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Residential, Commercial, Industrial Real Estate Trends In Line With 2016

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Assistant Editor

Real estate trends across Long Beach's residential, commercial and industrial markets seem to be continuing in line with those of 2016. High demand and low supply of residential and industrial properties continue to drive increasing sales and rent prices. The office market continues to improve, and new retail developments are signaling that perhaps it's too soon to seek a post mortem on brick-and-mortar stores due to increasing online shopping trends.

Both single-family and multi-family markets are experiencing high demand and low supply of available homes either to purchase or rent, which is putting a crunch on affordability, according to real estate professionals and economists.

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No less than six buildings are currently under construction at Douglas Park, including a dual-hotel project that will provide 143 Hampton Inn rooms and 98 Homewood Suites rooms, the new headquarters for United Pacific (currently located in Gardena) and three spec buildings known as Pacific Pointe East. Construction will begin soon on four office buildings known as The Terminal at Douglas Park by Urbana Development, and today, February 14, groundbreaking ceremonies are being held for the 26-acre Long Beach Exchange retail center at the southwest corner of Lakewood Boulevard and Carson Street. Hundreds of construction workers are on the job at the Douglas Park complex north of the Long Beach Airport. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

PART I

Labor Protests At Two Downtown Hotels Are In Violation Of Noise Restrictions

With No End In Sight, Residents, Union, City Officials And Councilmember Weigh In

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Assistant Editor
(Senior Writer Brandon Richardson contributed to this report)

If you've been downtown lately, you have likely noticed protests in front of the Westin Long Beach and Renaissance Long Beach hotels on Ocean Boulevard.

On one side are residents, arguing that their quality of life is being harmed by persistent, early morning noise from bullhorn use by protestors. On the other side are laborers and the union working to organize them, Unite Here Local 11, insisting upon their right to freedom of speech – bullhorns and all. In the middle are various arms of city government

doing what they feel are their best efforts to appropriately respond to the concerns of all parties.

Imagine you live in a high-rise condo, surrounded by other high-rise buildings. Across the street are more towers. At 7 a.m., multiple times per week, the echoes of protestors chanting on a bullhorn reverberate between these build-

(Please Continue To Page 32)

The Port's Real Estate: Big Leases, Big Money

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Writer

Each year, the Port of Long Beach handles more than 6.8 million 20-foot container units, which is more than 82.3 million metric tons of cargo valued at around \$180 billion. For fiscal year 2017, the port has a \$744 million budget and \$373 million in proposed operating revenue.

"Every function in the port certainly is important, but the leases generate 90% of the operating revenue of the port," Karl Adamowicz, director of real estate at the port, said. "So it's critical to the health of the port that the leases are good and we generate a significant amount of revenue."

(Please Continue To Page 10)

Signal Hill Elections March 7

Nine Vie For Three
City Council Seats

By **GEORGE ECONOMIDES**
Publisher

An intriguing election for the Signal Hill City Council is evolving, featuring two incumbents, one former city councilmember, the elected city clerk, the elected city treasurer and four other challengers – all running to fill three seats on the five-member council.

The election is March 7. A third incumbent, Mike Noll, who is completing his sixth four-year term, is not seeking reelection.

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Millennials At Work: Entitled Or Indifferent

By Assistant Editor Samantha Mehlinger

A reader asked if I might consider writing about the workplace habits of Millennials. Perhaps knowing I am a Millennial, she beat around the bush a bit before she got to her point, as she was clearly a little worried about offending me. (We are quite fragile, after all.)

She eventually gently pointed out that the Millenni-

als she encounters in the workplace are chronically distracted by their smartphones, and that many feel entitled to copious vacation time and workplace flexibility even if they have barely put in an effort. So, she wanted to know: is she just imagining things, or is there a real axe to grind here? (Please Continue To Page 4)

People In The News



Long Beach City Prosecutor Doug Haubert recently presented the 6th Annual IMPACT Awards, honoring individuals and groups that have worked with his office to make “a positive, significant impact on the City of Long Beach in the past year.” This year, a new IMPACT Award was named in honor of **Police Detective Kim Maddox**, who passed away last September after fighting cancer. “We have never named an award in honor of an individual, but my office wanted to do this to keep Kim’s memory alive,” Haubert said. The following

were recognized: **Charolotte Daisey** and **Lisa Waide, R.N.** from the office of Dr. Dennis Clark Laser M.D., for providing free/low cost tattoo removal services for human trafficking victims and former gang members; **Noly Guardamondo** of LB BLAST, **Rosario Delgadillo** of Catholic Big Brothers/Big Sisters, **Irene Quevedo** of Operation Jump Start and **Val Parker** of Power4Youth for partnering with the prosecutor’s office to provide mentors for at-risk youth in the community; **Virginia Zart** of the Long Beach Human Trafficking Task

Force and **Assemblyman Patrick O’Donnell** for fighting for legislation to combat sex trafficking in California; **Long Beach Detective Rudy Romero** of the Domestic Vi-

olence Detail received the Kim Maddox IMPACT Award for his investigation and assistance in helping “convict and obtain a six-plus year jail sentence for a man who systematically and continually harassed and terrorized a woman he met online;” **Long Beach Detective Ben Vargas** of the Robbery Detail for his “investigation of a serial thief who was his investigation and assistance in helping convict a serial thief, who received an eight-year sentence in county jail;” **Erick Serrato** of Pacific Gateway for the group’s partnering with the city prosecutor’s office “to develop the PATH program, a nationally recognized effort to divert nonviolent, youthful offenders into employment and job training opportunities;” and **Mary White** of GEMS Uncovered for providing counseling and other services to victims of human trafficking. Pictured from left are: Daisey, Guardamondo, Zart, Romero, Delgadillo, Vargas, Haubert, Serrato, Quevedo, White, Parker and Waide. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)



New officers for 2017 were installed last month for the **Las Damas De la Plaza**, an organization “committed to promoting and advancing the welfare of Community Hospital Long Beach.” Former Mayor **Beverly O’Neill**, who performed the installation, told the members “that the one word that best described the ladies of Las Damas was ‘indomitable,’ meaning impossible to subdue or defeat.” Established in 1984, Las Damas has raised more than \$1 million for the hospital. Pictured from left are: **Pat Mohler**,

corresponding secretary; **Nancy Eilers** and **Pat Ramsburg**, co-treasurers; **Christy Roerber** and **Linda Taylor**, co-recording secretaries; **Jan Young**, co-vice president with **Sheila Cantrell** (not pictured); **Bev Cook**, co-president; O’Neill; and **Lorie Merrill**, co-president. Other officers not pictured are: **Phyllis Boles**, parliamentarian; **Nell Kariger** and **RoseMarie Kimmerle**, hospitality co-chairs; **Mary Eichenhofer**, membership; **Fran Bylund**, nominating chair; and **Sandy French**, event coordinator.

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EDITOR & PUBLISHER

George Economides

SALES & MARKETING

EXECUTIVE

Heather Dann

PHOTOGRAPHER AND

STAFF ASSISTANT

Larry Duncan

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Samantha Mehlinger

SENIOR WRITER

Brandon Richardson

COPY EDITOR

Kellie C. O'Reilly

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Office

2599 E. 28th Street, Suite 212

Signal Hill, CA 90755

Ph: 562/988-1222

Fx: 562/988-1239

www.lbbizjournal.com

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(Continued From Page 1)

Our editor/publisher can attest to the fact that I have sat through many a meeting surrounded by Baby Boomers and have thus endured a regular helping of jabs at Millennials' expense. And while my knee-jerk reaction is to fight the power with a volley of witty retorts, sadly there is usually only time for a well-placed eye roll. (And as a Millennial from Southern California who grew up when "Clueless" and the Spice Girls were cool, let me tell you – I've got a well-practiced eye roll.)

Anyway, the point is, I'm used to the standard Millennial flack. We all are. So I listened to our kind-worded reader without annoyance. And I have to admit that, in some respects, she had a point.

For one, yes, we are indeed glued to our

phones. I've had co-workers who at any given moment you might happen upon them are texting or scrolling through every social media app you can imagine. And I cannot count the number of times I have seen Facebook pages on browsers minimized as a superior approached.

In correlation, the work of those individuals was often completed quite late, and sometimes sloppily, due to the procrastination rush. Thus, our office's general no-cell-phones-out rule.

Last year, a survey by Bank of America found that Millennials interact with their cell phones "more than anything or anyone else" on a daily basis. A 2015 Pew Research Center study found that nearly half of Millennials said they could not live without their smartphones.

In a survey conducted by Harris Poll for The Webby Awards (which honor excellence on the Internet), 40% of Millennials said they use their smartphones during work meetings. However, there was no specification as to what they were using them for. Perhaps they use them for taking notes, making recordings or referencing data. You know: work. But there's also a chance it was to check for texts or peek at notifications. Who knows? Someone do a survey on that, please.

The study also found: "A strong majority (77%) concede that it's hard not to look at their mobile phone when it rings or vibrates." And: "More than half (56%) of Millennials believe they would be happier if they used their smartphone less, and more than a third (38%) of this generation reports having a relationship deteriorate due to technology or social media." Yikes. That's depressing.

So, LBBJ caller, I do see your point. It's easy to see how Millennials' smartphone addiction could likely impede our work.

But what of our workplace attitudes in general? Are we really entitled about time off and – the new, dreaded term amongst non-creative firms – "work-life balance?"

Well, Gallup has more depressing news. The polling giant found that only 29% of Millennials are actively engaged in their workplace, despite an overwhelming desire among the generation to be passionate about and engaged in their work. Why then, you might ask, should we expect flexibility in the workplace if we're not even engaged?

Lest you jump to any conclusions, consider Gallup's pondering: "They feel indifferent about their job and company – and indifferent and entitled are not synonymous."

In my last column, I wrote about how many college-educated Millennials are underemployed. This is one likely culprit behind disengagement in the workplace.

A recent global survey by Deloitte of more than 7,000 Millennials found that 63% do not feel their leadership skills are being fully developed – an issue cited by 71% who intend to leave their workplace within two years. Another likely cause for indifference.

Deloitte's study also pointed out that most Millennials do not see their employers as aligning with their core values, which include "improving the skills, income, and 'satisfaction levels' of employees; creating jobs; and impacting positively on users of their goods and services." Deloitte concluded that Millennials are in alignment with their employers' goals for profit achievement but are highly likely to seek alternate employment if financial gain is the company's only objective.

Deloitte also confirmed that after pay and financial benefits, work-life balance is the number one thing Millennials want from a job. Three-quarters of Millennials desire opportunities to work remotely, and 51% believe doing so would boost productivity.

The obvious question is this: We know what Millennials want . . . but do we deserve it? Are we good enough or dedicated enough to ask for flexibility in the workplace? Or has our indifference made us lazy and, therefore, entitled?

Well, there isn't much research to cite to that end. So next time, I'll talk to some Long Beach employers and managers to see what they think, assuming they will let me. And some Millennials, of course. ■



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■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**, Senior Writer

Development News

Aquarium Groundbreaking Ceremony

Hundreds gathered for the groundbreaking ceremony of the Aquarium of the Pacific's nearly 29,000-square-foot Pacific Visions on February 2.

"This morning we celebrate our future, and we pause in this key event in the realization of Pacific Visions," Jerry Schubel, president and CEO of the Aquarium, said. "It will give our visitors the opportunity to connect to the ocean and to our planet in new and important ways by providing them opportunities to explore alternative pathways to the future. It can be a glorious future."

The \$53 million wing is the Aquarium's first major expansion since opening in 1998. The project includes the Honda Pacific Visions Theater, which will contain over 300 seats with interactive technology such as mist, wind, scent and seat rumblers; a 32-foot-tall, 130-foot-wide arc projection wall; and a 30-foot-diameter floor projection disc. The expansion also includes 6,000 square feet for temporary live animal exhibits and programmatic digital content, as well as 2,800 square feet of art gallery space and an orientation area.

The facade of the new wing will be covered in more than 800 glass panels, each of a unique size and shape to accommodate the curves and angles of the building's design.

"This expansion is really going to make the City of Long Beach the leading city when it comes to climate protection and climate resiliency. There will be no other facility like this, I think, anywhere in the country," Mayor Robert Garcia said.

"I want to thank . . . all of the generous donors for making contributions to this facility and its growth. But I also want to thank the people of Long Beach," Garcia added. "This is really the public's aquarium, and every single person in Long Beach has an investment in this very special place. And that's something that we should all be very, very proud of as a community."

To date, donations for the project have totaled \$42 million. More than 24 donations of \$100,000 or more were made to the fund, including \$15 million from the City of Long Beach and \$5 million from American Honda Motor Company.

In addition to its large donation to the Aquarium, earlier this month Honda announced the establishment of the Honda Marine Science Foundation. The initiative's goal is marine ecosystem restoration by looking at human impacts and climate change on oceans and intertidal areas.

According to Steve Goodling, president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Aquarium expansion will have a positive impact on tourism and conventions in the city.



Jerry Schubel, president and CEO of the Aquarium of the Pacific, address a crowd gathered for the groundbreaking ceremonies of the facility's newest wing, Pacific Visions. The \$53 million, 29,000-square-foot wing is the Aquarium's first expansion since opening in June 1998. (Rendering by EHDD; photo of rendering by Bret Janak; photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

"The Aquarium already is a landmark for our city, and the expansion will continue to create additional reasons to come to the Aquarium, as well as to Long Beach," Goodling said. "I think this new facility will give the opportunity even for conventions . . . in addition to being a tourism opportunity for the city."

The construction firm for Pacific Visions, Clark Construction, which also is overseeing construction of the new Long Beach Civic Center, estimates project completion in late 2018 or early 2019.

Signal Hill Library



Construction on the new 12,000-square-foot Signal Hill Library is expected to begin this year and is estimated to be completed in spring 2018. The project will include a children's reading area, a learning lab, reservable study rooms, a Signal Hill historical room, an outdoor patio and an updated book selection.

Toyota Leaves Traffic Circle

After 45 years, the former Toyota showroom near the traffic circle has vacated the premises, and demolition has commenced. Located at 4401 E. Pacific Coast Hwy., the dealership has carried the names Marina Toyota, Toyota of Long Beach and Hooman Toyota. The property will be subdivided into two lots to accommodate a Chick-Fil-A drive-thru restaurant and a Wells Fargo Bank.

Long Beach Exchange Groundbreaking

After being rescheduled due to inclement weather, the groundbreaking ceremony for Burnham Ward Properties LLC's Long Beach Exchange was held today, February 14. The project consists of 266,000 square

feet of retail and restaurant space on 27 acres of land located on the southwest corner of Lakewood Boulevard and Carson Street. The centerpiece of the project is a 16,800-square-foot, hangar-shaped building that will be home to small shops and restaurants. It was recently announced that the Lakewood Center Nordstrom Rack will relocate to the new center and take over 28,000 square feet of retail space. A 365 by Whole Foods location is also expected to open at the Long Beach Exchange. The project is expected to be completed in spring 2018.

Beach Concession Improvements

Two community meetings are scheduled for the public to meet the architect and review the proposed designs for renovations of the Alamitos, Junipero and Granada Beach concession buildings. The meetings are scheduled for tomorrow, Wednesday, February 15, at 5:30 p.m. at the Leeway Sailing Center located at 5437 E. Ocean Blvd., and Thursday, February 16, at 5:30 p.m. at Bixby Park Community Center located at 130 Cherry Ave. Both meetings will provide similar information.

Real Estate News

Broadway/Linden Building Sale

The two-story building at 435 E. Broadway (pictured below) recently sold to Gregory Yu at Great Broadway Investment



LLC for more than \$1.3 million, according to Martin Porter, director of the National Retail Group at Marcus & Millichap. The 2,400-square-foot ground floor will be renovated and occupied by the same restaurant-operating partner that owns Padre, a restaurant tenant of another building Yu owns up the street. The project is in the approval stage and includes a coffeehouse, a restaurant and improvements to the apartment units on the second floor. The four previous tenants were PJs Pet Cafe (now located on 7th Street), Modern Emporium Boutique (which moved to Dallas), The Look (now on 4th Street) and Native Sol (relocated to Retro Row on 4th Street). Yu hopes for approval by March 1 and for the project to be completed by mid-to-late summer.

Stepp Commercial Sale

Long Beach-based Stepp Commercial recently completed the sale of 36 units for approximately \$6.15 million. The properties located at 1121 Daisy Ave. and 1164-1170 Daisy Ave. were built in 1964 and renovated in 2009. According to a press release, the occupancy of the buildings at the time of sale was 97%, and current rents are about 14% below market rate value.

Retail And

Professional Services News

SteelCraft Grand Opening

On February 2, Mayor Robert Garcia and 7th District Councilmember Roberto Uranga celebrated the grand opening of SteelCraft with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The food court, made of modified shipping containers, is located at 3768 Long Beach Blvd. and includes eight vendors: Smog City Brewing Co., Steelhead Coffee, Pig Pen Delicacy, Waffle Love, Desano Pizza Bakery, Lovesome Chocolates, Tajima Ramen and The Fresh Shave.

Roots Through Recovery

Roots Through Recovery, an addiction and mental health outpatient treatment center, celebrated its grand opening at 3939 Atlantic Ave. in Bixby Knolls. The center has been taking clients since the beginning of January and offers several treatment methods, including cognitive behavioral therapy, dialectical behavioral therapy, mindfulness and meditation, and motivational interviewing.

The Pizza Press On 2nd

Renovations are underway at the latest location of Orange County-based The Pizza Press. Located at 5242 E. 2nd St., the newspaper-themed pizza joint is scheduled to open in May or June. Patrons can choose to "publish your own" pizza or choose from press classics, such as "The Tribune" or "The Times." ■

Realty Views

Appreciation Spurring Equity Loans



By **TERRY ROSS**

One of the key financial tools used by consumers prior to the housing crash was the equity line, or home equity loan, that in pre-recession days was easy to get – and equally easy to spend, as owners sometimes used

their homes like a piggy bank.

For almost a decade, this class of loan has languished for several reasons: the loans became much harder to get, equity was lost so owners had nothing to borrow against, and consumers were watching their debt and only using it for critical situations and family emergencies.

Now, say mortgage industry watchers, the equity loan may be coming back in a big way, and it may help shore up a home loan industry that many predict will see a large drop-off in refinancing activity this year due to rising interest rates.

With many owners having already refinanced or sitting on lower mortgages than what lenders are offering now, refinancing to get a lower rate isn't going to be an attractive option. And rather than buying a new home with a more expensive mortgage, many owners may choose to remodel, using their equity to improve the home they already own.

"They've been sitting on projects for years, and now they have equity that they can tap into," said Shaun Richardson, senior vice president of products at Icon Advisory Group, a data analytics provider in Dallas.

Many credit unions and banks are carrying relatively low balances of equity loans on their books these days, so they have plenty of lending capacity to make these types of loans – especially with equity returning to the marketplace and a stronger employment situation for borrowers.

Credit unions gained a lot of this market share during the recession as banks pulled out of this kind of lending. Total home equity lines held by credit unions rose 90% to \$325 billion from the end of

2007 through September 30, 2016, according to FedFis, an Austin, Texas, provider of data on the financial industry.

Although home equity originations are about half of what they were before the crash, they have increased 38% over the last three years to \$22.6 million at a group of banks that Icon surveys. This represents about three-fourths of the home equity market.

As an example, the Patelco Credit Union in Pleasanton, California, originated \$125 million in home equity loans last year – and predicts it will write \$188 million in 2017.

"We have three of the least affordable real estate markets in the country," said Vince Salinas, vice president of lending at Patelco, referring to San Francisco, Silicon Valley and the East Bay region of California. "That has to be a factor for our members who are looking to buy another home. Instead of moving, they are more likely to improve what they already have. HELOCs are the most effective way to do that."

Other markets will most likely see this same trend, said industry experts, who also noted that unlike before the crash, borrowers are showing a different mentality in borrowing from their homes.

Pre-recession borrowers were just as likely to borrow for a new car or a big vacation; whereas today, banks are seeing consumers being more careful and using the proceeds to improve their homes, remodel or pay for something else.

Larger home equity loans – like \$75,000 to remodel a kitchen – take longer to obtain than the smaller amounts, and consumers have shown that they will take the time to get the funds to do something that is truly important to them.

With lenders more eager to do business in this space, increased equity in homes and borrowers being more comfortable taking out debt, it appears that a perfect storm has been created for an increase in this type of lending during the coming year – and more opportunities for borrowers to flex their financial muscles.

(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 or call 949/457-4922.) ■



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Real Estate Trends

(Continued From Page 1)

“I think we are probably looking at a permanently lower average unsold inventory number compared to that long-term history,” Robert Kleinhenz, economist and executive director of research for Beacon Economics, said of single-family real estate. Access to websites and apps that make information about listed homes more easily accessible to buyers may be playing a part in lower inventory, he noted.

Many homeowners have not quite recovered equity in their homes lost in the recession and are not able to make large enough profits on them to move into a

higher-end property, which may be affecting for-sale inventory, Kleinhenz explained.

Short supply and high demand continue to increase list prices in Long Beach, according to Skylar Olsen, senior economist for the real estate website Zillow. Long Beach’s home price appreciation is pacing ahead of the Los Angeles metropolitan area as a whole by about 1.2%, she noted.

Housing affordability has become an issue due to increasing prices and tight home mortgage underwriting standards. In Long Beach, about 40.1% of the population cannot afford a median-priced home in the area, according to Olsen.

Rental rates for apartments are also creating affordability concerns. In Long Beach, rental rates increased by 5.6% from 2015 to 2016, according to Olsen. “The Los Angeles metropolitan area ranks the worst across the country in terms of affordability,” she said. Just under half of Long Beach residents cannot afford the median rent in the city, she noted. “That’s really very significant.”

Construction of multi-family homes is concentrated in Downtown Long Beach, but the rest of the city is mostly built out, Kleinhenz observed. As a result, there won’t be enough new housing coming online to stabilize rents, he explained.

Long Beach’s industrial market retains

one of the lowest vacancy rates in the Southern California region, at around 1%. The South Bay region as a whole has a vacancy of 0.8%, which is unmatched throughout Los Angeles County, according to Kleinhenz.

Container activity at the combined ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles increased last year, a trend Kleinhenz expects to continue. “That ought to drive heightened demand for industrial space,” he noted. There is little construction of new industrial space in the area, with the exception of Douglas Park, where a new three-building spec development is underway.

The retail segment of Long Beach’s real estate market is experiencing an injection of investment, with a new retail center breaking ground today, February 14, at Douglas Park. Another development is slated to begin construction soon at the corner of 2nd Street and Pacific Coast Highway in the coming months as well. Plus, City Place shopping center is in the midst of an extensive facelift and realignment.

A fourth quarter retail real estate report from CBRE indicated that retail spending is expected to increase by 3% over the next year. “With favorable retail and consumer confidence trends, the Southern California region can anticipate strong retail and spending growth,” the report stated.

Although vacancy rates in the regional office market remain higher than other real estate sectors, they continue to fall as industries that use office space experience job growth, according to Kleinhenz. In Long Beach, there has been an increase in medical-related employment, as well as employment in business services sectors, which should drive increased demand for office space, he explained.

The Cushman & Wakefield report for the calendar year ending December 31 indicated a vacancy rate of about 16.5% for the 20 largest office buildings in Downtown Long Beach. This represents a slight improvement from the previous year.

For the Suburban Long Beach market (everything other than downtown), the Cushman & Wakefield report showed the Long Beach Airport Area ended the year at 91.3% occupancy, the 405/710 Corridor – where the Freeway Business Park is located – was at 93.6%, and the Bixby Knolls/Signal Hill market registered an 85.3% occupancy at year’s end, a healthy gain from year-end 2015.

Overall, these trends are expected to continue into the foreseeable future, with stronger improvements possible if the Trump Administration moves forward with pro-business measures regarding tax and regulatory reform and other measures to boost job creation and, therefore, the need for more office space. ■

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Port Real Estate

(Continued From Page 1)

There are approximately 40 marine cargo terminals, which make up the bulk of port operations, according to Adamowicz. He said these terminals generate most of the revenue and occupy most of the time of his small team of nine.

The average lease length for marine cargo terminals is between 15 and 25 years. This is to provide stability to both the company and the port, according to Adamowicz. Pursuant to the City Charter, the port renegotiates rates, insurance requirements and environmental conditions every five years with tenants.

There are anomalies in lease terms, as with National Gypsum's 60-year lease that began in 1964 and Orient Overseas Container Line's (OOCL) 40-year agreement at the new Middle Harbor. In the case of OOCL, the company is part of the 10-year redevelopment project with an additional 30 years thereafter. Adamowicz explained this agreement occurred because OOCL is investing \$700 million to \$800 million of equipment in the project and required enough time to advertise and utilize its significant investment.

Eamonn Killeen, the assistant director of real estate for the port, explained there are various types of agreements but that, regardless, the port has a consistent land value and rate of return. Adamowicz explained that tenants do not pay for space



Karl Adamowicz, left, director of real estate for the Port of Long Beach, said the port has approximately 40 marine terminals. Adamowicz, Eamonn Killeen, right, assistant director of real estate, and their team manage hundreds of leases, permits and agreements on port property. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

as in normal real estate agreements – a set monthly payment per square foot. Revenue generated from agreements is based on the throughput of cargo.

“So the more cargo that comes through, the more revenue we get; the less cargo that comes through, the less revenue we get,” Adamowicz said. “We have a tariff that describes all the rates and rules and regulations of the port. It will have how much wharfage, which is a charge for cargo to come across the wharf from the ship to the land or the land to a ship.”

For every ship that is loaded or unloaded, port staff receives reports and in turn sends out a bill to the company based on the num-

ber of containers transported. However, to protect itself from the effects of an economic downturn, which could greatly reduce the amount of cargo coming into port, agreements have a built-in annual minimum.

For example, Adamowicz said the minimum for the six container terminals – which take up 1,339 acres and generate a majority of port revenue – ranges from \$160,000 to \$270,000 per acre. The smallest container terminal is Pier C, which is between 75 and 80 acres, while the largest is the 380-acre Pier T.

“At the end of one lease year, there will be a reconciliation,” Adamowicz said. “If their throughput revenue exceeds the [min-

imum], there's no more to do. If the throughput revenue fell short of the [minimum], we issue what's called a shortfall invoice to bring them up to that.”

Killeen explained that Toyota has had a 144-acre automobile terminal since 1994. The port also has 44 acres of petroleum liquid bulk terminals, 84 acres of dry bulk terminals and 77 acres of breakbulk and general cargo terminals.

“The way the marine terminals operate, they will typically have an administration building, then they will have a truck or gate monitoring center. They will have a rail ops building and a marine ops building,” Killeen said. “So they've got various operations, and they are constantly shifting their people around.”

Lee Peterson, a media relations specialist with the port, explained that the largest building at the port is a three-story office building. He said there will likely never be a larger building, as tenants only want as much space as they need for their purposes. The buildings for each company's operations are included in their overall lease agreement and require no additional payment based on square footage.

Aside from their larger leases, the real estate team at the port oversees between 75 and 100 ancillary and temporary use agreements. The Alameda Corridor, a 20-mile railroad express line that connects the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles to the transcontinental railroad, is jointly managed by both harbors and includes up to 400 agreements also overseen by port real estate teams.

The team also handled the acquisition of property for the new Gerald Desmond Bridge. This required vacating current port property and relocating or displacing several tenants that occupied the property, Killeen said.

“We continue to work with private owners and with our existing port boundaries to accommodate the bridge design as it gets tweaked in its final stages,” Killeen explained.

“So for us, it's been a significant undertaking to be part of that bridge team and acquire all the property rights that we need to,” Adamowicz added.

After the introduction of the Clean Air Action Plan, Adamowicz said there was a learning process for port staff and tenants on how to best implement green port policies. Peterson said in the last 10 years, the port has added environmental requirements to tenant lease agreements. Otherwise, the port would not be able to impose environmental regulations on tenants.

“We've been much more engaged with the tenants in trying to negotiate some viable, yet strong enough, conditions that would allow for us to achieve those goals in the Clean Air Action Plan,” Adamowicz said. “It was really unique, so it was quite a challenge. But for the most part, we've been successful. Prior to that, it was just about the traditional real estate stuff.” ■



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Long Beach Single-Family Market Mirrors 2016 Trends

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
 Assistant Editor

Local real estate professionals expect dynamics in the Long Beach single-family market to remain in line with last year's trends, with an inventory of homes for sale that is too low to meet demand. As a result, sales prices are expected to continue to appreciate.

"I think this year is going to be kind of a mirror image of where we were last year," Phil Jones, managing partner of Coldwell Banker Coastal Alliance, told the Business Journal. "And that would be a good year."

Jones said sales activity has remained strong for his firm so far this year. "Although, I am hearing from those outside our company that it's quieter," he said, noting that January is typically a slower month for residential real estate.

In December 2016 (the most recent data available), the inventory of single-family homes on the market would have sold within 1.6 months, given demand at the time, according to Jones. There were 2.3 months of inventory for condos.

The number of days homes are sitting on the market is dropping, Jones observed. "In December, we were down 35%," he said. Homes were sitting on the market 45 days in December 2016, versus 69 days a year prior.

Dorothy Cherney, owner and longtime real estate broker of Red Carpet Coastal Properties, also noted that homes are selling fast. "We're selling everything we touch within less than 30 days," she said. "The last one we had, we sold it and had it through escrow in 26 days. So I think we're very short of merchandise. It's a seller's market, and we really need listings."

Would-be homebuyers are "scrambling," Cherney said. "They don't mess around," she added.



The list price for this 16-unit apartment complex on Coronado Avenue between 3rd and 4th is \$4,475,000, according to Redfin.com. Long Beach's multi-family market is increasingly tight, with high demand and low supply driving up prices. This property is one of few to come on the market recently. Pictured is the listing team at Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR WESTMAC. From left: Austin Carr, associate; Steve Warshauer, vice president; George Bustamante, vice president; and Cameron Jacques, associate broker. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

Condominium sales were down by 28% in December, which Jones attributed in part to the current political climate. "I think this election has had impacts far beyond what anyone anticipated," he said. "It's like some [people] have been traumatized by the election. So I am not sure what's going on. December is probably a little fallout from the election based on what I am seeing."

While the median price of a condo in Long Beach dropped by 3% in December, single-family detached home prices are continuing to appreciate. "The median price of single family homes is \$589,000 in Long Beach, and that's up 6% over what it was in December 2015," Jones said.

Skylar Olsen, senior economist with real estate website Zillow, estimated that Long Beach's single-family home prices have appreciated by 7.7% year over year. That's a faster rate than the overall Los Angeles metropolitan area, which is experiencing about a 6.5% increase in median home prices, she said.

Although residents living under the flight

path have expressed concerns over their property values in public debates about the recently nixed U.S. Customs facility at Long Beach Airport, their home values are actually increasing as well, according to Jones.

"The reason is California Heights and Los Altos [neighborhoods] are the specific areas that we are talking about being the target for most buyers," Jones said, referring to the areas' price points. "In [zip code] 90815, which includes Los Altos, we saw an 8.5% increase in price year over year. The median [price] went from \$590,000 to \$640,000," Jones said. "And I certainly wouldn't anticipate any change in that."

Although interest rates are expected to rise this year, Jones said they would likely not be rapid increases, which is a positive sign for the market. President Donald Trump's moves toward deregulation, in particular revisiting the Dodd-Frank Act and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), may also prove beneficial for borrowers, he noted. "Once they pull the reigns back on the CFPB and there is some reform

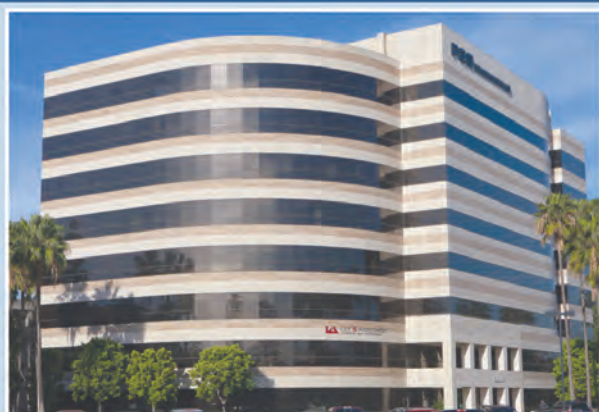
with Dodd-Frank, I think we are going to see underwriting loosen up a little, which is a positive," he said. "I think that will help." ■

Long Beach Multi-Family: It's A 'Landlord's Market'

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
 Assistant Editor

With a short supply of housing and strong demand from renters, rental rates for Long Beach apartments continue to increase. The combination of low interest rates and increasing rents continues to drive strong demand for these multi-family properties among investors, but a lack of for-sale inventory continues to be an issue, according to local real estate professionals.

"What I am seeing is there is still not a



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lot to buy, and there are still a lot of people who want to invest in real estate versus other investment vehicles,” Steve Bogoyevac, first vice president of investments for Marcus & Millichap, told the Business Journal.

George Bustamante and Steve Warshauer, vice presidents and multi-family market specialists with Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR WESTMAC, pointed out that low inventory is making it difficult for would-be sellers to trade up into other properties. “That’s the other thing that is driving sort of a shortage of available properties for sale. Where are they going to move?” Bustamante said.

Owners are also hesitant because if they sold their assets without trading up into other properties, they would be forced to pay high capital gains taxes, Warshauer explained.

“If all of a sudden the IRS changed the capital gains rate . . . you’d probably see a lot of people go, ‘Hmm, maybe I should sell,’” Bustamante said. “Many people are sitting on these very significant gains on their properties, and they just don’t want to pay the tax.”

With few properties listed for sale, Bustamante and Warshauer are seeing a larger share of sales transactions occurring off market.

Buyers are “constantly trying to find off-market deals” because it removes competition from the process, Bogoyevac noted.

“It’s a great move if you’re a buyer. It’s not a great move if you’re a seller,” he said.

There are plenty of older buildings in Long Beach with below market-rents, and these are particularly attractive to investors, Bogoyevac noted. “That’s where a lot of investors are going to see some opportunity: where they can pick up a building that has got low-market rent and then be able to improve the building, improve the rents and get the yield they need,” he said.

Although interest rates increased slightly at the end of 2016, there has not been much of an impact on the multi-family market, according to Bogoyevac. “It hasn’t really affected getting deals done,” he said. Sales price appreciation seems to be stabilizing somewhat, however, he added.

“It is a landlord’s market right now, not a tenant market,” Bustamante said, pointing to high demand for housing and low supply. Warshauer agreed. “We have been under producing housing for 10 years or more. And that is really starting to catch up to us,” Warshauer said.

Bogoyevac believes that a strong component of rent increases are being driven by properties that have had under-market rents and were then sold to investors who made improvements and raised rents to at-market rates.

All three agreed that the market is likely to retain these dynamics in the foreseeable future. ■

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Optimistic Business Atmosphere Indicates Continued High Commercial Real Estate Demand

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
 Senior Writer

With the Dow Jones Industrial Average closing at 20,000 points for the first time in history, the overall business climate seems optimistic. Robert Garey, senior director at Cushman & Wakefield's Long Beach office, said this optimism would lead to companies and businesses starting or expanding, which creates more jobs and increases demand for commercial real estate.

"I do think that there's a general positive outlook from a business perspective," Garey said. "Businesses think this new environment that we're going to be in is going to be a positive thing from a business standpoint, which will help fuel business and higher profits."

Office

For office space, Garey said the absorption rate is generally slow but steady. He explained that any policies coming out of the Trump administration that stimulate job creation will only fuel the demand for office space.

Garey did acknowledge that it remains to be seen what will become of Molina Healthcare and its more than 1.2 million square feet of office space in the city should the Affordable Care Act be dismantled. However, he said regardless of the decision, he doesn't think it will lessen any health care company's presence in Long Beach.

"The forecast, I think, is going to be steady and upward. Leasing demand will continue. Vacancy will shrink," Garey said. "Rental rates will continue to increase. In-



Roy Gaut, left, and Patrick Michel, associates at Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR WESTMAC, recently finalized a lease transaction with Good Life Pharmacy for 5,000 square feet of retail and office space at 2633 Atlantic Ave. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

vestor appetite out there is still healthy and office buildings are still selling."

Becky Blair, president of Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR WESTMAC, said she has continued to see a desire for leases and sales of smaller office spaces by doctors, lawyers and other professionals. She explained that a year and a half ago, the company took over the leasing of the building at 3939 Atlantic Ave., and her team has taken the vacancy rate from around 40% to less than 10%. Three of the leases have been signed in the last two months.

"I think the office leasing is still continuing to come back," Blair said. "It doesn't seem to be coming back quite as strong as it did during the last recession, but I think that's just because people are using space differently. There's less space per person that business owners are considering, and flex space is a lot more popular too."

Anticipated changes to federal tax laws could have an effect on the market, as well as California's split tax roll, which Blair said is a big concern for real estate investors. However, barring any unpredictable political action that would negatively impact business, Blair said the market should remain strong.

"I think the commercial market is slightly down in some areas, but we're still robust. And there's still a lot of investors looking for long-term transactions that they can purchase and hold on to," Blair said. "Long Beach

seems to be a very favored area. Investors seem to be very focused on this area."

Industrial

Brandon Carrillo, a principal at Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estate Services Inc., said vacancy for industrial real estate continues to fall well short of the high demand for space. According to Carrillo, the vacancy rate increased slightly, from 0.9% in the third quarter of last year to 1.1% in the fourth quarter. One impact he sees coming for industrial space is an influx of demand from the marijuana industry.

"One of the interesting things that [is] throwing off values is the whole [Long Beach] Measure MM and people in the medical marijuana industry chasing after product right now," Carrillo said. "Because of the negative stigma from 2010 . . . a lot of landlords have steered away from leasing [to them]. They don't want the liability because it is still a federal concern."

Carrillo said the Trump presidency could have negative impacts on the industrial real estate market with recent actions taken on immigration, a potential trade war with China and the proposed tariff on imports from Mexico. However, at the moment, Carrillo said all indicators are showing the market will continue to be strong, and any negative impacts on business and the market remain to be seen.

Low vacancy rates are not localized to Long Beach and the South Bay, according to Lance Ryan, senior vice president of marketing and leasing for Watson Land Company. He explained that record low vacancy factors are a national trend.

"While we're very familiar with the West Coast and some of the East Coast markets, it's really across the entire country that we're seeing this phenomenon," Ryan said. "When you get into the markets in Southern California in particular and close into the ports, we're seeing some of the lowest vacancies really ever on record."

Even with millions of square feet of development taking place in Long Beach, the South Bay and the Inland Empire, Ryan said the supply is still not meeting demand. With more development taking place in the

Inland Empire, Ryan said it is unlikely an impact would be felt in the Long Beach and South Bay markets.

Being near the port, Ryan said Long Beach and the South Bay are safe from companies relocating entirely to the Inland Empire because it is beneficial for them to be near cargo entry points.

"It's easier for them to get the product off of the docks and out to the consumer," Ryan said. "We have seen more dual-locations where a third-party logistics company may have a presence . . . near the ports where they have products that they handle closer in. At the same time, they may have an Inland Empire facility where they are handling product either that's going out . . . nationally to a distribution center or has a longer sit time in the warehouse."

Retail

Doug Shea, president of INCO Commercial, said he believes there is a lot of false information about the death of retail. He explained that announcements regarding Sears, Kmart and Macy's store closures are being attributed to the rise of Internet sales, which he said is not the case.

"Today, 90% of all purchases are done through a brick-and-mortar store," Shea said. "Everyone is saying Amazon is taking over, but 90% of all sales – that's a pretty big percentage."

Large box retailers such as Target, Nordstrom and T.J. Maxx are still going strong on the retail side, according to Shea. He also said that with the closing of Sport Chalet and Sports Authority, he has noticed a gap in certain sporting gear, namely ski equipment.

As far as restaurants, Shea said he is still seeing a lot of movement in certain areas of the city, with second-generation space being more sought after than space that needs to be built out.

"I just see optimism in the market. I don't see any negative in the market," Shea said. "With Trump being a businessman first and a politician second, I see more optimism than I do pessimism."

Mitchell Hernandez, an associate at CBRE Southern California, said he and his company do not see an impact on the retail market from the Trump presidency or the forthcoming medical marijuana dispensaries. He said he views the retail world independently of those types of issues.

The market is very good and continues to improve with more projects coming online and being approved, Hernandez said. He explained that diversity and a drive toward urbanization to meet daily consumer needs with better quality and more options, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, is pushing the city forward.

"We're happy with what opportunities there are in Long Beach. It's just so diverse. It really is a great breeding ground for businesses," Hernandez said. "It's also a market that's extremely localized, and people have a lot of pride in Long Beach." ■

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Residential Housing Trends And Environmental Awareness Boost Remodeling Industry

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
 Senior Writer

Last year, U.S. homeowners spent more than \$300 billion on home improvements, according to the Leading Indicator of Remodeling Activity (LIRA). The LIRA is released by the Remodeling Futures Program at the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University (JCHS), which projects a 6.7% growth in remodeling expenditures for 2017 totaling around \$317 billion.

“Growth in home prices is continuing at a healthy pace and encouraging homeowners to make remodeling investments,” Chris Herbert, managing director of JCHS, said in a January report. “Home sales are remaining on an upward trajectory as well, and this coupled with continued growth in remodeling permit activity suggests another strong year for home improvements.”

Ben Morey, owner of Signal Hill-based Morey Remodeling Group, said rising home prices coupled with very few homes for sale on the market has encouraged residents to stay in their homes longer. He explained that buying a new home that meets every need and expectation without remodeling is increasingly difficult, so many opt to remodel where they are. Other factors could be their kids attending surrounding schools or a general love for the neighborhood they are already in.

According to Morey, many of his clients are small business owners, which is another reason he has seen a steady increase in business. He explained that under the new Trump administration, owners are more optimistic about their business, with proposed tax cuts that could boost profits.

“The trend is people we have talked to about doing projects have come back and said let’s go ahead and start this design and make this project happen,” Morey said. “I think it’s a combination of having looked in the marketplace and what it would take to move somewhere and what that cost would entail, versus staying where they are at and making changes to their home to make it more livable.”

Morey’s company has 11 employees and takes on a maximum of six projects at a time. This is to enable the company to give each project the attention it deserves, Morey said. Each job has a lead carpenter on-site who deals directly with the homeowner and oversees the project. The company also employs two designers who layout the projects right down to the paint color so that the quoted completion timeframe is met.

“I think the future, as I look at it, for remodeling is going to just keep going up. The difficulty of going out into the marketplace and buying a home that will be something you can move into without having to do anything is very small right now,” Morey said. “That obviously encourages people to



Ben Morey, president of Morey Remodeling Group in Signal Hill, said that due to rising home prices, more people are opting to remodel their current home rather than purchase a new one. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

remodel where they are at, if they’re comfortable with the area they are in.”

When it comes to remodeling a home, the price tag is always at the forefront of the homeowner’s mind. According to homeadvisor.com, the average cost of a major kitchen remodel in Los Angeles is more than \$60,000, with minor remodels averaging about \$20,000 – just for the kitchen.

To help with these costs, homeowners have multiple options for loans. Raul Camaligan, branch manager of Skyline Home Loans’ Downey location, said his company finances remodel loans and can even add it onto another loan.

“For example, you have a \$100,000 loan and you wanted another \$100,000 in renovation money and you don’t have the funds,” Camaligan said. “So what we do on that same \$100,000 loan, we just finance \$200,000 into it, and now they are paying into one loan. Most people have retirement funds, checking and savings, but they don’t want to tap into their hard-earned cash.”

Another option for funding is to apply for the Home Energy Renovation Opportunity (HERO) program, the largest Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program in California. HERO offers financing for energy-efficient, environmentally friendly home improvements.

Recently, the HERO program announced that Long Beach homeowners had surpassed \$25 million accessed for green home improvements. The program covers larger, expensive projects such as solar panels and drought-tolerant landscaping; however, it can also cover some of the cost of remodeling projects. Water-efficient toilets and shower heads, energy-efficient doors and windows, energy-saving paint – items such as these can be financed by the HERO program during a home remodel.

“The majority of what we use for HERO is usually cool roof, energy-efficient windows and doors, exterior coating, which is a special coating which is a heat reflective for the exterior,” Uri Benhaim, owner of

2015 with five employees and has already increased to 25.

“I would say 70% to 80% of our business is the HERO program,” Behaim said. “I can tell you that without the HERO program, many of the homeowners that we go to would not be able to improve their house because they don’t have the perfect credit.”

HERO is the largest PACE program available in Long Beach and is a public-private partnership between Renovate America and L.A. County, according to Bevans. He said the reason HERO has become so popular is because it is not paid back as a standard

loan but rather through an additional line item on the homeowner’s property tax. Also, the financial obligation is attached to the home, not the homeowner. If a home sells, the obligation is transferred to the new owner.

While HERO will not cover materials such as wood or tile for a remodeling project, Benhaim said his company will often integrate HERO funding into other funding sources to cover the energy-efficient items.

Aside from the environmental impacts, Matt Bevans, director of marketing communications for HERO, said the program creates a boost for the local home improvement industry, which creates jobs. Home Renew 360 began operations in August

Home Renew 360, said. “LED lights and dimmers – there are so many items.”

“There’s a whole group of people out there that didn’t qualify for any other source of financing before that can now improve their homes,” Benhaim said. “These are usually things that are kind of necessities. It’s not interior paint or a new countertop. It’s roofing, windows, insulation, central heat or air.” ■



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Innovation & Design In Architecture: A Growing Long Beach Firm With National Reach



Innovation & Design In Architecture started out seven years ago with just four founding partners and has since grown to a firm with nearly 30 employees and an extensive list of national restaurant and retail clients. Pictured from left are founders Geoffrey Lim, Dallas Barker and Joshua Cool. Not pictured is co-founder Matthew Walsh. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)



From left: Innovation & Design In Architecture's (IDA) design for Table 301, a new restaurant concept slated to open where the redesigned City Place shopping center meets The Promenade at 3rd Street; IDA's concept for the R Bar, a new bar/eatery slated to open at City Place; Veggie Grill asked IDA to redesign and rebrand its location at Marketplace Long Beach. (Art provided by IDA)

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Assistant Editor

In just seven years, Long Beach-based Innovation & Design In Architecture (IDA) has grown from a founding team of four to a staff of nearly 30. The firm's retail and restaurant clientele include the likes of Benihana, Ruth's Chris Steak House, Nike, Lucky Brand Jeans, Lids and many other national brands. Due to the company's reach, it is licensed to do business in nearly 40 states.

IDA's founders and owners – Joshua Cool, Dallas Barker, Geoffrey Lim and Matthew Walsh – attribute the firm's success to their deep understanding of the connection between retail and restaurant environments and the lifestyle experience a company is trying to convey. In essence, IDA is known for experiential branding through architecture and design. (Walsh was unable to participate in this interview).

The four founders have extensive backgrounds in architecture and design, and they all hail from the same firm in Newport Beach. They left to form a new architecture arm of a contracting company around 2008 and then struck out on their own in 2010.

“When we started in 2010, we had a very good ongoing relationship with

Nike,” Cool said. “Based on the relationships we had with Nike, Benihana and certain other national retailers, we felt that the four of us could probably move out on our own and sustain our business.”

Cool and Walsh both lived in Long Beach at the time (and still do), and they recognized the potential in locating a business there. “We saw where Long Beach was going,” Cool said. From the start, the firm had clients in Los Angeles, Orange County and San Diego, so Long Beach was an ideal central location, he noted.

Locating in Downtown Long Beach was also attractive for employees, Barker noted. “When we came down here, we were like, you can walk anywhere you want. You can go to restaurants and don't have to worry about getting in your car,” he said.

The firm started off in a 2,000-square-foot office at 115 Pine Ave. Lim said they signed a seven-year lease thinking the space was large enough to accommodate the growth they expected. But it wasn't.

Right off the bat, Benihana tasked IDA with remodeling 13 existing restaurants. Nike acquired Converse, which became IDA's client as well. “That immediately sparked our growth based on those two companies,” Cool said.

With a quickly growing portfolio of proj-

ects, IDA's staff grew to 20 employees within two years. “The space only fit about 15. We at one point had about 24 people on staff,” Barker said. Lim added, “We had a whole library and materials section that all got converted to work spaces.”

In 2013, IDA moved to its current location on The Promenade with more than double the office space. “Where better for a restaurant/retail architect to be located [than] in the heart of what's going to be the future of Long Beach's restaurant and retail?” Cool said.

Initially, about 80% of IDA's clients were retailers, including Lids, Lucky Brand Jeans, Nike, Converse and others. But after IDA was approached by Veggie Grill, a vegan eatery, to create a new branded restaurant location at Marketplace Long Beach, IDA began attracting many more eateries as clients.

“We took a lot of what we learned about branding and retail design from Nike and other companies, about how to create environments that are all about their brand, and we applied it to restaurants,” Cool said. “We developed a whole new brand identity for Veggie Grill. Based on that, we started working for various national restaurants.”

Cool continued, “As time went on, we did Lemonade, Urban Plates, Luna Grill, Yalla

Mediterranean, Counter Burger – a lot of local brands that were expanding nationally.”

IDA is currently working with Norm's, a diner chain that is looking to add more locations, including in Long Beach. IDA also just added Outback Steakhouse and Black Angus as clients. “We just signed up with Outback. They are redoing [the] Rainbow Harbor [location],” Cool said.

IDA's fusion of branding and architecture are what have made the firm a success, the owners agreed. “We look at marketing and branding as connecting with your core customer,” Cool said. “With the explosion of fast casual [eateries] . . . you're going to continue to see this happen. Branding is becoming a huge thing for them because they want to separate and define themselves.”

The firm's use of building information modeling (BIM), a process of digitally modeling architecture in a three-dimensional format, has also helped attract clients. Representatives from BJ's Restaurants once showed up to IDA's Promenade office unannounced because of word-of-mouth recommendations related to IDA's use of BIM, Cool said.

About two years ago, the firm established lower rates for local businesses and, as a result, continues to grow a local client base, which includes Pier 76, Broadway Pizza & Grill and Linden Public. IDA is also designing Table 301 and the R Bar, new restaurant and bar concepts slated to open at the redesigned City Place.

Moving forward, IDA's leadership expects retail to become increasingly experiential. “It's going to be more interactive,” Lim said. IDA is working with online retailer Hudson Jeans to create its first retail location – described as an “anti-store” – in Santa Monica. “It's about the experience and educating the consumer to what their product is, which is kind of fascinating,” Cool explained.

Another transformational trend they foresee for retail and restaurants in the future is a fusion with recreational marijuana thanks to its recent legalization in California. “It has already happened in Colorado,” Cool said.

As the firm continues to take on new clients and projects, more employees will be added. Two new staffers recently came on board, and IDA is currently hiring for three more, according to Cool. About half of IDA's staffers live in the downtown area.

Cool, who serves on the Downtown Long Beach Alliance's economic development committee, emphasized that IDA is committed to working with local entrepreneurs. “For local businesses on the restaurant and retail side, we'd love to talk to them about how we can work with them to expand,” he said.

“All of us really love Long Beach,” Cool said. “We like being a part of this community.” ■

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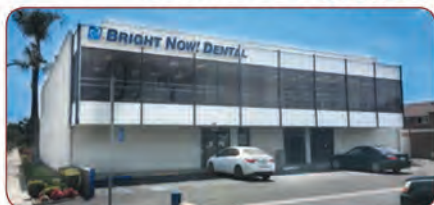
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Customization Driving Wedding Trends In 2017

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
 Assistant Editor

This year, wedding trends are being driven by a greater desire for unique experiences customized to the bride and groom. Traditional wedding schedules – ceremony, cocktail hour, main course, dessert, etc. – are going by the wayside as couples plan their big day to better engage their guests throughout the evening and create a more personalized event.

“In 2017, it’s more about the experience than it is for just having a ceremony, a cocktail reception, and a dinner and dance,” Melissa Selmanson, event planner for the Hyatt Regency Long Beach, said. “It’s how you get to each one of those parts of the day or the evening . . . and what are you remembering about each one of those parts.”

Erica Noriega, special events manager for the Aquarium of the Pacific, is also noticing a trend of couples looking to create a unique experience rather than a traditional one. “It’s not just the typical ceremony and reception and then you sit down and have dinner and leave,” she



Dan D'Sa, director of Grand Food & Beverage, displays trending food items at weddings – smaller bites that guests can grab at tables throughout the reception while they mingle and socialize. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

said. “People are really trying to give their guests more of an event.”

One way that couples are creating a more engaging, unique atmosphere is through activities and entertainment. “We see a lot more photo booths than we used to,” Noriega said. Couples who marry at the Aquar-

ium are increasingly leveraging the unique venue. Some couples have incorporated live sea otter shows or even had a diver in the Great Hall's stories-tall tank announce them as they walk down the aisle.

Dan D'Sa, director of Grand Food & Beverage at The Grand Long Beach, ob-

served that couples are creating more social, memorable events by changing up the main course. “Not to say that a traditional wedding or sit-down meal isn't great, but what's trending are more walk-around foods, like live-action food stations,” D'Sa

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Wedding Trends

(Continued From Page 19)

said. “We were doing live carving stations with prime rib. We were doing tacos. . . . We did an Indian [food station] with chicken tikka masala and rice. And we dress up each area to go with that theme, so it was really like an experience around the world,” he explained.

Not only does this format give guests more meal options, but it also creates a more social environment, D’Sa pointed out.

“We are starting to see people wanting to be a little more creative and different with their menus and asking for more customized menus,” Lisa Duncan, director of catering and convention services at Hotel Maya, said. For example, a couple that recently wed at the Maya requested fried chicken as the main course because, even though it was not on the typical wedding menu, it was the groom’s favorite dish.

Event planners from multiple local venues, including The Grand, the Aquarium and the Hyatt, pointed out that Millennials are increasingly conscious about incorporating healthy, sustainable foods into their wedding menus.

“People are even more conscious about trying to get on board with things that are organic,” Noriega said. “People are even more aware of sustainable options.”

Mary Carley, director of events at the



Sabine DuBois, director of catering at the Queen Mary, said couples are drawn to the ship for its romantic elegance and Art Deco decor. She has noticed that couples are increasingly budget-conscious, and are having smaller affairs on less popular days of the week. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

Hyatt Regency, sees the customization trend as generational. “There is a huge trend in the Millennial generation to go toward craft items. That’s why we’re seeing a lot of custom food requests,” she said. “We are getting requests for craft beers and ciders now and things that are made locally and homemade.”

Nontraditional desserts are also becoming popular. “It’s really popular now to do

nitrous ice cream,” Carley said, referring to stations where someone creates ice cream before guests’ eyes using all the ingredients and liquid nitrogen.

“People are doing something a little more individual and unique than a traditional tiered wedding cake,” Noriega said, noting that she often sees candy stations at weddings.

D’Sa said donuts are becoming a popular

dessert alternative. “Churros and cinnamon crisps with different toppings are also super popular,” he added.

“Candy and dessert stations are really popular still, and it’s not just to fill a bag with jellybeans anymore,” Duncan said. “It’s really elevated, high-end desserts and treats.” When cakes are used as the dessert, Duncan has been seeing a trend of sleek cakes made to look like a slab of



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marble. “It’s a clean sort of modern look, and it’s very pretty and unique,” she said.

For the most part, wedding themes and decor are fairly specific to the venue, according to interviewed wedding professionals. But some trends are emerging, including using a mix of table sizes – long, square and round – to create visual interest.

Similarly, Selmanson noted that centerpieces are often staggered in height, or each table may have entirely unique centerpieces. “I would say with flowers you are getting more of a mix whether you are doing high and low arrangements, or maybe you have tables that have no arrangements but have candle lighting instead,” she said. “People are enhancing a lot of their events with multiple candles and then using flowers as more of an accent, where it used to be vice versa.”

Sabine DuBois, director of catering at the Queen Mary, said the biggest trend she’s seeing is a move toward smaller, more budget-friendly weddings. “They want a lot of value for the money,” she said. “We are still seeing a lot of smaller weddings, such as 20 to 50 people.”

Many couples are opting to get married on Fridays or Sundays, which are typically cheaper than Saturday wedding packages, DuBois noted. “They want value, but they are looking to make it very elegant,” she said, adding that couples are also focused on customized weddings as well. ■

Technology Transforming The Wedding Experience

■ By **THYDA DUONG**
 Contributing Writer

For many couples, their weddings will call for something old, something new, and – in this digital era – something high-tech, too.

From aerial drone photography and GoPros to 3D printing and video mapping, technology is increasingly making an appearance at weddings. According to The Knot Wedding Tech Survey 2016, which included 1,192 respondents, one in three couples (34%) said they felt strongly that technology should be incorporated into weddings.

The most popular tech element, says The Knot Planning Editor Ivy Jacobson, is specialty light projections. Couples can choose to order a plain white cake, for instance, and project images onto each tier of a cake to create evolving designs. Light projections – also referred to as video mapping, projection mapping or spatial augmentation reality – can be used to transport guests to a completely different location.

“You can take an empty shell space with

four white walls and project onto a whole wall, where it looks like you’re in the middle of a forest,” explains Sofia Riley, president of event production company TGIS Catering. “It just changes the whole environment.”

Moreover, interactive light displays on the dance floor can give guests the impression that they’re dancing on clouds, water or fire.

The trend is certainly “light” years ahead of when Riley started her business 27 years ago. “I started in the dark ages when there were no cell phones and we used Thomas Guides,” she says jokingly. “It’s about taking it to the next level, whether it’s something guests are going to experience when they walk in, to a feeling, to sharing with others.”

Create, Capture And Share

In addition to creating experiences, technology is increasingly used to capture and share them, too.

According to Jacobson, selfie sticks are popular for capturing wide-angle dance floor shots, for instance, while GoPros are being placed in bouquets to capture the bride’s walk down the aisle, and drones are becoming popular for aerial photography and videography.

Even photo booths, Riley adds, have taken on a new dimension, with interactive, 360-degree photo booths that also allow guests to post onto social media.

In fact, Snapchat has now become a more official part of weddings with the introduction of custom Geofilters – starting



Branded portable cell phone charging stations, like the one pictured at Long Beach-based TGIS Catering, are becoming an increasingly popular guest amenity at weddings, helping guests stay charged and connected. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

at just roughly \$5 – which allow couples to create personalized filters that wedding guests can add to their image or video.

Some couples, Jacobson says, are also integrating social media into their weddings, with guests’ social media posts projected on-screen at the reception. Similarly, she adds that live stream videos have gained popularity, particularly for couples with friends and family who can’t physi-

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Technology

(Continued From Page 21)

cally be at the wedding due to distance or an illness, for instance.

Despite the number of high-tech gadgets available in the marketplace, the most popular remains in most people's pockets — the smartphone. "Anything people can do with their phones right now, they're going to engage with," Jacobson says.

Smartphones are such a mainstay at weddings that many couples are choosing to integrate branded portable cell phone charging stations at their reception as a guest amenity, Riley adds.

The Road Ahead

That charged phone may come in handy when guests are ready to leave the wedding and, say, call an Uber. That's because ride-sharing services like UberEvents, Riley adds, are becoming increasingly popular. Through UberEvents, couples may purchase rides in advance for their guests by creating a custom code. Guests simply enter the event code into their app to redeem their ride.

Some transportation trends, however, are still gaining traction.

"I definitely think some tech elements are trends and some are very aspirational," Jacobson says. "For example, driverless cars is still a very new tech concept to the world in general and [in particular] to the wedding world."

Top 10 Most Desired Tech Elements

If given an unlimited budget, couples reported wanting to incorporate the following technology into their weddings:

1. Specialty light projections (50%)
2. Drones (47%)
3. Cell phone charging stations (37%)
4. Digital scroll of social media posts using the wedding hashtag projected at the reception (32%)
5. GoPro (27%)
6. 3D printing (15%)
7. Livestreaming on video hosting platform (14%)
8. Driverless cars (13%)
9. Wearables (i.e. Apple Watch, Fitbit) (6%)
10. Robots (4%)

(Source: The Knot Wed-Tech Survey 2016)

"[They] will still continue to have a presence in weddings, and I think they'll pick up steam more so in the future," she says of driverless cars and other high-tech elements such as robot bartenders, which are making appearances in restaurants and on cruise ships.

Another emerging trend, Jacobson adds, is 3D printing, with some couples choosing to make custom, 3D-printed wedding bands, wedding favors, and cake toppers. The Hershey Company, for instance, allows consumers to create and 3D print their own creative chocolate designs.

The emergence of new technologies provides unique opportunities for the wedding party and its guests — as well as the wedding planner, Riley notes. "It's amazing, it's fun, [and] it constantly keeps us on our toes as a company and as a team," she says. "And it's exciting because it brings the whole experience to another level." ■

I Do . . . Not Want To Go Into Debt Paying For My Wedding

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Writer

The average cost of a wedding in Los Angeles and Orange counties is more than \$36,500, according to valuepenguin.com. The five most expensive components are the ceremony site, the photographer, the reception band, the engagement ring and, most expensively of all, the reception venue at more than \$13,000 on average.

However, when it comes time to plan their special day, not every couple has an extra \$36,000 just laying around or parents who will (or even can) front the entire bill. Additionally, many couples may not want to start their life together with an extra \$30,000 of debt, especially considering the amount of student loan debt accumulated nowadays. Sticking to a tighter budget is becoming increasingly necessary, but that doesn't mean couples need to sacrifice having a beautiful wedding.

With Southern California weather, outdoor weddings are almost always a viable

option that can be less expensive with a more casual yet beautiful setting. Some of the least expensive options in Long Beach are the 18 rentable park community centers and six rentable beach sites, according to Jane Grobaty, community information officer for the Long Beach Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine.

"We have choices all over the city, so you can get one in your neighborhood maybe," Grobaty said. "I think people like it because they're used to the parks. They're happy with the parks. It's a safe, nice setting. There's parking, and the cost is a lot lower than a banquet hall."

Park facility rental rates are \$40 per hour for events Friday through Sunday and \$35 per hour every other day of the week. Additional charges for booking include a \$375 refundable deposit, a \$110 maintenance fee, a \$30 permit fee and a \$25 per hour staff fee, which doubles after 6 p.m. The social halls and activity rooms can host between 40 and more than 200 people for dining, depending on the park in which the event is held.

Alamitos, Belmont, Cherry, Claremont, Granada and Peninsula beaches have designated areas to host permitted events such as weddings. Permits can be obtained up to six months before the event but no later than five business days prior.

Permits for up to 25 people cost \$30, 26-100 people cost \$61, 101-200 people cost



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\$113 and 201-300 people cost \$203. Events with more than 300 people must be approved by the Office of Special Events and Filming. Each price includes a \$30 nonrefundable fee, and one-day insurance must be obtained through the city's Office of Risk Management.

"Here you are in Long Beach. It's scenic. It's very pretty down at the beach," Grobaty said. "It's just a lot less formal, and I think that might speak to the bride and groom that might have that kind of attitude. They just want to be outdoors and enjoy the outdoors."

The beach does have its limitations, however. No glassware, open flames, generators or alcohol are allowed on the beach. Also, groups must be off the sand by 10 p.m.

For couples who want an outdoor wedding experience that is a little more formal but still affordable, the Earl Burns Miller Japanese Garden at Cal State Long Beach could be a good fit. The garden has been in the wedding business for more than 30 years, according to director Jeanette Schelin.

"Although we are a uniquely beautiful site, really something different, the cost of holding a wedding at the garden is very affordable," Schelin said.

The garden offers ceremony-only packages that can accommodate 250 people or full ceremony and reception packages that



Mooyon Kim, left, the new general manager at Holiday Inn Long Beach Airport, and Charlene Tritipeskul, director of catering at the hotel, are pictured in the newly renovated, 5,000-square-foot ballroom. The space can accommodate up to 320 people for weddings. For more information, visit hiltonbeach.com/weddings.htm. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

can accommodate 200 people with dinner and dancing. December through February is considered off-peak with a ceremony costing about \$700 per hour. However, off-

peak packages do not include parking, which will add to the cost.

During peak months, wedding and reception packages are paid for by the day. For

average-sized weddings, which are around 100-150 guests, Fridays cost \$3,500, Saturdays cost \$4,500 and Sundays cost

(Please Continue To Page 24)

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On A Budget

(Continued From Page 23)

\$3,900. Schelin said the garden also offers options for small weddings of 25 people or less, which cost a very small amount.

“Once we find out what a couple is looking for, what they need, what they want, we can find the most economical opportunity for them,” Schelin said. “We try to make this as easy for people as possible.”

The garden has preferred vendors that offer discounts and also provides a wedding coordinator from beginning to end to help couples make the most of their wedding. With total costs as low as \$9,000, Schelin said the garden falls several thousand dollars below the area’s average cost for wedding venues.

“We are such a beautifully designed garden. We are an architecturally significant garden. It’s completely private,” Schelin said. “When you step through those wooden gates, you are transported into a different place. We’re a destination wedding venue without the travel.”

Another outdoor venue in Long Beach is Rancho Los Cerritos. While a little more expensive than the Japanese garden – with a starting price of \$4,500 or \$2,700 for a non-food event – it is not without its perks to help ease the financial burdens of a wedding. Because it is a museum and a historical site, nearly half of the venue cost is considered a charitable donation, which makes it tax de-



Able to accommodate up to 200 people for a wedding ceremony and reception, the Earl Burns Miller Japanese Garden at Cal State Long Beach costs couples several thousand dollars less than the regional average for wedding venues, according to garden director Jeanette Schelin. For more information, visit csulb.edu/~jgarden. (Photograph courtesy of Caught In The Moment Photography, www.caughtinthemoment.com/)

ductible, according to Nora Cristobal, development associate for the rancho.

Cristobal said that since tours are held at the rancho from 1-5 p.m. and weddings are from 5-10 p.m., the rancho offers two docents dressed in 1800s or 1930s garb to be

at the wedding and offer free museum tours.

Another added perk for weddings held in the larger inner courtyard and backyard areas, which can accommodate up to 400 people, is that a photographer is provided. The average cost for a wedding photogra-

pher in Los Angeles for 2015 was more than \$2,600.

“It’s a beautiful space. We’re tucked in the middle of Long Beach, and you really do feel like you’re separated from the city, which is nice and quiet and peaceful,”

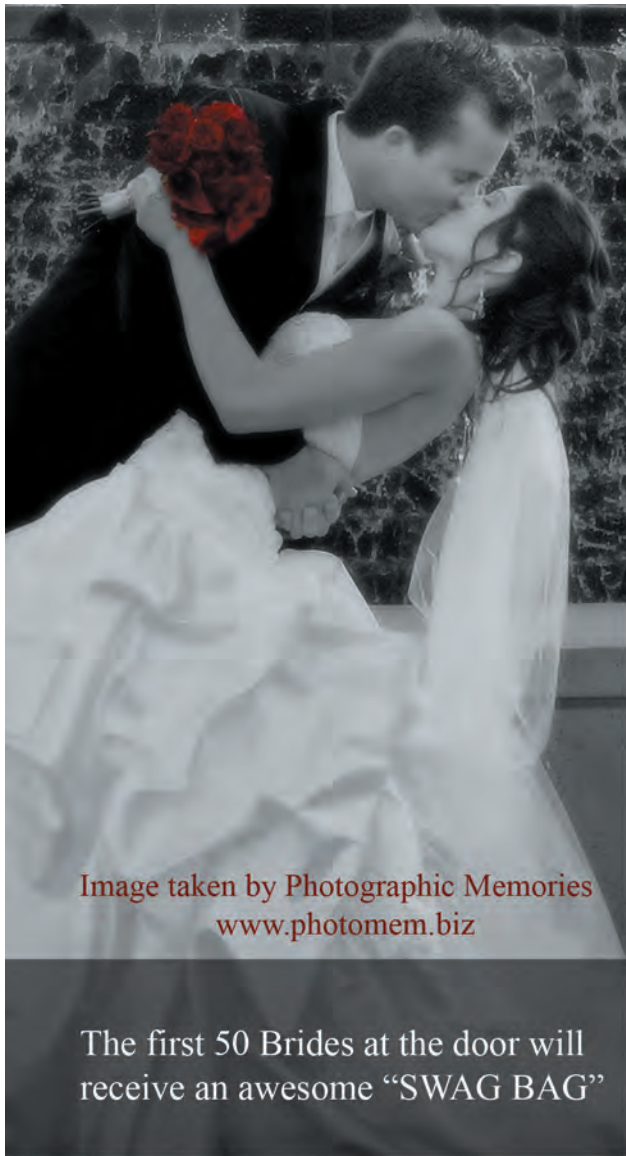


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Cristobal said. “And we have the Moreton Bay fig tree, which is, like, 100 years old – that’s always an eye catcher.”

Long Beach also has an abundance of more traditional wedding options in banquet halls and hotels, including the Holiday Inn Long Beach Airport. Currently, a ceremony in the courtyard is \$5 per person and can accommodate around 150 people.

Up to 320 people can be accommodated in the newly renovated, 5,000-square-foot ballroom for receptions. Reception packages include everything from the room rental down to the salad forks and start as low as \$55 per person. Two appetizers, an entree plate and a cider and champagne toast are also included.

“If they have a minimum of 150 people, we also provide a gift certificate for the one-year anniversary,” Charlene Tripteskul, director of catering at the hotel, said. “On the day of the event, we also provide complimentary accommodations with champagne and chocolate in the room and breakfast for two the next morning. Also, we provide complimentary parking. I know a lot of people love that.”

Some larger restaurants, such as Ports O’ Call in San Pedro, offer various wedding packages that start at affordable prices. Noramae Munster, the marketing director for the restaurant, said ceremonies start at \$500 for afternoons, with evenings costing \$1,000, which includes the use of the bridal salon.

Receptions at the restaurant start at \$48 per person, which includes a four-course meal and a champagne toast. According to Munster, the reason the restaurant can be so affordable is because the longtime staff has well-established techniques and keeps things delicious and beautiful, yet simple.

“The way we go about our business is that we create these menu offerings that are very straightforward and everything is included,” Munster said. “We are the number one, best of South Bay, which also includes Long Beach, banquet facility every year since 2012.”

Munster explained that there are no hidden fees or add-ons required for ceremonies or receptions – the bottom line is the bottom line. She also said the facility has everything necessary for events in each of its six different banquet rooms and three outdoor venues, so no additional rental costs are needed. Munster described all nine event spaces as picturesque and said the waterfront views, gardens, gazebos and fountains make for great photo opportunities.

“When you think of a wedding on a budget, you think you’ll be in a small room with no windows in a hotel somewhere, but our experience on the waterfront is that it’s expansive,” Munster said. “Everything has a view. Everything has gardens and fountains. So it’s not that you’re giving up the beautiful ambiance you want on your wedding day.” ■

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A photograph of two men in safety gear at a port. The man on the left, wearing a black cap, sunglasses, an orange safety vest, and white gloves, is pointing at a control panel on a large metal structure. The man on the right, also in a black cap and sunglasses, wears a yellow and orange safety vest and has a tattoo on his left arm. The background shows industrial equipment and a ship.

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SCAG Funding Opens Door To 'UPLAN,' A Land-use Document For North Long Beach

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Assistant Editor

City officials and business interests have hailed Long Beach's Downtown Plan as a major factor in the area's development and success. Now, the city may be able to develop a similar planning document for North Long Beach, thanks to \$250,000 in funding recently approved by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).

The idea for UPLAN – an acronym for Uptown Planning Land Use And Neighborhood Strategy – was conceived in and championed by the 9th District, according to Vice Mayor/Councilmember Rex Richardson.

"The Downtown Plan was a collection of documents that updated the land use, created some incentives, streamlined environmental impacts and created the stage for development to take place in downtown. We're doing the same thing but differently, because downtown is very different than uptown," Richardson said. "We're going to look at areas where we can modernize and update the land use to set the stage for more investment, just like downtown," he explained.

While there are multiple developments planned in and around North Long Beach, there is no single guiding plan for the

area, Richardson explained. "UPLAN would be one strategy, one community plan for North Long Beach that ties it all together and spurs more economic development," he said.

The plan might address ways to capitalize on North Long Beach's industrial area, which accounts for one-third of the industrial space in the city, according to Richardson. It may also address the area's corridors and creating connectivity between areas of development. "We have to make sure the table is set for better community development," he said.

While the grant application was conceived by and pertains to the 9th District, Richardson said the idea has not been fully scoped. When asked if UPLAN could include the 8th District, he said, "We look at North Long Beach as one community, and just because it starts in District 9 doesn't necessarily mean it stops where the border boundaries stop."

The \$250,000 grant awarded by SCAG will go to Long Beach Development Services, which created the grant application and will spearhead development of the document.

According to a press release from Richardson's office, the funding is awaiting final approval by the California

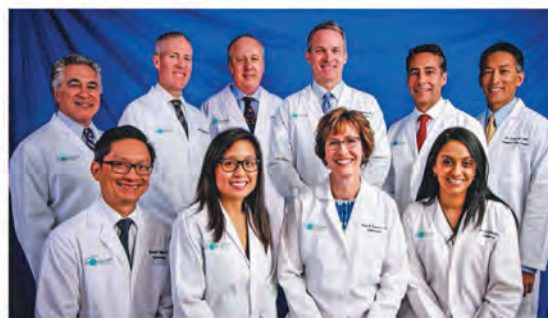
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TITLE	BID NUMBER	DATE
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Water Efficiency Outreach, Engagement & Analytics	Water Efficiency	02/16/2017
Job Order Contract	R-7074	02/17/2017
Petroleum Fuels	ITB FS17-019	02/21/2017
Petroleum Products	ITB FS17-037	02/21/2017
Up-fitting of Ford Police Interceptor Utility Veh.	ITB FS17-046	02/21/2017
Prefabricated Restroom Building	ITB CM17-035	02/23/2017
Library Painting Projects	ITB CM17-035	02/28/2017
Veterinary Pharmaceuticals & Supplies	ITB PR17-049	03/02/2017
Information Technology Strategic Plan	RFP TI17-057	03/07/2017
REBID – Comm. Rehab Prog. – Anaheim & Cherry	ITB DV17-031	03/09/2017
Downtown Long Beach Area Parking Study	RFP DV17-040	03/17/2017

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

Bidder Registration

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SCAG Funds UPLAN

(Continued From Page 27)

Transportation Commission and the Mobile Source Air Pollution Reduction Review Committee.

“Residents will actually be a part of crafting it,” Richardson said of UPLAN. “The title is UPLAN, but you can think of it as U-Plan.”

Richardson has begun creating a task force to oversee the creation of the document. The chair is Tom Carpenter, whose firm, Frontier Real Estate Investments, is developing a former redevelopment agency property at Atlantic Avenue and Artesia Boulevard. The vice chair is Tasha Hunter, director of the Uptown Business Improvement District. A second vice chair appointment is pending, Richardson said. ■

The Struggle For Affordable Housing And Renters’ Rights Continues

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Writer

During its February 21 meeting, the Long Beach City Council is scheduled to hold a study session on affordable housing.

According to Patrick Ure, housing development officer at the Long Beach Housing

and Community Improvement Bureau, city staff will make a presentation to talk about existing resources and funding for affordable housing; share feedback from housing developers, advocates and the community; and highlight accomplishments from the last 10 years.

Some accomplishments include the city and Long Beach Community Investment Company (LBCIC) assisting in the production of 1,178 affordable units – with 635 additional units in process – and the preservation of over 2,000 more, according to Ure. He said the city also has rehabilitated 367 units and assisted 335 first-time homebuyers.

Despite a decline in federal and state funding for affordable housing, Ure said the city and LBCIC have invested about \$143 million in the production, rehabilitation and preservation of units in the last 10 years. Total investment in affordable housing is \$542.4 million, when combined with outside funding sources and developer contributions.

“We all know that housing costs are on the rise and resources for developing affordable housing are on the decline,” Ure said. “So we are wanting to have a conversation about how we are going to produce new affordable housing units going forward. It’s up to the council what happens after that.”

Late last year, Mayor Robert Garcia hosted three community meetings with housing developers, advocates and the community to discuss affordable housing issues. Developers discussed current policies and the challenges of producing affordable housing, while advocates and residents expressed the growing need for more units.

The mayor pointed out that the city is required by the state to build affordable housing units each year. He said this study session will be a good opportunity for councilmembers to ask questions as they hear from city staff and members of the community.

“There is a need for quality housing affordability – whether it’s for working families or whether it’s for recent graduates out of Cal State Long Beach,” Garcia said. “We do have, statewide, a major housing crunch, and we need to do a better job of working with first-time homebuyers and ensuring that there’s housing for the community.”

The discussion on affordable housing, including renter and landlord rights, has been ongoing for years and has resulted in the adoption of policy and procedures, such as the Proactive Rental Housing Inspection Program, and the introduction of advocacy groups, such as Housing Long Beach (HLB), Long Beach Residents Empowered (LiBRE) and Better Housing for Long Beach.

Josh Butler, executive director for HLB, is a major proponent of increasing the amount of affordable housing in the city and has worked within the community on behalf of residents to gain more tenant protections and better quality housing. At a recent Human Relations Commission meeting, Butler spoke during public comment regarding a Responsible Renter’s Ordinance, which is a set of protections for tenants

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News In Brief

Business Owners Invited To Provide Input On Styrofoam Ban At February 21 Meeting

The environmental committee of the Long Beach City Council will have a discussion on the proposed ordinance to ban Styrofoam and other polystyrene products on February 21 at 3 p.m. in council chambers at city hall. Anyone interested in assisting with the drafting of the ordinance is invited to attend. Public commentary will be accepted. Those unable to attend are encouraged to send feedback to 4th District Councilmember Daryl Supernaw's office: 562/570-4444 or district4@longbeach.gov.

March 1: New Bathroom Access Requirements

Effective March 1, all businesses in California must make their single-user bathrooms accessible to all genders. Single-user bathrooms must have signage identifying them as gender neutral per Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations. The new requirement is a result of Assembly Bill 1732, which was signed into law by Gov. Jerry Brown. For the full bill text, visit www.leginfo.ca.gov.

City Council Expected To Restore Paramedic Rescue 12 And Fund Police Academy

At tonight's (February 14) meeting, the city council is expected to approve the restoration of Paramedic Rescue 12 and

reinstate Police Academy operations effective March 1.

If approved, one sergeant and seven police officers would be hired to perform recruitment, hiring and training for the police academy. Additionally, one sergeant would be hired to oversee background checks for hundreds of police recruit applicants.

For Rescue 12, approval would increase the number of Advanced Life Support-capable resources by one to nine; increase daily sworn firefighter staffing by two; and add six firefighting employees who would provide assistance in the event of a major or regional emergency.

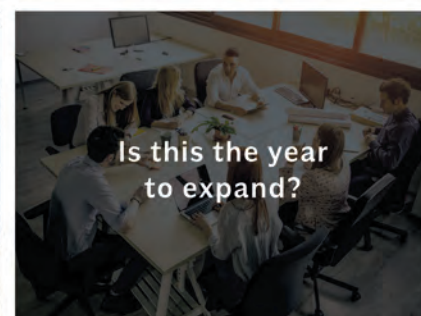
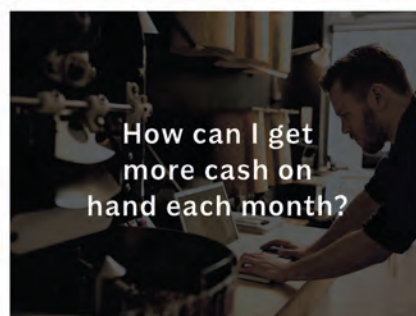
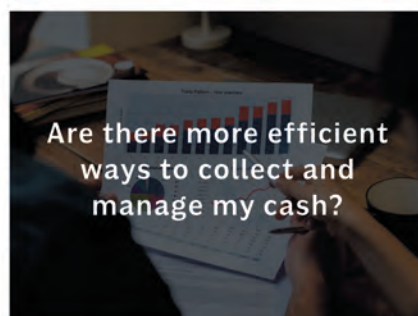
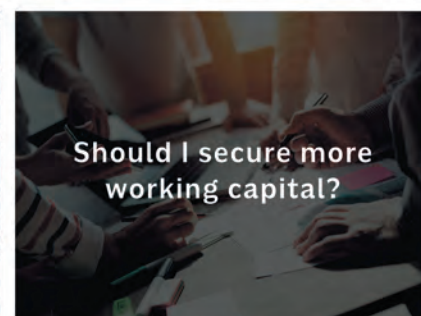
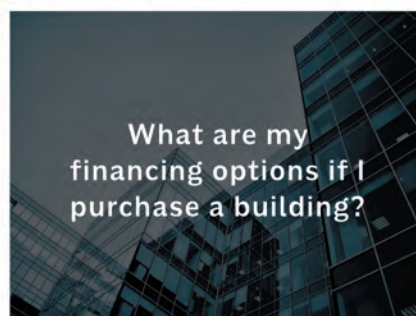
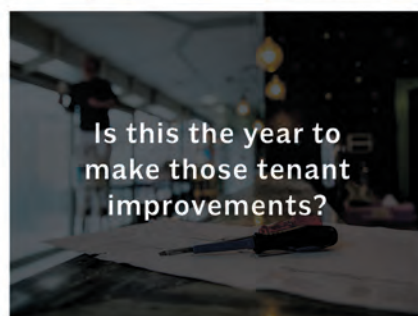
According to the city staff report, Measure A would fund both projects, with a total cost of \$1.5 million for the remaining six months of the current fiscal year, and \$2.5 million every fiscal year thereafter. ■

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proposed by HLB to prevent being unfairly evicted.

Based on his public comment, the commission invited Butler to its February 9 meeting to make a formal presentation on just-cause eviction. According to Butler, the presentation considered the number of residents HLB thinks would be interested in these protections, increasing rents and low vacancy rates in the city.

"We'd like to have [this] conversation with a larger group in the community and look at what other cities have done," Butler said. "I'm excited to have the opportunity to speak to the Long Beach Human Relations Commission. I think this issue is right up their alley."

Jorge Rivera, a community organizer with LiBRE, said his organization supports additional renter protection measures, such as HLB's proposed ordinance. However, Rivera said until a draft of the ordinance is produced, his organization cannot comment on whether it fully supports HLB's proposal.

Recently, when they learned of the sale of their buildings at 87 and 89 Lime Ave., tenants contacted Rivera to discuss habitability concerns and possible eviction notices. The buyer, Mike Dunfee Group, as part of the Downtown Long Beach real estate firm DOMA Properties, has served eviction notices to Long Beach residents in the past in order to renovate a building after purchase.

Rivera explained that the newly formed Lime Avenue Apartments Tenant Association has no legal recourse to fight eviction notices but explained that there are still options.

"There are strategies and tactics that other associations across the state and the nation have used to try to mitigate those impacts and try to negotiate for being able to stay. Negotiating for reasonable rent increases, . . . negotiating for fixed leases for certain terms and considerations, like a gradual rent increase as opposed to one lump sum," Rivera said. "So using tactics like withholding rent to negotiate for those terms are the things that other associations have been implementing just so that they could fight for the right to stay."

Rivera said this is a preemptive move, as no eviction notices have been posted at either building. In the meantime, he and the association have begun working toward improving their current quality of life by requesting what they claim are long-overdue repairs and maintenance, including a request for a code enforcement inspection of the property.

Tenants claim they have not had heat throughout these winter months and have only been offered space heaters. As of February 8, three weeks after the requested inspection, Rivera and the association were uncertain if the property owners had been cited by code enforcement for the broken heater.

"It goes without saying, if they are paying rent, they should be living in habitable conditions as per house and safety codes at the very least," Rivera said. "And if rent goes up, it will no longer be affordable to them, and that will lead to displacement. And there's always the risk of homelessness if they can't find another affordable place to rent." ■

Long Beach Heritage To Present Annual Preservation Awards

■ By **GEORGE ECONOMIDES**
Publisher

Last week, Long Beach Heritage announced the honorees for the 29th Annual Preservation Awards, including the preservationist of the year, six restoration awards and two cultural resource awards.

The individuals and organizations will be honored February 23 during the group's gala and fundraiser onboard the Queen Mary. A silent auction is set for 5:30 p.m. that includes antique items and gift certificates, followed by dinner at 7:15 p.m.

Tickets are \$125 per person. To purchase tickets or for more information, visit: www.lbheritage.org.

Long Beach Heritage is a non profit education and advocacy group promoting public knowledge and preservation of significant historic and architectural resources and the cultural heritage of Long Beach.

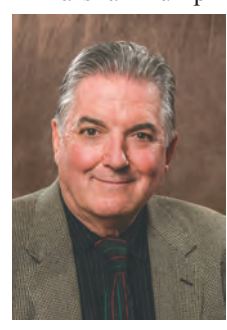
The following descriptions have been provided by Long Beach Heritage.

Preservationist Of The Year

Marshall Pumphrey

This top award honors an individual who has demonstrated sustained commitment to the preservation movement and to Long Beach's cultural heritage.

Marshall Pumphrey sets a tremendous example as a resident investing in Long Beach's past and future. In addition to, as a real estate investor, stabilizing and reactivating older buildings and, thus, providing residents and visitors with the experience of a city vested in taking care of itself, he is the President and Curator of the Long Beach Heritage Museum. In this capacity, he tirelessly promotes appreciation and pride in our great and multi-faceted history through placing the extensive collection of Long Beach artifacts, historical photos and post cards in educational installations in businesses and public spaces throughout Long Beach.



and visitors with the experience of a city vested in taking care of itself, he is the President and Curator of the Long Beach Heritage Museum. In this capacity, he tirelessly promotes appreciation and pride in our great and multi-faceted history through placing the extensive collection of Long Beach artifacts, historical photos and post cards in educational installations in businesses and public spaces throughout Long Beach.

Restoration Awards

Mid-Century Modern

Restoration on Harvey Way –

Greg & Anna Karin Kight

This Lakewood Village custom home represents a stunning purist restoration of the mid-century modern home built for Mr. and Mrs. W.R. Barton by J. Alvin



Floating staircase at the home of Greg and Anna Karin Kight.

Howell in 1957. Strategic placement of walls adds depth, interest, and a play of light to the open floor plan that is enhanced with floating bookshelves, a floating staircase, beautifully restored wood floors and cabinetry and a period-popular built-in planting bed.

Craftsman Bungalow

Restoration on Lewis Avenue –

Mark & Todd

Tokunaga-Wiesenhutter

Built in 1923 on Signal Hill, this charming craftsman bungalow has the distinction of being one of the homes that was simply relocated in 1932, probably to make more room for oil derricks. The current owners patiently restored each craftsman feature that was peeking through various alterations and, after 12 years, their home is a beautiful exemplar of a craftsman bungalow celebrating wood, stone, ceramic and glass artistry. Use of natural materials, built-in storage, and earth tones create a simplicity of design and a peaceful elegance throughout.

Rancho Los Alamitos Restoration of the Kitchen Areas and the Cook's Bedroom –

Pam Young Lee

Curator Pam Young Lee guided detailed historical examination before returning the kitchen and cook's bedroom to their conditions in the late 1920s and 30s. Through a combination of repair, replication and relocation of accoutrements from the Rancho collection, she has provided a delightful glimpse into the orderly activities of the "behind-the-scenes" help as well as their employers.

Hot Cha Café –

Winkler Properties LP &

Long Beach Development LLC

A great collaboration arose to allow the rehabilitation of this charming exemplar of programmatic architecture erected in 1932. When you see its iconic coffee spout, you know you'll be able to buy a cup of coffee there. Winkler Properties LP & Long Beach Dev. LLC purchased the property and worked with We Are The Next, Citron Design, and JR van Dijks to design and complete this project.

Edison Lofts –

Radkovich Properties,

The Kor Group and Waterton

Property Management

Conversion of this 1959 midcentury modern architectural gem from office space to residential and retail units has been accomplished while respecting Kenneth Wing's original architectural vision but also bringing the building into com-

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Rancho Los Alamitos Kitchen & Cook's Bedroom



Miner Smith Project

pliance with current seismic building code. Wing's conception has been respected. Edison Lofts continues to reflect the clean, geometric aesthetics of mid-century architecture, both inside and out.

Modern Sculpture Symposium at CSULB Art Museum – Kimberli Meyer, Director

The Monumental Sculpture Collection at the California State University Long Beach campus had its beginning in 1965 when sculpture artists from around the world convened in Long Beach and collaborated with industrial sponsors who provided technological assistance and access to facilities, equipment, and materials. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of

this event, the first of its kind in the United States, the sculptures were rehabilitated by the University Art Museum with the aid of funding from the Long Beach Navy Memorial Heritage Association. A walking tour map was designed to enable visitors to stroll the campus, locate each piece and read about its background.

Cultural Resource Awards

Collaborative Parks Survey –
Wilson High School Architectural
Club led by Ryan Dowgiewicz

Students from the Wilson High School Architecture Club partnered with the City of Long Beach Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine and Department

of Development Services in documenting noteworthy elements of structures throughout our Long Beach Park System. This collaboration has resulted in an invaluable time-saving reference for city staff as they plan maintenance and the grant applications necessary to fund infrastructure maintenance needs.

Miner Smith Project –

Steffie Hands & Norbert Schurer

A 150-page book, Boom and Bust: Miner Smith and his 1920s California Bungalow Mansions and a three-month-long photographic exhibit at the Historical Society of Long Beach was made possible through a project led by Steffie

Hands, a Long Beach realtor, and Norbert Schürer, a Cal State Long Beach English Professor and the owner of a Miner Smith home which was sponsored by the Belmont Heights Community Association with generous financial support from the Long Beach Navy Memorial Heritage Association and a micro-grant from the Arts Council for Long Beach. This project raises awareness of this unique artisan builder's work, and ensures the public continues to recognize his unique contributions to the rich history of the neighborhoods of Long Beach. ■

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Labor Protests At Downtown Hotels

(Continued From Page 1)

ings, preventing you from sleeping or, if you're already up, concentrating on your work. Imagine that this has been going on for two years.

This is the scenario that residents at the Aqua condominium towers at 388 E. Ocean Blvd. – directly across the street from the Westin – say they have been living with for some time now. They have been vocal about their frustrations, regularly calling the police department to complain.

Some of these residents who have complained about noise were recently subpoenaed in a case concerning two protestors who had charges brought against them by the city prosecutor, but they never had to testify. That's because, on February 1, the two protestors ultimately entered a plea of "no contest" to charges that they "did willfully and unlawfully and maliciously disturb another person by loud and unreasonable noise, in violation of Section 415(2) of the Penal Code of State of California," according to court documents.

"I live on the 14th floor, and I'm pretty much directly across from it. And it's really loud and annoying," Vicki Cameron, an Aqua resident, told the Business Journal. "They're right outside here. But my bathroom is not connected to the window or the wall at all, and I can hear it in there when I'm in the bathroom getting ready and the door is shut. It's just very loud."

Debbie Lewis, another resident of the Aqua, said she wouldn't mind the protests if it weren't for the bullhorn use. "It's not all that bad without the bullhorns. But once they turn that on, it's just ungodly," she said. Both Lewis and Cameron noted that the bullhorn use typically starts at 7 a.m. on the dot.

"I share the same experience, and I have other neighbors that live next to me – it's the same thing," Katherine Kelton, another Aqua resident, said. "The one I was most concerned about is my neighbor who is a surgical nurse working graveyard. And she's trying to rest, and she can't sleep while this is going on. And she's got to get up, work the graveyard shift and take care of patients."

Kelton said she works for a Fortune 500 company with an office in Long Beach, but declined to identify the firm because she does not want to speak on its behalf. She did say, however, that the protests are affecting that business.

"I work for a large Fortune 500 company, and I host business meetings here on a regular basis. And I'm afraid to have them stay at the Westin," Kelton said. "I told my boss that I'm really concerned for having [them] stay at the Westin because I'm afraid that [they] might be attacked with bullhorns. I'm actually to the point of telling the company, 'Don't come to Long Beach,' because you pass them on the street and they have no respect for anybody."

Kelton has already diverted 10 room nights from the Westin that were scheduled for a July meeting. "I'm thinking of canceling the meeting altogether," she said.

The residents feel that existing noise laws in the area are not being enforced by the city in relation to these protests. Despite making calls to police and meeting with their district councilmember, Jeanine Pearce, they feel their concerns are not being addressed.



Protesting work conditions, a woman set up a clothesline and speaks into a bullhorn outside of The Westin Long Beach on Ocean Boulevard. Similar protests have been recurring since 2015 and have resulted in dozens of calls for service to the police. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

Police Department Response

Commander Robert Smith has been in charge of the police department's West Division, which includes downtown, during the course of these protests. Last week, he started a new position overseeing gang-related activity.

"There have been a number of calls for service at the Westin and the Renaissance, and ultimately those calls would come in a variety of different types. Probably the most common would be disturbing the peace," Smith said. "When we get calls . . . for those types of activity and they have somebody that's willing to press charges, our officers will go out there. And their role when they go out there is just as basically fact-finders."

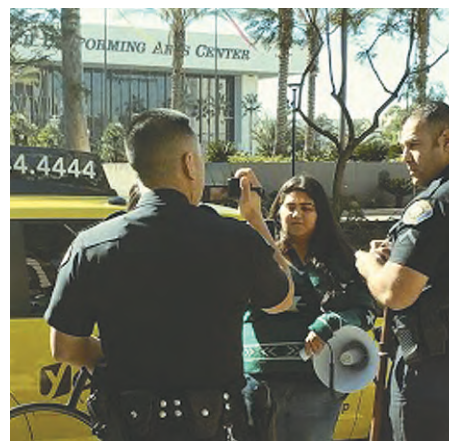
In 2016, there were 136 calls for service to the Westin, according to Smith. Among these, 29 calls were labeled with the call type "disturbing the peace." Twenty-five were simply labeled "strike." Another 10 calls were referred to as "unwelcome" complaint types, which indicate that an uninvited individual or group is being disruptive and has refused to leave the premises when asked.

Smith noted that these are "a variety of different calls for service that may or may not have anything to do with what you're talking about – protest activity."

The police department received 195 calls for service to the Renaissance last year. "I'll tell you the top four," Smith said. "The call type 'unwelcome' – 46 calls for service. 'Strike' call type is 19 calls. 'Disturbing the peace,' which is a call type – 18 calls. And then 'group,' which is also a call type, 17 calls."

In essence, police arrive at the scene to collect evidence for potential prosecution, Smith explained. "That could include what you're talking about there with the megaphones and the loud speakers," he said. "All of that material and information would then be put into a police report. And that police report would then be packaged up and provided to the city prosecutor for any filing consideration."

When told about residents' complaints that officers are not making an effort to stop noisemaking, Smith explained how officers are able to respond to the situation. "There are and could be some first amend-



Long Beach police officers question a protestor outside the Westin Long Beach Hotel.

ment free speech rights that those union members or protestors have out there," he said. "So ultimately our officers are there to collect all the evidence, take all the statements from both sides."

Smith called the situation "sensitive on all sides."

"Our officers have a very simple mission, and that is to collect all the facts to the best of their ability," he said. "When they interact with the protestors and the union members, it's probably basically to get their information, to identify the people who may be accused of a crime, but ultimately we're not making that decision at that time," he said.

The police department also responds to requests for service from protestors, Smith pointed out. "If a protestor or union member makes the call themselves and alleges a crime like they have in the past, we would do the same thing with whoever they are accusing of potential crimes," he said.

There is a city noise ordinance in place in the area, but the health department oversees that, according to Smith.

Union Weighs In

Unite Here Local 11 is the union involved in organizing the protests. Lorena Lopez, community organizer for the union in Long Beach, said that the organization got involved when hotel workers came forward with complaints of labor law abuses and sexual harassment. "As you know, it's within our constitutional rights to protest in an organized manner," Lopez said.

Hotel workers typically arrive for work

between 7 and 8 a.m. and leave at 5 p.m., Lopez noted. "We want to be able to communicate to the guests and to the workers of the hotels," she said. "And our goal in no way is to disturb the neighbors. That is not why we're there."

Asked if she and the protestors would consider a compromise to stop using bullhorns, Lopez instead responded by addressing concerns about police involvement. She pointed out that it is a waste of city resources to have multiple police officers in multiple vehicles respond to calls about the protests.

Instead, as many other cities do, Lopez would like the department to retain one labor relations officer to contend with these calls. "I think having labor detail deal with those issues is something that should have been addressed a long time ago," she said.

Asked again if the protestors would compromise by putting down the bullhorn, she said no.

"We're committed to defending our first amendment rights," she stressed. "And it's within our rights to use amplified noise. And in a city where we have seen police tactics that are just unacceptable, we are not going to be uncommitted to defending that." Lopez continued, "We don't want to in any way jeopardize their ability to protest with amplified noise in the City of Long Beach because we agreed to such a thing."

Asked if the protestors make efforts to abide by the city's noise ordinance, she said, "We believe we are within our rights."

Health Department: Protests Have Violated City's Noise Ordinance

Nelson Kerr, director of environmental health for the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services, said the city's noise ordinance allows for louder noise levels in the 2nd District (which includes downtown) than in other parts of the city. The health department has decibel readers, technology that enables measurement of noise levels.

"There's a higher decibel allowance there because it's just louder down there," Kerr said of the noise restrictions. "It's actually 55 [decibels] at night after 10 p.m. and then during the day it's 60 [decibels] from 7 a.m."

The health department has taken nine readings of noise levels related to the protests since June 26, 2015. The last was on December 7, 2016.

"Each time we went out when we were able to get a reading, the noise levels were in fact exceeding the noise ordinance standard," Kerr said. "Levels were between 80 and 84 decibels."

Increases in noise by decibel are logarithmic — meaning, they increase more sharply between points than number readings that are on linear scale. This makes an increase of the acceptable noise level of 60 decibels to 80 decibels a drastic increase, Kerr confirmed.

"Understand that there are interior standards for measurements taken from the interior of somebody's home and then there's exterior measurements, and most of the ones we took were exterior," Kerr said.

"However, there were a couple [instances] where we actually went into somebody's home and took readings. Those were also found to be in violation," Kerr said. Another reading was taken inside a hotel room, he noted.

There is currently another case pertaining to three protestors — different individuals than those who recently pleaded no contest to charges — that is ongoing. In that case, the city prosecutor is also attempting to prosecute based on Section 415(2) of state penal code, relating to disturbing the peace.

"What I could say about that is it's a shame that the City of Long Beach is retaliating and treating protestors as criminals," Lopez said. "I think it's a shame. I think the Long Beach police and the mayor of that city should be ashamed to treat protestors as criminals."

Lopez said she has met with Police Chief Robert Luna. "I personally met with Robert Luna before this campaign went public and explained to him [to] expect this," Lopez said. "We don't want to waste city resources. We want to be able to communicate with you." She said that complaints related to protests are "just the nature of the business."

Lopez added, "People have the right to protest. People will complain. But if the Long Beach Police is structured in a way where they respond to calls, I mean, that's just silly."

Asked what the end goal of the protests is and how labor peace can be achieved, Lopez responded, "A fair process to organize a union."

Councilmember's Response

Residents from the area, including Lewis, have met with Pearce to discuss their concerns about noise. They continue to send her e-mails demanding she directly address the matter.

Pearce worked for The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) before her election last June to the city council. Through her work at that organization, she helped to establish a coalition of 40 Long Beach organizations that are dedicated to the wellbeing of workers. One of the organizations LAANE works with was (and still is) Unite Here Local 11. During her work with LAANE, she did participate in hotel picket lines.

Pearce is no longer employed with LAANE and devotes her time to her council work.

Describing her involvement with labor advocacy and protests at the Renaissance and Westin, Pearce told the Business Journal: "My role was to educate community members, to bring people to the table and to make sure they were hearing the stories from employees, to give them the opportunity to engage with management if they wanted it, to make sure that they were talking to their elected officials about what they heard. And that was my role as director."

Referring to current complaints about the protests, Pearce said, "I think what is important [to know] about this project and what is happening outside the Westin and the Renaissance is that you have a very small group of people that are very upset."

"I would be upset too if I was being woken up three times a week with a bullhorn. But it's a small group of people that is upset, and they're asking me to tell my union lackeys to step off."

Pearce said the same group of individuals has been bullying her online through e-mails and Facebook messages. "It's the hardest part of the job whenever you're trying to do your best and then people come up and make snubs at you or call you fun names," she said. "It's the same five people that have had the same conversation for two years with me."

Pearce argued that it would not be right for her to tell a hotel housekeeper who has come forward about sexual assault experiences in the workplace, as has occurred with workers at the Renaissance and Westin, to stop picketing. "I'm not going to tell her to be quiet about the injustices that she feels," she said.

Soon after being elected to the city council, Pearce traveled to Utah to meet with Utah Retirement Systems, the majority stakeholder in a limited liability corporation that owns the Westin Long Beach. "My purpose to go was to sit down with the union, have a conversation, have management sit down with workers, with labor, and figure something out," she said. "It wasn't to say, 'You have to go union.' It was to have a conversation."

In her role as councilmember, Pearce said she is able to make policy, advocate for constituents and provide a forum to bring people together. "So going to the Westin, that is me trying to be a good elected official," she said. "And when I was there, I said I have residents that are upset, I have businesses in downtown that are upset. This is not just about hotel workers. This is about the entirety of my district."

Attempts to meet with management of the hotels prior to this meeting in Utah were not successful, according to Pearce.

"I had reached out several times to the Westin and the Renaissance," she said, "and they would never meet with me. To not meet with the official that represents your district is frustrating." Since her trip to Utah, she has spoken with management at the Westin, and they are working on setting up a meeting, she noted.

Pamela Ryan, manager of the Renaissance, said she has never heard from Pearce.

Asked if she condones the use of bullhorns in early morning hours, Pearce did not say yes or no. "I think, being someone who has held a bullhorn on a picket line at 7 in the morning or 6 in the morning . . . we used to do it at 6. We moved

it to 7. We worked with the city to move it to 7," she said.

"I have been monitoring the calls to service for PD because I know that when there's pickets out there we get multiple calls to service and that is a strain on our resources," Pearce said. "It's the same calls. Nothing is coming of it."

At mention of the case in which protestors pleaded no contest and the current, separate case against three other protestors, Pearce said she was worried about where such legal pursuits might lead. "I worry that if we continue to prosecute people for exercising their first amendment right, that the city could be at risk for any kind of lawsuits. You know, it is a fine line to walk down," she said.

Residents at the Aqua interviewed by the Business Journal remain frustrated as, despite dialogue and ongoing litigation, bullhorn protests continue. "It's not very difficult to just drop the bullhorn, for starters. That's a very simple thing to do," Lewis said.

Kelton said she and her fellow Aqua residents are not anti-union. "We're pro-workers' rights, and we're pro-tourists' rights. We're not against unions or against anything," she said. She queried, "I think the question I have is: At what point do you draw the line?"

(The February 28 edition of the Business Journal will focus on the efforts to unionize these hotels, including interviews with hotel workers and all sides involved.) ■

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Carol Churchill



Robert Copeland



Tom Benson



Maria Harris



Keir Jones



Larry Blunden



Ed Wilson



Jason Aula



Lori Woods

(Continued From Page 1)

Signal Hill has a population of roughly 11,750 residents and a voter registration of about 6,800.

During a comparable election in 2013, three incumbents and four challengers faced off, and one incumbent was unseated. Voter registration then was 6,143, with a turnout of 21.29%. The top three vote-getters received 633, 613 and 547 votes, respectively, with last place receiving 393 votes.

With 1,400 to 1,600 people expected to cast ballots this year – each voting for up to three people – the race appears to be wide open.

Voters are also deciding whether to impose a 10% tax on medical marijuana facilities and users – even though the city does not currently allow such facilities. Known as Measure F, the item qualified for the ballot due to a petition drive. A sister petition to legalize medical marijuana facilities failed to qualify for the ballot.

Councilmember Lori Woods, who serves as mayor (the position is rotated annually among the five councilmembers) and who is completing her first term, and 20-year incumbent Councilmember Ed Wilson, are seeking another four years.

The field of challengers consists of former councilmember Carol Churchill, current Signal Hill City Clerk Robert Copeland and current Signal Hill City Treasurer Larry Blunden. The latter two are not full-time positions and are paid \$300 monthly – increasing to \$405 after the election. City councilmembers currently receive \$494.40 per month, jumping to \$667.44 monthly after election day.

Other challengers are Jason Aula, Tom Benson, Maria Harris and Keir Jones.

The Business Journal e-mailed the nine candidates, requesting a bio, picture and answers to two questions, not to exceed a combined 300 words. The following is a brief background on each candidate – presented in the order received. The candidate answers to the questions are shown separately beginning on the next page.

Carol Churchill ...

A 37-year resident of the city and a lawyer with a private practice in Signal Hill; she has considerable involvement in the city, previously serving as a councilmember, a planning commissioner, founding member of Signal Hill Community First and a member of the Rotary Club of Signal Hill; she earned her Juris Doctor from the University of West Los Angeles School of Law and her bachelor's in wildlife biology from Colorado State University.

Robert Copeland ...

A resident of Signal Hill since 2002; began serving on city's sustainable city committee in 2008; appointed city clerk to fill a vacancy, then elected to a full term in 2015; an 18-year employee with The Boeing Company, he currently is an environmental engineer in Boeing's Huntington Beach plant; married with two children; earned Juris Doctor from Southwestern School of Law, MBA from Pepperdine and a bachelor's in chemistry from UCLA.

Tom Benson ...

A 30-year resident of Signal Hill and a long-time small business owner in the city, served on the city's planning and civil service commissions, sustainable cities and library design committees; member of the Rotary Club of Signal Hill; served on the leadership council of the National Federation of Independent Business for the past seven years; holds a bachelor's in finance and received a certification in project management from UC Irvine.

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Maria Harris . . .

She is a retired university professor and consultant who spent nearly 30 years as a full and part-time teacher at several Cal State campuses, including in Long Beach, USC and at the New Bulgarian University in Sofia, Bulgaria; has authored numerous papers on a variety of subjects; active in the Signal Hill community since 1994, including being a founder of the Signal Hill Community First group; earned her doctorate and masters in public administration from USC, and a bachelors from UC Santa Barbara; worked nine years as a journalist.

Keir Jones . . .

A long-time city resident, he grew up in San Clemente and moved to Signal Hill following graduate school, earning a degree in business. He owns a State Farm Insurance agency in Long Beach, which won “Best of Long Beach” for four consecutive years; he served on the boards of the Legal Aid Foundation and as president of the Long Beach Gay & Lesbian Chamber; he lives with his husband, Thomas-Michael, and their schnauzer, Winston.

Larry Blunden . . .

A Signal Hill resident since 1984, he also owned a small business in the city for 28 years; has been serving as city treasurer city 2014; other involvement includes being president of the Signal Hill Historical Society, treasurer of the Friends of the Signal Hill Library, president of two homeowners associations and a member of the Signal Hill Police Foundation.

Ed Wilson . . .

Elected to the Signal Hill City Council in 1997 and has served four one-year terms as mayor; “Signal Hill has been a leader in economic development, water management and business friendless” during this time; has nearly three decades in private business and was employed as a CPA (inactive) for KPMG and several large corporations; he has served in leadership positions on numerous regional and state boards and organizations; earned his bachelor’s degree in accounting from USC.

Jason Aula . . .

He says he’s a “conservative community organizer” who “loves the U.S. Constitution and capitalism;” he’s an Indian American “Desi” who grew up in the San Fernando Valley; attended CSU Long Beach studying finance and served as president of College Republicans; lead organizer for the College Affordability Act of 2008, working with the Greenlight Institute; has served as a professional political campaign consultant.

Lori Woods . . .

Completing first term on the Signal Hill City Council, she is currently serving as mayor; she’s been “working on the development of neighborhood based emergency preparedness plans” and to “encourage residents to support our local economy by shopping locally;” she and her husband are raising four children and running a family business; earned a degree in office administration from Tennessee Temple University; holds a California Real Estate Sales License.

Candidate Questions

The Business Journal asked the candidates to respond to two questions and to keep their responses to 300 words, combined. Here are their unedited responses:

QUESTION #1

What do you consider the City of Signal Hill’s biggest challenge, and how would you address it?

Carol Churchill – The primary challenge the City faces is creating a BRAND that will identify the Signal Hill as a “destination” for more than buying a car and bulk groceries.

I want to give people a unique reason to get off the 405 Freeway in Signal Hill. I want to plan and develop an architecturally stunning venue with exciting year-round festival events that people from Southern California declare: “We have to go to Signal Hill..there is so much going on.”

Our economy is changing as technology and life styles change. We are seeing people INVENT their own kind of work and live environments. Civic and Business Leaders must recognize this, and adjusts their policies as fast as the economy changes to fit the needs of not only local residents, but visitors who generate business opportunities and revenues.

Economic reports state that the “new economy for cities” is based on “festival tourism”. Cities seek new stadiums because they create jobs for local residents and bring in visitors, building city revenues.

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Young adults want a combined “work and living” space where they can meet friends,

(Please Continue To Page 36)



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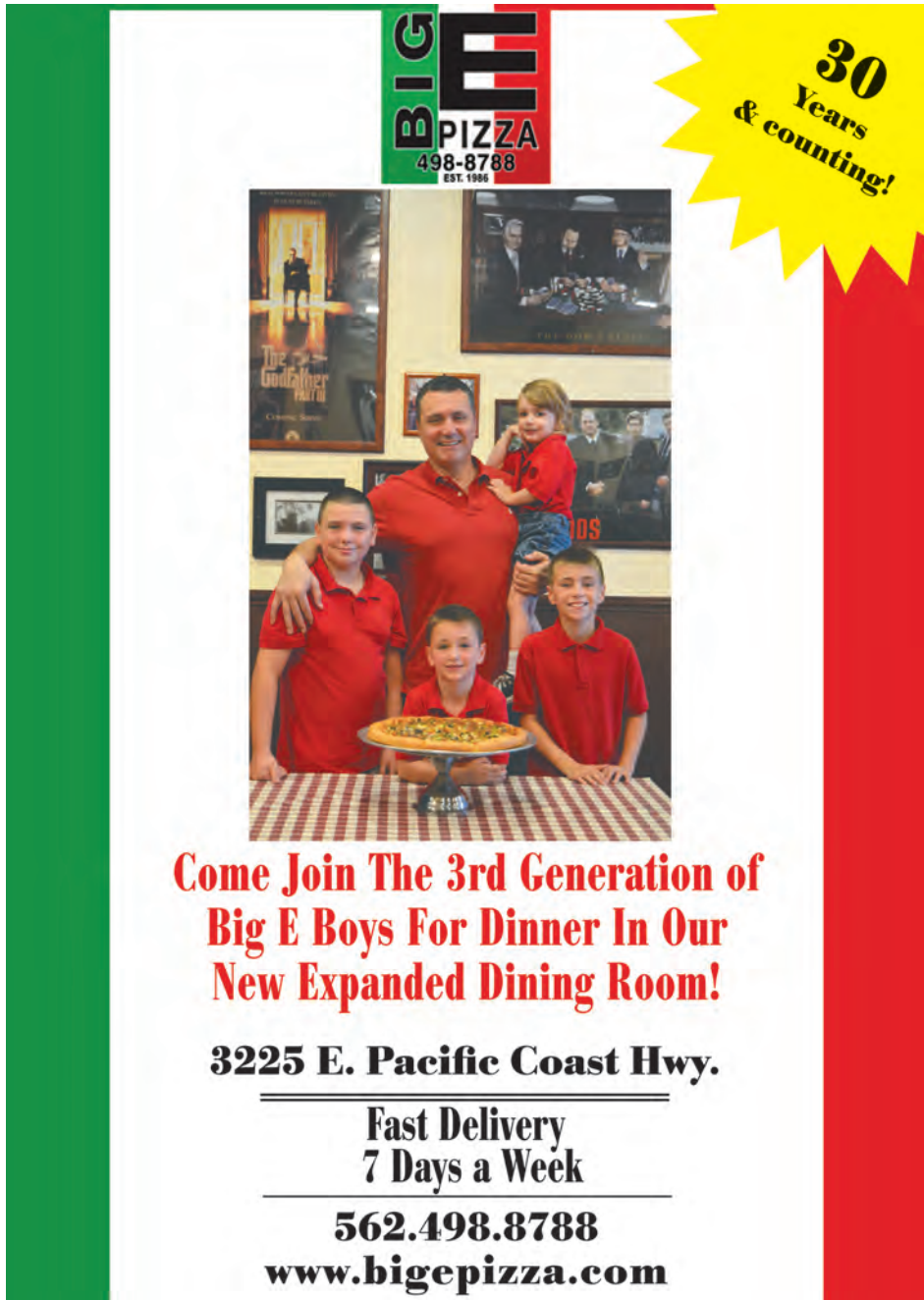
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(Continued From Page 35)

come up with business plans, and be motivated to succeed. Signal Hill and Long Beach's multicultural and diverse community, with year-round mild weather, all valuable assets for international "festival tourism".

Unskilled labor can earn a living with micro-businesses such as movable food trucks, the sale of home-made arts, crafts, food and souvenirs. This micro-economy cuts poverty, homelessness, and benefits the whole community.

Robert Copeland –

I believe the biggest challenge Signal Hill faces is the diversification of our revenue streams. The majority of our revenue is from sales tax, and much of it is from a handful of businesses. Shortfalls in revenue due to the departure of a major business or an economic downturn that affects consumer spending could eventually strain city services. Steady increases and diversification of revenue will make everyone more comfortable increasing the provision of the additional police, city, and community services that residents want. While the city is currently financially healthy, a comprehensive plan must be developed in partnership with residents, businesses, and property owners in order to diversify revenue. Engaging and creating passionate stakeholders to develop and execute such a plan will go a long way in convincing new businesses to bring their business to Signal Hill.

Tom Benson –

The largest challenge is to keep Signal Hill expertly staffed and agile to be able to focus on solutions that address the dynamically changing landscape of Resident Needs, Business Development, Government, and the plethora of new regulation. This challenge includes having an intelligent understanding of the issues facing this community today: safe, affordable water; public safety; balanced budgets; reserves; and optimum utilization of limited land.

Many opponents in this election will offer you simple and definitive platitudes, with high gloss mailings. . . . the fact is the answers are complex and require experience and an intelligent understanding of Signal Hill. Evaluating and articulating current regulations, trends and development, with the genuine ability to work with 4 other Council Members to formulate and implement the most beneficial solutions for Signal Hill will be the biggest challenge.

The simple answer is, there are not simple solutions. . . . I have a track record of commitment, continuous involvement and participation, and constructive relationships to help me be part of the solution on the first day as a City Council member.

Maria Harris –

Our biggest challenge continues to be funding effective basic public services to residents and the business community while also providing facilities and activities that enrich the quality of life. More attention is needed on city initiatives to generate more sales tax revenue.

To be specific – Signal Hill's police chief wants to establish robust Community Policing procedures and I want to work to get the resources necessary to do it.

A larger sales tax revenue means the City will be able to put more money into Community Policing. When we see a police officer walking our neighborhoods we can get to know him or her and then we can work together to solve problems.

Keir Jones –

The biggest challenge we face in Signal Hill today is maximizing the opportunity we have – right now – to shape the future development of our city. I would help facilitate a master development plan to address our remaining vacant lots, incorporating plans that connect our city from the North to the Southeast with public spaces, adding new residential and commercial options that will insure the future success of our city and define it as an amazing place to live, work, and play.

Larry Blunden –

As the current city treasurer, keeping our city fiscally sound for the future is always a basis for everything the City does for our community. Maintaining services without increasing costs to our residents is always a challenge for any city. Signal Hill continues to do a terrific job with their reserves and fiscal responsibility to the community. Signal Hill currently depends heavily on the auto center for revenue and a downturn of sales could put stress on our reserves. Finding a way to diversify our sales tax revenue by bringing in more businesses would be at the top of the list. Creating a community town center to encourage businesses while providing residents with more shopping and restaurant choices will keep dollars in our city and help balance revenues.

Ed Wilson –

My priorities for the next four years are as follows: A new library powered by solar; Ensuring a strong police force; Sustained business and residential growth; Balanced budgets; Increasing renewable energy in the city; Maintaining accountability to the citizens; Supporting enhanced transparency through directly elected Mayor.

Signal Hill could face significant fiscal issues due to the CA State Budget Deficit, increases in PERS contribution rates and potential slow down in retail sales and the national economy. We have made a concerted effort to build our reserves and diversify our revenue base to ensure a buffer from dramatic financial fluctuations. We are looking to develop and implement a master plan for economic development and job growth. It is my goal to incorporate new sustainability strategies within this plan.

Jason Aula –

The City of Signal Hill's biggest challenge is restoring general faith in our system of government. Politicians must serve people and their interests first not special interests and such. According to my field research of Signal Hill voters there are numerous demands for pension reform and term limits for council members. Signal Hill should have a good pension for their employees which is why I am proposing use taxes for cannabis and sugary drinks to create new revenue to fund varying liabilities rather than cut. If elected I will be the proponent of ballot initiative for term limits or call for an ordinance by vote if elected to set term limits for at two four year terms. I will do this because the voters want these reforms and I believe in said causes.

Lori Woods –

Few of the challenges that face Signal Hill come from 'within' the city. Our biggest long term challenges come from state and federal requirements like stormwater capture & treatment, air quality standards, housing requirements, transportation mandates, etc... Many of these requirements and mandates are imposed without any funding options made available. As part of the City Council we recognize and address these issues head-on, getting as much information as we can and many times Signal Hill takes the lead throughout the region and county on how best to meet these 'requirements'. ■

QUESTION #2

Is city government serving the needs of the residents and business community? Please explain.

Carol Churchill –

Local residents receive good basic municipal services.


Robert Copeland –

The City of Signal Hill is doing a great job serving the needs of the residents and business community. Residents are blessed with beautiful parks, diverse communities & city service offerings, a range of housing options, and a great police force. In addition to the city's location, the business community appreciates the friendly and accessible city staff, forward-thinking commissions, and low taxes and fees. What I hear from residents is that they would like more local shopping and dining options. By not doing all we can to attract the shops and dining options residents want we are doing

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both the residents and business community a dis-service. In order to serve our residents we need to accelerate resident and business outreach by creating an overall plan for development that integrates new business, housing, and open space into one plan. We have a lot to offer all of our stakeholders, and we should work together to make an even better Signal Hill.

Tom Benson –

The answer is that the City government has historically served the residents and the business community needs very well. We have a balanced budget; meaningful growth in our housing; good public safety; 2 modern water reservoirs, upgraded water mains, and a new well about to be dedicated; and a comparatively friendly business environment.

My purpose in running for City Council is that our future is dynamically changing and volatile. We face crippling State and Federal regulations and mandates, unprecedented educational shifts, changing residential demands, dramatic transformation in retail channels, and rapidly changing transportation infrastructure requirements. The decisions we make will be consequential. We must understand and exploit our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and the threats to soundly assure the future of the 21st Century Signal Hill.

The fulfillment of the City’s future services and needs will require the ability to assess the City’s best opportunities and intelligently implement services and solutions with a balanced budget. Political soundbites and slick glossy mailers by smiling empty suits will not help the City to continue sound growth and operational leadership. I have a record of continuous service in Signal Hill and I believe I one of the best candidates to represent you. Thank you.

Maria Harris –

The City has not kept pace with the changes in local demographics or methods to generate more sales tax dollars. The modern consumer has to leave Signal Hill in order to buy the goods and enjoy experiences he or she wants.

What is needed is a new business development vision that is designed to fill this vacuum. We must develop a business vision with a focus on small and mid-size business along the Cherry/Willow commercial corridor.

The Signal Hill business community is interested in revitalizing the local economy and is open to work with the city. They see a need for small to mid-size retail business and an opportunity for attracting to the city emerging software/tech entrepreneurs.

A possibility is a commercial plaza with a promenade with public spaces where people can “hang out,” shop, eat, lounge in appealing spaces. The City should explore opportunities for the entrepreneurial trend in “pop ups” or a two or three-story building with lofts, studios and apartments on the upper floors, a floor for innovation entrepreneurs and retail on the bottom floor. These are concepts that have proven viable.

As a Council member, I will work with the business community and residents to develop a vision for revitalizing the local economy. This type of planning takes commitment, trust, and hard work.

Keir Jones –

Our city government has been fiscally responsible, and must remain so, while improving communication and safety for us all. I would encouraging involvement between residents, business owners, and our city staff to make sure that everyones needs are



being met, by improving our online and mobile technology platforms, most importantly better connecting our police department with our neighborhoods.

Larry Blunden –

Absolutely and yes! Signal Hill is really doing an amazing job of serving those who live and work here and we must be able to grow and change with the times to continue this legacy. Currently Signal Hill has an awesome police department with three minute or less response times. Residents and businesses pay no utility tax. Signal Hill has great award wining parks with wonderful programs for kids and seniors. Residents and businesses pay the lowest water rates of any nearby city. We have a strong Chamber of Commerce supporting local businesses and a friendly business environment.

Planning the future with new faces and new visions, combined with carefully planned growth of our City to better serve our residents will help bring some new excitement to our city.

Ed Wilson –

I believe that the Signal Hill is very responsive the the needs and concerns of both residents and the business community. The council and staff

actively seek input from all areas of the community, examples include the Strategic Plan, Community Needs Assessment, the Police Department Committee, and the Library Building Committee.

Jason Aula –

The city government serves the needs of the residents and business community satisfactorily presently. However, city government can serve better and differently from my point of view. Signal Hill businesses pay less tax by 10% at 9% total. By better I mean the sugary drinks use tax I am proposing to further fund municipal recreation and parks geared for youth and adult use to offset the taxpayer cost of obesity and diabetes. By different Signal Hill can do as Law Vegas has just done with all city buildings powered by renewable resources to promote private use of renewable power sources such as solar, wind, and water. City government can promote job growth in micro industries like technology by bring fiber optic internet to Signal Hill. In addition, city government could create hundreds of jobs by permitting recreational cannabis in addition to Measure F a 10% cannabis cannabis use tax for police & schools voted on March 7th as well.

Lori Woods –

Signal Hill is a very business friendly environment. Our goal is to help provide an atmosphere that will attract business to come, provide the necessary infrastructure to aid in their success and then to get out of their way. Signal Hill succeeds in providing services and programs to the community because our businesses succeed. We are a no/low property tax city, only receiving about .06 cents of each property tax dollar collected. The majority of our revenues come from sales tax. We still have space to develop many areas of the city. That development doesn’t come quickly, but once a business, development or project is completed in Signal Hill....it is always a success! As a result, the needs of our residents are met. Trees are trimmed, streets are swept, trash is hauled away, park programs are well attended, senior programs are popular, police, fire and emergency services are ‘top notch’. There is always room for improvement and we strive everyday to provide excellence in all we do. ■

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Small Business Showcase – The Broadway Corridor of Villages



Bicycle Stand

In 2011, husband and wife Evan and Nicole Whitener founded The Bicycle Stand, a vintage bike store with repair services. The longtime cyclists never planned to be business owners, but their desire to provide services to the local cycling community and to share their love of foreign, vintage bicycles led them to scrap a trip to Europe and use their savings to start up the store on Broadway instead. “We took a gamble and set up our first shop at 1824 E. Broadway and stayed there for three and a half years through many trials and tribulations,” Evan Whitener recalled. “Then in 2014, we were able to move down the street about a mile and establish our new residence at 2740 E. Broadway. We got to keep all our local clientele, and we got to expand our footprint, which was a dream come true.” The Bicycle Stand specializes in foreign, handmade steel bicycles. “I think that people in Long Beach have a certain appreciation for that older sort of more durable, robust good [bike] than maybe a different area that might be more prone to the latest and the greatest, or the flash in the pan,” he said. The shop also offers standard bicycle services like tire changes and tune-ups, as well as restoration and repairs.

Hot Java

On March 1, Sergio Macias, left, and Ken Davis will celebrate their 12th anniversary as co-owners of Hot Java, a coffee shop located at 2101 E. Broadway. The pair purchased the business after the previous owner asked all interested buyers to write a letter about their vision for the coffee shop. “Sergio and I were very committed that it stays part of the community and that it’s a place for people to come and find a home away from their own,” Davis said. To set itself apart from other community coffee shops, Davis said Hot Java strives to help people “find what they love.” The shop carries more than 40 syrup flavors and its signature Flaming Sauce (yes, a spicy sauce they will add to any drink order), which allows them to create an endlessly customizable coffee experience. Open 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day, the shop also employs a chef and sous chef who serve up paninis, breakfast burritos, lox and bagels, and avocado spread toast on organic, whole-grain bread. The shop also showcases art, literary and comedy events. “I think, for both of us, it’s really our passion for people and great coffee, and . . . we are just in love with our community and our customers.”



Babcock & Cooke

Card shop and gift store Babcock & Cooke has been a fixture of the Bluff Heights Village of the Broadway corridor since it first opened in 1983. Since then, the shop has moved storefronts multiple times on the block between Redondo Avenue and Newport Avenue, and it now resides at 3405 E. Broadway. Current owner Michael Davis started out at Babcock & Cooke as an employee in 1989, when he was about 20 years old. A recent transplant from Ohio at the time, he was simply looking for employment. But over the years, he stayed on because of the tight-knit family vibe of the staff and of the business corridor. “Even just yesterday I was ringing up a woman, and she has been shopping here that whole time,” Davis said. “This little corner is such a nice community,” he added, noting that he has watched the area become a bustling place for business in recent years. The founder of Babcock & Cooke had to close down its larger location a few doors down when he was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig’s disease in 2012. He transferred ownership of the name to Davis, who reopened the smaller gift shop at its current location. “The lofty goal is to somehow grow space-wise and to continue to keep the store a part of the community for as long as I can,” Davis said.



Mineshaft Bar

Uncle Jimmy purchased a straight biker bar at 1720 E. Broadway 40 years ago and transformed it into the Mineshaft Bar, a prominent gay bar in the heart of Long Beach’s gayborhood in the Alamitos Beach area. “Being a gay man himself, I think [Uncle Jimmy] was looking for a place that kind of fit his personality. That was back in the heyday in Long Beach, where the gay Broadway corridor was really coming into its own,” Jeff Darling, manager of Castro Group, which operates all the family’s businesses, including bars, apartment complexes and retail buildings, said. At one time, Jimmy owned five bars in the city, according to Darling, but eventually whittled it down to Mineshaft and The Brit less than a block away. Darling said the cash-only bar is often busy, which he attributes to its large, open floorplan and the consistent staff – one bartender has been with the bar for 38 years. “We’ve kept the bar very similar to the way Jimmy had it when he was here,” Darling said. “I’ve tried to honor his memory by keeping it a little more old school.” He said most patrons live in the surrounding community, often within walking distance, and described them as tight-knit and accepting of people and their lifestyles.

Pictured: Robert Perkins, general manager of Mineshaft and The Brit.

Small Business Showcase – The Broadway Corridor of Villages

Articles by Assistant Editor Samantha Mehlinger
and Senior Writer Brandon Richardson.
Photographs by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan

The Broadway Corridor stretches nearly two miles from the edge of downtown on the west to Belmont Heights on the east. The On Broadway Business Association separates the corridor into six villages: Alamitos Village (Alamitos to Orange avenues); Falcon Village (Orange to Hermosa avenues); Bixby Park Village (Hermosa to Lindero avenues); Temple Village (Lindero to Orizaba avenues); Heights Village (Orizaba to Euclid avenues); and Belmont Village (Euclid to Belmont avenues. For more information, visit: onbroadwaylb.com

Support Local Small Businesses

Long Beach Autohaus

Long Beach local Scott Parsons opened Long Beach Autohaus, a German car repair and service shop, at 3925 E. Broadway in 1986, and he has been running the shop there ever since. When he started the business, he was just 23 years old. At the time, an auto shop at the site had gone belly up after about 18 months in business. Parsons tracked down the original investor, who agreed to loan him \$5,000 to start up Long Beach Autohaus at the site. "When we opened the doors, we had a whopping \$442 in the bank," Parsons recalled. It took about a year before the business began making money. Today, Long Beach Autohaus specializes in German brands like BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen and more, and it does about \$1.5 million in business each year. The shop's location in the Belmont Village of the Broadway corridor is ideal due to the area's demographic. As Parsons put it, "You know, you basically can't throw a cat without hitting a German car in Belmont Shore." Parsons, pictured far right, hopes to transfer ownership of the shop to his business partner, Carlos Venegas, pictured, in the next few years. Venegas, a Mexican immigrant, worked his way up from janitorial duties to partner in the business. "He is kind of the American dream," Parsons reflected.



Studio 1021

Specializing in the human form and oil painting, Studio 1021 owner Patrick Farrand has been offering workshops and private art lessons in Long Beach for about six years. The self-taught artist moved to the city from Pasadena in 1986 to attend Cal State Long Beach. While at college and after graduation "life happened," and he said he took a detour away from art. "Then at one point, I was going through some tough times," Farrand said. "And I thought, 'What is it that made me happy when I was young?' It was an easy answer: art." Eventually, he found himself doing traditional animation and cell painting for Disney and other companies. He then transitioned to 3-D animation when it was introduced but disliked the hours and atmosphere. So eight years ago, he bought his studio at 1021 E. Broadway, first using it as his personal studio before introducing the business element. Now, workshops are every Wednesday from 6-9 p.m. and Friday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon, while private lessons are by appointment. Private lessons can be in oil painting, acrylics, multimedia, watercolor and all dry mediums, including charcoal and graphite. When he is not teaching, Farrand still utilizes the space as his personal art studio.



Small Business Dollars & Sense

Higher Interest Rates?

What Small Businesses Should Know



By BEN
ALVARADO

Many indicators tell us that we are headed into a year of strong economic growth. Small business optimism and consumer confidence are their highest since the great recession, the stock market is reaching new highs and we have an administration that has promised smaller tax bills and less regulation. Now is a great time to evaluate your small business plan to see what kind of expansion is possible for your business.

The latest Wells Fargo/Gallup Small Business index shows 14% of small business owners plan to apply for financing. Although interest rates are slated to rise, it is still worth considering if it is the right time to expand your business. Here are a few tips to help you as you evaluate the current business environment and taking that big step towards credit.

Don't overreact – It is important to put the climbing interest rate into historical perspective. The Federal Reserve raised the range of the federal funds rate to 0.50% and 0.75% from rock-bottom in late 2015. Compared to the pre-crisis lending environment, today's rates remain historically low and borrower friendly. Although more hikes are anticipated over the next year, they are expected to remain modest.

Avoid knee-jerk borrowing – There is pressure to borrow when rates are poised to rise. So if you have specific borrowing needs, now is the time to lock it in. However, in-

terest rates should not be the driving factor when making borrowing decisions. If you don't need the capital, don't borrow just to take advantage of the current ultra-low rates.

The same concept applies to shopping during sales: when considering products that cost less, do you actually buy products that you don't need? So, borrow if you must, but have a good reason for it.

Remember: It's not all or nothing – Depending on what makes sense for your business, you might consider acquiring some capital now to fund some projects at the current rate, and plan ahead to borrow more later to fund future needs. Don't forget to consider holding a mix of floating and fixed rates. This allows you to hedge and still benefit from low floating rates, while also maintaining certainty for longer term, fixed rates.

Look at the big picture – The cost of capital should be only one of the factors considered when making borrowing decisions that impact your company's financial future. Money remains pretty cheap. Besides interest rates, other negotiated terms like loan maturity, advanced rates and guarantees can offer great value. Foregoing the lowest interest rate, in exchange for the best terms to boost your company's medium- and long-term success, can be a deciding factor as well.

The important thing to remember is, don't panic. Instead, consult your banker on interest rate risks and to learn more about your options. They should be able to provide valuable information on everything from simple fixed-rate loans to more complicated interest rate swaps.

Work with your banker to find solutions that match your company's risk appetite. The goal: ensure your financial future is deliberate – not reactive, based on interest rates' ebb and flow.

(Ben Alvarado, a 26-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.)



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