

She pointed to previous years in which the city’s originally projected

deficit shrank as the actual amount of revenue the city collected by end of the year became clear.

In the 2021 fiscal year, the city projected an \$8 million deficit, but it ended the year with a \$2 million surplus. In the 2022 fiscal year, which ended in September, the city projected a \$30 million shortfall, and the actual revenue is expected to be determined next month. Yoon said there’s expected to be an improvement in the city’s revenue stream.

A big part of the fluctuations between projected deficits and the year-end numbers has been a quicker-than-expected rebound from the pandemic for things like sales tax and the number of hotel rooms that are being booked in the city, Yoon said.

The Measure A sales tax, which was reapproved by voters in 2020, has outperformed projections and surpassed pre-pandemic levels. The lower budget projections were made because of the immediate economic shock that was introduced by

COVID-19 shutdowns of restaurants and other businesses, but consumers spent money instead on home improvements, vehicles and cannabis, Yoon said.

“Actually, people started to spend and continued to spend more,” she said of the pandemic’s effect on sales tax revenue.

The city is still facing some economic obstacles, though, that will not be resolved by higher retail and restaurant spending.

Measure A revenue, for example, will decrease over the next five years as the city begins to pay its share of a countywide tax to fund homelessness solutions. The city has collected about \$60 million per year in Measure A revenue, but that could drop to as little as \$38 million, city officials said last year.

Meanwhile, the loss of Measure M revenue—which came after a March 2022 court decision ruled the city’s transfer of Water Department revenue to the general fund was illegal—will mean the city’s general

fund could have about \$7.5 million less annually.

A decrease in oil production, and the potential for a new state law to hasten the city’s phase-out of oil-producing wells, could also cost the city another \$20 million in annual revenue.

The implementation of that law, though, could be halted by a statewide referendum being financed by the oil industry, which is currently being reviewed by state election officials. If enough signatures are verified, the law could be put on hold until 2024.

Long Beach had previously said it plans to phase out oil production by 2035.

Mayor Rex Richardson said last week that he’s working on a request to have city management present the council with future funding options so the city can continue to provide services with new and sustainable sources. Richardson said he hopes that information can help the city begin to plan for future changes to the city’s financial picture. ■

Councilmember Roberto Uranga returns to dais 4 months after stroke

Uranga had the stroke Sept. 21, one day before his 34-year-old son Roberto Tomas “Tito” Uranga died after battling a rare form of cancer.

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach Councilmember Roberto Uranga returned to the dais last week after a four-month absence from the council due to a stroke he suffered just before the death of his son in September.

Uranga had been out of the public eye for months before returning to a Dec. 20 swearing-in ceremony where he participated in the ceremony with several other elected officials at the Terrace Theater in Downtown. The council had voted in October to excuse Uranga’s absence to avoid a special election from being called, something that would be required after five unexcused absences.

Uranga was elected to a third term in office in June.

He returned to the council chambers last Tuesday for the first time since Sept. 13. Uranga had the stroke Sept. 21, one day before his 34-year-old son Roberto Tomas “Tito” Uranga died after battling a rare form of cancer, according to his office.

“It feels so good to be here, to see all of you,” Uranga said. “Thank you so much for all the well wishes I received over the last three months.”

Uranga said he was still in “recovery mode” and was going through physical therapy. His voice has been affected by his condition and he used a microphone headset to speak last week.

An emotional Uranga said his heart was broken, but he was grateful for the outpouring of support from the community and the city during his recovery. Uranga called the council his family and welcomed his three new “family members” to the dais.

Last week was the first regular meeting of the council that included newly elected Councilmembers Kristina Duggan (3rd District), Megan Kerr (5th District) and Joni Ricks-Oddie (9th District). ■

Historical Society

Continued from page 11

Within a couple of years, the Historical Society’s entire collection had been archived and rehoused, Bartolotto said.

“It’s been a process of professionalizing the organization all of these years and securing collections and proper locations,” said Bartolotto, who also worked to update the database system to better track items and information, as well as members and donors.

While the nonprofit has lived in several locations throughout the years since its 1962 founding, the Historical Society has been in its current location in Bixby Knolls since 2007, which has allowed the space to accept large collections, Bartolotto said.

While over the years, the Historical Society has become recognized in the community for its historical cemetery tours each October and participation in community events, particularly First Fridays in Bixby Knolls, its effort in archiving Long Beach remains one of its most integral roles.

The city of Long Beach doesn’t have an archivist, and it isn’t always possible for libraries to prioritize saving historical materials, Bartolotto said.

“Without saving these materials, and (having) a place for the community to learn about local

history, (community members) only know what’s happening right now. They don’t understand any of the history, which we think is important for building strong communities, and giving people a sense of place,” Bartolotto said.

Today, the Historical Society’s archive is “full of stories that are fascinating,” whether they’re stories of corruption or more inspiring, Bartolotto said.

The economy and demographics in Long Beach have changed over the years, and Bartolotto hopes to expand the Historical Society’s collection to reflect this.

Without specific collecting efforts, such as with the upcoming Black Student Union Elders Association exhibit, the Historical Society often ends up with great materials that are more about the institutions in Long Beach rather than its people, Bartolotto said.

“Therefore we also are often lacking the people whose names aren’t written in the newspaper, all underrepresented communities whose stories haven’t been chronicled or shared,” Bartolotto said.

Bartolotto and the Historical Society encourage communities to bring their materials, or have their families share historical materials with the organization, “so that we can better tell the story of Long Beach as people, not just this institution,” Bartolotto said.

“We kind of have called that initiative, ‘the changing face of Long Beach,’” Bartolotto said. ■

Sommelier

Continued from page 15

he felt like a kid in a candy shop, suddenly able to try a variety of Japanese beverages that he would ordinarily have to wait another year to legally imbibe back in the States.

Beck was so taken with Japan that he immediately moved back there after graduating from the University of Arizona in 2006 to teach English with the Jet program. He lived there for five years. And while he recalls drinking sake bombs during his stay as a college student, it was really the year he moved back that he fell down the umami rabbit hole.

Saijō Sake Festival in Hiroshima Prefecture, where Beck lived for five years, is the place that he said really opened his eyes, or palette really, to Japanese brewers’ ability to dexterously create complex flavor profiles in their sake.

“That’s when I started to slow down and ask questions. The brewers that came to the festival to pour sake were coming from different parts of Japan and I was like ‘why is yours like this?’ And they’d say ‘well we have different water and it gives you a softer, cleaner mouthfeel or we have a lot of minerality and that gives it more complexity,’” Beck explained.

After attending Saijō, he became



Kat Schuster / Business Journal

Greg Beck, who became a certified sommelier in 2019, offers a unique and wide selection of Japanese sake at his pop-up, Sake Secret, where he dedicates his time to sharing the “secrets” of sake.

a well of curiosity. As time went on, he found himself asking questions that were often too difficult for the average restaurant server or bartender to answer.

Some 18 years after Beck first tried sake in Japan, he would open Sake Secret within the Long Beach Beer Lab. Tucked in the corner of the lab, surrounded by stacked wine barrels and a row of clinking pinball machines, you’ll find Beck’s shop, with a rotating menu of nearly 80 different sakes, all of which are Japanese.

Most folks who aren’t from Japan tend to think of sake as the hot rice

wine beverage that is always paired with sushi. According to Beck, this is a misconception—the “secret” of sake for many.

“On one end of the spectrum sake can be fruity, floral, delicate, ethereal, and with uber light bodies, as if you’re sipping on a cloud,” he told the Post. “And then on the other end of the spectrum, there’s super caramel and mushroom flavors.”

Typically light bodied traditional sake pairs well with sushi, Beck says. Often “full body, viscous sake will have you like ‘I need to eat this with a cheeseburger or smoke a cigar’



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Aquarium on Wheels resumes for 1st time since pandemic

By Tess Kazenoff

For the first time since the pandemic hit, the Aquarium of the Pacific relaunched its Aquarium on Wheels program on Jan. 5 at William F. Prisk Elementary School in East Long Beach.

The program began in 2002, just four years after the Long Beach aquarium was founded in 1998. Since then, it has served about 35,000 students each year, with the exception of the last two years, according to Jennie Dean, vice president of education and conservation at the aquarium.

As a component of the aquarium’s educational programming, Aquarium on Wheels is an opportunity to extend learning outside of the aquarium itself, where participants of all ages can experience some of the aquarium’s tide pool animals—including three swell sharks, giant green and strawberry anemones, urchins, sea stars, snails, hermit crabs and more—regardless of ability to visit the actual aquarium, said Dean.

From hiring a bus to organizing chaperones—field trips can be costly. Not only does the program streamline some of the logistics, but it also allows for the same hands-on experience that students would have within the aquarium, Dean said.

“The students are getting to touch the same animals that they would get to touch here at the aquarium in our tide pool and touch tanks, and just be steps away from their home



Courtesy of the Aquarium of the Pacific

The Aquarium on Wheels outreach program returned on Jan. 5 after a hiatus due to the pandemic. The truck, which houses numerous tide pool animals including swell sharks, anemones, urchins, sea stars, snails, hermit crabs and more, can travel up to 75 miles from the Aquarium of the Pacific.

classroom,” Dean said.

The relaunch of the program comes with some needed upgrades to the truck, including the back part of the vehicle where the animals live, along with adding imagery to its interior, which both creates the feeling of being underwater, while also identifying the sea life, according to Dean.

“We turned sort of the negative of closure into a positive, by updating

the life support systems and exhibit spaces,” Dean said.

The aquarium’s educational content largely focuses on making STEM—or science, technology, engineering and math—content accessible, allowing anyone of any age to feel like they’re a part of the scientific process of inquiry and exploration, Dean said.

“All of the lesson plans really do expose students to how to think

about what they’re observing in the natural world, and sort of see themselves as a scientist—not that that means that they have to go up and become a scientist professionally, but that they feel comfortable talking about these topics and seeing a part of themselves, at least, in the scientific world,” Dean said.

While the program is typically for pre-kindergarteners through eighth graders, the truck does make appearances at other events that can target older audiences, including festivals, birthday parties or public libraries, Dean said.

The truck can travel up to 75 miles away from its home location at the Aquarium of the Pacific, which can mean as far as Malibu or down to Oceanside and all the way out to parts of San Bernardino, Dean said.

“Being able to travel those 75 miles away, we’re closer and reach students that haven’t had the opportunity to come visit our actual facility and sometimes haven’t even had the opportunity to visit the ocean itself,” Dean said. “We do have the experience, on occasion, to give students their first exposure to what lives in the ocean in a more hands-on and applied way.”

About 25 schools are currently booked for the remainder of the school year.

“Obviously, I love the ocean—I work for an aquarium. I want everybody to love the ocean just like I do,” Dean said. “So hopefully, this experience, especially at a younger age, might inspire some future ocean professionals.”

Make a reservation by calling (562) 590-3100, ext. 0. ■



Courtesy of the Aquarium of the Pacific

The Aquarium on Wheels program gives youth the opportunity to experience sea life without visiting the actual aquarium, said Jennie Dean, vice president of education and conservation at the Aquarium of the Pacific.

Tova Capital acquires 34,500-square-foot retail complex in Central Long Beach for \$6.2M



Courtesy of Tova Capital

Tova Capital recently acquired the property occupied by Trademark Brewing and Long Beach Rising.

By Tess Kazenoff

Tova Capital, a Los Angeles-based real estate and development company, has acquired the Central Long Beach retail complex occupied by Trademark Brewing and climbing gym Long Beach Rising in a \$6.2

million off-market transaction, the company announced on Jan. 9.

The fully occupied 34,500-square-foot retail complex is located on a nearly 1-acre site at 205-233 E. Anaheim St. between Long Beach Boulevard and Pacific Avenue.

Trademark Brewing and Long Beach Rising, both of which occupy

approximately 17,000-square-foot single-story buildings, are under long-term leases, according to Tova Capital.

The property is also situated across the street from two recently completed senior and affordable multifamily housing projects and is adjacent to a future 36-unit townhome development. Tova officials said Long Beach’s Midtown Specific Plan, where the complex is located, has succeeded in its goal to make the area more attractive to investors.

“The Downtown and Midtown Specific Plans have done their job of luring institutional investors and developers to build much needed quality housing in the submarket including market-rate, affordable and senior housing,” said Ron Harari, president and CEO of Tova Capital in a statement. “Our tenants will continue to benefit from the new residents moving into the area.”

The Midtown Specific Plan and Downtown Plan have led to over 2,100 housing units being built over the past five years in or near Downtown.

Retail rents in Long Beach have grown by 2.2% over the past 12 months, and in Downtown Long

Beach in particular, retail rents are 30.9% higher than they were a decade ago, according to Tova Capital vice president Zach Boren.

“This was a tremendous opportunity to acquire a cash-flowing retail asset at a very low basis,” said Boren in a statement. “Given the challenging credit markets, we were able to secure attractive seller financing, which allowed the deal to make sense in a market with few transactions occurring.”

Tova Capital plans a long-term hold of the retail property, which is its first investment in Long Beach.

Jared Swedelson from NAI Capital represented Tova, while the seller was represented by Sheva Hosseinzadeh from Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR.

Founded in 2017, Tova Capital focuses on rehabilitating older industrial and office buildings, entitling land for higher and better uses and constructing ground-up development.

Tova manages all aspects of the development process including acquisition, construction, financing and disposition. ■

Xela Institute of Art joins Wrigley neighborhood

The new gallery is intended to provide a platform for both emerging and established artists.

By Tess Kazenoff

After officially opening in September, Xela Institute of Art, a gallery on Pacific Avenue that displays contemporary art, is preparing for its second exhibition, which opens Jan. 28.

After a successful inaugural exhibition featuring 14 emerging, mid-career, and well-established artists, Xela’s second exhibit highlights the work of a mentor and mentee, Katherine Sherwood and Cynthia Ona Innis.

When Sherwood was 40 or 41, she had a cerebral hemorrhage, leading to partial paralysis of the right side of her body, including her dominant right hand, said Xela director Alex Alexander.

“She had to relearn how to use her hand that she had never used,” Alexander said. “The work

is so beautiful.”

As a “kunsthalle” style space, which is a German word for “art hall,” the Xela Institute of Art does not have a permanent collection, nor does it sell art or represent artists, Alexander explained.

Instead, with its focus on four-month shows, Xela is intended to celebrate and provide a platform for emerging and established artists, while also displaying a diverse range of artists, Alexander said.

Its name and logo—designed by French artist Christopher Leroux, who does urban industrial work—“refers to a lot of things that are amazing in our world,” Alexander said.

It is left up to the imagination to determine exactly what the “X” in the logo represents, although connotations like “x marks the spot” or a signature come to mind, Alexander said.

Situated in the Wrigley neighborhood, Xela Institute of Art is in a pocket of Long Beach that feels particularly authentic, said Alexander.

“It’s a very cool, lovely neighborhood, and Long Beach is beautiful,” Alexander said. “It’s a great location. I’m really enjoying it. I’m getting to know it little by little.”

Surrounded by neighboring businesses such as Wrigley Coffee and Wrigley Tavern, Alexander



Tess Kazenoff / Business Journal

Femtotechnology (2018) by Cori Redstone, featured in Xela Institute of Art’s inaugural exhibition, which closed Jan. 8, 2023.

is excited to become a part of the local community, while joining an established art presence in Long Beach that includes the Long Beach Museum of Art and the Museum of Latin American Art.

While Alexander noted that contemporary art simply means that the artist is alive, the art in Xela’s exhibitions has a specific style.

“The idea for me is that you have to be very original,” he said. “You have to really know what you’re doing, and you really have to love art.”

While Alexander will be curating some of Xela’s exhibitions,

future exhibitions may utilize an invited curator.

Although its second exhibition will center artists from within California (as well its third exhibition, which will feature Los Angeles-based artist Carla Jay Harris), Alexander hopes to widen the artists’ scope as time goes on.

“It’s just a little bit of a work in progress, but this first exhibition is a really incredible endeavor, because it’s just one of the best exhibitions right now,” Alexander said.

Its inaugural exhibition garnered support from around the world,

First-Time Homebuyer

Continued from page 12

four could earn an income of up to roughly \$136,650. Additional eligibility requirements include holding U.S. citizenship or permanent residency, along with being a first-time homebuyer, which the city defines as someone who has not owned a home in the past three years.

Those applying must also be first-generation homebuyers—people whose parents or guardians never owned a home during the homebuyers’ lifetimes or who lost their home to a foreclosure or short sale and do not currently own a home.

Anyone wishing to apply must also live within a federal Community Development Block Grant designated census tract in Long Beach, or areas where at least 51% of its residents are low- to moderate-income, which represents about half the city, primarily in North, Central and West Long Beach—although grant recipients may purchase a home anywhere in Long Beach, noted program specialist Stephanie Harper.

“It’s primarily our communities of color within Long Beach and folks who traditionally have been excluded from owning a home,” Harper said. “We really wanted to make sure that

this support is geared towards those who need it the most.” Additionally, applicants must be pre-approved and be working with a real estate agent, but they won’t be eligible if they have already opened escrow on a home at the time of applying. After submitting an application, applicants will receive a preliminary program qualification notice, so they can move forward with finding a home and getting an offer accepted, Harper said.

“It’s primarily our communities of color within Long Beach and folks who traditionally have been excluded from owning a home. We really wanted to make sure that this support is geared towards those who need it the most.”

- Stephanie Harper, Affordable Housing Program Specialist for the city of Long Beach

Once buyers open escrow, grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis to applicants who have been pre-qualified, and disbursed directly to escrow. Buyers that receive a grant will see the funds within 30 days of opening escrow, according to city officials. While prospective homebuyers may be hesitant to open escrow on a home without knowing

whether they will receive funding, representatives from Long Beach’s Housing and Neighborhood Services Bureau said the grants will still be helpful in covering any unforeseen closing costs or to buy down the interest rate without reducing the buyers’ down payment. “We believe that the City will be helping many residents who could not otherwise close escrow and get keys to their new homes without us,” the bureau said in a statement.

the housing shortage in the country,” Jones said. “It’s a serious issue.” Jones noted that there are measures being taken within Long Beach, including efforts to convert former commercial and retail housing into affordable housing. However, many of the city’s initiatives, which have been largely concentrated in Downtown, are limited to renters, and minimal units are allotted to affordable housing. “I think it’s the ‘not in my

backyard’ pushback,” Jones said. “If the public has enough of these ‘not in my backyard’ people, and there are overwhelming numbers of them, then the council people don’t have the political fortitude to push for it. I hope that will change but I am not optimistic that that will.” High labor costs and supply shortages have only compounded the issue, as have increasing interest rates, which—while stable over the past two months—are expected to go up to 7%, if not higher, over the course of this year, Jones said. “If interest rates increase, it does impact the ability of buyers to buy. It shrinks their buying power,” Jones said. “It adds to the list of challenges that first-time homebuyers find.”

At the state and local levels, Realtor associations are pushing for the ability of low- to moderate-income families to start building generational wealth through homeownership, Jones said. While programs such as the homebuyer assistance program are important, what’s more important is reducing the obstacles to creating housing, Jones said. “The Homebuyer Assistance Program is good—I don’t think it’s nearly enough,” Jones said. “Twenty thousand dollars for approximately 100 families will help to a degree, but . . . we have to really continue to work with our local council people and the local city employees, the bureaucrats, in finding easier, less expensive ways to build homes.”

For low- to moderate-income buyers, that situation is even more complicated, since inventory is even more limited for people with strict price restrictions, said Jones. Housing affordability is a challenge statewide and across the country, although California has particular issues with housing development, where costs to both get building plans in place and to start construction are high, Jones said. “That, of course, adds to the overall cost of housing, which further prices low- to moderate-income families out of the market,” Jones said. “It increases the cost of building new construction to the point where it’s no longer affordable.”

Nationally, experts estimate that the housing stock is as much as 6 million units below what the population needs—but in California, that number is 3.5 million, Jones said. “We make up more than 50% of

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Planning Commission approves Mosaic housing project in Downtown

The project is expected to transform the two blocks between Sixth Street and Fourth Street west of Long Beach Boulevard into three eight-story apartment buildings.

By Jason Ruiz

The Long Beach Planning Commission has given its approval to the Mosaic housing project, which will replace a large part of the former City Place shopping center in Downtown with 900 units of housing and new ground-floor retail.

The project is expected to transform the two blocks between Sixth Street and Fourth Street west of Long Beach Boulevard into three eight-story apartment buildings. Because the project is in the Downtown area affected by the city’s inclusionary housing zone, it will also include 56 units set aside for very low-income households once the project opens.

In Los Angeles County in 2022, “very-low-income” was determined to be a household of four with an income of \$59,500 or less.

Planning Commissioners voted unanimously last week to approve the project’s site plan, which divides the northernmost block of the project into two parcels. It also amends the city’s previous environmental impact report for the 2012 Downtown Plan, which the city recently has re-worked to turn unrealized office, retail and hotel space into additional housing units.

For the updated Downtown Plan, the city used a conversion formula to conclude that it could build an additional 3,260 units in the Downtown area on top of the originally planned 5,000 units that

were approved in 2012.

The project is being supported by local business owners and resident groups who say that it will bring life and economic viability to the heart of Downtown, which has stagnated since the closure of multiple large stores at City Place, including Walmart’s closure in 2016.

“As a neighbor, I am damn glad they’re joining the neighborhood,” said Leanna Noble, a member of the North Pine Neighborhood Alliance. A “super-block” that extends from Pine Avenue to Long Beach Boulevard will be broken up by the project, which will create a paseo to connect Sixth Street to Fifth Street. The project will also block off a portion of the Promenade north of Fourth Street for pedestrian use.

It’s expected that the farmers market and night market that currently happen in the area will continue to be allowed once the project is completed.

The project did receive some pushback from others, who said they were left out of the community input process and called for the addition of things like senior housing, a requirement that the developers hire local contractors to complete the job, and for more affordable units to be included in the project.

The city’s phased-in approach to implementing its inclusionary housing ordinance, which requires builders to include affordable units in their projects, only mandated that 6% of Mosaic’s units to be affordable. Had the developers submitted an application for the project this year, the requirement would have been 11%.

Commissioners sympathized with the union construction workers who showed up to lobby them to require a local hire requirement, similar to the project labor agreement the city has for city-financed projects, but ultimately said their powers were reserved for approving or denying land uses, not mandating workplace conditions. ■



Courtesy of Turnbridge Equities and Waterford Property Company

A rendering of the forthcoming Mosaic development that looks onto the intersection of Fifth Street and the Promenade North. The team behind the project hopes to turn the Promenade into a pedestrian-only zone that extends north to Sixth Street.



Magnolia Lafleur / Business Journal

Owner of Bebe's Diner Grace Higgins stands with her father Jeff Higgins at their new restaurant in North Long Beach.

Diner replaces rundown Sizzler in North Long Beach

By Magnolia Lafleur

A rundown Sizzler at Long Beach and Del Amo boulevards has been transformed from a chain steakhouse to a diner named after the matriarch of the family that has owned the business for 50 years.

After undergoing a complete makeover, the new North Long Beach restaurant opened as Bebe's Diner on Jan. 5, replacing the Sizzler that sat vacant since closing a few months after the start of the pandemic in 2020.

The new eatery features traditional Southern breakfast dishes like pancakes, eggs and ham and grits, alongside Mexican favorites such as huevos rancheros smothered with chili con carne.

The restaurant is being overseen by Jeff Higgins, who turned over ownership to his daughter, Grace Higgins.

“My wife and I and my daughter had wanted to do something like this for a long time,” Jeff said. “We had never done breakfast before and wanted a retro modern diner, so we jumped at the opportunity as it came. It’s our way of giving back to the neighborhood who has been so loyal to us.”

The lease for the building has been in the family for five decades. Jeff’s father, Ron, first leased the location in 1972. He opened a Sizzler franchise, a popular restaurant in the 1970s and 1980s after becoming one of the earliest pioneers of the “all-you-can-eat” salad bar.

The company, however, fell on hard times, and the parent company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in September 2020.

Councilmember Al Austin, who represents the North Long Beach area where the restaurant is located,

said he was “elated” to see this area alive and upbeat.

“It’s very much a refreshing change, a welcomed and necessary addition to our community,” Austin said.

The new diner combines contemporary furnishings with some of the feel of a 1950s classic diner, with booths and sage green stools lining a counter eating area.

On the wall is a picture of Bebe herself—Jeff’s grandmother, Bea “Bebe” Ryan, who died at 96 in 2011.

The Higgins family hired Chef Nick Dieugeno to take the lead in creating a menu with recipes that resonated with some of the foods they grew up eating.

Upon having his first child, Dieugeno moved back to his hometown of Long Beach following his work as a cook for Chef Ori Menashe’s Middle Eastern restaurant Bavel in Los Angeles.

“After having been in fine dining, it was always my intention to return to classic American comfort but with more updated and trendy ingredients,” Dieugeno said.

Distinct from other diners, Dieugeno said that all of Bebe’s sauces will be made in-house, from scratch and with simple ingredients. Dieugeno hopes to infuse Bebe’s food with the love the owners and himself have for their city.

“We don’t have secret recipes, but what we have is freshly made, all-American food with the most important ingredient: love and attention,” Dieugeno said.

Bebe’s Diner’s current hours are breakfast from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday through Sunday. By the end of January the restaurant will be serving breakfast, lunch and dinner from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day.

Bebe’s Diner is located at 15 W. Del Amo Blvd. ■

Zwift to award multiple \$5K microgrants to nonprofits

By Tess Kazenoff

Long Beach-based online fitness platform Zwift has launched a new microgrant program, the company has announced.

Five \$5,000 “Zwift Microgrants” will be awarded to nonprofits that prioritize fitness and community, among other pillars listed within Zwift’s social impact mission.

The company will also provide each grantee with as many as 20 complimentary Zwift accounts.

Zwift, which fuses gaming with fitness, offers immersive virtual “worlds” or platforms for cyclists and runners, who can connect exercise equipment such as bike trainers, treadmills and more.

“Zwift’s work to foster and support a diverse community on our virtual worlds is what truly sets us apart from

all other fitness platforms,” Eric Min, Zwift co-founder and co-CEO, said in a statement. “We’re excited to support organizations engaged in the same work by offering these five grants to organizations that align with our missions and we look forward to see the positive impact that will result.”

Microgrants will be awarded to registered nonprofit organizations that are aligned with one or all of Zwift’s three social impact pillars: fitness and technology, health and wellness, and community. Applications will be reviewed by Zwift’s people, growth, and impact team.

Local organizations must be registered as a 501(c)(3) in the United States. Applications are open through Feb. 26 and grantees will be notified in March.

Those who are interested can read more about the available grants on their website: us.zwift.com. ■

Xela Institute of Art

Continued from page 23

with over 450 people from across the country and globe in attendance for the opening event, and about 180 people at the closing, Alexander said.

The Xela Institute of Art has received its California nonprofit status and expects to receive its federal status in the coming months. As the gallery continues to develop, Alexander hopes to not only widen its breadth of artists, but also begin various art education programming and partnerships with programs such as Cal State Long Beach’s master of fine arts program and the Arts Council of Long Beach.

The institute will also offer art classes, along with art appreciation classes discussing contemporary art, which Alexander hopes will help participants learn to train their artistic eyes and understand the process of being a part of the arts, Alexander said.

“Part of the goal is making sure that people in Long Beach,

whether it’s schools, with their art professors,” Alexander said, “I want to make sure Long Beach is included, and very involved.”

Xela Institute of Art is located at 2176 Pacific Ave. and is open to the public Thursdays through Sundays, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. by reservation only. Email info@xela.art to book a reservation. ■



Tess Kazenoff / Business Journal

Xela Institute of Art’s opening exhibit, which closed Jan. 8, 2023, featured the work of 14 different artists. Its second exhibit, which includes the work of two artists, a mentor and a mentee, will be open from Jan. 28 to May 27.

Egg Scarcity

Continued from page 19

Heaven Cafe, which had closed due to the pandemic and just reopened three weeks ago under new ownership.

As customers on the morning of Jan. 9 dug into omelets and sipped coffee in beige vinyl-upholstered booths, Esperanza Trejo, who helps run the restaurant, said the biggest concern right now is the cost of eggs.

“They’re way too expensive,” she said. The cafe buys eggs locally, and “we have to shop around because some stores don’t even have any.”

Fanis Pietris, who has owned Pietris Greek Bakery and Restaurant since 2017, told a similar story. Eggs used to fetch about \$40 for 15 dozen, last week

they went to \$95 for the same amount, and now the price is \$130, Pietris said — and he has no idea how long the situation may last.

Unfortunately, neither do the experts.

The last major U.S. avian flu outbreaks were in 2014 and 2015, and they also sent egg prices soaring, but there are some important differences, said Maurice Pitesky, an associate professor at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine Cooperative Extension.

About seven times more counties around the country have been affected this time around, so “the scope of the outbreak that we’re dealing with right now is basically much larger geographically,” he said.

Also, five or six years ago, the number of infections died down during the warm summer months and didn’t flare back up the following winter, Pitesky said, but

the current wave didn’t go away in the spring and summer.

What’s known as highly pathogenic (very contagious) avian influenza is typically spread by wild waterfowl such as ducks and geese. But recently authorities have found the virus in numerous other bird species as well as marine mammals and foxes, so “it’s become much more robust in the species that it’s affecting,” Pitesky said.

When the virus is found in a flock, the fastest way to stop its spread is to euthanize the birds, and it takes time to replace them. Pitesky said young hens are usually about 20 weeks old when they start laying commercial-grade eggs.

Further compounding the flu problem is volatile prices for corn and soybeans, which are used to feed hens, he said.

“I think this is an existential issue for the poultry industry,” Pitesky

said. “I don’t think we know when this will end.”

Meanwhile, Long Beach businesses that depend on eggs continue to try to scratch out a living, hoping their patrons won’t fly the coop.

At Joe Jost’s, a nearly century-old pub that sells its popular pickled eggs by the jar, owner Ken Buck has kept prices level but isn’t sure how long that’s sustainable.

“I don’t like raising prices on my customers, but everything’s so expensive now, including beer,” he said. “I’ll try to keep them the same, but there comes a point when you have to consider charging more.”

Trejo at Egg Heaven is also hoping she won’t have to raise prices. She’s worried but trying not to brood about it.

“We’re trying to stay positive, but it’s hard right now,” she said.

Staff writer Tim Grobaty contributed to this report. ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

A worker cracks eggs into a large pot to be whisked and prepped for omelets and scrambles at Egg Heaven on Fourth Street.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Rito Garcia finishes preparing three breakfast plates at Egg Heaven.

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Educational Opportunities

The Port of Long Beach's high school internship and college scholarship applications are open through March 1. Our internships cover areas from engineering to communications, and if you're interested in a career in logistics, trade or business, check out our Port scholarships. Find out more and apply at polb.com/education.

