

## Challenging The Validity And Integrity Of Minimum Wage Study

By **GEORGE ECONOMIDES**  
Publisher's Perspective

Soon after the minimum wage study requested by the mayor and city council was released on November 13, the Business Journal called its results into question – specifically because of the parameters used to develop the analysis, or what the study calls “What This Tells Us.”

What the study tells us is that the results are significantly skewed against small businesses.

In short, the data compiled from interviews with 600 Long Beach businesses in the report were not weighted to account for the fact that small businesses – those with fewer than 20 employees – comprise an overwhelming majority of businesses in the city: 84% in fact. Any valid analysis would acknowledge this reality by either conducting a proportional number of interviews with small, medium and large employers; or, if equal numbers of interviews are conducted with the three groups, weight the data accordingly. This ensures that the busi-

ness owners interviewed are a true representation of the Long Beach business community. That, according to several companies that conduct surveys, is necessary to ensure accurate data prior to interpreting that data and issuing a report.

The result is that unless the company contracted by the city – the Institute of Applied Economics of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) – reissues its report based on weighted data, the November 13 report that

(Please Continue To Page 8)

This shows the number of businesses by employee size interviewed regarding the city establishing a minimum wage, versus the number that should have been interviewed to accurately represent the makeup of the city's business community. By not issuing the weighted responses, the study is flawed.

Employee Size	Number Of Businesses Interviewed	Number Of Business That Should Have Been Interviewed
1-19	200	504
20-99	200	78
100 +	200	18

## Business Owners And Nonprofit Leaders Torn On Setting A Minimum Wage In Long Beach

By **SEAN BELK**  
Staff Writer

Business owners and nonprofit leaders who spoke at a roundtable discussion last week about potentially raising the minimum wage in Long Beach said they are divided on the issue, stating that they support higher pay for workers but that increasing wages too rapidly would create a financial burden they are unprepared for, and in some cases unable to bear.

During the gathering at Admiral Kidd Park in West Long Beach on November 17, nearly a dozen people, including workers, nonprofit representatives, business owners and restaurateurs, participated in the roundtable discussion led by Mayor Robert Garcia, followed by



Alan Anderson, is owner of Bel Vista Healthcare Center, a 41-bed skilled nursing facility for seniors in Long Beach.

public comment. Some speakers attended a similar roundtable held in Bixby Knolls two weeks prior.

The roundtable last week took place just days after a study on the feasibility and potential implications of a citywide minimum wage policy conducted by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Commission (LAEDC) was released to the public.

The gathering was part of a series of community outreach meet-

ings organized by the city in the last two months to collect input on how, or if, Long Beach should move forward with a minimum wage policy after the City of Los Angeles and several other major cities across the country have raised wages in their respective jurisdictions.

Following a nationwide union-led movement, the City of Los Angeles passed an ordinance earlier this year that raises its minimum

(Please Continue To Page 8)



Michael McCarthy is senior vice president and residential lending manager for Farmers & Merchants Bank, which was founded in 1907. He is pictured at the bank's Seal Beach office. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

## Activity For Mortgage Refinances, Business Loans Up, But Standards Remain Tight

By **SEAN BELK**  
Staff Writer

Underwriting requirements for residential mortgages remain tight as new regulations

aimed at keeping lenders more accountable after the housing crisis continue to roll out, while banks that provide business loans continue to keep standards stringent as well, according to

local lenders interviewed by the Business Journal.

Still, financial experts said new business loan activity has been strong this year, while continued record-low interest rates and rising property values have prompted borrowers to tap into equity through residential mortgage refinancing opportunities.

The Federal Reserve has indicated that it may increase interest rates either this December or early next year as the economy continues to improve; however, experts don't anticipate much of a dramatic impact on lending markets since rates will still be relatively low and are expected to rise only gradually.

(Please Continue To Page 20)

(Please Continue To Page 22)

### Technology And The Future Of Prosthetics



See Story Pages 16-17

### HEALTH CARE QUARTERLY

## Are Health Insurance Providers Slowly Killing Off PPO Plans?

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**  
Senior Writer

Two studies released in early November reported that fewer health insurers are offering preferred provider organization (PPO) plans for individuals on health care exchanges in 2016. Health insurance analysts and professionals interviewed by the

Business Journal pointed to consumer trends as a cause for the shift, as they are increasingly opting for more economical health maintenance organization (HMO) plans, which offer narrower physician networks and require referrals to see specialists.

PPO plans, which are typically

higher in cost, offer broader networks, do not require referrals to see specialists, and cover visits to health care providers outside of an individual's network.

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a national philanthropy dedicated to health

## C-17's Legacy A Testament To Dedicated Workforce Says Program Manager

See Story, Photos On Page 11



The 279th and last C-17 Globemaster III built in Long Beach departed Long Beach Airport on November 13. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

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Inside This Issue	
4	<b>Inside City Hall</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why Is The Smell Of A Tax Increase In The Air? By Former Councilmember Gerrie Schipske</li></ul>
5	<b>Newswatch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City Employee Units Seek Decertification From IAM</li><li>• Vote On Civic Center Rebuild Project In December</li><li>• New Master Leaseholder Approved For Queen Mary</li><li>• SCIG Rail Yard Project Lawsuit Hearing January 28</li><li>• Fire Department To Implement New Online Program</li><li>• Breakwater Reconfiguration Study To Move Ahead</li><li>• Port Of Long Beach Earns 22 Awards At Conference</li><li>• City Grant Targets Youth Violence, Truancy</li><li>• Challenging The Minimum Wage Study, from Pg 1</li><li>• Business Owners Talk Minimum Wage, from Pg 1</li><li>• C-17's Legacy A Testament To Dedicated Workforce</li><li>• Mercedes-Benz USA Holds Long Beach Grand Opening</li><li>• Pacific Gateway Workforce Focus: FCI Management</li></ul>
14	<b>Focus On Health Care</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alzheimer's Disease Rises With Aging Population</li><li>• Technology And The Future Of Prosthetics</li><li>• Depression In Seniors: An Overlooked Disease</li><li>• Are PPO Plans Being Killed Off? from Pg 1</li></ul>
22	<b>Financial Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Business Loans Up, Standards Tight, from Pg 1</li><li>• Tech Giants Form Coalition For Financial Services</li></ul>
24	<b>In The News</b>
28	<b>Perspectives</b> Real Estate, Trade & Transportation, HealthWise, etc.
30	<b>Art Matters</b> Presented By The Arts Council For Long Beach
31	<b>The Nonprofit Page</b> Presented By The Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership

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# Why Is The Smell Of A Tax Increase In The Air?



■ By **GERRIE SCHIPSKE**  
Contributing Writer

In the upcoming budget year, the City of Long Beach faces an announced “budget gap of \$7.5 million.” Also coming are: the price of oil at a low \$50 a barrel, the failure of the Fire Department’s “rapid medic deployment system,” and pending contract negotiations with the city’s numerous unions. The CALPERS pension rates are expected to increase from 24 percent of salaries to 39 percent of salaries for public safety employees in the next budget years.

So what’s a city to do but raise taxes?

The first inkling that this is being discussed at City Hall was a recent statement made by 6th District Councilmember Dee Andrews at a “Town Hall” meeting in his district. Violent crime is out of control in the 6th and 1st Districts. Shooting after shooting is making those areas unlivable. Residents came out to the Andrews’ meeting to complain about the situation. Andrews apparently responded: “If you want more police, we’re gonna ask you for more taxes.”

What would those taxes look like? A public safety “parcel property tax” was tested in a survey several years ago and there seemed to be some support. An increase in the “transient occupancy/hotel tax” (TOT) is possible. According to the city, this tax is 12 percent (twelve percent) of the rent, half of which is paid to the General Fund and half is paid to the Special Advertising and Promotion Fund. Cities like Newport Beach also impose a Visitor’s Service Fee. San Diego adds 1.45 percent to their TOT for a “Tourism Marketing District.” The City of Anaheim charges 15 percent on hotel rooms. A tax on car rentals outside the Long Beach Airport. (Inside the airport the tax has to stay in the airport fund.)



Ah, then there is the utility users tax (UUT). This tax was reduced by voters in 2000 from 10 percent to 5 percent. In 2008, voters approved extending the tax to new and evolving technologies which were not included in the traditional definition of utilities. Currently, the UUT generates 5.7 percent of the city’s revenues. It is estimated that for every 1 percentage point increase in the UUT that \$8 million is generated in revenue.

Instead of proposing new taxes, perhaps the mayor and council should look inward and start using a zero based budgeting approach. This means start at zero funding for each department and then deciding how much is really needed to operate the programs and services instead of just automatically increasing the funding each year.

How is the city doing in collecting money owed like parking tickets, franchise fees, business licenses, etc?

How about utilizing real performance measures in each department? When I asked for them while I was on the city council, I was greeted with this response from city management: the city had performance measures but they were removed from the budget because the city lacked funds and staff to set them. Really!

The Charter for the City of New York mandates a “Mayor’s Management Report” (MMR) which serves as a public account of the performance of city agencies, measuring whether they are delivering services efficiently, effectively and expeditiously. The MMR is released twice a year.” Long Beach needs to do the same.

Scaring taxpayers into supporting tax increases to deal with crime shouldn’t be the first thing local government does to find funds for public safety. Especially when there are so many other options available.

Next column: Why taking down the breakwater could break Long Beach and why it won’t happen.

*(Gerrie Schipske is a native of Long Beach, an attorney, registered nurse practitioner and full time instructor at CSULB Department of Health Care Administration. She was elected to both the Long Beach Community College Board of Trustees and the Long Beach City Council. She is the author of several books on Long Beach history and her blog, [www.longbeachinside.blogspot.com](http://www.longbeachinside.blogspot.com).)* ■

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# Two Long Beach City Employee Units Seeking Decertification From Union

■ By **GEORGE ECONOMIDES**  
Publisher

The Business Journal has learned that Long Beach refuse workers and up to 600 employees from a variety of city departments want a vote on whether they should continue to be represented by the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers (IAM). The IAM is the largest city union in Long Beach, representing approximately 3,600 city employees, and is currently negotiating with the city for a new contract.

The two separate groups of employees each filed a “decertification petition” with the city in early October and are waiting to hear from the city’s human resources department as to when a decertification vote by employees will take place.

The Business Journal obtained copies of the petition from the city. One petitioner is Jeff Walker, who is representing 90 employees and whose unit is listed as “refuse basic.” The other petitioner is Victor Serrano, who is representing approximately 600 employees from various city departments who are classified on the petition as “skilled and general services basics.” Both petitioners checked a box on the petition form that read: “Employees desire no representation.”

According to Ken Walker, labor relations manager for the city and no relation to Jeff Walker, a date for a vote has not been determined, nor has the method – in person or through a ballot mailed to members of each petitioning unit. If a majority of those voting in each unit favor decertification, they will no longer be represented by IAM.

The Business Journal reached out to Jeff Walker and Serrano for comment and to find out why the decertification has been requested, but neither petitioner returned our call.

Salvador Vasquez, president of IAM District Lodge 947, which represents city workers, said he would not comment on the decertification. But he did take the opportunity to say, “. . . the city doesn’t appreciate their (IAM) employees” and that “employees here are not paid as much as employees in other cities. You don’t see our people as members of the \$100,000 Club,” a reference to the Business Journal’s annual list of city employees with six-figure base salaries. As of last August 1, nearly 27 percent of city employees earn a base salary of \$100,000 or more, but the majority of them are sworn personnel.

The petition action taken by the two units is governed under what is known as the Meyers-Milias-Brown Act (Local Public Employee Organizations), Government Code Title 1, Division 4, Chapter 10. ■

# City Council Expected To Vote On Civic Center Rebuild Project In December

■ By **SEAN BELK**  
Staff Writer

The Long Beach City Council is expected to vote on certifying a supplemental environmental impact report (SEIR) and approving a site plan review for the Long Beach Civic Center rebuild project in December, according to city officials.

Encompassing four city blocks, the major development project includes building a new city hall, Port of Long Beach headquarters, main library and Lincoln Park in Downtown Long Beach.

The project, being funded through a public-private partnership via an agreement between the city and development team Plenary Edgemoor Civic Partners, will eventually include a mixed-use development with residential and commercial components, including a 30-story residential tower.

The Long Beach Planning Commission at its meeting on November 9 unanimously recommended approval of the project’s SEIR, which city staff explained supplements the EIR approved for the Downtown Plan, a set of planning guidelines approved nearly three years ago that fast-tracks projects in the downtown area.

City staff indicated at the planning commission meeting that designs of the private mixed-use development would likely come back to the planning commission and city council for approvals at a future date. ■

# Long Beach City Council Approves New Master Lessee For Queen Mary

■ By **SEAN BELK**  
Staff Writer

The Long Beach City Council at its meeting on November 17 approved amending a lease contract for the city-owned Queen Mary, allowing Los Angeles-based Urban Commons, LLC to take over as the master leaseholder of the ship and adjacent shore side property.

The previous master leaseholder, Garrison Investment Group, LLC, took over control of the Queen Mary master lease in 2009 and has since spent over \$13 million on preservation, renovation and other capital improvements to the ship’s hotel, exhibits and attractions, according to city staff.

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# CITY OF LONG BEACH

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Purchase and Development Opportunity at Broadway & The Promenade North	RFP EP16-003	1/11/2016
Purchase and Development Opportunity at Anaheim Street & Lime Avenue	RFP EP16-002	1/11/2016
Purchase and Development Opportunity at 5100 Long Beach Boulevard	RFP EP16-001	1/11/2016
Fleet Fuel Management Software	RFP FS16-014	1/05/2016
Rental of Construction Equipment w/ Operator For Beach Nourishment Project for PRM	ITB PR16-018	12/18/2015
J.Will Johnson Tank#2 Rehabilitation Project	WD-18-15	12/17/2015
LBPD Duty Gear & Footwear	ITB PD16-033	12/16/2015
Police Uniforms	ITB PD16-034	12/16/2015
Diversion of Green Waste	ITB LB16-017	12/16/2015
Maint & Mgmt of Environmentally Sensitive Areas	RFP PR16-023	12/11/2015
Ford F-350 Welder Body & Lighting Pkg Trucks	ITB FS16-013	12/10/2015
LBPD Gym Equipment	ITB PD16-035	12/04/2015
Water Main Bridge Crossings Repair FY 15-16	WD-25-15	12/03/2015
Development of Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) RFP Five-Year Consolidated and Annual Action Plan	DV16-031	12/02/2015
Drake/Chavez Soccer Fields & Greenbelt	R-7002	12/02/2015
Improvements of Orange Ave between 52nd Street and 64th Street	R-7012	12/02/2015
Ford F-150 CNG Regular Cab Long Bed w/ Tool Box & Lights	ITB FS16-040	12/01/2015
Ford F-150 CNG Super Cab Long Bed Tool Box & Lights	ITB FS16-039	12/01/2015
Alley Service Connection Conversion Magnolia Avenue and Eucalyptus Avenue	WD-25-13	12/01/2015

**\*\*Some of the listed projects have scheduled mandatory pre-bid meetings which may have already occurred due to publication lead times\*\***

## Bidder Registration

To receive notifications of bid opportunities, register with the City of Long Beach at [www.longbeach.gov/finance/business-info/purchasing-division/purchasing-division/](http://www.longbeach.gov/finance/business-info/purchasing-division/purchasing-division/). Additional details on upcoming bids and how to register can be found on the website.

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## (Continued From Previous Page)

Additionally, Garrison's management company, Evolution Hospitality, modernized operations, improved retail and restaurant offerings and brought new events to the ship, city staff said.

According to city staff, the new lessee was vetted by both Garrison Investment Group and the city to take over control of the master lease.

With “experience and commitment to innovative development,” Urban Commons, a real estate investment and development firm, has a “successful track record of developing, re-positioning and rebranding a wide array of property types throughout the United States,” city staff said.

City staff added that the firm is also known for working closely with municipalities, communities and neighborhoods to create “thoughtful development plans that optimize each property while delivering valuable public benefits.”

The amended and restated master lease provides necessary modifications to attract new development, while also providing stronger support for the preservation and maintenance of the historic ship. According to city staff, Urban Commons will be squarely focused on future shore side development while having “robust and stable stewardship programs in place for the Queen Mary.”

The recently formed Queen Mary Land Development Task Force is expected to meet on January 6. ■

## Next Court Hearing On SCIG Rail Yard Project Lawsuit Scheduled For January 28

■ By **SEAN BELK**  
Staff Writer

The next court hearing in the case regarding a proposed \$500-million project by Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway to build an on-dock rail yard Southern California International Gateway (SCIG) facility on Port of Los Angeles property adjacent to West Long Beach has been scheduled for January 28, according to Long Beach City Attorney Charlie Parkin.

For more than a decade, BNSF has been planning to build an on-dock rail yard facility on a 153-acre site bounded by Sepulveda Boulevard, Pacific Coast Highway, the Dominguez Channel and Terminal Island Freeway in order to move cargo containers from trucks to rail lines closer to port docks, increasing efficiency and capacity.

In 2013, however, the City of Long Beach and several other parties, including the Long Beach Unified School District and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), filed a lawsuit against the City of Los Angeles and BNSF, claiming an environmental impact report (EIR) on the project conducted by the Port of Los Angeles is flawed.

While the Port and BNSF assert that the proposed state-of-the-art project would reduce air pollution by taking trucks off freeways and including zero-emission equipment, opponents claim the project would increase health risks and air pollution in the local community, particularly impacting Long Beach schools, a homeless shelter and residential neighborhoods.

After Country Costa County Superior Court Judge Barry P. Goode heard oral arguments on November 16 and 17 in Martinez, California, he scheduled another hearing for January 28 to hear oral arguments from the NRDC on a matter regarding due process, Parkin said, adding that the judge won't make a ruling on the project's EIR until after the next court hearing.

If the judge concludes oral arguments at the next court hearing, the judge then would have 90 days to render a final decision on the case, Parkin said. ■

## L.B. Fire Department To Use Online Program For Tracking Fire-Protection System Reports

■ By **SEAN BELK**  
Staff Writer

The Long Beach Fire Department (LBFD) will start using a new online program for tracking reports on the inspection, testing and maintenance of fire-protection systems at thousands of buildings throughout the city.

The Long Beach City Council at its meeting on November 10 approved LBFD's use of The Compliance Engine, a cloud-based program that collects, organizes and categorizes annual third-party inspection reports.

The program will allow approximately 15 licensed firms that test fire-protection systems in Long Beach to upload reports online at [www1.thecomplianceengine.com](http://www1.thecomplianceengine.com). The LBFD will be able to retrieve data, including whether a building is in compliance, through the site rather than manually pulling reports from spreadsheets with data collected through e-mails and faxes.

The program tracks building fire-protection systems and detects whether buildings are compliant, which is integral to keeping occupants and firefighters safe, according to a statement from the LBFD. Fire Chief Mike DuRee states that the new program will “proactively drive compliance, increase efficiency by maximizing staff resources, decrease false alarms and reduce repeat calls and re-inspections.”

The LBFD will use The Compliance Engine at no cost to the city since third-party companies that enter data online will be funding the program, according to city staff.



LBFD personnel will start using the program for the 78 high-rise buildings in Long Beach that have multiple fire-protection systems, while adding commercial, assembly, educational, industrial and eventually residential buildings. ■

## Ecosystem Restoration Study Tied To Breakwater Reconfiguration To Move Ahead

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**  
Senior Writer

Following a meeting between Mayor Robert Garcia and Brig. Gen. Mark Toy in San Francisco, the City of Long Beach announced it had reached an agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers to move forward with the East San Pedro Bay Ecosystem Restoration Study. The final cost agreement is to be signed in coming weeks.

The study will examine the feasibility of restoring the aquatic ecosystem of Long Beach by reconfiguring the breakwater. According to the city, the study will “evaluate opportunities for kelp, eelgrass and wetlands restoration within the East San Pedro Bay and make a strong push to increase water circulation, which could lead to increased wave activity.”

“I can’t thank the Army Corps enough for working with us to start this important and groundbreaking study,” Garcia stated in the city press release. “Improving the coastal experience and ecosystem in our city is a win for residents [and] visitors, and will be a boost to the Long Beach economy.” ■

## Port Of Long Beach Receives 22 Awards At Trade Conference

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**  
Senior Writer

The Port of Long Beach recently received 22 awards for its security, communications and environmental programs at the 2015 Annual American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) Awards held in Miami. The AAPA represents 160 port authorities in the U.S., Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Notable awards included the Best Information Technology Award for the port’s Virtual Port security program, the Best Environmental Improvement Award for the West Anaheim Street Improvement Project, and an award for best advertisements for the port’s trade and summer community ad campaigns. Twenty of the awards received by the port were for communications programs and efforts.

“These awards are a source of tremendous pride for the Port of Long Beach,” POLB CEO Jon Slingerup said in a statement. “Our team works tirelessly to advance Long Beach’s initiatives and projects. Being recognized not once, not twice, but 22 times by the North and South American port association is an exceptional salute from our peers.” ■

## City Awarded \$529,000 In Federal Grants To Prevent Youth Violence, Reduce Truancy

■ By **SEAN BELK**  
Staff Writer

The City of Long Beach has been awarded two grants from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) totaling \$529,000 to support strategies preventing youth violence, reduce truancy among students and implement goals of the city’s violence prevention plan, known as Safe Long Beach.

The DOJ’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is funding both grants, according to a statement from the city.

A \$250,000 grant was awarded for the implementation of a “youth violence prevention expansion project,” aimed at expanding community outreach and local resources to assist families and children affected by violence.

Funding from the grant will be used to develop a public awareness campaign about the impacts of violence and coordinate a citywide “family strengthening conference” for parents, families, caregivers, service providers, social workers and the faith-based community to learn about best practices in “trauma-informed care.”

Through the grant, expert training will be provided to more than 80 partners of Safe Long Beach who provide specialized care and services to children who are victims of abuse and/or exposed to violence in the home.

A \$279,000 state and community development grant will be used to implement a strategic plan to improve school attendance and to reduce truancy and subsequent delinquent behavior among students.

City staff is expected to work alongside the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) to implement the “All In” campaign at high-truancy schools, engaging community leaders, neighborhood associations, business owners and the faith-based community to ensure students are in school during regular school hours. The LBUSD is expected to receive \$100,000 of this grant as part of the partnership.

For more information on Safe Long Beach, visit [www.lbvpp.com](http://www.lbvpp.com). ■

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## Challenging The Minimum Wage Study

(Continued From Page 1)  
has been widely distributed is misleading with conclusions that do not reflect the real community of Long Beach businesses. Let us explain.

The LAEDC decided on the parameters to be used for the survey. It said 600 business owners would be surveyed to determine the impacts on their business if Long Beach establishes a citywide minimum wage. LAEDC then, incorrectly, decided to evenly divide the 600 businesses into three employee-size categories: 1 to 19; 20 to 99; and 100 or more. LAEDC further decided to separate the city into three regions by zip code.

The end result is that 200 businesses in each region were interviewed, and within each region a third of the 200 businesses interviewed have 19 or fewer employees, a third have 20-99 employees and a third have 100 or more employees. The problem is that the matrix is not representative of the city's business makeup – which, again, is overwhelmingly small businesses employing 19 or fewer people.

There are currently 11,077 businesses in Long Beach (not counting home-based or those with P.O. boxes), give or take a dozen. That number is confirmed from several sources, including the U.S. Postal Service. Of that total, according to information available through various sources, 84 percent of Long Beach businesses have 19 or fewer employees; 13 percent have between

20 and 99 employees; and only 3 percent have 100 or more employees.

However, the survey matrix by LAEDC incorrectly gave equal weight to all three employee-size categories by interviewing the same number of business owners – 200 – in each employee size. An accurate representation would have required that 504 of the 600 businesses (84% x 600 surveyed) interviewed had 19 or fewer employees; 78 had between 20 and 99 employees (13% x 600); and 18 had 100 or more employees (3% x 600). Since that did not occur, weighting the data is a must.

On the morning of November 17, the Business Journal issued an e-mail newsflash critical of the study and asked if the survey had been weighted. It had been – the day before, on November 16! Therefore, the weighted data was not part of the report made available to the public and city officials on November 13.

The simple solution would have been – and it still is – for the LAEDC to re-issue its study using the weighted data that it has in hand.

The question is, why not disclose it? Isn't transparency – which Mayor Robert Garcia promised would be part of the overall process – the best approach?

If LAEDC has nothing to hide, then why doesn't it provide the weighted data? We did receive a response from LAEDC (through city management) to some of the issues we raised, which is displayed in the adjacent box.

The Business Journal shared its concerns

with city management, only to be told that management is not an expert in statistical surveys or the method of how the data is displayed. We are not quite sure what that means, other than it sounds as if they are dismissing our concerns.

Thus far, this "process" has left a sour taste in our mouth with how the business of the people is being conducted.

The public and the city's elected officials who requested the study in the name of transparency deserve a report that accurately represents the views of the business community on this extremely important issue. Anything less should be unacceptable to everyone.

This is not only an issue of accuracy. It's one of ethics. ■

## Business Owners Weigh In On Minimum Wage

(Continued From Page 1)  
wage to \$15 an hour incrementally by 2020, with the first increase going into effect next year, while giving small businesses with 25 or fewer employees more time to comply. The County of Los Angeles passed a similar law for unincorporated areas.

For Long Beach, the LAEDC study commissioned by the city council considered two possible scenarios– increasing the minimum wage to \$12 an hour incrementally by 2017 and raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour incrementally by 2020.

The study indicates that, while some employees would benefit from higher wages, others may suffer, since employers might be forced to cut jobs or reduce employee hours.

Garcia reiterated during the roundtable that no official proposal for Long Beach would be brought forward until the issue has been fully vetted. He said the city's economic development commission (EDC), which meets today at 6 p.m. at City Hall to discuss the issue, is expected to make a rec-

ommendation to the city council sometime early next year.

Steering clear from taking an official stance on the issue, Garcia said the ultimate goal of imposing a citywide minimum wage law is to "lift up the city" to a better standard of living by doing what's in the "best interest" of the city long term.

Over the course of the past several weeks, however, a number of issues have been brought up, including those related to how a citywide minimum wage law would impact: businesses with tipped workers, such as restaurants, and commissioned employees; staffing agencies that fill temporary positions inside and outside of the city; and organizations that derive most income from state resources, including senior home care providers and nonprofits.

At the same time, fast food, warehouse and hotel workers have called for a \$15-an-hour wage in addition to accompanying enforcement from the city. Many workers have brought forward claims of

(Please Continue To Top Of Next Page)

### Response From The LAEDC To The Business Journal On Questions Related To The Statistical Validity, Source Of Data And Weighted Vs. Non-Weighted Results

The following information was sent to the Business Journal via the city manager's office. It is in response to the publication's newsflash e-mailed November 17 and subsequent comments.

#### Statistical Validity Of The Survey

The survey was conducted by an independent survey specialist (Market Enhancement Group (MEG)) using best methods and is accurate with a 95% Confidence level, with a sampling error of +/- 4.1 %. The survey was segmented by geographic regions and by size of business to provide insights into the specific categories of firms. The methodology is consistent with surveys conducted at the county level. Survey results are shown overall and for each category to allow the reader full visibility into the responses.

#### Source Of Data For The Survey

In selecting its random sample of businesses to survey, MEG uses data from Claritas (a Nielson company), which is similar to Dun & Bradstreet or other private business listing sources. They report approximately 11,000 firms in Long Beach. As a reference point, the report includes in Exhibit 2-8 Census data on size of business that reports 8,340 firms, not including private households (which is approximately 6,700 firms) in an aggregate of zip codes that include Long Beach. The survey firm did not rely on this data for the survey. It was included in the report simply for illustrative purposes.

#### Data On Size Of Business In Long Beach

The data shown on size of business in the report is our closest estimate for firms in Long Beach; it is the best available data for Long Beach. However, as described in the narrative, because it is based on zip code data, which does not conform to city boundaries, the data does include some businesses that border Long Beach. The exhibit is provided to demonstrate that the distribution of firms by size is quite similar to the County average.

#### Weighted Verses Non-Weighted Survey results

There are many ways to weight surveys. The overall responses in this particular survey could be weighted by size of firms, by geographic location or by whether or not firms have minimum wage employees. Rather than choose which weighting system to use, the LAEDC presents full data for all categories and allows the reader to view complete data. This is consistent with how the LAEDC has reported other survey results, allowing all results to be visible to the reader. The LAEDC feels that the best way to present the data is in a non-weighted format with detailed breakouts for firm sizes, regions and minimum wage workforce. ■



Alan Anderson, owner of Bel Vista Healthcare Center, a skilled nursing facility for seniors in Long Beach, said if senior care providers are required by the city to increase wages for workers, there would be no way to pass on higher labor costs to customers since income for such facilities is mostly governed by the state and federal government through Medi-Cal and Medicare rates. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)



wage theft and being overworked. One mother stated she has worked for Taco Bell for nine years and still is paid minimum wage, which some questioned why she would continue working there.

Alan Anderson, owner of Bel Vista Healthcare Center, a 41-bed skilled nursing facility for seniors, said he agrees with workers that the minimum wage should be increased but opposes raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2020, a 60 percent increase in wages over a four-year period.

"I agree the minimum wage is too low and I think it should be higher, but, as it's been proposed, it's too much, too fast," he said, adding that such a wage increase would create unintended negative consequences, particularly for senior care providers.

Anderson explained that, if privately run care providers, including skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities and in-home supportive services, are required to increase workers' wages above state levels, there would be no way to pass on increased labor costs to consumers since most seniors are covered through Medi-Cal or Medicare and income for these facilities is mostly governed by the state and federal government.

Anderson said raising the minimum wage in Long Beach would ultimately make home and health care services for seniors more expensive and would potentially cause seniors to be "priced out of their own homes" because they would no longer be able to afford it and would be forced to live in less expensive institutions.

Additionally, many facilities are aggressively competing to fill beds since Long Beach is currently "over-bedded" with more senior care skilled nursing facilities than are needed, he said. Many facilities were built in the 1960s when seniors moved to the city from the Midwest. Anderson added that that there are 27 nursing homes in the city, with more than 3,100 beds and approximately 4,982 employees.

Also, Anderson, who once served as president of a local chapter of the California Association of Health Facilities (CAHF), told the Business Journal that such facilities aren't able to cut employees like other businesses because nursing facilities have a moral obligation to make sure patients are taken care of and staffing patterns are regulated by the state.

On top of the state's minimum wage increase, other labor costs have increased as

well, he said, adding that he now pays \$138,000 more a year for workers' compensation insurance for 63 employees. Anderson said the state's new paid sick leave law has also added costs since he has to pay employees overtime for shifts since part-time workers are now taking sick days.

Restaurant owners expressed their own concerns with raising the minimum wage, including that it would force them to raise prices, putting them at a competitive disadvantage with restaurants in other cities.

Mike Rhodes, owner of Domenico's, an Italian restaurant on 2nd Street in Belmont Shore and considered the oldest restaurant in Long Beach, suggested that, if the city moves forward with a minimum wage policy, tipped employees, who make significantly more than minimum wage after taking home tips, should be carved out and be allowed to follow the state's wage rate.

He added that raising the minimum wage in a citywide law might only encourage a recent movement by some restaurateurs to eliminate tips all together.

Garcia said the city attorney's office is currently investigating whether there would be any legal challenges in exempting tipped employees in a proposed minimum wage policy.

Rhodes and other restaurant owners said their biggest concern is that passing minimum wage legislation at the city level would create a competitive disadvantage. He added that union-sponsored organizations that have pushed the "Fight for \$15" campaign should be lobbying for legislative changes in Sacramento instead of at city hall to maintain a level playing field.

In response, Garcia noted that proposals are currently being deliberated to increase California's minimum wage. A statewide proposal may be voted on in a ballot measure for the November 2016 election, an issue that will ultimately be part of the discussion of whether Long Beach should pass its own minimum wage law, he said.

Wayne Slavitt, owner of Mobül: the home mobility store, which provides medical and mobility equipment in Long Beach, said employees who receive commissions should also be taken into account when considering exemptions from any citywide minimum wage increase.

He added that profits are important for businesses to grow and businesses often have to cut jobs if labor costs are too high. Slavitt added that minimum wage positions

were meant to be entry level jobs and not meant for people in their 30s, 40s and 50s who are supporting a family.

Slavitt said the city should be devoting more resources to job training opportunities for people to seek higher-paying jobs rather than simply mandating higher wages.

During public comment, Christine Petit, hub manager for the nonprofit Building Healthy Communities in Long Beach, said a recent survey of 80 nonprofit organizations in the city found that 75 percent of the respondents indicated that they would support a minimum wage increase without exceptions.

As part of the roundtable discussion, however, nonprofit leaders expressed con-

cerns with covering higher labor costs, noting that many nonprofit organizations receive a majority of income from state reimbursements, which are limited. Still, nonprofit leaders also expressed a need to pay their employees more, noting that some nonprofit workers are able to qualify for the same low-income assistance programs for which they work.

"We have a very limited reimbursement from the state," said Sarah Soriano, executive director of Young Horizons Child Development Center, which provides child development services to hundreds of low-income families in Long Beach. "How are we going to make ends meet? At the same time, how does my staff qualify for my own low income program?" ■



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# C-17's Legacy A Testament To Dedicated Workforce Says Program Manager

■ By **SEAN BELK**  
Staff Writer

For nearly two and a half decades, Long Beach has been “home of the Globemaster C-17 III.” That slogan has been a mainstay in the city at Cherry Avenue and Wardlow Road near the Long Beach Airport atop Boeing’s



Nan Bouchard is vice president and program manager for the C-17 Globemaster III Program and is part of Boeing’s military aircraft business division. She was appointed to the position in 2013 after serving as vice president and general manager of program management for Boeing Defense, Space & Security.

manufacturing plant, where thousands of workers have produced the large military transport aircraft since the factory was first opened nearly 25 years ago by then McDonnell Douglas.

The C-17 final assembly plant, however, has now officially come to an end.

In 2013, Boeing announced its decision to shut down the plant because of insufficient orders from the United States Air Force and foreign customers. According to Boeing officials, the C-17 manufacturing facility once employed up to 5,000 people in Long Beach at peak production.

The last C-17 built in Long Beach, #279, departed on November 13, for San Antonio, Texas, from where it will be delivered to Qatar. One last C-17, #275, is expected to leave Long Beach soon for the same destination in a final sendoff, according to Boeing officials.

In an interview with the Business Journal, Nan Bouchard, vice president and program manager for the C-17 Globemaster III program, said the C-17 remains an important part of Southern California’s aerospace history. The aircraft’s legacy of quality is a testament to a dedicated workforce, she said, adding that, even in the face of uncertainty leading up to the program’s closure, employees never lost sight of production or customer service.

“Throughout it all, which was a lot of personal stress, no one ever lost focus on the aircraft or on the customers,” Bouchard said. “Every aircraft that has left here has been just as great as the aircraft from five or 10 years ago. There has just been no drop in dedication or quality to the final product and I think it speaks a lot to the professionalism of everybody who worked on the airplane . . . I think we’re all very grateful for that. We’re really sorry to see the program end but happy to have been part of it.”

Since the maiden flight of the initial test aircraft known as T1 on September 15, 1991, the airlifter has “exceeded expectations” in capabilities for long-range and tactical missions, including humanitarian efforts and medical transport operations, while breaking world records, including being able to take off and land on a runway less than 1,400 feet long, she said.

Boeing will continue to provide support and maintenance of the existing C-17 fleet through the company’s Global Integrated Sustainment Program (GISP), which is headquartered in Huntington Beach, Bouchard said. Some of the C-17 program’s 348 suppliers will continue to provide spare parts, she said.

Additionally, Boeing’s commercial aerospace program will maintain its presence in Long Beach, Bouchard said, adding that the company has hired 1,500 engineers in the past two years for work in the local region. Overall, nearly 16,000 employees will remain in Southern California, she said. ■

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# The 279th And Last C-17 Built In Long Beach Lifted Off November 13, 2015

The 279th and last C-17 Globemaster III built in Long Beach departed Long Beach Airport just before 11 a.m. on November 13. The plane flew to San Antonio before being delivered to Qatar. One last C-17 built prior to #279 will be flying out later this month as Boeing officially shuts down its final assembly plant. (Photographs by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)



**August 28, 1981** – U.S. Air Force awards contract to McDonnell Douglas for its proposal to build the C-17.  
**September 15, 1991** – Maiden flight leaves Long Beach Airport.  
**May 18, 1992** – First official delivery to the U.S. Air Force.  
**1997** – McDonnell Douglas merges with The Boeing Company.  
**November 13, 2015** – Final C-17 built, #279, leaves Long Beach.



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# Mercedes-Benz USA Holds Grand Opening For Its Western Region Campus In Long Beach

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**  
Senior Writer

After six months of operating in Douglas Park, Mercedes-Benz USA held a grand opening event for its 1.1 million-square-foot facility at the corner of Conant Street and Lakewood Boulevard on November 15.

As previously reported by the Business Journal, the firm moved its Western Regional Sales Operations, Vehicle Preparation Center and Mercedes-Benz Academy Offices into the facility following completion of construction on the building, formerly an airplane manufacturing plant, in May.

Mercedes-Benz USA executives, including President and CEO Stephen Cannon, Vice President of Sales Operations Dietmar Exler, were joined at the event by Long Beach city officials such as

Mayor Robert Garcia, City Manager Pat West, City Attorney Charles Parkin and 5th District Councilmember Stacy Mungo, as well as others. Mercedes dealership owners and representatives were also in attendance.

“It’s hard to believe in three years we transformed it from kind of an empty shell into now our biggest West Coast presence that we have ever had for Mercedes-Benz,” Cannon said while addressing attendees at the grand opening. “This is a significant moment for us.”

The facility, which sits on a 52.2-acre lot, is the biggest operation for Mercedes-Benz in the entire United States, Cannon noted. “It’s kind of incredible that we have 42 acres under one roof,” he said. “We don’t have any capacity like that anywhere else in the United States, and we’re going to make full use of it.”

Over the course of the next seven years, the German car company plans to launch 30 new vehicles, 10 of which will debut next year. The Vehicle Preparation Center at the Long Beach site will process and quality-check vehicles coming in through the Port of Long Beach before they head to all 84 dealerships in 12 states in the company’s Western Region.

All employees of these dealerships, as well as Mercedes-Benz USA corporate employees, must train at the Mercedes-Benz Academy at the Long Beach facility. The Western Region Sales Office located on site also supports these dealerships.

Cannon noted that Mercedes intends to be a good corporate citizen in Long Beach. “Part of who we are as a company, as a culture, is that when we go to a place, we say we’ve got to leave that place better off than where we found it,” he said. “So being part of the community, getting out [and] giving back with charity events, you can expect that from us.”

Following his remarks, Mayor Garcia expressed thanks and assured Cannon that he would certainly take him up on his offer of community support. He then pointed out the rich history of the site in aerospace and aviation manufacturing, which helped build up the Long Beach middle class. “This is part of a lot of history, and to see this space reactivated with such a strong brand that has not only a great reputation here at home but obviously abroad, it is really a very special moment,” Garcia said.

“Bringing Mercedes-Benz’s southwest American headquarters to the 5th District is a big deal for our community,” Mungo told the Business Journal. “It’s a lot of good paying jobs.”

Following the success of bringing Mercedes-Benz into this facility, which was formerly used by The Boeing Company, Mungo expressed hope that Boeing would not demolish its nearby C-17 Globemaster III manufacturing facility. “We’ve already had so many interested parties in the C-17 facility,” she said. Mungo said she hopes to secure a large manufacturer for the site to expand upon ongoing economic development in the area. ■



Top: Dietmar Exler, left, vice president of sales operations for Mercedes-Benz USA, greets Long Beach City Manager Pat West, center, and 7th District Councilmember Roberto Uranga. Above: City officials join Mercedes-Benz USA's top executives in a celebratory ribbon cutting at the grand opening of the company's new Long Beach facility. Pictured from left are: Uranga; Exler; Mercedes-Benz USA President and CEO Stephen Cannon; Mayor Robert Garcia; 5th District Councilmember Stacy Mungo; and 8th District Councilmember Al Austin. Below: The entrance to Mercedes-Benz USA's new Western Region campus, which houses sales offices, a vehicle preparation center and a training center, all of which service 84 dealerships throughout 12 western states. The facility is located at 3860 N. Lakewood Blvd. (Photographs by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)





# Helping Long Beach Businesses Grow FCI Management



Warehouse Shoe Sale in North Long Beach often works with Pacific Gateway to employ local students through the Youth Jobs Program. Store Manager Paula Santillan (center) hired Ashley McFarland (left) full time after she completed the program. Martin Martinez (right) is currently employed through the program. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**  
Senior Writer

For Long Beach-based FCI Management, finding candidates with backgrounds in the specialized field of energy solutions often isn't a simple task. But with help from Pacific Gateway, a local workforce development center dedicated to meeting the employment needs of individuals and businesses, FCI has been able to more easily screen and hire qualified jobseekers. Through its On-the-Job Training program, Pacific Gateway also covers some of the cost of on-the-job training for these employees while they become acquainted with their work.

Patricia Watts, president and CEO of FCI Management, said her firm first began working with Pacific Gateway about five years ago. The workforce development organization serves the communities of Long Beach, Signal Hill and the Los Angeles Harbor area.

"I was very familiar with workforce development centers and I knew they offered an opportunity for us to get qualified candidates," Watts told the Business Journal.

"This is kind of a non-traditional company if you will, so [because of] the products and services that we provide and the knowledge base that we are looking for, we often have to train the people who are coming into our work environment," Watts explained. "So that was appealing to me, to be able to have the assistance that Pacific Gateway provides with on-the-job training and some other services to help us get the right skill sets and the right employees."

Nearly two years ago, Watts was seeking an executive assistant and called upon Pacific Gateway to help her find a good candidate for the position. "They do the screening and then they send us the ones they feel are most qualified for the position, and then we do the interviewing," Watts said of the hiring process. "It certainly saves us time in bringing in potential candidates to get the right candidate. From a productivity standpoint, that is a value-add."

Watts hired Carla Warren through Pacific Gateway's On-the-Job Training program, which covered a portion of her wages while she was in training. "She had a little bit of background in the industry," Watts said. "She is a quick learner and she works with me really well. Her personality and everything is a fit for the culture of our company."

After Warren completed the On-the-Job Training program, Watts hired her on full time. In January, she will have worked at FCI for two years. "[She handles] my scheduling, my calendars and all of the activities I participate in. I really rely on her to help me keep things focused," Watts said.

Delores Banks, human resources liaison and consultant for FCI, said the company has also taken part in Pacific Gateway's Summer Youth Jobs Program, which covers the wages of local youth while they gain work experience. "It was an opportunity to help young people getting out of high school to get experience working in a business environment," Banks said.

"We love working with Pacific Gateway and will continue to work with them," Watts said. "Over the years, we look forward to a continued relationship."

For more information about Pacific Gateway's employment services, call 562/570-3700. ■

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# As Prevalence Of Alzheimer’s Disease Rises With Aging Population, Researchers Seek Therapeutic Strategies

■ By **SEAN BELK**  
Staff Writer

While advances in medicine have enabled more people to live longer, the rising prevalence of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias have prompted the need to explore new therapeutic and preventative strategies, according to researchers and health officials.

As the baby boomer generation advances in age, people in the United States and abroad are becoming more susceptible to developing Alzheimer’s disease, a degenerative brain disease that most commonly begins with memory loss and eventually leads to death.

According to a report called “2015 Alzheimer’s Disease Facts and Figures” from the national Alzheimer’s Association released earlier this year, there are an estimated 5.3 million people in the United States living with Alzheimer’s disease, the sixth leading cause of the death in the country.

By the middle of the century, the number of people with the disease is expected to triple to 16 million, according to the report. In the next decade, 19 states in the country are expected to see a 40 percent or greater growth in the number of people with Alzheimer’s disease.

“The prevalence is rising dramatically, but that very much follows the demographics of our society,” said Dr. Debra Cherry, a clinical psychologist and executive vice president of the Alzheimer’s Association California Southland Chapter. “Our society is aging, and the No. 1 risk factor for Alzheimer’s disease and many other dementias is age.”

The rise of Alzheimer’s disease comes as the prevalence of other chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer, has declined thanks to medical advancements.

In fact, according to the report, deaths from Alzheimer’s disease increased 71 percent from 2000 to 2013 while deaths from other major diseases, including heart disease, stroke, breast and prostate cancer and HIV/AIDS, have decreased.

The Alzheimer’s Association estimates that, unless something is done, costs associated with Alzheimer’s disease will rise to more than \$1.1 trillion by 2050, with costs to Medicare increasing over 400 percent to \$589 billion.

According to Cherry, as baby boomers survive into their late 70s and 80s – the age group with the greatest number of people with Alzheimer’s disease – more people are becoming at risk of developing the disease, and multiple clinical trials are underway in search of preventative measures and new interventions.

“People are living longer and, as they live longer, they are becoming more susceptible to Alzheimer’s and related dementias,” Cherry said. “That’s because they’re surviving other chronic diseases. It’s a public health phenomenon.”

Dr. Roberta Diaz Brinton, a neurologist, leading researcher of Alzheimer’s disease and professor at the University



Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans of the brain are often used to diagnose Alzheimer’s disease before symptoms of memory loss are present in a patient. (Photograph courtesy of New York University’s School of Engineering)



Dr. Roberta Diaz Brinton, a neurologist and leading researcher of Alzheimer’s disease at the University of Southern California’s (USC) School of Pharmacy, continues to lead research and clinical trials to discover new therapeutic strategies in treating Alzheimer’s disease. (Photograph courtesy of USC)

of Southern California’s (USC) School of Pharmacy who chairs the Alzheimer’s Association California Southland Chapter’s Medical & Scientific Advisory Council, said symptoms of the disease involve loss of short-term memory because an individual is unable to encode new information.

The disease eventually progresses to where a person might not be able to remember what happened yesterday or last week. Persons with the disease may also exhibit an inability to plan an event or solve problems. They might also have difficulty understanding where they are or may become confused in unfamiliar places, she said.

Furthermore, Alzheimer’s disease, which eventually leads to death after neurons in the brain die, often goes undiagnosed. In fact, only about half of all people living with the disease have ever been diagnosed, according to the Alzheimer’s Association’s report.

The difficulty in diagnosing the disease, Brinton explains, is that symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease, which are memory problems, are often confused with normal aging and the individual and family members might make adaptations to accommodate such problems.

Oftentimes, only when a person’s memory loss becomes “intrusive” on the fam-



Prof. Jürgen Götz, foundation chair of dementia research at The University of Queensland and inaugural director of the Clem Jones Centre of Ageing Dementia Research at the Queensland Brain Institute in Australia, was part of a recent study to develop a non-invasive treatment for Alzheimer’s disease using ultrasound technology to break up brain plaques in mice. (Photograph courtesy of Prof. Jürgen Götz)



Dr. Omar Omidvar is a neurologist and member of the Long Beach MemorialCare Health System who practices at the Southland Neurologic Institute in Long Beach. The institute collaborates with a clinical research center called CNS Network that conducts clinical trials for new therapeutic strategies in treating Alzheimer’s disease. (Photograph courtesy of Long Beach MemorialCare Health System)

ily does proper diagnosis take place. Individuals also might never receive brain imaging because the technology might not be available or because of a person’s health care situation, she said.

An important advancement in understanding the disease, Brinton said, is that the National Institute on Aging (NIA) now acknowledges that Alzheimer’s disease is not a single disease but is caused by a “constellation of risk factors.”

With the exception of rare cases (an estimated 1 percent or less) that develop as a result of gene mutations, Alzheimer’s, like other chronic diseases, develops as a result of multiple factors, the Alzheimer’s Association noted.

Women, for instance, are found to be more at risk of developing the disease mainly because they tend to live longer than men and age is the No. 1 risk factor for the disease. However, being a female isn’t the only reason a person might develop the disease, Brinton said.

Understanding the complexity of how Alzheimer’s develops in the brain allows researchers to broaden their approach for therapeutic strategies, opening up opportunities for “precision medicine,” she said.

Though there has yet to be found any therapeutic strategies that stop the disease’s progression or change the underlying course of the disease once it develops, current interventions may alter symptoms or slow onset of the disease.

“For the first time in about 15 years, I’m at the point of saying . . . we may have something within the next five years that makes a difference,” Cherry said.

While the average age of diagnosis is around 75, about the time a person starts exhibiting major lapses in memory, recent advances have shown evidence of Alzheimer’s developing in the brain up to 10 years or more before clinical symptoms emerge.

The main hypothesis behind the pathology of Alzheimer’s appears to be that the enzyme “gamma-secretase” disrupts the processing of amyloid precursor protein (APP) in the brain, creating instead a short fragment of APP known as beta-amyloid. The accumulation of clumps of this sticky protein fragment in the brain (called amyloid plaques) triggers the disruption and destruction of nerve cells that causes Alzheimer’s disease.

Dr. Omid Omidvar, a neurologist and member of the Long Beach Memorial, Miller Children’s & Women’s Hospital Long Beach and Community Hospital Long Beach medical staff, said via e-mail that therapeutic arsenals currently available remain “very limited,” however researchers are actively searching for disease modifications.

He added that there are multiple therapies in different phases of clinical and preclinical development attempting to target beta-amyloid through the use of certain drugs.

“It is thought that drugs that either could inhibit this enzyme or products that could passively immunize the brain against this toxic protein could reduce beta-amyloid accumulation, which may play a role in various neurodegenerative disorders,” he said.

Omidvar also practices at the Southland Neurologic Institute located at Douglas Park in Long Beach. He said the institute is in active collaboration with a leading clinical research center called CNS Network, also located in Long Beach, offering the local community access to a large





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# Technology And The Future Of Prosthetics

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**  
Senior Writer

Scientific and technologic advancements that decades ago were the stuff of science fiction are now the groundwork for the development of a new wave of human prosthetics – devices that can communicate with the human body’s nervous system, be controlled by the mind, and potentially even transmit sensations to the wearer.

As these devices are under development and in testing across the country, technology is also helping prosthetics users achieve the highest level of functionality possible, and improving access to replacement limbs among underserved individuals.

## Towards Science (Non)Fiction

Engineers at Stanford University announced last month that they had succeeded in creating an artificial skin capable of sensing differences in pressure and delivering those signals to living brain cells. Their hope is to develop the technology to a point where it can be applied to prosthetic limbs.

“We are hoping it will make prosthetic devices simpler and give people a natural and intuitive sense of touch like they would have had before,” Alex Chortos, a Stanford Ph.D. candidate and a member of the research team working on the project, told the Business Journal.

The artificial skin has two components. The first is a pressure sensor made of medical-grade rubber and carbon nanotubes, which are “tiny conductive materials . . . thousands of times smaller than human hairs,” Chortos said. The second component is a flexible circuit made of plastic that relays sensations of pressure via “pulses similar to Morse code.”

In the study, pressure signals picked up by the artificial skin were transmitted via light impulses to neurons, which had been genetically modified to respond to the light impulses. In other words, the neurons responded to sensations of pressure picked up by the artificial skin.

The experiments with the artificial skin were done on a small scale in petri dishes, but Chortos said his research group, led by Dr. Zhenan Bao, is working to modify the design and test it on a larger scale.

“So far the only thing we have demonstrated is a single receptor. In reality, skin has lots of pressure receptors. . . . So we would like to scale up the skin so that it has more sensors,” Chortos said. “We would also like to add a couple different functionalities. For example, pressure is one of the things that the skin senses, but it also senses things like temperature.”

The Stanford team is planning animal tests to see if their artificial skin is compatible with animals’ nervous systems.

Other labs at organizations and universities across the country already have futuristic technology for prosthetics in testing phases.

The Alfred Mann Foundation, a nonprofit based in Santa Clarita, has developed a prosthetic arm that wearers can control with their thoughts. Sensors are embedded in wearers’ skin in muscle groups that control arm and hand movement. Impulses in the muscle groups, generated by thought, are picked up by a controlling mechanism for the arm, which then translates the signals into movement. A handful of amputees have been outfitted with the arm.

Dr. Miguel Nicolelis, co-director of the Center for Neuroengineering at Duke University and a Duke professor in neurobiology, biomedical engineering, and psychology and neuroscience, has created a mind-controlled prosthetic exoskeleton that enables paralyzed individuals to walk. The equipment is essentially a full body suit rigged with sensors to pick up brain signals to enable movement. The technology was demonstrated to a world audience in 2014, when a paraplegic man wearing the exoskeleton started off the World Cup by walking onto the soccer field and kicking the ball.



## How Technology Is Improving Prostheses’ Quality Today

In the Gait Laboratory at the VA Long Beach Healthcare System, U.S. Army Airborne veteran Alberto Leoncias Armas, who served in the Vietnam War between 1968 and 1970, tried on a new prosthetic limb for his lower left leg. It was his second fitting in a couple of weeks, and already he could tell this limb would likely be the one for him. It would be his fourth prosthesis.

“When I tried this new foot, it was a big difference between that one and the one I am wearing now,” he said. For him, the difference is in the balance. “I was able to get down in what we call a three-point stance in football, which I couldn’t do with the other one,” he said. He turned to Russell Ward, director of the Gait Lab, and told him that if he could take the foot home he’ll have to try out for a team.

Armas’s leg was amputated three years ago due to complications from type II diabetes, a late-onset disease that was linked to his military service. During the time period he served in Vietnam he had been exposed to an herbicide called Agent Orange, used by the





Vietnam veteran Alberto Leoncias Armas is fitted with a prosthetic foot by Russell Ward, who heads up the Gait Lab at the Veterans Administration Long Beach Healthcare System. Ward directed Armas through a series of tests designed to measure how naturally he is able to walk and balance while wearing the prosthesis. The Gait Lab is outfitted with cameras and electronic sensors to help Ward quantitatively assess how well VA patients are able to walk with prosthetic devices. During the tests, Armas expressed that he was more easily able to balance with the new foot, and that it was lighter than his current prosthesis. (Photographs by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)



U.S. military to kill off dense vegetation. The chemical was linked to his diabetes, and later to a heart condition. “They found out that there were a lot of us who were coming down with diabetes, heart conditions, Parkinson’s, you name it,” Armas said.

Armas had purposefully avoided going to the VA prior to his diagnosis of diabetes in 1996. “Prior to that, my daughter was always telling me, ‘Go to the VA.’ I said, ‘Hell no. I am not going to go. They don’t do anything for us – just tell us to bend over, and that’s it.’ I was very anti-VA at the time,” he recalled.

Following his surgery and rehabilitation work with VA staff – who Armas said are willing to try anything to improve the functionality and quality of his prosthesis for his life – his attitude changed. “That’s the one thing about Russ [Ward] and his crew. They have always been really good to me as far as giving me the right tools to work with, and that’s the big difference.

The Gait Lab is a permanent fixture at VA Long Beach. Outfitted with cameras, floor sensors and computers, the equipment in the lab helps Ward analyze how lower-limb

prosthetics and orthotics wearers are moving. The technology has been around for 10 years, he said. “It’s not terribly new but, on the other hand, not all facilities by any means have this kind of equipment; not even all VA facilities, not even all hospitals or large rehab facilities have it,” Ward said.

One of the key pieces of equipment in the Gait Lab is an electronic floor mat. “The mat is essentially an electronic version of walking on sand. It provides an electronic reading of footprints, the spacing between the footprints, and the timing,” Ward said. “So we can tell for example if a person is walking with an asymmetrical gait.” Other equipment consisting of a smaller mat and a laser helps Ward determine how well prosthetic wearers are balancing. Tape on the floor outlines a series of walking tests.

“We as clinicians were used to assessing how well people walk just with eye and crude, old-fashioned measuring devices – rulers and tape measures, essentially,” Ward said. “This [lab equipment] is an additional means that gives us numbers, a quantitative assessment of a person’s gait.”

“The purpose of all of this assessment is to make sure that for each individual we have provided the best hardware, and that will vary from individual to individual,” Ward said, adding that there are around 200 different prosthetic feet from which to choose.

The foot Armas was trying on in the lab is a new prosthesis made from stiffer composite, carbon fiber material, according to Ward. “The manufacturer has attempted to make changes in the shape of the carbon blades that the foot is constructed from and how they are attached to each other to provide more natural gait functions,” he explained.

As Armas went through Ward’s series of tests, walking throughout the room and balancing on electronic pads, he noted the limb felt significantly lighter than his previous one. In the end, he says, he’s just happy he can dance. “I can just about do anything,” he said. “If I get the new foot, I am really going to be more functional.”

In a separate interview with the Business Journal, Derek Reichardt, assistant chief of prosthetics at the VA Long Beach, explained that the VA System is caring for more and more amputees, often those who were injured by improvised explosive devices buried in combat zones. “As combat medicine becomes more practical and viable and on-the-spot, we are seeing greater numbers of veterans surviving these injuries but also needing care afterwards,” he said.

“Here in the prosthetics department, we get consults for about 300 different durable medical equipment ideas per day,” Reichardt noted. “This could be anything from glasses to power chairs or high-end prostheses or even adaptive sports equipment.”

“I think our Gait Lab is certainly one of the VA’s most preeminent research labs and it does allow us to focus on those groundbreaking prosthetics and wearable technology devices for patients’ rehabilitation,” Reichardt concluded.

### Increasing Access

Thanks to teamwork, volunteerism and ingenuity, technology is increasing access to prostheses among underserved and low-income individuals. The e NABLE Community Foundation, a nonprofit, is pioneering this effort by providing free downloadable instructions to make upper limb prosthetics with 3D printers. In addition to producing and providing the open source documents online, the foundation connects volunteers with access to 3D printers to people in need of prostheses.

“As you know, traditional prosthetics might cost \$5,000 to \$15,000. We give ours away for free,” Jon Schull, founder of e-NABLE, said. “They probably cost about \$50 and they probably take about 15 hours to make, but all of that is donated by our volunteers.”

Schull estimated that around 6,700 volunteers worldwide use designs available through e-NABLE to make prostheses for under-served individuals. The foundation operates a Google+ community, an online social network where volunteers and those in need of a prosthesis are able to connect. In this way, the Internet, as much as 3D printers, are advancing e-NABLE’s efforts, Schull noted.

e-NABLE’s designs are lightweight and not as functional as more expensive prostheses, but they are ideal for people who cannot afford more expensive options, according to Schull. The designs are predominantly used for children, for whom prostheses can be quite expensive, as they must be continually refitted with new ones as they grow, Schull said.

“These are lighter, cheaper, more breakable, less robust, more kid-friendly. And they are getting better all the time,” Schull said. “We do now have an adaptive grip, which is a feature that, even though it has got only the one actuation through wrist movement, it can actually adjust its grip mechanically to grasp a variety of shapes.”

There are nine designs for hand and arm prosthetics available on e-NABLE’s website, [www.enablingthefuture.org](http://www.enablingthefuture.org), and more are coming. “We do plan to expand to other prosthetics, orthotics and assisted technologies. And eventually even going beyond 3D printing,” Schull said. ■



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## Alzheimer's Researchers Seek Therapeutic Strategies

(Continued From Page 14)

spectrum of clinical trials for researching Alzheimer's disease.

He said researchers are developing therapies that also target "tau," the protein involved in "tangles" being developed in the brain that result in nutrients and other essential supplies being unable to move through brain cells, which eventually die. Omidvar said some researchers are hoping to reduce brain pathology and even regenerate damaged cells.

Some trials, however, have yet to be conducted with humans. For instance, researchers at The University of Queensland in Australia claim to have developed a non-invasive Alzheimer's treatment technique using ultrasound technology.

In a series of experiments on mice bred to develop Alzheimer's, regular ultrasound scans triggered the brain to break up brain plaques and showed signs of reversing memory loss in the mice. The achievement has been hailed as a "breakthrough."

In an e-mail to the Business Journal, Prof. Jürgen Götz, foundation chair of dementia research at The University of Queensland and inaugural director of the Clem Jones Centre for Ageing Dementia Research at the Queensland Brain Institute, said that it's uncertain when this type of treatment might be tested on humans mainly because of safety issues, particu-

larly for long-term treatment in aged individuals. However, he added that ultrasound has been used to open the blood-brain barrier for the first time non-invasively to treat cancer.

Still, Brinton said that, while such therapeutic approaches may have promise, they still aren't tackling the issue of why the brain is forming plaques in the first place.

Omidvar said that, since Alzheimer's disease is a progressive and chronic condition that may be present before symptoms arise, there are many clinical trials attempting to prevent the formation of beta-amyloids in healthy or mildly affected persons.

Lifestyle modifications, if started early enough, could significantly delay the onset of the disease, he said. In addition, researchers have found that people who stuck to a healthy diet with foods such as berries, leafy greens and fish, had a drop in risk for Alzheimer's disease, he said.

Treating underlying sleep disorders like sleep apnea and treating metabolic disorders like diabetes and hypertension are also important steps people can take, Omidvar said.

Daily physical and social activities, avoidance of head injuries and concussions (especially during high school and college sports) as well as taking certain natural supplements may also result in delaying or even fully preventing the disease, he said. Others have noted that cognitive stimulation, such as playing brain games, may also help delay onset of Alzheimer's disease. ■



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# Depression In Seniors: Recognizing An Overlooked Illness

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**  
Senior Writer

While depression among those aged 60 and older does not occur at a higher rate than in other age groups, it is a condition that is nonetheless common and often overlooked, according to mental health experts. Signs and symptoms of depression in seniors are often mistaken as a natural part of aging, and may also be confused or conflated with existing illnesses.

“What happens is that oftentimes in our society people believe depression is a normal part of aging – that it is just a natural reaction to chronic illness or a loss or social transitions that seniors are facing,” Tammy Heilemann, a licensed therapist and licensed clinical social worker affiliated with Community Hospital Long Beach, told the Business Journal. “It’s really important to realize that depression is not a normal part of aging.”

The Center for Disease Control And Prevention pointed out in a recent article on its website that this perception occurs even among health care providers. “Older adults themselves often share this belief and do not seek help because they don’t understand that they could feel better with appropriate treatment,” the article stated.

Heilemann estimated that between 10 to 20 percent of older adults suffer from depression at some point. Dr. Lana Delshadi, a neuropsychologist with a practice in Los Alamitos, estimated the rate might be as high as 25 percent because the condition is often overlooked and unreported.

“In a lot of senior citizens, many times they are not even aware they are depressed,” Delshadi said. “The signs are more physical and cognitive. They may not necessarily always have emotional symptoms, such as feeling sad or worthless.” Common physical signs of depression in seniors include fatigue and difficulty sleeping, while cognitive symptoms include difficulty concentrating and not being able to make decisions, she explained.

Heilemann noted that cognitive issues such as forgetfulness and confusion are also symptoms of depression in seniors. These symptoms are easily confused with other conditions or issues, such as dementia, she noted.

Other warning signs of depression in seniors include withdrawal from socialization or regular hobbies and activities, weight loss or gain, irritability, changes in sleep patterns, feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, and appearing untidy or disheveled, according to Heilemann. Depressed individuals may also express “excessive guilt or self blame” and repeated thoughts of suicide, she noted.

Dr. Dorree Lynn, a psychologist based in Washington, D.C., and a relationship expert for AARP, said that single senior men have one of the highest suicide rates in the country. She emphasized, however, that, as a whole, some studies have found

that the senior population is actually less likely to experience depression than other age groups.

Among seniors, “isolation is the biggest killer,” Lynn said. “As soon as you get isolation, you get depression.”

Another common cause of depression among seniors is retirement. “If they have been working most of their adult lives, that’s a pretty major transition,” Heilemann said. Lynn agreed. “You have people who are entering encore careers because they find that this retirement they have always waited and longed for is actually pretty boring, and they start to get depressed,” she said.

Some of the most frequent causes of depression among seniors include deaths of family members and friends, and chronic pain or illness, according to Heilemann. Lynn pointed out that running low on money is also a common cause of depression among seniors, particularly following the Great Recession.

For seniors experiencing any of these situations, Heilemann recommends a few tactics for preventing depression.

“Continuing to have good self care is really important,” she said. Maintaining

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Dr. Lana Delshadi, a clinical neuropsychologist with a practice in the City of Los Alamitos, said that symptoms of depression in seniors are often physical and cognitive, and not all seniors experience emotional symptoms of the condition. For this reason, depression in seniors may be more difficult to spot both by loved ones and the affected individuals themselves. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

## Depression In Seniors

(Continued From Page 19)

connections with family and friends, keeping regular medical appointments, and integrating pleasurable activities into daily routines also help, she added. Lynn suggested taking a course at a university, some of which offer reduced rates for seniors, or joining support groups.

Heilemann said that, in light of the upcoming holiday season, it's important to be attentive and encouraging to senior friends or family members who may be experiencing loneliness due to isolation or loss of loved ones. "While the holidays are a festive time for seniors, it can be a very lonely time too, and it can bring up a lot of emotions," she said.

"It is really up to families and neighbors to say, hey, we are here for you, and to note what is going on," Lynn said. "Because when a person is depressed, the last thing they want to do is reach out." ■

## Local Skilled Nursing Facilities Donate \$43,000 To Community Hospital Long Beach Foundation

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**  
Senior Writer

The Community Hospital Long Beach Foundation recently received a \$43,000 donation for its Emergency Department Challenge Campaign from five local skilled nursing facilities. A combined \$33,000 donation was made by Alamitos-Belmont, Broadway by the Sea, Edgewater Skilled Nursing Center and Signal Hill Courtyard Care Center, and another \$10,000 donation was made by Bel Vista Healthcare Center. A check presentation ceremony was held at Community Hospital on November 20. Through the campaign for the hospital's emergency department, the foundation hopes to raise \$1.3 million by the end of the year. The emergency department has experienced a 25 percent increase in patients so far this year, according to a statement from the foundation. Funds raised will go toward increasing service capacity for that department. ■

## Are Health Insurance Providers Killing Off PPO Plans?

(Continued From Page 1)

matters, 28 percent of providers dropped all their silver PPO plans from exchanges for 2016, 39 percent of providers reduced these offerings, and 33 percent retained their silver PPO plan selections. Silver plans are considered the standard level plans on health care exchanges.

A study by Avalere Health, a strategic advisory company focused on resolving health care issues, reported a 31 percent decline in PPO plan offerings on health care exchanges from 2014 to 2016.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that eight states are losing all individual silver PPO plan offerings on health care exchanges for the upcoming year, including: Florida, which had PPOs from three carriers last year; New Mexico, which had two PPO providers; Texas, which had five; and Iowa, Indiana, Nevada, South Carolina and Utah, which

each had one silver PPO plan provider through exchanges last year.

In California, one provider dropped its individual PPO plan from its health exchange, Covered California, last year. Now, only two carriers, Anthem Blue Cross of California and Blue Shield of California, offer individual PPO plans on Covered California.

Individual PPO plan offerings are being dropped outside of health care exchanges, too. Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) of Texas announced in July that it was dropping PPO plans in the individual retail market. A statement on the insurer's website said it was the only provider of individual PPO insurance plans for individuals in both 2014 and 2015.

As BCBS Texas adapted to the market following the passage of the Affordable Care Act, it "found that the individual PPO plan was no longer sustainable at the cost it was being offered," according to its website. The statement continued, "Because we want to make sure that our plans are affordable, we decided not to offer individual PPO plans in 2016."

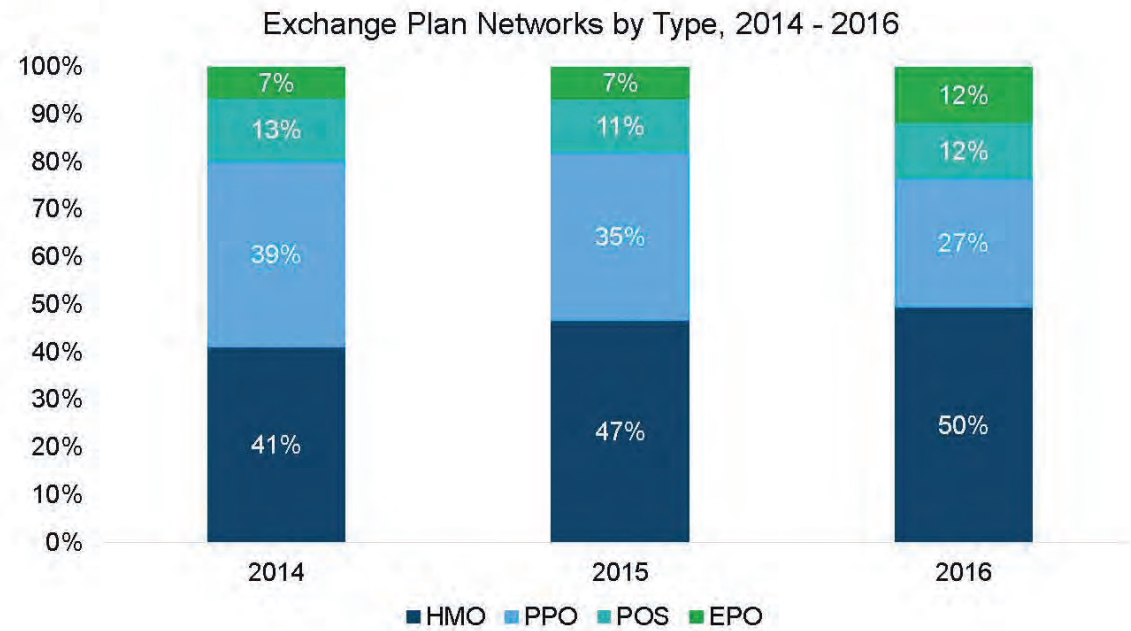
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### Fewer PPOs Offered on Exchanges in 2016

A new Avalere analysis finds fewer insurers are offering preferred provider organization (PPO) networks on exchanges in 2016. Specifically, from 2014 to 2016, the percentage of plans offering PPO networks dropped from 39 percent to 27 percent. This represents a 31 percent decline over the three year period. Meanwhile, use of health maintenance organization (HMO) and exclusive provider organization (EPO) networks has increased. In general, PPOs include a wider network of providers and cover more out-of-network care than HMOs and EPOs.<sup>1</sup>

"The shift away from PPOs underscores the evolution of network design in exchange plans," said Elizabeth Carpenter, vice president at Avalere. "While network type is not a perfect way to predict network breadth, it is an indicator that exchange plans are moving toward networks with fewer providers."



Importantly, care provided by out-of-network providers does not count toward consumer protections like the out-of-pocket limits put in place by the ACA

<sup>1</sup> HealthCare.gov describes the network types available to consumers. More information is available at: <https://www.healthcare.gov/choose-a-plan/plan-types/>



“We have seen from a lot of surveys of consumers that they are willing to trade off access to providers for a lower cost product, and I think, given that, it makes a lot of sense that that’s what carriers would do.”

**Dr. Katherine Hempstead, Author**  
**Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Report On PPO Plans**

Ben Gonzalez, a spokesperson for the Texas Department of Insurance, commented on the state’s loss of PPO plans in an e-mail to the Business Journal. “We are seeing carriers in the market shift from offering PPO plans with out-of-network benefits, to EPOs (exclusive provider organizations) and HMOs with no out-of-network benefits, especially on the ACA [Affordable Care Act] exchange,” he wrote.

Chris Sloan, a manager with Avalere Health who conducted the analysis in the firm’s recent report, said via e-mail that health insurers are responding to consumer demand. “Consumers heavily enroll in the cheapest plans in the market (specifically the lowest priced silver plans) and that trend doesn’t show any sign of slowing,” he observed. “So, to respond to that, plans are looking for new ways to reduce their premiums, and one of those ways is to switch to a narrower network [such as in an HMO or EPO].”

Sloan pointed out that 2016 is the first year that health insurers have been able to design their offerings based upon claims experience on health care exchanges. When they planned their offerings for 2015, which Sloan said was back in May 2014, insurers only had about four months of exchange enrollment to go on.

For 2016, “That means they had a chance to review spending/medical costs and make adjustments to their benefit designs/networks,” Sloan wrote. “Given that information, they have likely evaluated their benefit designs and determined that, for some carriers, shifting away from PPOs to HMOs is a cost-effective strategy to drive enrollment and/or increase the viability of their offerings.”

Requests for comment from BCBS Texas and BCBS New Mexico, which also dropped PPO plan offerings in 2016, were not answered. Humana, which dropped all PPO offerings on Healthcare.gov, declined to comment.

“It is a very competitive market, and the carriers are looking for ways to keep their costs down,” Dr. Katherine Hempstead, who authored the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report, said. Hempstead is the foundation’s director and senior program officer, and leads its work on health insurance coverage. “Eliminating access to out-of-network providers is definitely one way to do it,” she added.

“To a certain extent, this is happening in the individual market off the exchange, and I won’t be surprised if we see more of this happening in employer-sponsored insurance,” Hempstead said.

Craig Gussin, vice president of public affairs for the California Association of Health Underwriters and partner of San Diego-based Auerbach & Gussin Insurance and Financial Services, noted that the number of PPO plans for individuals

is being reduced outside of the health care exchange as well.

“If you come to me and you want group insurance, it’s like, fine. Every company has HMOs and PPOs,” Gussin said. “But when we get into the individual arena, that list gets really small . . . there aren’t as many choices.”

Prior to the implementation of the ACA, Gussin, as an insurance agent, had more options for his clients. “Everybody except for Kaiser offered PPOs. We had a lot more choices,” he said. “Now we can only have gold, platinum, silver or bronze [health plans]. Well, before the ACA, we had a \$0 deductible plan, we had a \$500 deductible, a \$750, a \$2,000, a \$5,000,” and so on, he said.

“I used to be able to show you 40 or 50 [individual health] plans,” Gussin continued. “Now, it’s probably down to 15 or 20 [plans] and, of those, you’re probably looking at eight to 15 PPOs.” The reduction in choices is due to requirements laid out in the ACA, which restrict how health insurers can structure their plans, he explained.

“The interesting thing to look at is to

what extent does this become typical in all insurance products, or to what extent is it just sort of a thing about the ACA marketplaces,” Hempstead said. “We have seen from a lot of surveys of consumers that they are willing to trade off access to providers for a lower cost product, and I think, given that, it makes a lot of sense that that’s what carriers would do.”

Hempstead said she expects PPO plan offerings to be reduced in the short term, but she isn’t sure what will occur in the long term. “People say the ACA plans are kind of like the bellwether or the canary in the coal mine of what is going to happen in the rest of the insurance market,” she said. “So I wouldn’t be surprised if we do see more narrow networks, or certainly like a higher cost for out-of-network care being available.” ■

# THE HOSPITALITY & TOURISM INDUSTRY



## EDITORIAL TO INCLUDE:

- How The Convention & Visitors Bureau Is Growing Interest In Long Beach As A Convention And Tourism Destination
- Charlie Beirne And Steve Goodling Discuss Reimagining The Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center
- An Interview With Catalina Express’s Greg Bombard
- Update On The Local Tourism Industry
- Update On The Local Hotel Industry

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# Business Loans Up, Standards Remain Tight

(Continued From Page 1)

For a borrower, qualifying for a home loan in the local market is currently tough since a higher loan amount than in previous years is required as low inventory has driven up home prices, said Michael McCarthy, senior vice president and residential lending manager of Farmers & Merchants Bank in Long Beach.

Unlike in other parts of the country where homes are more affordable, in the Los Angeles County market, only about 30 percent of households have the income to qualify for an average home loan, he said, adding that the West Coast is still one of the most expensive markets for residential real estate in the United States.

Additionally, potential homebuyers who qualify are still up against a particularly low inventory of homes, a factor that has created bidding wars and has driven up home prices of mostly low-end residential properties, McCarthy said.

“From a mortgage standpoint, you’ve really got to have your ducks in a row,” he said. “The price of real estate is higher and your average home loan amount is higher. . . If you’re trying to get into the market, you need to be really well prepared and you need to also be prepared for a long, hard run to find a property.”

Steve Puppo, vice president and area sales manager for First Bank in Irvine, said underwriting requirements for home loans remain tight, particularly as the federal government continues to put new consumer protection laws in place years after the mortgage meltdown. New rules have made the process more “detail oriented,” he said.

“I think the pendulum has swung pretty far to the side of tight regulations,” Puppo said. For people who have good credit, have saved money and have sufficient income to buy homes, it’s the same process as it’s always been. What we’ve lost are the people who really had no business buying homes. They’re not able to qualify nowadays.”

An initiative that recently went into effect is the “Know Before You Owe” mortgage disclosure rule, requiring new disclosures for most mortgages that have been applied for on or after October 3.

The new rule, mandated by the Dodd-Frank Act (federal legislation signed into law in 2010 to reform the financial lending industry in response to the Great Recession), requires that consumers be given

three business days to review disclosures before closing.

According to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), the regulatory agency created to carry out financial reforms, the three-day period gives consumers time to review loan terms, to compare the loan with an estimate given early in the process and to ask advisors or the lender any questions.

The new closing disclosure rule was put in place to make the costs and risks of financial products and services “clearer” so consumers can make “better, more informed decisions,” according to the CFPB, which adds that the new rule redesigns the mortgage process to help consumers “shop around to compare offers.”

Although new consumer protection laws in some ways make applying for a mortgage more difficult for borrowers, the new regulations are essentially “good for the industry,” Puppo said.

“Everyone wants to make sure that when people get that mortgage, they know exactly what they’re getting and have an opportunity to read all the fine print, which is good for the industry and keeps people honest,” he said. “I think there’s probably been some abusive lending practices over the past 10 years that have pretty much evened out now.”

McCarthy added that the underwriting process continues to become more detailed, with consumers required to provide more documentation than in the years prior to the recession, which may frustrate consumers. Ultimately, however, the goal is to make it easier for consumers to understand the mortgage process, he said.

In addition, the current market of rising property values and low interest rates have attracted many people to refinance mortgages in order to pull out equity either for lines of credit, capital for business purposes or other investments, McCarthy said.

“What we see at the bank quite a bit is people utilizing the equity in their homes, whether it’s through equity lines or cash out,” he said. “You see a lot of people who do that to try to get access to cash for business reasons, and you see it potentially as an alternative to an SBA (U.S. Small Business Administration) loan.”

Puppo also said that there has been more activity in mortgage refinances recently as interest rates have remained low and property values have increased in the last few years.

“It’s been kind of boom time for people who have wanted to refinance all this time,” he said.

Furthermore, many people are looking to lock in on fixed, 30-year loans at a low interest rate before the Federal Reserve raise rates. Still, experts said even if interest rates rise, they still would be considered low compared to previous years.

McCarthy added that a rise in interest rates might even help the real estate market by slowing down demand and increasing inventory.

On the commercial side, Alan Epperson, regional business banking manager at Wells Fargo’s office in Irvine, said business loan activity has been strong this year. In fact, Wells Fargo’s commercial division in Orange County is projected to see an 18 percent increase in new business loan activity this year compared to 2014, he said.



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Epperson attributes the rise in new business loans to a strengthening economy, adding that more businesses are hiring and expanding while in previous years businesses were more cautious about spending. In fact, he said many businesses are having trouble finding qualified skilled workers.

“What I’m hearing in the market is people are hiring and they need more space,” he said. “Those are things that really tell me that we’re climbing out of this, and could see some really strong years coming up.”

Lenders said they haven’t changed underwriting requirements for business loans, although commercial lenders continue to be affected by the strict regulator environment.

“We never really changed our underwriting guidelines,” Epperson said. “We’ve always been open for business. The challenge has been companies meeting that criteria, and I just see a lot more strength out in the market.”

Curtis Chinn, chief credit officer for International City Bank (ICB) in Long Beach, said barring any major events, such as something similar to the port worker strike earlier this year that slowed down economic activity, demand for small business loans should continue to grow. ICB has seen growth in business loans in the third and fourth quarters of this year, he said.

Asked whether an increase in interest rates will impact business loan activity, Chinn said it depends if the Fed decides to increase rates gradually or at a more accelerated pace.

“If there is a rate hike in December and it’s a modest bump, say a quarter point, it may give people pause, but, in general, I don’t think it would lead to a dramatic decrease in demand for loans,” he said. “If the Fed has what I would call an accelerated pace of future increases and they raise rates every quarter for a year, I think that would dampen things.”

Additionally, an interest rate hike would

impact demand for business loans more than home mortgages since mortgages are typically at a fixed rate over 30 years while business loans, such as for equipment, or lines of credit are often a floating rate over three to seven years. ■



Curtis Chinn is chief credit officer for Long Beach-based International City Bank in Downtown Long Beach. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

# Tech Giants Form Coalition For Financial Services Innovation

■ By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER  
Senior Writer

As major tech firms become more prominent in the financial services industry, they are positioning themselves to promote policies that foster their innovations in this arena through the formation of a coalition called Financial Innovation Now.

Google, Apple, Amazon, Intuit and PayPal announced in early November that they were forming the alliance to “modernize the way consumers and businesses manage money and conduct commerce,” according to a statement on the organization’s website. “We believe that technological transformation will make financial services more accessible, safe and affordable for everyone, and we promote policies that enable these innovations,” the statement continued.

Brian Peters, former director of government relations for BlackBerry, has been tapped to lead Financial Innovation Now. “Innovation is coming to financial services, and now is the time for Washington to help enable a modern financial system that is more accessible, affordable, and secure,” Peters, who is the organization’s executive director, said in a statement.

“This alliance of remarkably innovative companies brings a new voice to Washington’s financial conversations, and we look forward to engaging on a wide range of opportunities,” Peters’ statement continued. “Whether it is protecting consumers, growing small businesses, or promoting financial literacy and savings, Financial Innovation Now wants policymakers to understand how new technologies can help solve today’s policy challenges.”

Currently, Financial Innovation Now is focused on promoting security and authentication rules and standards that are “based on principles and consensus to continue to allow innovation.” Other policy issues the organization is concerned with include developing “open security and fraud reduction standards” and increasing transparency of fraud and security costs of payments.

Robert Morgan, vice president of emerging technologies for the American Bankers Association (ABA), told the Business Journal he thinks the formation of Financial Innovation Now is ultimately a good thing for the financial services industry.

Morgan went on to say that new digital technologies are creating useful financial services tools for consumers, but that there is a lack of oversight in this arena. “Ultimately I think it’s really a good thing that these groups are now engaging with regulators to see how the regulatory framework needs to evolve to include them, and make sure that you’re still meeting all the demands of customers and doing so in a way that provides them the protections and safety that they’ve become accustomed to,” Morgan said.

Moving forward, as banks and nonbanks such as credit unions or tech firms continue to innovate in the area of digital payment tools, Morgan said it is key that consumer protections are maintained. “Consumers are afforded very significant protections when they make electronic transfers by federal law, and they have come to be accustomed to those

protections,” Morgan said. “So consumers largely expect that they will receive those same protections that they get from their bank from these other companies.”

In the end, what Morgan and the ABA want is fairness among financial service providers, for the benefit of consumers. “You need to make sure that there is some sort of a level playing field in that you don’t have one set of regulations on one group and a separate set of regulations on another, which provides different incentive sets for consumers to pick one over the other – particularly when that is pushing consumers toward one that might not offer them as much in the way of protection,” he explained.

Tech firms aren’t necessarily banks’ competition, though.

“Tech companies and some of these startups are looking to partner with banks to help offer these products and services,” Morgan said. “And banks, given their strict regulatory regime, need some sort of assurance that they’re complying with all the appropriate regulations in order to do that.” ■

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**Long Beach Police Department’s Braden Phillips Honored For His Service In The U.S. Navy**  
Long Beach Police Department Administration Bureau Chief Braden Phillips, a former captain in the United States Navy, was honored for his 27-year career in the military during the eighth annual Honoring Those Who Served Luncheon held by U.S.VETS-Long Beach. The event took place on November 12 at the Long Beach Hilton Hotel. Phillips graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1968, and was then commissioned as an ensign in the U.S. Navy. He was chosen to command a deep draft ship, the U.S.S. Ogden, in 1989. The ship was deployed to the Persian Gulf for 301 days in Operation Desert Storm. Phillips retired from the Navy in 1995 and joined the Long Beach Police Department in his current position in 2001. Phillips, left, is pictured with Col. Michael J. Lawson, special assistant to the chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and director of the chairman’s office of reintegration. Colonel Lawson delivered the keynote address for the event. The U.S. VETS-Long Beach is located at 2001 River Ave. in West Long Beach and, according to statement, “has helped thousands of veterans in need regain their sense of purpose, and return to their loved ones and to society.” (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)



**Windes Names Lena Wolek As Winner Of The Firm’s Corporate Gallery Award**  
Lena Wolek (right), a California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) graduate student studying sculpture, is the winner of Windes’ Corporate Gallery Award. Windes, who is led by Managing Partner John Di Carlo, left, is a Long Beach-based accounting and consulting firm that’s been in business for 89 years. Wolek’s ink on propylene painting is hanging in the lobby of Windes’ Downtown Long Beach office. Wolek is a native of Siberia, and holds a bachelor’s in fine arts degree in art history from University of California, Los Angeles. According to Windes, the award is presented semi-annually to a student in the graduate Studio Arts Program at CSULB in an effort to encourage and support students, and bring awareness of their artistic contributions to the community. “We are very pleased to recognize Lena with the Windes Corporate Gallery Award,” Di Carlo said in a company statement. “Her painting is a skillful and penetrating work, in which the creative elements compete for the viewer’s attention, giving the piece a sense of movement and fluidity, inviting the viewer to contemplate the life inside the glass. Lena’s work is displayed in the lobby of our corporate headquarters for employees and visitors to view and enjoy.” (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

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Recreational Coffee Opens Storefront On Long Beach Boulevard In Downtown Long Beach

After about a year and a half of growing their caffeinated business with pop-up shops and social media marketing, husband and wife Bobby and Correne Hernandez set their sights on a brick and mortar location for their Recreational Coffee store. A month ago, they set up shop in Downtown Long Beach at 237 Long Beach Blvd., Suite A. Business has been going well, Bobby told the Business Journal. "It has been great. I feel like we consistently have lots of people in here," he said. Recreational Coffee sources its coffee from mini-roasters, including Portola Coffee Roasters in Costa Mesa and Kate's Coffee Roasters in Ashland Oregon. Hernandez said he and his wife, who is the company's CFO, choose what coffee to purchase based on blind taste tests. "All of our menu is very carefully designed. As the owner, I would not be happy serving something that I personally would not drink. So we make sure that everything is up to that standard," he said. In addition to a variety of coffee beverages, Recreational Coffee serves pastries, and has begun serving breakfast burritos on weekends. Hours are: Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Saturday and Sunday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, visit [www.recreationalcoffee.com](http://www.recreationalcoffee.com). (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

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### HD Orthodontics Opens On Los Coyotes Diagonal Near Traffic Circle

Dr. Heather Dosh, a board-certified orthodontic specialist, recently celebrated the opening of her business, HD Orthodontics, near the Long Beach Traffic Circle at 4714 Los Coyotes Diag. Dosh told the Business Journal she first dreamed of becoming an orthodontist when she was undergoing orthodontic treatment as a child. "I wanted to be an orthodontist since I was 10 years old in headgear," she said. "For me, that experience having orthodontic treatment was so transformational because I was always self conscious about my smile." Dosh also knew she wanted to go into business for herself, so she could provide treatment with her own personal touch. HD Orthodontics accepts patients of all ages, and offers a variety of orthodontic treatments, including Invisalign, clear and metal braces, self-ligating braces, and more. Dosh graduated in the top 5 percent of her class from the University of Pennsylvania's dental school, one of only two Ivy League dental schools. For more information, call 562/283-6590 or visit [www.hdorthodontics.com](http://www.hdorthodontics.com). Pictured celebrating the opening of HD Orthodontics, are from left, HD Orthodontics employee Dafne Sandoval, 4th District Councilmember Daryl Supernaw, Dr. Dosh (also pictured below in her state-of-the-art office) and Nea Love-Lee, assistant property manager for the location. (Photographs by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)



### Courtyard Long Beach Downtown Unveils New Guestrooms

The Courtyard Long Beach Downtown, 500 E. 1st St., has unveiled its new guestrooms, complete with



high-tech systems and custom murals. It's all part of a multi-million dollar makeover that includes public spaces and hotel amenities. Hotel GM Silvano Merlo said: "Embracing the essence and vitality of our fabulous area, we provide a distinctive new experience while continuing to offer the same exemplary service that our customers appreciate." (Photograph provided by Courtyard)

### Brian Yoder Appointed Chief Software Architect For Moffatt & Nichol

Moffatt & Nichol, an international engineering firm headquartered in Long Beach, recently announced the appointment of Brian Yoder to the position of chief software architect. Yoder is

based at the company's Long Beach office, where he is tasked with managing the development of a software product called FlexTerm. The software is "a simulation and emulation tool developed by Moffatt & Nichol" and is used for planning, operating system testing and logistics system modeling for container terminals and ports, according to a company statement. Yoder has more than 20

years' of experience in engineering management, and has focused on technological work related to the web, networking, high-performance computing and more. He previously ran his own consulting firm focused on business strategies, architecture and coding for computing clients. He also previously served as the CEO and co-founder of tech firm US Networkx, "was the origi-

nator of Norton AntiVirus" and was chief architect for EarthLink. He holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from Central Michigan University. "Brian's vast software technology knowledge will help our port clients make critical decisions that will optimize the long-term viability of marine terminal facilities – especially those moving toward automation or expansion," Moffatt & Nichol Senior Port Planner Ashebir Jacob, PE., stated. (Photograph provided by Moffatt & Nichol)



### Courtyard Long Beach Airport Sold

The Courtyard Long Beach Airport – the city's newest hotel – was recently sold to Chartres Lodging Group and Artemis Real Estate Partners for \$20.5 million, according to a statement from RobertDouglas, a financial advisory firm that worked with the companies on the purchase. RobertDouglas's statement indicated the firms were attracted to the 159-room hotel because it "is ideally situated within the 261-acre Douglas Park mixed-use development that features a rapidly expanding tenant base including Mercedes-Benz, Virgin Galactic, The Kong Company, Food Pharma and Turbo Air." The hotel features 2,000 square feet of meeting space, an outdoor swimming pool and spa, a fitness center, and a food and beverage outlet. It is located adjacent to food and beverage retailers including Starbucks, The Flame Broiler, Jersey Mike's California Fish Grill, The Habit Burger Grill and Jersey Mike's Subs. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

### Carolyn Keith Named Senior Business Development Manager At P2S Engineering

P2S Engineering, a Long Beach engineering firm with international reach, recently named Carolyn Keith as senior business development manager. "Carolyn brings broad industry experience and an outstanding track record for securing major projects in numerous markets that are key to our continued growth at P2S Engineering," Kevin Peterson, CEO of P2S, said in a company statement. Keith is responsible for expanding the firm's market sector reach both in Southern California and other areas. Most recently, she served as business development manager for Enovity Inc., an energy services provider and division of the ORIX Corporation. In 2008, she co-founded The Eco-Logic Studio LLC, a green







The Wine Country Celebrates Its 20th Anniversary

The Wine Country, a fine wine retailer located in Signal Hill, celebrated its 20th anniversary on November 14. Owner Randy Kemner said he first opened the store with the goal of providing the Long Beach area with a “a good, comprehensive selection of international wines.” The Wine Country has developed a loyal following over the years, and in the past year experienced double-digit growth in business. Recently, the store incorporated a craft beer section, which Kemner said has been performing “off the charts.” He added, “We are one of the top destinations in the area for hard-to-find, really cool craft beers.” Kemner said the store’s anniversary caused him to reflect upon changes in the wine industry over the past two decades. Pinot Noir has become a notably more popular varietal than in years past, and technological advancements such as refrigerated shipping have enabled him to stock more crisp white wines from abroad. “One profound thing I have also learned is that, if you’re eating ethnic foods, try and drink a wine from that country because, not only will you have something different that is designed to taste better with the food, it’s [also] an adventure.” he said. “We get in ruts where we are drinking the same old stuff over and over again. Wine is about adventure, and sharing too.” The Wine Country is located at 2301 Redondo Ave. Hours: Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Sundays and holidays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, call 562/597-8303 or visit [www.thewinecountry.com](http://www.thewinecountry.com). (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

building services company, where she also served as principal and director of business development. She was a boardmember of the San Diego Green Building Council from 2007 to 2011, and is a LEED accredited professional with a specialty designation in building design and construction. Keith holds a bachelors in fine arts degree in design from the Design Institute of San Diego, as well as a bachelors degree from the University of Colorado. “I was attracted to the entrepreneurial spirit of the firm and look forward to opening new markets and opportunities,” Keith stated. (Photograph provided by P2S Engineering)

DENSO Announces Organizational Changes

David Shushereba has been promoted to the newly created position of director of the product development, engineering, quality and service group at DENSO Products and Services Americas, Inc. in Long Beach. This is one of several organizational changes announced by the company last week. Others include: Steve Corey, promoted to the newly created position of senior manager of the na-

tional accounts department; Ramona Petersen promoted to the newly created position of senior manager of the human resources department that includes the firm’s Murrieta office; David Williams promoted to senior manager of the strategic planning and marketing departments; Matt Eaton promoted to manager of the product management department, maintenance products; and Jose Ramirez, promoted to manager of the aftermarket sales department.

Restauranation’s Party With A Purpose

Restauranation a popular restaurant at 2708 E. 4th St., has a new promotion for the holidays: Party for a Purpose. According to owner Dana Robertson, when groups of 15 or more book a luncheon, dinner or catering event for December or January, the eatery will donate 10 percent of the net check to a local nonprofit of the group’s choice. More details: [www.restauranationlb.com](http://www.restauranationlb.com).



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# HealthWise

## Prediabetes, The ‘Hidden Condition’ That Could Eventually Impact Your Health



**By LINDA KERR, DNP, RN**

Prediabetes is a condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. One in three adults in the United States has prediabetes, but most do not know it. People with prediabetes usually do not have clear symptoms and are not aware that they have this condition. Prediabetes isn’t necessarily a precursor to an onset of Type 2 diabetes, and should be seen as an opportunity to improve overall health. With healthy lifestyle changes – such as eating healthy foods, increasing physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight – you can help reduce elevated blood sugar levels. Speak to your healthcare provider, dietitian or certified diabetes educator for more information on how to live a healthy life with pre-diabetes.

**When to See a Doctor**  
Speak with your physician about the risk for prediabetes or diabetes if you have at least three of these symptoms:

- Blurry vision
- Excessive thirst
- Stubborn wounds or infections that won’t go away
- Extreme fatigue
- Sudden, unexplained weight gain or loss
- Darkened areas of the skin

In addition, the American Diabetes Association recommends that anyone who is 45 years of age or older, overweight, physically inactive, has high blood pressure, a family history of diabetes, or belongs to an ethnic group with a higher risk for diabetes (African American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino or Asian American) speaks to their health care provider about the risk for prediabetes or diabetes.

Finally, younger overweight women also might need testing for prediabetes or diabetes if they have:

- Family history of diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Low HDL cholesterol and high triglycerides
- History of gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy)
- Gave birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds

Knowing your risk for prediabetes will help you to take the preventive steps needed to stop this hidden disease from sneaking up on you.

*(Linda Kerr, DNP, RN, FNP-BC, CDE, is director of the Diabetes Program, Long Beach Memorial at Long Beach Memorial.)*

# Small Business Dollars & Sense

## Top 5 DO’s Of Cyber Security For Your Small Business



**By BEN ALVARADO**

As a small business owner, you don’t always have the luxury of having an IT manager to guide your employees to better cyber security. Some say millions and some say billions of dollars are lost each year to cybercrime; it may be helpful to consider the following:

**Create Strong Passwords**

Passwords provide the first line of defense against unauthorized access. Use unique phrases and different passwords for each of your access points and devices. A password can include a variety of capital and lowercase letters, numbers, and non-alphanumeric characters. A strong password should include a combination of upper-case and lower-case letters, numbers, and one special character, such as @, #, \$.

**Avoid Suspicious Links**  
Opportunities to click come your employee’s way every day, either by email or on websites, offering online deals or asking you to validate your personal information. Be cautious, since clicking on them may infect your entire business’ system with malware. Trust your instincts and remember that even email from sources you know can be spoofed and contain malware.

In addition be cautious about Internet search engine sites. Criminals often use real-time events to move their fraudulent sites to appear at the top of the search results list.

Your employees shouldn’t share passwords or credentials with anyone. Be aware of pop-up boxes or other requests for access to install software.

**Limit Personal Information Online**

Cyber criminals are looking for your information so be careful about what you post and share online. The more personal information you share online, the easier it is for cyber criminals to capture it for their own use. The Internet is a public resource. Once you have posted information, you can’t take it back. Even if you delete it, it remains out there in cyber space.

Your employees should limit the amount of personal or company information they post online to make your business system less vulnerable. Change privacy settings to be more restrictive, rather than using the default setting. Be sure to check those settings often as they sometimes change. Encourage your employees to read websites’ privacy policies. Many websites share your information, which can lead to unwanted spam.

**Keep Your Computer Updated And Patched**

Updating software and virus protection is vital to maintaining a safe and secure environment for your business. Think of it as patching a hole in a boat, don’t let information leak out. Keeping your anti-virus software up to date also helps you avoid and remove viruses before they infect your computer.

**Use A Screen Lock On Mobile Devices**

Your business, laptops and personal mobile computing devices should have a screen lock activated after 15 minutes of inactivity to ensure secure access to business functions. Employees should press CTRL+ALT+Delete before leaving work stations and when not in use, devices should be powered down.

Even in a small business, protocols should be place to help secure your company’s work product. At the minimum consider assigning a person to researching ways to keep your information secure or perhaps consider a small contract with a computer firm to assist you in safeguarding your business and your customer’s information.

*(Ben Alvarado, a 24-year veteran of Wells Fargo, is the president of the bank’s So. Calif. Region, which stretches from Long Beach to Orange, Imperial and San Diego counties.)*

# Effective Leadership

## Tips On Developing The Art Of Contentment



**By MICK UKLEJA**

One of the most important muscles we have is the emotional muscle of gratitude. How can we exercise it and make it stronger? The myth of life is that allowing ourselves to feel content before we resemble perfection reduces our motivation. The question becomes, when will you arrive? When you end world hunger? When you meet Mr. or Mrs. Right. When you finally amass that fortune? How much enough will be enough? Webster defines “Contentment” as the choice to be at peace with yourself and at peace with the world around you. Contentment doesn’t lead to apathy. It leads to energy, where I feel more rather than just trying to feel better.

Contentment is central to a good life and a good society. All the religions of the world basically say that all there is, is all there is, and all there is – is enough. Even the Old and New Testament remind us again and again that if we culti-

vate discontentment instead of contentment, then no matter how much we accumulate or achieve, we will not be fulfilled or happy. In other words, we will never fill that inner void with more outer stuff. Interestingly enough, psychology has affirmed this truth over and over in recent years.

Our culture tends to celebrate self-glorification. Therefore we set aside a day as a reminder to celebrate grateful hearts. Gratitude lifts us above our own demands and becomes the best antidote to that haunting feeling of discontent. It broadens our peripheral vision so that we take delight in the gifts surrounding us.

It’s also instructive to remember the Massachusetts Pilgrims original harvest celebration was surrounded by disease, death, and deprivation. And when Abraham Lincoln gave the proclamation for this National Day, it was 1863 in the midst of the worst conflict in American history, the Civil War. Both were marked by extreme suffering.

And let’s not forget the science of being thankful:

- lower stress
- stronger immune system
- improved cardiovascular function
- increased energy
- less likelihood of depression
- deeper sleep
- stronger relationships
- deeper sense of purpose
- better coping strategies

David Hume referred to gratitude as a Calm Passion. It doesn’t have the theatrical potential of anger, hatred, courage,

or sacrifice. We will never see a movie full of contented characters living lives of gratitude. Yet it is the very thing that makes life at the same time both livable and delightful.

So what can we do to enhance it? Try these 3 tips:

1. Be yourself – This is a challenge in a world that’s trying to make you like everyone else. It’s the I’m not enough demon. Cast it out! Don’t change so people will like you. Be yourself and the right people will love you. You’ll be even more grateful and content that you are you.

2. Live the only place you can . . . today – It’s easy for all of us to try and live in another time and place. Some lament about what they could have done or might have become. Believe me, I’ve done my share of that. The past is gone and the future doesn’t exist. Instead, live for now, focusing on all the blessings unfolding before you.

3. Saunter into your day – The word saunter comes from the Middle Ages. Everything was considered sainted, including the earth – St. Terre. Therefore to saunter is “to walk on the earth with reverence for its holiness.” It’s hard to integrate or go deep in the fast lane. Spend sometime in the slow lane and reflect on the wonders of life. Don’t forget to saunter, i.e. enter your day slowly and holy.

Happy Thanksgiving! :)

*(Mick Ukleja keynotes on topics related to leadership and personal productivity. He’s president of Leadership-Traq, and author of several books. His clients have included Fortune 500 corporations and nonprofit organizations. Check his weekly blog at [www.leadership-traq.com](http://www.leadership-traq.com).)*



# Realty Views

## Is There Another Commercial Bubble Looming?



By **TERRY ROSS** Even though most of the attention given to the real estate bubble that began in 2007 centered around the housing crisis and the large number of foreclosed homes that flooded the market, commercial real estate investors – especially lenders who held mortgages on these types of properties – also suffered huge losses as multi-family, commercial, construction and land loans took a hit as well.

Commercial property appreciation and lending – just like residential – has come back and is growing and approaching more normal market conditions. Activity is up along with the general economy, but the opinions on where it goes from here are varied.

Some regulators and analysts are comparing today’s climate with 2007 and issuing warnings about an overheated market and reckless lending practices, while others see improvement without the over-exuberance that led to problems almost a decade ago.

“I think commercial real estate is getting back to normal more than anything else,” said Matthew Anderson, a managing director at the analytics firm Trepp. “The overall volume of lending has grown, but it hasn’t reached the peaks of 2007 and 2008.”

Banks have added so much capital in the past several years that they’re better insulated against commercial real estate risk than they used to be, despite the huge increase in those loans on banks’ books as compared to a few years ago. So where some see a possible bubble, Anderson sees only a market stabilizing after the trauma of the financial crisis and recession.

The total amount of commercial real estate loans on bank balance sheets as of the end of the second quarter had grown 31 percent, to \$1.37 trillion, since bottoming out in the second quarter of 2011, according to Trepp’s analysis. Land and construction loans, a massive source of losses during the crisis, contracted 4 percent in that time frame, but other commercial loan types have more than made up the difference.

Multi-family lending has increased 72 percent over the past four years to \$320 billion and is an area that Kelly King, the chairman and chief executive at BB&T Bank, has singled out as particularly troubling. “We don’t have a bubble yet, but we have an impending bubble,” King noted recently.

Unsecured real estate lending – including credit advanced to construction companies and real estate investment trusts – has grown 73 percent in that same four years. Though that’s a slightly faster rate than even multi-family, it is coming off a lower base, totaling \$90.3 billion at the end of the second quarter.

Higher capital levels have nearly balanced out the overall increase of \$324 billion in commercial real estate lending, though. The amount of risk-based capital in the banking system has increased by 24 percent, or \$317 billion, since the second quarter of 2011, to more than \$1.6 trillion, according to Trepp’s data. This greatly increases the resilience of banks’ balance sheets in case of a shock, Anderson pointed out.

In addition, the number of banks with high concentrations of commercial loans as defined by regulators has dropped dramatically in recent years. As of June 30, there were 597 banks where commercial real estate loans totaled more than 300 percent of capital or land loans surpassed 100 percent of capital, down from 1,375 banks five years earlier.

Also, according to Anderson, underwriting guidelines are much stronger today than they were pre-bubble, which will help insure banks’ investments. Even in multi-family, arguably the riskiest segment, Anderson sees some reassuring signs. A lot of the growth is due to demographics, as the percentage of renters – particularly young adults – has increased from before the crisis, driving up demand for apartment living. And much of the growth in banks’ multi-family portfolios has come from taking market share from other players, like securitized lenders and the government.

“Some of lenders’ enthusiasm for multi-family lending has led to easier loan terms and rapid growth for the loan type itself,” Anderson added. “Even with that, though, the growth in multi-family lending overall (including lenders beyond banks) doesn’t appear to be excessive yet.”

Given what has transpired over the last decade, the current economic growth and the increased scrutiny on underwriting, it looks like a repeat of what happened earlier is not as likely as some fear.

*(Terry Ross, the broker-owner of TR Properties, will answer any questions about today’s real estate market. E-mail questions to Realty Views at [terryross1@cs.com](mailto:terryross1@cs.com) or call 949/457-4922.)*

# Trade & Transportation

## A National Strategy For Freight



By **TOM O'BRIEN** In mid-October the US Department of Transportation released a draft National Freight Strategic Plan (NFSP). The NFSP is a report on the state of the nation’s freight system and the challenges confronting it as both the economy and freight volumes grow, as well as an outline of the strategies to be taken to move freight more efficiently while increasing capacity of the many components of the system.

The plan is simply that, a plan. It does not guarantee funding for any one program or establish new regulatory mandates. But it is a major step for the world’s largest trading nation which up to now has lacked a clear blueprint for funding, on a consistent basis, our trade infrastructure and eliminating bottlenecks to future growth. This might be one reason why the plan has been greeted with a fair amount of cautious optimism by private freight operators as well as the public agencies responsible for developing parts of the freight system and mitigating the negative impacts of trade on the communities through which it passes.

The NFSP was a requirement of MAP-21, the last federal highway bill, and puts forth key strategies that focus on ensuring dedicated freight funding, identifying the nation’s multimodal freight network in a way that helps planners pri-

oritize needed investments, facilitating cross-sectoral and cross-jurisdictional collaboration, unleashing the power of data in the service of goods movement, improving the safety of the system, and developing the next generation freight transportation workforce. Specific objectives and performance measurements are established for economic competitiveness, system efficiency, congestion and environmental mitigation, and system maintenance among others.

The National Freight Strategic Plan makes a strong case for investing in freight systems. It cites figures that demonstrate the economic importance of goods movement. More than 3.1 million Americans are directly involved in freight transport, with over 44 million other jobs made possible by its existence. The report projects that the US economy will double in size by 2045 with an expected increase of more than 40% in freight movements over the same period. Constant attention to the health and well-being of the freight system will be required to accommodate this growth.

The NFSP provides both high level guidance as well as specific recommendations to improve freight flows. For example, as part of a broader recommendation to strategically prioritize technology research and deployment dollars, the report specifically calls for an expansion of electronic manifest systems (a tool used by US Customs and Border Protection) to include information on empty loads. More complete information on this aspect of cross-border trade could help eliminate bottlenecks at crossings for all freight flows. The plan also calls out the need for more and better truck parking facilities across the country.

Many of the strategies address the need for better coordination across freight operators and among the various agencies with regulatory oversight of the system. These include an expansion of an off-hours delivery pilot program in New York City involving the city’s Department of Transportation

and private carriers and receivers, and the use of a Permitting Dashboard to track the various permitting processes required for major freight-serving projects. These processes often appear complex, confusing and contradictory to the system user and I expect this strategy to be applauded by the private sector. This group will also be happy to see the NFSP outline the potential benefits of evaluating freight movements from a user perspective, where a system-of-systems approach gets you different results than an assessment constrained by jurisdictional boundaries that reflect planning authority but not necessarily real freight flows.

Not surprisingly I’m personally pleased by the inclusion of workforce development as a strategy to eliminate institutional bottlenecks in the system. Developing freight skills among planning agency staff and helping improve the logistics-related skill sets of returning veterans, both called for in the plan, is something we already do. I am even more pleased by specific reference in the National Freight Strategic Plan to continued support of the national network for the transportation workforce and the five regional workforce centers funded by the Federal Highway Administration, one of which is housed at CSULB, and a renewed emphasis on workforce training and development in the nation’s university transportation centers. The latter have traditionally had a research focus.

Of course, all of this requires money. The dedicated funding strategies in the NFSP are more effective as ideas than as steps to implementation at this point. But for those who have been calling for a national freight strategy for the past decade or so, some movement toward developing a national consensus on the importance of the freight system is a good start.

*(Dr. Thomas O'Brien is the executive director of the Center for International Trade and Transportation at CSULB and an associate director for the METRANS Transportation Center, a partnership of USC and CSULB.)*

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# More than 125 Local Artisans now at MADE in Long Beach

By By SARAH BENNETT  
Arts Council For Long Beach Contributor

A few holiday seasons ago, Heather Kern wanted to make Long Beach-themed gift baskets to give to her friends and family. She went to Sliced and Diced eatery and bought jars of their popular sauces. She went to local coffee shops, and she stocked up on Fine Feathers Kombucha. She even went to The Wine Country in Signal Hill and asked if they carried any wines from vineyards owned by Long Beach locals.

"I had to drive all around the city to get these things and I thought, 'Wouldn't it be cool to have a single store that only carries things made in Long Beach?'" Kern said. "Now, that store exists."

Kern is the manager at MADE in Long Beach, a store on Pine Avenue founded by DW Ferrell as an

Kern. "What we were unaware of is just how many people are making things in their home here."

MADE differs from some of the other similarly minded small-business incubators around – like OC Mix and Anaheim Packing District – in that it does not have individual stalls for each vendor. Instead, it is a single store with a curated selection of local goods that are merchandized and sold through a centralized transaction counter. Everything that is available is on display in the ever-expanding space, surrounded by rotating art exhibits that line the walls, as well as a side gallery that occupies a hallway off the side of the main room. All the art is for sale, too.

MADE also throws weekly events, from coffee tastings to local music shows, which builds community around local art.

It's this creative business model for supporting local artisans and creating community that earned MADE the Arts Council for Long Beach's first-ever Arts Innovator award, announced at the annual State of the Arts event in October.

"To me, this place spells out all of this

city's culture," Mert Turkoglu, who sells his Urban Canvas bags and Syrnian soaps at MADE, said. "Walking through it, it's like a library for the city. I sell at other places, but this is more important."

Selling everything from necklaces to t-shirts to baby bibs to books written by local authors, MADE is a one-stop shop for all things from Long Beach. You no longer have to drive all around town to make a thoughtful holiday gift basket of Long Beach-made goods – you just have to go to MADE.

"The one thing I always tell people is that when you spend money here, it stays here in Long Beach," said Kern. "It goes back into supporting your local economy and your local artists." ■



Courtesy of MADE in Long Beach

incubation project of his company Localism, which promotes local small businesses.

Though MADE originally launched this time last year as a pop-up holiday shop selling goods from 25 vendors on consignment, the experiment was successful enough to stay open year-round. Today, MADE is a massive retail space featuring products from more than 125 Long Beach-based artisans, from Black Ring Coffee beans to Jay Michaels' handbags.

Kern receives dozens of daily requests from local artists, makers and crafts people wanting to sell their items at MADE.

"We were definitely aware of several local brands, which is who we started out with," said

## Gallery Corner

In the heart of Long Beach's emerging design district, near Anaheim and Redondo, is a 5,000-square-foot gallery space with nine private artist studios: the Artist Co-Op, located at 1330 Gladys Avenue. On Saturday, December 5, 6–10 p.m., the Co-Op will present Long Beach artist Alexander Onley's first solo art exhibition, *A Landscape is a View*. Onley has produced a series of large-scale oil paintings and sketches of the Solvang, California countryside. Onley's series is a study of how landscape is defined. Onley writes, "Although the natural world exists whether beheld or not, the viewer's visual perspective will inherently shape their perception of what they see." Patrons will have the opportunity to view the exhibition through their own unique perspectives at the public opening or by appointment through December 31, 2015. For inquiries or to schedule an appointment, contact Alexander Onley at onley.art@gmail.com.



Solvang II

# Long Beach Museum of Art Opens Three New Exhibits

By LBMA AND ARTS COUNCIL STAFF

Long Beach Museum of Art opened three new exhibits November 20 with works by women from the local area. All three artists use varying collage processes in a wide variety of media featuring images from the natural world ranging from deer to dancers. They weave the images into intriguing compositions that ask viewers to contribute to the narratives.

*Who Is She?* – Terry Braunstein, by Long Beach artist Terry Braunstein, includes sculpture, artist books, prints and photomontage. A catalogue by guest curator Claudia Bohn-Spector and designed by Bohn-Spector and Sam Mellon accompanies the exhibition.

San Pedro-based Barbara Strasen's exhibition, *Barbara Strasen – Layer by Layer* includes digital prints, mixed media paintings, lenticulars and two installations. Strasen's colorful works present multiple images in



Barbara Strasen, Asian Cabbage 1

singular pieces that shift with the viewer's perspective. Publications about Strasen's innovative collage and painting techniques are available.

Long Beach artist Lori LaMont exhibits her most recent and longest watercolor at 20-feet long, *Camp Life in the Woods and Tricks of Trapping*. This strikingly colorful painting is presented for the first time since she completed it this year. LaMont is the Museum's featured artist-in-residence this fall in the Ralston Family Learning Center.

In addition, the Kitty Rosenbaum Gallery features pieces from the permanent collection created in fiber, wood and ceramics. Artists include Kay Sekimachi, Beatrice Wood and Polia Pillin, among others.

In the Lane Oceanview Gallery, *Revisited and Revealed: Selections from the Permanent Collection* includes new acquisitions in glass, painting and fiber by Mylene Raiche, Joan Austin, Karena Massengill and Gail Factor. Also featured are new gifts to the collection including paintings by Helen Lundeberg, Judy Chan and Thelma DeGoede Smith.

All the exhibitions are a wondrous feast for the eyes, mind and heart! The Long Beach Museum of Art has an impressive history of presenting and collecting works by women since it was founded in the 1950s. Additionally, the Museum presents a nearly continuous program of exhibitions that feature local, regional and emerging artists. ■



Terry Braunstein, Adolescent Series XII



Giving Tuesday and Long Beach: A Perfect Holiday Match



Linda Alexander,  
Executive Director,  
Long Beach  
Nonprofit Partnership

The holiday season means many things to many people. It may be a time for family, reflection, celebration, worship, future planning, peace on earth, and/or doing acts of goodwill. All of them hold important places in our community. It has long been said that charity begins at home.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines charity as benevolent goodwill toward or love of humanity. Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." Giving and goodwill can be a part of all of our lives this holiday season. No matter what your priorities this season, I would encourage you to test old Winston's axiom and make your life richer.

I know that someone reading this is thinking, "Why should you give?" This is an honest question that is often answered in a couple of standard ways, "because it's the right thing to do" or "because it feels good" or even "as a tax break." But I would like to add something powerful to the lexicon of giving. By giving in any amount, large or small, you can strengthen your community, improve conditions for others, make a real impact and improve your health. Yes, it is true - studies show that people who give and volunteer feel physically healthier than those who do not.

But, wait! This is the holiday season. What about all of the expense of gift giving and parties and dinners? Money is tight. Since the new millennium, more and more people have been making charitable donations in lieu of presents. And, remember what

research says about the connection between health and giving?

There are organizations in every community staffed by committed, talented and compassionate individuals with missions to assist and support those in need and improve the quality of life for all of us. If you want the biggest return on your charitable investment, rely on the expertise of your local nonprofit organizations.

In the last few years, Black Friday has become a growing example of mass consumerism. We have seen the lines of shoppers camped out overnight in front of stores to get a good deal. Online retailers caught on to this craze in the early 2000's and created Cyber Monday. According to Wikipedia, Cyber Monday 2014 online sales grew to a record \$2.68 billion. In 2010, small businesses hopped on the money train as well, starting #SmallBusinessSaturday.

Welcome to #GivingTuesday, a global movement that celebrates work that organizations are doing and encourages people to contribute and give. In response to the increased focus on consumerism, #GivingTuesday was created in 2012 by the 92nd St Y in New York and the United Nations Foundation as a global response to the heavily advertised and much criticized consumerism of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. #GivingTuesday is always the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. #GivingTuesday was also timed to kick off the season of charity and giving that is supposed to define the holiday season. This year it December 1, 2015.

It couldn't be simpler. #GivingTuesday is a day when individuals, families, businesses, students and community groups give to causes that are near and dear to their hearts. You can give your time and volunteer, or donate

money or material to a nonprofit organization. It could be as easy as a school class bringing in unexpired canned food and dry goods from home and delivering them to the local food bank, or it could be a large corporate donations made to great local nonprofit organizations.

#GivingTuesday generated \$45m in 2014, up from the \$13m in the inaugural year of 2012. While those numbers are nowhere near the \$2.68 billion generated by Cyber Monday, it is gaining momentum. What we have here is an important global movement not just an annual moment of warm fuzzies.

Forbes recently spoke with Asha Curran, director of 92nd St. Y's Center for Innovation & Social Impact, about the growth of the movement, "#GivingTuesday grew out of looking at our core beliefs in community and philanthropy and imagining how social media might catapult them well beyond our walls. The result has been a global movement around giving that exceeded all of our expectations."

#GivingTuesday has some heavyweight partners including Microsoft, Google, Sony, and The Case Foundation. Cities like Seattle, Miami, Houston, and Atlanta have had great success energizing their residents to give on Giving Tuesday.

Communities in Southern California could do better. According to UCLA's 2014 State of the Sector Report, giving in Los Angeles County lags behind its own pre-

NONPROFIT NEWS

**Welcome to...**  
Noly Guardamondo, Executive Director, Long Beach Blast.

**Congratulations to...**  
SPIRITT Family Services, recipients of the 2016 Avon NO MÁS Grant Program and Building Stronger Families in South El Monte/El Monte.

Friends of Long Beach Animals for their acquisition of a Dual Purpose Animal Clinic, at Animal Care Services at the Long Beach Companion Animal Village. The clinic will be used for shelter pet medical treatment during the week, and low-cost spay/neutering on the weekends for Long Beach/Signal Hill low-income residents.

recession giving as well as behind giving in Northern California. So welcome #GivingSoCal, a partnership between CNM and CrowdRise, with support from local television stations, the LA Mayor's Office and Time/Warner Cable. We wish them the best of success.

Remember that nonprofit organizations rely heavily on the support they receive through charitable giving. Well over 80% of all of their funding comes from people just like you. Through this support, they provide the indispensable resources and services that can create fundamental positive changes in the lives of those in our communities who are in need.

Make your life richer and more fulfilled by donating to our local nonprofits on #GivingTuesday this year. Show the world just how generous Long Beach really is!

The Nonprofit Partnership would like to invite you  
to a  
Holiday Mixer and Nonprofit Celebration

Join the Nonprofit Partnership for a year end celebration of the nonprofit sector and all that has been accomplished to support, grow and strengthen our community. Catch up with friends old and new. We will also be unveiling our new 2016-2021 Strategic Plan.

We look forward to seeing you Thursday, December 10, 2015,  
from 4-6 pm, at the Nonprofit Partnership Office.  
To RSVP call 562-888-6530 or info@lbnpp.org.

We are ALL-IN this Together

It is amazing how much we have accomplished together this year! It was only last November that George, Jeff and I sat down to muse about the local nonprofit sector, the Journal, and the important issues in our community. And now The Nonprofit Page is nearly a year old.

We hoped to spark conversations, shed light on important topics in our community and stoke the flames of new and committed partnerships. While it is true that it is through action that change occurs, it is also true that words can inspire, and that the written word has helped to inform, inspire and promote change. How can anyone be expected to help if they are not informed? If they do not know what is needed? Or that they can be and are part of the solution? So, within these pages we aimed to do all of that and more.

The response we have received this year have been overwhelmingly positive and quite humbling. We would like to thank all of our contributors who eloquently informed and enlightened us while elevating the conversation: Paul Brindley, Wendy Chang, Jenny Chheang, Kelly Colopy, Marcelle Epley, Matthew Faulkner, Porter Gilbert, Christina Kreachbaum, The Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, Jane Netherton, Brian Russell, Andrea Sulsona, Lisel Thomas, Francine Togneri, and Brian Ulaszewski. And we would especially like to thank you for engaging with us beyond these pages and with each other. We are ALL-IN this together and, together, we can continue to make things better.



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# New Businesses — to the — NEIGHBORHOOD

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488 E Ocean Blvd, ste 411

**Aroma di Roma Centro**

444 W Ocean Blvd, ste 110

**Hair & Lashes  
by Karaphine**

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**Jeanette E Broady  
Attorney At Law**

1 World Trade Center, ste 800

**MulchMaster**

333 W Broadway, ste 105

**National Lease  
Solutions LLC**

111 W Ocean Blvd, ste 400

**Ink Expressions Corp  
at Outer Limits Tattoo**

22 Chestnut Pl

**PBF Energy**

111 W Ocean Blvd, ste 1500

**RecoveryWorks  
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*New Downtown businesses, owners, and independent contractors established in October 2015.*

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