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Building A Better Long Beach

Final Four Industrial Buildings To Complete Decade-Long Douglas Park Development

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

For the last decade, Sares-Regis Group (SRG) and its partners have worked to develop Douglas Park on more than 280 acres of land previously owned by The Boeing Company. Come July, the first components of the final major

development in the area, Pacific Pointe Northwest, will come online.

The mixed-use project, located north of the Long Beach Airport, has been a boon to the local economy, creating thousands of good-paying jobs, attracting companies to relocate their headquarters to the city and serving as a good neighbor to

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The first of four buildings at Pacific Pointe Northwest, the final major development at the more than 280-acre Douglas Park, is slated to be completed in July, with three more buildings to come online by September or October, according to Larry Lukanish, senior vice president of commercial development and investment for developer and property management firm Sares-Regis Group. Lukanish is pictured at the site, north of the Long Beach Airport near Carson Street and Worsham Avenue. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

U.S. Navy Letter Raises Serious Concerns About Modifications To Breakwater

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**, EDITOR
AND **GEORGE ECONOMIDES**, PUBLISHER

The United States Navy has serious concerns about the City of Long Beach's East San Pedro Bay Ecosystem Restoration Study, an ongoing endeavor by the city and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers assessing multiple "alternatives" to the current configuration of the Long Beach breakwater.

In a letter dated October 2, 2018, obtained last week by the Business Journal, N. J. Dahlke, Captain, U.S. Navy, Commanding Officer, Naval Weapons Station in Seal Beach, informed the city that, "Any modification to the breakwater would bring on increases in wave energy affecting vessel motion and increasing the risk to safety of personnel and damage to vessels and equipment. This unwanted effect

would severely impact the Navy's ability to respond during a time of national or international crisis."

In the waters behind the structure, an area referred to by the Navy as the "D8 anchorage," the Navy conducts weapons and munitions transfers between vessels on the water, the letter explained. Any change to the breakwater could result in changes to wave energy, and even "small swells can generate sudden and random shifts in distance and height" between such vessels.

There is no other area within the San Pedro Bay that would meet the Department of Defense's requirements for the explosives operations the Navy currently conducts, according to Dahlke's correspondence. He referred to the D8 anchorage as "a unique national asset, strategically located to sup-

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Rental Properties

City Council To Consider Tenant Protection Policies

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
STAFF WRITER

When city staff invited Long Beach property owners and tenant advocates for a joint "tenant protections focus group" meeting in September 2018, it quickly became clear that there was little the two sides could agree on, as recalled by some of those present.

The meeting was part of a process kicked off last January by 1st District Councilmember Lena Gonzalez, who asked city staff to produce a progress report on the city's search for "revenue tools and incentives for the production of affordable and workforce housing" to include

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HEALTH CARE QUARTERLY

Pine Avenue's Fitness Row

Where Downtown Works Out

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
STAFF WRITER

To Long Beach residents who want to make good on their New Year's resolutions to get in shape, Pine Avenue in Downtown Long Beach boasts a variety of gyms and conditioning classes.

Featuring crossfit, Pilates, boxing, weight training and aerial silks, the half-mile stretch between Broadway and 8th Street has been dubbed "Fitness Row" by KP Pilates Plus, located at 245 Pine Ave.

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MILLENNIAL PULSE

The Cult Of Robert

By Editor Samantha Mehlinger

You've seen the tropes played out on several sitcoms by now: Millennials wearing hemp products or, better yet, burlap sacks, surrounded by towering pink Himalayan salt lamps, incense, a menagerie of crystals, and perhaps some sort of book on witches,

likely while probably smoking weed (but not drinking, because alcohol is, of course, poison to the body). In general, these comedic riffs seem an apt commentary on Millennials' hippie-like penchant for alternative healing and

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PortSide Keeping Up With The Port Of Long Beach



Kymberly Clay has worked for the Port of Long Beach for nearly 30 years. Clay started out as a clerk supervisor within the port's human resources (HR) division, eventually working her way up to the position of leave management administrator and payroll personnel supervisor. "The most important thing the port did for me [was that] it revealed my passion – my passion is in disability management and helping employees to be able to stay at work, return to work and find a life-blend with their jobs," Clay said. Her responsibilities include handling employee relations, payroll and benefits, and other HR-related duties. Clay assists employees, including those dealing with illnesses, in understanding their rights and what they are entitled to, such as workers' compensation, pregnancy disability leave and other programs. "Dealing with employees with chronic and terminal illness, at times it can be difficult when I am trying to balance or blend their medical condition with the operational needs," she said. "Making sure the law is applied appropriately is critical." Clay considers being named employee of the year in 2008, becoming the board president and secretary of the Disability Management Employer Coalition's Southern California chapter and receiving professional certification in her field through the port's employee reimbursement program as highlights of her career. "What we do is we treat people as most important," Clay said. "We'll help guide you to be successful and we'll guide you to be a change-maker, and we make sure that nobody feels like they're a hidden figure."

Article and photograph by the Business Journal's Annette Semerdjian

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Wells Fargo Donates \$50,000 To Long Beach's 'Everyone In' Initiative

Wells Fargo has given a \$50,000 grant to Long Beach's "Everyone In" economic inclusion initiative. Created to support more diversity and minorities in the city's small business community, the initiative entered its second phase in January 2019. According to a press release from 9th District Councilmember Rex Richardson's office, the grant funds the implementation of new policies in the areas of housing, economic resiliency, entrepreneurship and procurement; as well as the establishment of a small business council with emphases on minority-owned and woman-owned businesses. "Wells Fargo is proud to support this innovative platform aimed at removing barriers and creating pathways to opportunity, and ensuring that every resident can thrive," Wells Fargo Region Bank President Natasha Mata stated. Pictured from left are: Rebecca Kauma, project lead, economic and digital inclusion, City of Long Beach; Los Angeles Local Initiative Support Corporation Executive Director Tunua Thrash-Ntuk; Richardson; and Mata. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

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Machelle Thompson, President, Keen Home Care

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
 EDITOR

(Editor's note: Machelle Thompson has grown Long Beach-based Keen Home Care from a company of two to a firm boasting 60 employees. In 2016, she opened Rossmoor Home, a board and care facility with 30 employees.)

LBBJ: What led you to found Keen Home Care in 2005?

Thompson: I am a physical therapist by background and worked as a director of rehab in skilled nursing facilities. I became a nursing home administrator and ran nursing homes. I saw that our health care system was extremely fragmented and the average consumer didn't know how to navigate [it] or what their options were. I saw a lot of people who were prematurely institutionalized. So I got certified as a geriatric care manager and started Keen Home Care.

LBBJ: What was your vision for Keen, and do you feel you've seen that vision come to fruition?

Thompson: My vision was to help seniors stay at home or their preferred environment to the end, if that's what they wanted. And that certainly has come to fruition. We do that, and we're very good at it. Unfortunately, times have changed, and not a lot of seniors are now able, in California, to afford the care they need at home until the end.

When we first started, we were doing predominantly care management. At first, we started using other people's caregivers and overseeing them for the client. But we found out that wasn't the best strategy. The caregivers showed allegiance to their employer rather than communicating with us about the clients. So we figured out quickly that we needed to have our own caregivers so they would follow a similar belief and value system in how we do our work. It has turned out to be very prosperous for our clients and for the business.

LBBJ: How have you grown the company over the years?

Thompson: Part of our strategy has been to collaborate with our caregivers and our families as a team, as well as anyone who is involved in the team – that includes physicians, attorneys or CPAs. Through networking with a person's entire support system, we have found that to be very valuable for the individual as well as the relationship development over time.

LBBJ: What sets Keen apart compared to other home care providers?

Thompson: I would say we're a concierge home care business. We have a very integrated team where everyone on the management team knows every client and every caregiver. Every client has a care manager who oversees their care and partners directly with the caregivers. We have a very well oiled machine. . . . We look at the big picture needs for the client and what they can afford, what's realistic and their desires.

LBBJ: The health care industry has for the past decade been the subject of major policy reforms and has become something of a political football. How has this affected your business?

Thompson: I'm used to this from my prior history working as a therapist and going through the changes in Medicare and managed care. Changes in health care are expected and needed. I am not afraid of that. I would say the frustrating thing that's happened here in California is that when the Consumer Protection Act went into place, where agencies had to become certified as health care organizations and get licensed under the Department of Social Services, and then the caregivers had to get registered – I had been a big advocate of licensure because I believed the consumer deserves a minimum level of security and expectations when they hire a home care agency, as well as oversight. However, what's happened as a result, [with] the exponential increase in cost across the board, is that a lot of consumers are hiring under the table. They don't understand the risk associated with that. So [with respect to] the Consumer Protection Act, I have not really seen that come into fruition in terms of actually protecting the consumers.

LBBJ: How would you hope to see that addressed going forward?

Thompson: The regulators need to go down to the grassroots level of their constituencies and really understand how this is impacting the seniors, the developmentally



"Every executive I know is a visionary. There needs to be a balance between working in the business and on the business. Within that, developing systems and leadership skills to facilitate your team continuing to grow, always knowing what you're growing towards and being prepared for that two steps in advance."

disabled, as well as the caregivers and health care organizations that are trying to run above-board operations and do the right thing for the right reasons – and understand that the economics of the situation have driven a lot of people to go towards the very avenue that makes them most vulnerable. We need to find a way to educate the consumers about their vulnerabilities and offer them affordable and reasonable solutions.

LBBJ: As Long Beach's population ages, what challenges do you expect the city to face in terms of meeting the needs of its seniors?

Thompson: Transportation and advocacy. There are a lot of seniors who are living in situations where they're completely vulnerable. They're on a fixed income, and maybe they had their water heater go out or they have a new medication that is expensive. And they don't have any additional support system or resources to reach out to when they're struggling. I would love to see an advocacy group developed in collaboration through the city and state, as well as providers like myself, for the most vulnerable population to have greater resources.

LBBJ: What are the biggest unknowns for you as a business executive in 2019?

Thompson: I would say it's not competition, because competition is always alive and well. I would say the biggest unknown is finding a way to collaborate with the new and upcoming workforce of the Millennials and the younger generation to create an attractive option and opportunity for them to join into caregiving and health care.

LBBJ: If a startup CEO were to ask you for your most important piece of business advice, what would you say?

Thompson: Hire a solid bookkeeper immediately. That has been the best decision I've ever made, was hiring a bookkeeper early on. She's fabulous. I still have the same one. She has worked with me for twelve and a half years The value in that for a start-up business is taking that pressure off you to keep everything in order, but then also as you go out to try to apply for loans . . . having your books in order and being able to produce those on a dime is invaluable.

LBBJ: What are some traits or skills every executive should strive to cultivate?

Thompson: Every executive I know is a visionary. There needs to be a balance between working in the business and on the business. Within that, developing systems and leadership skills to facilitate your team continuing to grow, always knowing what you're growing towards and being prepared for that two steps in advance.

LBBJ: Is there anything you would like to add or emphasize?

Thompson: One of the most invaluable experiences I've had is becoming part of a business group, Women Presidents Organization. Being a business owner can be very isolated. You have to reach out to gain opportunities to network and collaborate about business practices, and feel safe to do that. That organization has been phenomenal. I have learned more from my peers in that group than every continuing education course I have ever attended. For a young person to have their sights on meeting the objective to join a group like that, the information they will gain as a young business executive or entrepreneur is completely invaluable.



The Norse Village Business Association partnered with 5th District Councilmember Stacy Mungo and the Long Beach Economic Development Department (EDD) to pursue improvements including new crosswalks, lighting, bike racks, and trees. Pictured from left are Eric Romero, project manager for the EDD, Ian McPherson, president of the association, and Bryer Garcia, owner of Wolf's Brew, a coffee house and art gallery on Norse Way. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

Growing Long Beach Is Presented In Partnership With The Long Beach Economic Development Department Business Corridor Improvement Pilot Program Brightens Up Norse Village

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

During Fiscal Year 2018, the Long Beach City Council set aside \$450,000 in savings to create a business corridor improvement pilot program benefiting three business zones on Carson Street, Anaheim Street and Pacific Coast Highway. The first to reap the fruits of this investment was the Norse Village Business Association (NVBA) area.

Located just beyond the northeast corner of the Lakewood Boulevard and Carson Street intersection, businesses on Norse Way and adjoining Village Road got together with help from 5th District Councilmember Stacy Mungo's office, the Long Beach Economic Development Department and the NVBA to decide how best to spend their portion of the funding.

"The conversation started with the [NVBA] board, and once there was a general vision for the area and different projects people wanted to see, we then had a larger meeting with the businesses, talked through the process and identified some key projects," Eric Romero, project manager for the economic development department, told the Business Journal.

According to Mungo, the decision among about 70 meeting attendees was unanimous. "It's probably the largest meeting I have ever seen a unanimous [decision on] anything," she said.

Ian McPherson, NVBA president and on-site manager

of the Village Hotel, said the first priority was improving the walkability of the area, which was suffering due to ficus tree roots that were damaging sidewalks. "The first thing that had to happen was removal of trees," McPherson said, noting that the decision caused some pushback among neighboring residents in Lakewood Village. But the trees had to go, he explained, both because of their effect on the sidewalks and because they blocked light poles, making it dark in the corridor at night.

Business owners met with an arborist and picked a new type of tree to replace the towering ficuses – crepe myrtles, which bloom pink in the spring. Because crepe myrtles have a less robust foliage, they were placed closer together, allowing for more trees along the corridor with 44 total, McPherson noted.

Now that storefronts are more visible, Mungo said property owners are making facade improvements with their own funds. "They are putting in new signage and painting . . . because now, people can see what restaurants and businesses are on the street," she said.

Another major change was the addition of two cross walks in the corridor. The new crosswalk at the intersection of Norse Way and Village Road includes bollard-marked bulb outs for pedestrian use on either end, which help improve walkability and slow down traffic, Mungo explained.

Also important to business owners was the addition of

24 parking spaces, a 30% increase, Mungo noted. To make the area eye-catching and festive at night, festoon lighting was strung across the street. New bicycle racks and trash cans were also installed.

These improvements were completed in early December, just in time for the NVBA to hold a holiday event featuring guest appearances by Santa Claus, the Grinch and even Jack from Jack in the Box. "Fifteen-hundred people showed that night," McPherson said.

Bryer Garcia opened his Norse Way business, Wolf's Brew Coffee, three months ago – just before the start of construction. While he had no idea the improvements were coming, Garcia said he was glad to see them implemented. "With the improvements, it has changed the dynamic of the street. People are driving through it more. People walk through it more. It feels friendlier and inviting," he said.

Councilmembers have interest in continuing the pilot program to fund additional business corridor projects like the one done along Norse Way and Village Road, according to Romero. "People are excited about what's happening here and want to find ways to improve their business corridors," he said. Grant funding is being considered to fund the program's continuation, according to Mungo.

"The goal is to continue to find ways to revitalize business corridors, bring more customers to these areas," Romero said. ■



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With Huntington Beach Lawsuit, Governor Newsom Signals Aggressive Housing Strategy

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
STAFF WRITER

California Gov. Gavin Newsom has directed the state to sue the City of Huntington Beach for failing to comply with its affordable housing goals. The suit claims Huntington Beach became out of compliance with its Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), a state-mandated calculation for zoning residential areas to accommodate various income levels, when it rezoned two corridors of land in 2015. Because of this rezoning, the city is about 400 units short of its assessed housing need. How this shortfall will affect Huntington Beach moving forward, and how the lawsuit is resolved, could foretell changes for affordable housing production in other California cities.

According to Russ Heimerich, a representative from California's Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency, there are 51 cities in California that are not in compliance with their housing elements, a type of municipal document that guides residential development and housing goals. The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) reviews governments' housing elements to calculate the RHNA for each region of the state.

Of the 51 cities, there are only three — Huntington Beach, Selma and Clovis — that were once in compliance with their RHNA allocations but became out of compliance through rezoning. Selma and Clovis are currently working “in good faith” to bring their zoning areas back into compliance, Heimerich said. Huntington Beach was singled out by the state for refusing to rezone after being notified of its non-compliance by HCD.

In a press release, the governor's office declared this lawsuit a “first-of-its-kind legal action against a city for standing in the way of affordable housing production.” Michael Gates, the city attorney for Huntington Beach, told the Business Journal the suit was “not well-founded” and that he expects it to be thrown out of court.

Heimerich said the state is taking the issue of housing allocation seriously. He went on to say that the state's goal is to bring every jurisdiction into compliance with its individual RHNA. “If Huntington Beach comes into compliance, we are happy to drop the lawsuit,” he said.

The state's lawsuit against Huntington Beach was made possible by Assembly Bill (AB) 72, which was signed into law by Gov. Jerry Brown as part of the 2017 legislative housing package. This set of bills was designed to increase funding, development and availability of affordable housing in California. According to Long Beach Assistant City Attorney Michael Mais, before AB 72 the state did not sue cities that failed to meet their RHNA allocations.

By state law, the “housing element” of a general plan must designate space for the development of housing that accommodates all income groups. This includes the city's share of its regional housing assessment.

Before 2018, when AB 72 went into effect, HCD had no teeth to penalize non-compliant governments, according to Mais. “Usually what happened was a housing advocacy group of some sort would sue the city and make the argument that the housing element was out of compliance with its general plan,” Mais explained. This is what happened to Huntington Beach in 2015. After reducing the number of affordable units that could be built on the corridors of Edinger Avenue and Beach Boulevard, the city was sued by the

Kennedy Commission, an affordable housing advocate for low-income households in Orange County. With the passage of AB 72, HCD is now able to refer RHNA enforcement cases to the attorney general.

In a statement, Gates said the state's lawsuit interrupted months of discussions with the Kennedy Commission and the HCD. “Now instead of making progress in discussions and negotiations, good productive communications with HCD representatives will be cut off because of this new state lawsuit,” he wrote. Gates maintains that Huntington Beach is complying with “all applicable state housing and zoning laws” and is working with HCD to meet the housing goals of its RHNA. “Any delay experienced by the city in its ability to amend its zoning and/or make additional progress has been caused by the city fighting lawsuits,” he added.

California Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris, a Democrat, whose district includes coastal Orange County and half of Huntington Beach, told the Business Journal that she would welcome the opportunity to work with Huntington Beach and the Newsom administration to find a solution that does not involve litigation. She called the lawsuit “a shot across the bow” to demonstrate the state is serious about the housing crisis, but doubts how effective it may be. “The reality is, what's at stake is Huntington Beach adding a number in their plan that says 400 housing units,” she said. “Even if the lawsuit is successful, it isn't going to address the real underlying issues that are contributing to the [housing] crisis.” Petrie-Norris said she'd prefer to focus the state's resources on solving this crisis.

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Huntington Beach Suit

(Continued From Page 5)

On February 6, Petrie-Norris and Republican Assemblymember Tyler Diep, as well as State Senators Thomas Umberg, a Democrat, and Republican John Moorlach, sent a letter to Newsom and Huntington Beach Mayor Erik Peterson calling for a mediation to the lawsuit. As of this writing, Michael Gates said Huntington Beach was open to the mediation. Nathan Click, a spokesperson for Gov. Newsom, said the administration was open to the same.

Implications For Other Cities

In January, Newsom made it clear that creating affordable housing was a key goal of his administration. His budget proposal called for \$7.7 billion in funding for housing and homelessness programs in the state, including \$1.3 billion “to remove barriers and increase long-term housing production, particularly for low- and moderate-income housing.”

Newsom has called on cities and counties to address the housing crisis. “[M]any cities are making herculean efforts to meet this crisis head on,” he said in a January 25 statement. “But some cities are refusing to do their part . . . and willfully stand in violation of California law. These cities will be held to account.”

It would seem that Huntington Beach is such a city. But Gates cast doubt on the legality of Newsom’s suit. “What the state is requesting is not legally tenable,” he said.

While cities and counties in California are required to zone for housing that meets estimates for future population and income levels, they are not obligated to build those



Now under construction, the Beacon is intended to offer affordable housing to Downtown Long Beach residents. The project is also in line with the state’s mandate for California cities to build more affordable housing. Developed in partnership with the Long Beach Community Investment Company, a nonprofit arm of the city, and Century Housing Corporation, a nonprofit developer of affordable housing, the project consists of two buildings, Beacon Place and Beacon Pointe. Bartek Malecki, a representative of Century Housing, said the former will provide 39 units to disabled and homeless veterans while the latter contains 121 units for low-income seniors. Beacon Place is scheduled to open in March of this year, with Beacon Pointe opening in September. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

units, Heimerich clarified. Though most cities and counties in California meet their RHNA zoning targets when they are evaluated by the HCD every eight years, they still fall short of their building goals. As Heimerich put it, “While 90% of jurisdictions are in compliance with housing ele-

ment law, 90% also fail to actually build enough housing.”

The 2013-2021 RHNA for the City of Long Beach is 7,048 units. This figure includes 2,839 units allocated for low-income residents: 886 units for residents earning up to 30% of area median income (AMI); 887 units for residents earning 31-50% AMI; and 1,066 units for residents earning 51-80% AMI. According to the city, 806 units are in various stages of development: nine are nearing completion, 233 are under construction and 564 are either approved or proposed. The city estimates that, based on average development costs of the projects underway, the cost of building the additional 1,711 units allocated in the RHNA would be \$793 million.

Long Beach is not one of the 51 cities out of compliance with the zoning requirements associated with its RHNA allocation. Unlike Huntington Beach, it has zoned its land in accordance with state law. “All the city is required to do, through their zoning ordinance, is provide a mechanism so that capacity can be built if the economy merits building,” Mais said.

But Newsom’s recent comments suggest

that he may want to make changes to this policy. In a January 10 press conference, Newsom told reporters that regions that don’t reach their building goals might not receive revenues from either the gas tax created by Senate Bill 1 or the state’s discretionary transit funding. “Regarding withholding transportation revenue, all I can tell you at this point is that the governor is exploring all options to give jurisdictions incentives to meet their housing needs,” Heimerich said. He added that specific proposals for doing so could be presented during the budget’s May revision. “As of now, however, there is very little in the way of enforcement or other measures that can be taken if cities do not meet their production goals.”

Newsom’s proposed budget is vaguer on the issue. It reads: “The state will strongly encourage jurisdictions to contribute to their fair share of the state’s housing supply by linking housing production to certain transportation funds and other applicable sources, if any.” The proposal does not describe how it would accomplish this, only that the administration plans to discuss the issue with local governments and other stakeholders. ■

CITY OF LONG BEACH BID OPPORTUNITIES

TITLE	BID NUMBER	DATE
Three (3) Half Ton Pick Up Trucks	WD-17-19	02/14/2019
Panasonic Toughbook Tablets & Accessories	ITB TI19-070	02/14/2019
Purchase and Remove Recyclable Materials	WD-06-19	02/15/2019
Blueprinting, Reprographic & Related Product/Svcs	ITB LB19-008	02/19/2019
Ann. Contract for Major & Secondary Hwy Improv.	R-7131	02/20/2019
Comprehensive Fee Study for Public Health Lab	RFP HE19-005	02/20/2019
City Fiber Infrastructure Utilization	RFI TI19-064	02/20/2019
On-Call Services for Emergency Water/Sewer Repair	WD-13-19	02/25/2019
Purchase of Canon Document Scanners	ITB TI19-077	02/26/2019
S-18 Sewer Lift Station Rehabilitation Project	WD-03-18	02/27/2019
Sewer System Management Plan Update (SSMP)		02/27/2019
Steams Park Irrigation Upgrade	R-7061	02/28/2019
Development of Emergency Communications Plan	RFP DC19-069	03/05/2019
Workers' Compensation Medical Case Mgmt. Svcs.	RFP LW19-074	03/06/2019
Workers' Compensation Utilization Review Services	RFP LW19-075	03/06/2019
Law Enforcement Records Management System	RFP PD19-065	03/12/2019
Public Health Vaccines	ITB HE19-063	03/12/2019
Concessions & Rentals Opportunities at the Beach	RFP PW19-018	03/21/2019
On-Call Environmental Pgrm. Support for LB Airport	RFQ AP19-056	04/04/2019
Fueling Facility Operator	RFP PR19-055	04/09/2019
Qualification and Selection of Peer Reviewers	RFQ DV17-112	Continuous

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

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Hotel Association Lawsuit Over Measure WW Might Lead To Changes Across The State

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
 STAFF WRITER

Measure WW, a ballot initiative that created safety and workload regulations for hotel workers in Long Beach, is now the subject of a lawsuit filed against the city by the California Hotel & Lodging Association (CHLA). The measure, which has a turbulent history and perhaps equally tempestuous future, was approved by voters in November 2018.

The complaint, which the city was officially served with on Tuesday, January 5, according to City Attorney Charles Parkin, alleges that voters didn't have the right to implement workplace rules, as this infringes on the authority of the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal OSHA) to regulate workplace safety.

The measure limits the floor space to be serviced by each worker to 4,000 square feet per eight-hour workday, requiring employers to pay workers twice the regular daily rate if workers exceed their daily limit. It also requires employers to receive written consent from employees for any overtime, which is defined as exceeding 10 hours in a workday, and to inform workers of their right to decline working overtime. Records of each worker's wages, hours, square footage cleaned and overtime consent must be kept for at least two years.

In terms of sexual assault and harassment prevention, the measure requires employers to provide workers with paid time to contact the police, a counselor, or other advisor in the case of any alleged incident and the right to be assigned a different area for the remainder of an allegedly threatening guest's stay. The measure, which applies to all hotels with 50 or more rooms unless covered by a bargaining agreement, also requires hotels to provide workers with electronic contact devices, often referred to as panic buttons.

If the lawsuit is successful, it might provide a template to combat similar measures in other cities, such as Oakland's Measure Z. Lynn Mohrfeld, president and chief executive officer of CHLA, said the association has no current plans to take legal

action against Oakland, but might in the future. "It was a little more complex, so we wanted to initiate litigation in Long Beach first, and we're going to look at Oakland next," Mohrfeld said.

Measure WW's workload-related items closely resemble elements of a 2012 proposal by the Unite HERE labor union to add workload requirements to the state's occupational health and safety standards made to Cal OSHA, which the agency ultimately rejected.

Cal OSHA has since established a set of workplace safety regulations designed to address the needs of hotel workers as a special group within the service sector, which went into effect on July 1, 2018. The agency's "Hotel Housekeeping Musculoskeletal Injury Prevention" orders included requirements for employers to provide informational materials on injury prevention, review injuries to identify health hazards, perform annual worksite evaluations, and provide annual health and safety hazard training specific to housekeeping tasks, as well as record keeping requirements.

Mohrfeld argued those regulations, combined with industry-driven initiatives and a Long Beach ordinance requiring panic buttons approved in October 2018, provided sufficient tools and guidance to ensure a safe work environment for hotel staff. "As far as I know, every hotel in Long Beach has panic buttons," Mohrfeld said. "The other parts of WW are covered by other laws and are unnecessary."

Rules put in place by Measure WW, Mohrfeld argued, have done more harm than good for hotel workers. "They are no longer, effectively, eligible for overtime," he said, explaining that the square footage limitations included in the measure make overtime more expensive. Workers are entitled to double pay for the entire day once they clean more than the maximum square footage allowed. He added that this put an end to a common practice among workers to help out fellow staffers whose rooms needed more work, because the entire room would be counted towards each worker's daily square footage limit.

The workload limitations may also have

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Hotel Lawsuit

(Continued From Page 7)

an adverse effect on the benefits full-time workers are entitled to, Mohrfeld said. "Some of these housekeepers can get done with their rooms in five to six hours, and when that happens, that puts them below the threshold for a full-time employee – and therefore their health benefits are in jeopardy," he explained. "If they can't get benefits at a Long Beach hotel, they're



Members of the Unite HERE labor union are pictured protesting labor conditions at a Long Beach hotel in 2016. In the following year, the union and workers continued to advocate for workplace regulations, ultimately succeeding when voters approved Measure WW in November 2018. (File photograph)

going to go to another municipality to get those benefits."

CHLA's lawsuit targets the entire measure, but Mohrfeld said the workload requirements constituted the heart of the problem, from a legal standpoint. "Implementation, in my discussions with the hoteliers in the area, means different things to different hotels and we know that's going to be a legal

issue further down the road," he explained.

The regulations included in the measure first came to the city council on September 19, 2017, in the form of an ordinance proposal authored by 1st District Councilmember Lena Gonzalez. Councilmembers failed to approve the regulations as a city ordinance, and left it up to voters to decide on the matter.

During the council's discussion of the proposal in 2017, 3rd District Councilmember Suzie Price raised concerns about the cost of potential litigation, referencing a similar ordinance that spurred a lawsuit in the Bay Area. In 2006, Woodfield Suites Hotel, LLC, sued the City of Emeryville, alleging that the voter-approved Measure C, which included minimum wage requirements and workload limitations, was unconstitutional.

"Lawsuits are common, so that's certainly not a deterrent from us engaging in good policy, but I'm just asking the question," Price told City Attorney Charles Parkin. Parkin said according to information his office received from Emeryville, the city spent \$750,000 on the four-year litigation. The measure remained in place following a settlement between the two parties in 2010.

Parkin said his office was unable to comment on the current litigation at this point. Councilmembers Gonzalez and Pearce, the measure's most vocal supporters on the council, did not respond to a request for comment. ■

Acura Grand Prix Of Long Beach New Title Sponsor Of The 'Number One Street Race In America'

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
STAFF WRITER

Honda luxury brand Acura has signed a multi-year agreement to become the title sponsor of the Grand Prix of Long Beach – just in time for the running of the 45th annual race on downtown city streets on April 14.

Jim Michaelian, president and CEO of the Grand Prix Association of Long Beach, announced the news on February 6 during a press conference at the Terrace Theater. "We're very excited," he told the Business Journal. "I think this is a tremendous opportunity for the event, for the city and . . . we're delighted with the way this whole thing has developed."

Acura Vice President and General Manager Jon Ikeda said his company was excited by the opportunity to sponsor the Grand Prix. "We've refocused ourselves on precision-crafted performance and gone back to our roots as the performance division of Honda," he told the Business Journal. Ikeda said this was evidenced by Acura Team Penske and its lineup of precision vehicles and professional drivers, including 2018 IndyCar Grand Prix winner Alexander Rossi. "Having a real big race with Long Beach Grand Prix just seems like a big stamp that we're serious about what

we're trying to do with our brand," Ikeda said.

Acura was the "ideal choice" to host the racing event, Michaelian said at the press conference. He noted the brand's commitment to quality vehicles as well as its longtime involvement in the Long Beach Grand Prix. Acura's parent company, Honda, has won more races at the Grand Prix than any other car manufacturer, he said from the podium.

Mayor Robert Garcia, also present at the event, said Acura's sponsorship brings a "new energy and excitement to our city." He noted that the economic impact of the race totals about \$30 million per year and generates about \$700,000 in tax revenues for Long Beach. Michaelian said the event brought 185,000 people to the city in 2018.

"It puts Long Beach on the map," 2nd District Councilmember Jeannine Pearce said of the annual event. Pearce, whose district includes the racing circuit, said the Grand Prix "really highlights the ability to live, work, [and] play in Downtown Long Beach."

Acura replaces the previous title sponsor, Toyota, which sponsored the event for 39 of the motor event's 44 years. At the press conference, Michaelian took a moment to thank Toyota and the Southern California



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Shortly after Grand Prix Association of Long Beach President and CEO Jim Michaelian (pictured at right) announced Acura's title sponsorship, the clouds parted over the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center. "Right on cue, the sun's shining outside," Michaelian said. "I think that bodes well for this partnership as we get started together." Above, created in partnership with Honda Performance Development and French racing team Oreca, the Acura ARX-05 is the fifth iteration of Acura's sportscar prototypes. A pair of the cars debuted at the International Motor Sports Association's WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, where they placed fifth and seventh overall. The No. 7 car, featured in this photograph, is co-driven by Helio Castroneves and Ricky Taylor. (Photographs by the Business Journal's Annette Semerdjian)

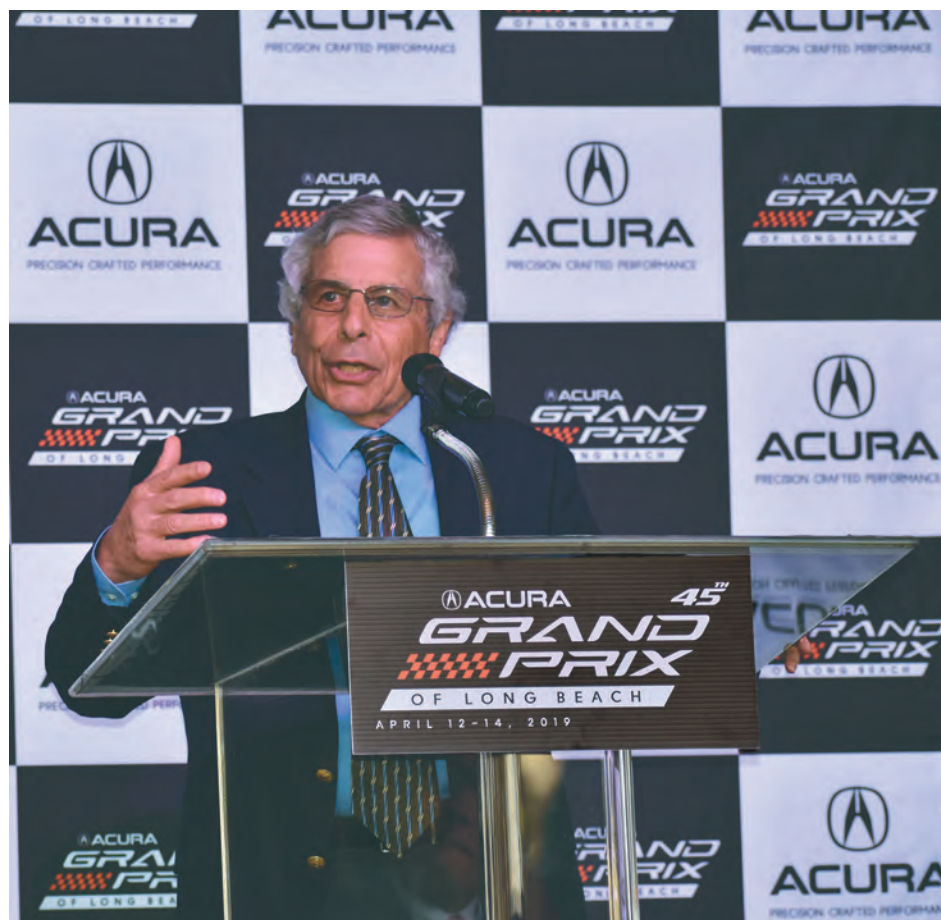
Toyota Dealers Association for their decades-long contribution "to making this the number one street race in America."

Steve Goodling, president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, called the Acura sponsorship "good news" for Long Beach. "It's exciting that the Grand Prix got the quality and the caliber of a sponsor they deserve," he said. "They're going to be as invested as [the Grand Prix Association] is, and I think their distribution of dealerships and their reach out into the public of Southern California will be vital for this year's race."

Honda's North American headquarters is located in Torrance, and there are 20 Acura dealerships spread throughout Southern California.

Both Michaelian and Ikeda told the Business Journal that Long Beach's improvements to its infrastructure and amenities over the years continue to make it an inviting venue for street racing. The Grand Prix Association has renewed its contract with the City of Long Beach through 2023, Michaelian said, "and hopefully for many more years to come."

The 45th Acura Grand Prix of Long



Beach is scheduled for April 12 to 14 and will include the Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT) IndyCar Series, the Bubba Burger Sports Car Grand Prix, the International Motor Sports Association (IMSA) WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, as well as other events such as the Motegi Racing Super Drift Challenge and the Historic IMSA GTO Challenge. "We've got concerts on Friday and

Saturday night, which we're working on finalizing talent for," Michaelian said.

At the press conference, Michaelian noted that, as part of an agreement with the mayor and city council, construction for the grand prix circuit would begin one week later than in past years, on February 18.

For more information about this year's events, or to purchase tickets, visit: gplb.com. ■



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U.S. Navy Concerned About Breakwater Modifications

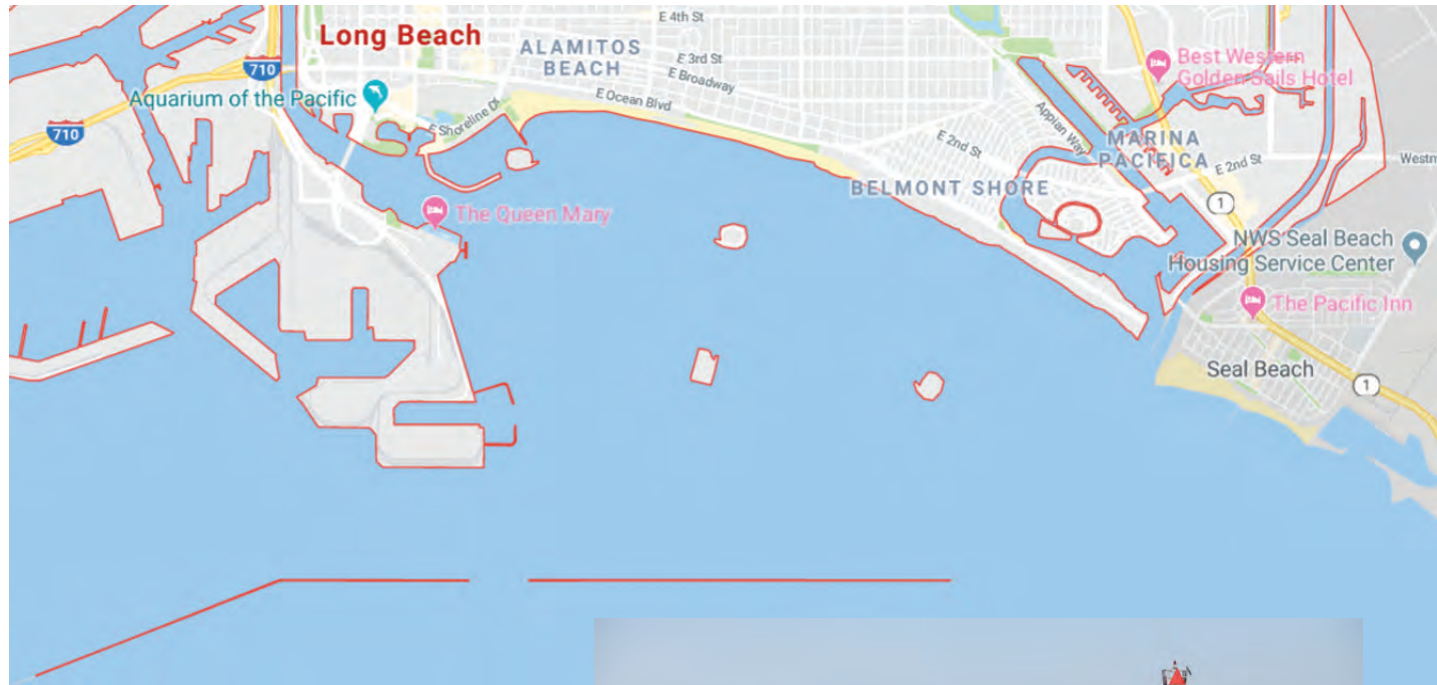
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port Pacific Fleet homeport locations and ordnance supply points, in the event of regional conflicts or other international crisis scenarios.”

The Navy has veto authority over any changes to the breakwater, according to Diana Tang, government affairs manager for the City of Long Beach. But Gregg Smith, public affairs officer for the weapons station, told the Business Journal the Navy was not aware that it has veto authority and that, while he cannot speak for the Army Corps of Engineers, it is up to them to make the final decision.

Asked to clarify the matter, Dena O’Dell, deputy chief of public affairs for the Los Angeles District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, wrote in a statement to the Business Journal, “As part of our plan development and selection, we will attempt to identify and analyze beneficial and adverse impacts of alternative plans before we select a plan to recommend for authorization. The Navy’s letter, together with other input, will be important in our decision-making process.”

Tang said the Navy has been informed of the study’s progress since it began at the direction of the city council in 2013. Smith noted that Navy personnel have been engaged in regular contact with the city regarding breakwater modification discussions since at least 2008, when the



Navy issued its first letter to the city expressing concerns about potential changes to the breakwater.

Tang clarified that the city and Army Corps of Engineers are still studying potential breakwater reconfigurations, rather than developing specific project recommendations, and noted that Captain Dahlke’s letter was written “before meaningful mitigation measures were developed for consideration.” Proposals for mitigation measures have not yet been released.

It is unclear when the study will be complete. The city council has authorized \$2.25 million to fund the study, which is also receiving funding from the Army Corps of Engineers.



“The City of Long Beach collected feedback related to Port Navigation relative to the Draft Alternatives and wave modeling between Sept. 24, 2018, through Oct. 15, 2018,” O’Dell wrote in an e-mail. “The Navy’s letter was received in response to that request. The City of Long Beach shared all input they received with the Corps, and we are considering all com-

ments in our evaluation of the proposed ecosystem restoration alternatives.”

Tang said letters and correspondence in response to the study are not individually released to the public or to the city council, but are collected to inform the study’s progress.

To view the full letter from Captain Dahlke, visit <http://bit.ly/2HZiQqo>. ■



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Long Beach Police Officers Issued 50,000 Fewer Tickets For Moving Violations In 2017 Compared To 2009; Revenue Dropped Sharply

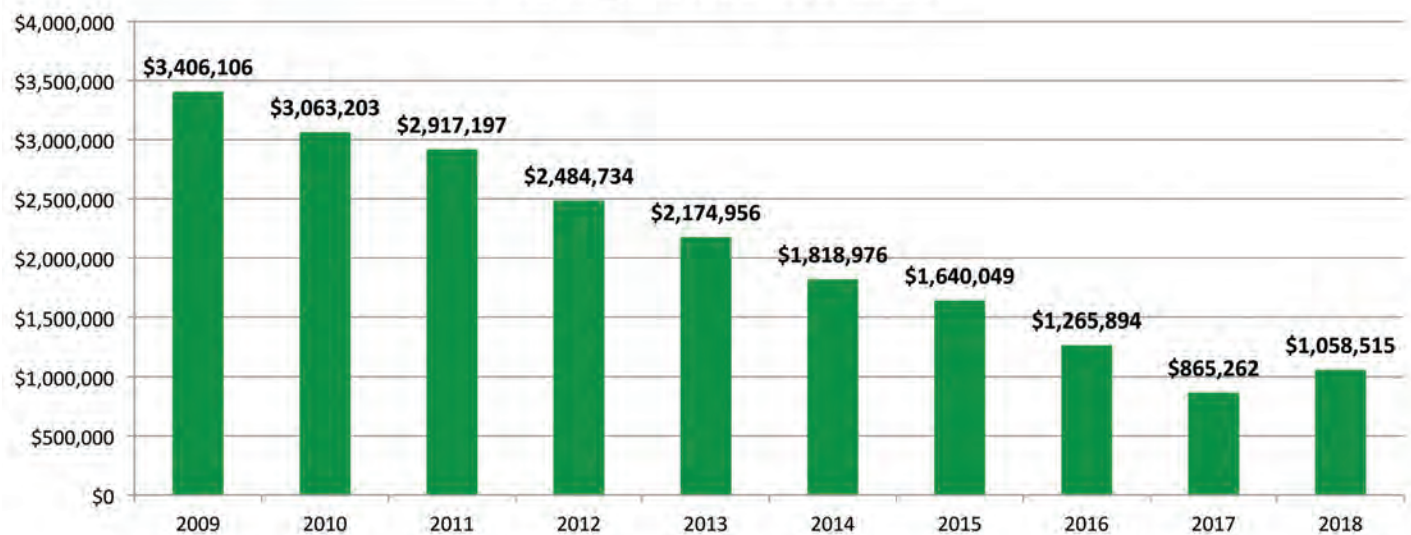
■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

Data provided to the Business Journal by Long Beach Director of Financial Management John Gross shows that annual moving violation revenues generated by Long Beach Police Department (LBPD)-issued traffic citations decreased by more than \$2.3 million between 2009 and 2018. Data showed that the decrease occurred steadily over the course of 10 years, bottoming out in 2017 at \$865,262 before an uptick last year to approximately \$1.05 million.

These revenues feed into the city's General Fund, rather than directly back into the police department, according to LBPD Commander Eric Herzog, who serves as the department's chief of staff. He explained that this is not a revenue stream the police department depends upon – it does not set any kind of revenue goal for traffic citations, he noted. However, he qualified, "Anything that impacts the General Fund obviously impacts our budget, so I can't say that we ignore it."

Gross said that the funds "are not allocated for any particular use." While no specific services are impacted, he explained via e-mail, "A decline in or even no change in a revenue source (no increase) is problematic as that means it is not even keeping up with inflation – most

Moving Violation Revenue



Number of Citations Per Year

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
72,106	69,009	61,400	52,763	46,911	32,112	23,964	18,788	22,710	23,936

Source: City of Long Beach

of our costs go up at least with inflation."

According to Gross, moving violation fine amounts are set by the state government, with additional penalties applied by counties and county courts. "If an individual wants to fight the ticket, there is a court process in which a judge can dismiss the case or deem the offender

guilty," he explained. "The offender then works with the court to submit payment for the full fine amount or can develop a payment plan. Judges can also practice discretion in lowering the fine amount to a level that is affordable for the driver. The court then issues payment to police departments. . . . We are simply given a

check each month from the various courts in the region."

The number of citations issued decreased from 2009 to 2015 and have increased since then. In 2009, 72,106 moving violations were issued by police officers, according to data provided by LBPD. That

(Please Continue To Next Page)

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Moving Violation Tickets Issued

(Continued From Page 11)

figure bottomed out at 18,788 in 2016 and has since crept back up to 23,936 in 2018. The number of “budgeted” motor officers assigned to the traffic detail was 36 in 2009. In 2018, that number was 31. The reduction is mostly due to attrition, according to Klein, who estimated that there are 17 actual officers currently assigned to this detail. Although he said the department would be able to provide the past three years’ worth of actual traffic officers versus budgeted officers, LBPD Public Information Officer Arantxa Chavarria later explained that the information could not be provided “as we do

not have a method for us to reliably obtain the statistics in a timely manner.” Asked why traffic citation revenues have decreased during the past 10 years, Klein and Herzog cited a number of possibilities. “Basically, we set our focus to increase engagement with the community more,” Herzog said. “We look at what are the needs of our community, and what are the resources we have, and how do we allocate those resources to meet the priorities of the community. All of that leads to kind of a shifting focus. And I think, as a result, there are not as many citations being given.” Klein noted that LBPD is now more data driven in its approach to traffic control than in years’ past, which could have some effect on citations. Herzog pointed out that this is evident in LBPD’s partnership with city traffic engineers. “We have

developed a better than ever relationship with engineering and the traffic engineer,” he said. “He and Lieutenant Klein will frequently have conversations saying, ‘Hey we are seeing accidents here and an unusual number of speeding incidents here’ . . . They will put out a traffic trailer that allows them to collect data on what’s happening in that area, and then we look at different solutions.” The police department handled 205,000 calls for service from local residents in 2018, versus 181,000 in 2009, Herzog pointed out. Officers initiated 415,000 service calls on their own last year, bringing total service calls to 620,000. “It’s a different dynamic now of now [that] we have to balance because [when] we have more calls for service [it] means we are going to have less time for officer initiated [calls],” he said.

Herzog concluded, “There is always the balance thing we do with what funds we have available. In an ideal world we’d have a lot of officers doing traffic. But we always have to balance out the needs of the department and where the resources are. It’s not up for me or even the chief to decide. It’s up to the city council and how they allocate budgets.” ■

Long Beach Approves Purchase Of Year-Round Homeless Shelter

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
STAFF WRITER

The Long Beach City Council has approved the establishment of a year-round, 125-bed homeless shelter and services center located in Long Beach’s 9th Council District. The city’s \$9,591,540 purchase of the property at 6841-6845 Atlantic Ave. is mostly funded with \$8 million from the state. The remaining \$1,591,540 is to be paid with the proceeds from the sale of city-owned property. Kelly Colopy, director of the Long Beach Department of Health & Human Services, told the Business Journal that the shelter is scheduled to open in June 2020.

The \$8 million in state funding comes from the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP), a one-time block grant from the California Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council. The city is also receiving \$3.4 million in funding from Measure H, a Los Angeles County sales tax for homeless services, to renovate the Atlantic property into a shelter.

“Right now it’s pretty much just a big empty building,” Colopy said. “So the \$3.4 million that’s coming from the county . . . will be utilized to do the tenant improvements.” Colopy added that the city would also rely on Measure H funds to cover the shelter’s operational costs once it comes online. “The operating costs will vary by the type of services provided, and we’ll have a better feel for that as we design the shelter and services,” she said. Long Beach Economic Development Director John Keisler told the Business Journal it is likely that the city will contract with a service provider for day-to-day operations.

The city’s website notes that the shelter is expected to include “separate quarters for men, women, families and LGBTQ individuals.” It will also be “pet-friendly” and include storage. Colopy said that, in addition to the shelter, the finished property may include such services as a health clinic, a commercial kitchen and a restaurant.

The city plans to take ownership of the property by June 1, 2019, according to Keisler. The store currently located on the property, Eddie’s Liquor, will pay the city \$6,000 per month in rent until the end of 2019, and store will close and the city will compensate it for up to \$400,000 in unsold inventory.

Prior to the city council’s approval of the property purchase, a local political action committee (PAC), the Long Beach Reform Coalition, raised concerns about the price of the transaction and demanded the release of



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Fiscal Year 2019 Fund Sources For Homeless Services

• U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	\$8.94 Million
• Measure H (1/4¢ L.A. County sales tax)	\$5.61 Million
• Homeless Emergency Aid Program (state funding)	\$2.34 Million
• Other State Funding	\$1.58 Million
• Other County Funding	\$0.45 Million
• Housing Authority Vouchers (also funded by HUD)	\$10.02 Million
• City Funding (through Long Beach Health & Human Services Dept.)	\$1.21 Million

Total: \$30.15 Million (for programs, services, shelter, housing and operations)

Source: 2018 Everyone Home Long Beach Report; 2019 Fiscal Year ends September 30, 2020

the site appraisal, which valued the property at approximately \$7.5 million. According to the coalition, because the two parcels of land that make up the site last sold in December 2013 for \$2 million, the current owners stand to make a profit of \$5.5 million, or a 250% return on investment in five years.

Keisler told the Business Journal that the city intends to release the property appraisal after the close of escrow on May 31, “to protect the negotiating process.” The appraisal was conducted by Hawran & Malma, a local real estate appraiser that Keisler said is “subject to the reporting requirements defined by the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice.”

The firm looked at 21 property sales in the area between 2016 and 2018 and determined that demand in the industrial submarket of North Long Beach is “extremely high with a vacancy average between 3-4 percent.” The 2018 city ordinance that allowed for marijuana-related businesses in the area also “significantly increased the regional value of the property.” In addition, Keisler noted at the February 5 city council meeting that the two parcels of land, totaling 99,534 square feet, included retail, industrial and residential space, which makes for a more complex calculation of fair market value.

City Council Begins Process To Form Voter-Approved Ethics Commission

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
 STAFF WRITER

On November 6, 2018, Long Beach voters approved Measure CCC, starting the process to establish an ethics commission for the City of Long Beach.

During its February 5 meeting, the Long Beach City Council approved a measure by 8th District Councilmember Al Austin, who spearheaded the Measure CCC effort, directing the city manager’s office to create a roadmap for establishing the commission.

“This is long overdue and I’m hopeful for a path to move forward,” Vice Mayor Dee Andrews commented. Assistant City Manager Tom Modica said he expects to have a report on the timeline of the commission’s establishment as well as the commission’s budgetary needs within 30 days.

The next step is for the city attorney to craft an ordinance adding the commission’s guidelines and budget appropriations process to Long Beach’s municipal code. Members of the ethics commission will be appointed from a pool of applicants by the mayor and city auditor. ■

Colopy told the Business Journal that the city’s street count for homeless individuals was 1,863 in 2017, but the actual number is greater. “We know that every year about 4,000 people fall in and out of homelessness [in Long Beach],” she said. She estimated that the city needs about 500 shelter beds to address its homeless issue, one quarter of which will be met by the new shelter.

According to the Everyone Home report released by the city’s homelessness task force in December 2018, some 20,000 households in the city are estimated to be “precariously housed,” or “one step away from homelessness.” City programs and services were able to help over 1,000 people or households to find permanent housing in 2018, Colopy said. The Everyone Home report states that Long Beach has \$30 million of funding available for services, shelter, housing and operations, in Fiscal Year 2019. The majority of this funding is distributed to Colopy’s department and through the Homeless Services Division and Housing Authority. ■

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Vice Mayor Dee Andrews Kicks Off City Effort To Develop 2030 Strategic Plan

By **ALENA MASCHKE**
STAFF WRITER

A motion made by Long Beach Vice Mayor Dee Andrews during the February 5 city council meeting kicked off the city's process to create a Comprehensive Strategic Plan for 2030. "As Long Beach continues to grow, we must think big as an organization and plan for an even brighter future," the motion read, referencing Mayor Robert Garcia's call for a strategic plan during his recent State of the City address.

Andrews described the plan as "a roadmap for Long Beach's future," and said the next step will be a presentation by City Manager Patrick West, who has been tasked with designing the process for creating the strategic plan. "I think that one of the first things that the planning process should address is how have we performed along the way. Where have we been successful, where have we underperformed and are those still priorities," Andrews said.

The last time the city created a strategic plan was in 2000, when the city council approved a list of priorities and goals for the following decade. The plan focused on strengthening neighborhood leadership, creating a greater appreciation of the city's diversity and expanding public safety by building stronger ties between police and the community, among other strategies.

Attorney Doug Otto chaired the citizen-led committee that crafted the Long Beach Strategic Plan 2010, which was approved by the city council in June 2000. Otto, who currently serves on the Long Beach Community College District Board of Trustees, said he considers the plan to have been a success overall. "I think that the 2010 plan transformed the way that Long Beach did business," Otto said. "It was clear to us that the city was changing, demographically," he added. "We wanted to include more people."

Otto said he believes efforts to strengthen neighborhood leadership and identity were an especially effective element of the city's 2010 strategy. "We developed an identity, as a city, of neighborhoods," he explained.

Another lingering effect of the last strategic plan was the increased focus on accountability, which Otto credited for creating a more performance-based city budgeting process, especially in the area of economic development. "It made the city government more accountable to the citizens, and it got more citizens involved in the city government. On those levels, it was a huge success, and we're now looking at what's next," Otto said.

The new strategic plan is likely to address hot-button issues like housing affordability, job opportunities and climate change, according to Andrews. During the February 5 city council meeting, he expressed his gratitude to Mayor Garcia for the opportunity to lead the city's efforts in devising the 2030 plan: "I'm very, very excited to be able to spearhead this." ■



City National Bank Donates \$15,000 To The Assistance League® For Purchase Of Books

The Assistance League® of Long Beach has received a \$15,000 gift from City National Bank to purchase books for its Operation School Bell®, Launching Literacy and ALa Carte programs. The presentation took place February 7 at the Barnes & Noble store in the Long Beach Towne Center in Northeast Long Beach. The existing partnership with Barnes & Noble allowed The Assistance League to collect more than 5,000 books during the holiday season. According to the organization, City National's gift will allow the purchase of many more books for children in need in Long Beach. Pictured at the check presentation ceremony were, from left: Sophie Segovia, Barnes & Noble assistant store manager; Andrea Navarro, Barnes & Noble assistant store manager; AnnMarie Barenchi, Barnes & Noble Kid's Lead; JoAnn McDonald, president of the Assistance League of Long Beach; Annette Kashiwabara, executive director of the association; Charles Mariano, vice president of City National Bank; and Carolyn Rodriguez, vice president and program administrator for City National Bank. The Assistance League of Long Beach is entering its 79th year. Its mission is "transforming the lives of children and adults through community programs." For more information about the organization, visit: www.allb.org. (Photograph courtesy of The Assistance League of Long Beach)

Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Receives \$10,000 Grant From Kohl's Cares

MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach received a \$10,000 grant from Kohl's Cares, a program "dedicated to supporting happier and healthier communities nationwide," according to a hospital announcement. The grant is funding additional courses related to infant crying spells and bicycle and helmet safety within Miller Children's Injury Prevention Program. "Each new class offered will carry an impact in our community and support our efforts to enhance the safety of all kids," Danny Luna, the hospital's injury prevention coordinator, stated. "With the support from Kohl's Cares, I am excited that we can continue to expand our resources for families looking for innovative ways to prevent injury." ■

Councilmember Al Austin Pulls Out Of Senate Race

Eighth District Councilmember Al Austin announced the end of his campaign for the state's 33rd Senate District. The seat was recently vacated by former Sen. Ricardo Lara, who now serves as California Insurance Commissioner. "While I've been humbled by the support I've received for the senate campaign from communities across the region and all the endorsements from local leaders, there's much more to accomplish at the local level and that is where I will continue my focus," Austin stated. The special election primary takes place March 26. ■

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Rental Properties

(Continued From Page 1)

“policies that support tenants adopted in other cities.”

Now, city staff is planning to present the council with the results of their research, which “will include information on the stakeholder engagement process and proposed policy recommendations,” according to Long Beach Development Services Community Information Officer Richard De La Torre. Although city staff have not released any further details on the report at this point, the one thing both stakeholder groups can agree on is that they don’t have high hopes for the proposal and are unhappy with the city’s process thus far.

The city council directed staff to research tenant assistance policies on January 16, 2018. As part of this process, city staff met separately with landlord and tenant advocates, and held two joint meetings with both groups.

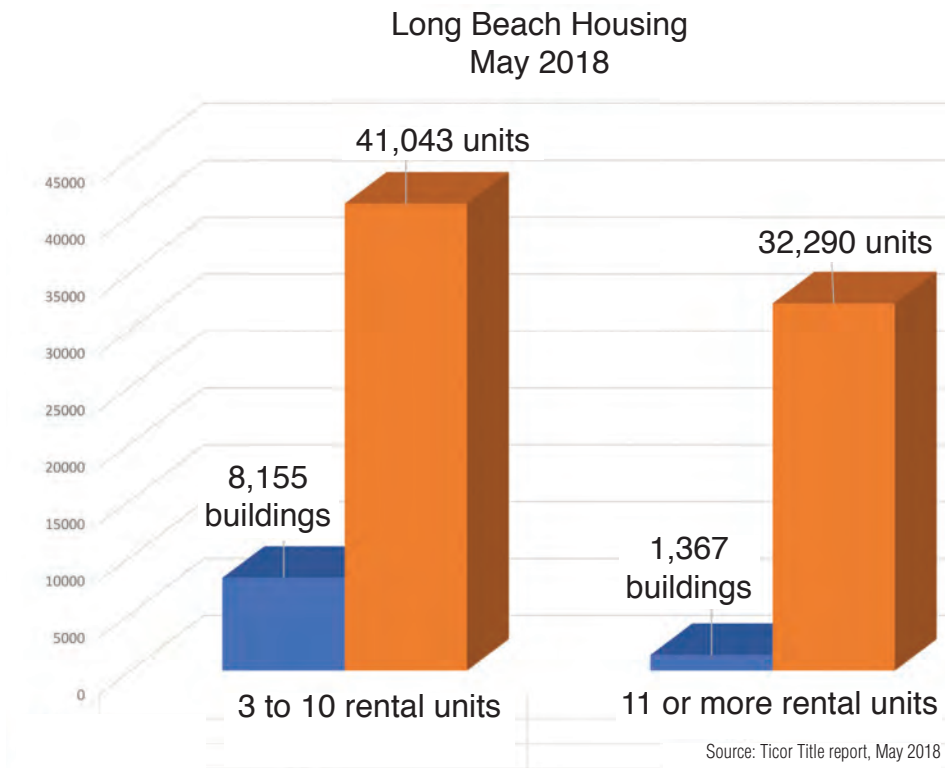
“There was just not enough time that was allocated for these meetings to thoughtfully go through it and reach an agreement,” Jorge Rivera, program director of Long Beach Residents Empowered, said about the stakeholder meetings. Parties on the other side of the aisle agree. “Our position on this whole thing is that they really haven’t done enough research,” Elaine Hutchinson, owner of Long Beach-based property management company Paragon Equities, told the Business Journal.

Hutchinson and fellow members of the Small Property Owners Association (SPOA) felt like property owners’ perspectives were neglected throughout the process, according to the association’s president, Keith Kennedy. Hutchinson added, “They wanted to be able to say they did the outreach; it’s not necessarily that they want our input.” SPOA, a group of property owners holding 10 or fewer properties each, was formed in 2017.

After meeting with city staff, the group felt that the research was lacking any analysis of the effects certain tenant protections had on the communities that enacted them. “You can’t really bring a policy recommendation forward, when the data that you’re providing doesn’t say whether it’s successful or beneficial to the community,” Coldwell Banker Coastal Alliance Broker Associate and property owner Brian Mathison, also a member of SPOA, told the Business Journal.

Mathison also noted that he had doubts about the accuracy of the information presented during the focus group meeting. In a copy of the presentation provided by SPOA lobbyist Mike Murchison, the City of Ventura is listed among 17 other cities that have adopted local regulations around the termination of tenancies. Mathison said his research showed no proof of any such ordinance in Ventura, information that the Business Journal confirmed with the Ventura City Attorney’s Office.

Regardless of the process, it was unlikely that the two sides would find areas of agreement, Rivera pointed out. “I think, ideologically, we’re on two different sides of the fence,” Rivera said. After two meetings, the groups were unable to agree on a single one of the eight policy options presented by the city’s development services department:



According to information provided to the Business Journal by local landlords, as of May of 2018 the City of Long Beach included 73,333 rental units spread among 9,522 buildings. The overwhelming majority of the buildings (85.6%) consisted of between 3 and 10 rental units.

- increased relocation assistance
- just cause termination of tenancy
- anti-retaliation policies
- source of income anti-discrimination measures
- legal information or assistance for tenants
- seniors-only rental assistance
- enhanced notice provisions
- right of first refusal for tenants whose buildings were being sold by the owner.

Stricter eviction regulations, often referred to as “just cause” evictions, drew the ire of the landlord group. Regulations of that nature in other cities require landlords to provide tenants with a “just cause” before asking them to leave, such as failure to pay rent, violation of the lease or creating a nuisance. Murchison said such eviction regulations were a “non-starter” for property owners. “It’s not even something that they would accept to have a conversation about. Doesn’t matter if it’s an investor, a syndicator or someone who owns two units,” Murchison said. The primary issue, Murchison explained, was that just cause eviction policies place the burden of proof on the landlord, making it more difficult to evict “problem tenants.”

Under current law, Long Beach landlords are not required to provide a reason for terminating a tenant’s lease as long as the tenant is notified. Tenants who have occupied a unit for less than a year have the right to a 30-day notice, while tenants whose occupancy exceeds one year are entitled to a 60-day notice.

Alexei Hong, staff attorney at the tenant advocacy and eviction defense group BASTA’s Long Beach office said Long Beach offers little in terms of assistance or protections to local tenants. “There are no real rights for tenants in Long Beach, unfortunately, that are being enforced by the court,” Hong said.

Hong noted that state law protects tenants who file a complaint or lawsuit against their landlord or ask for the inspection of their unit through a public agency from retaliatory evictions. Still, she said, this defense against eviction rarely wins the support of jurors, who

often decide it’s best for the two parties to go their separate ways. “I just think of it as: I’m in a divorce court, trying to tell people that the divorced couple needs to live together,” Hong said. “I think sometimes they don’t realize that the person, if they lose, is going to have an eviction on their record for eight years.”

The presentation also included an option that would expand an existing state law that prohibits discrimination based on a prospective tenant’s source of income to include housing choice vouchers, commonly referred to as Section 8 assistance, as a protected income source. Other options discussed during the joint meetings were a right to legal information for tenants and an increase in relocation fees for tenants displaced by demolition or condo conversion. “The only thing we could agree on was some type of tenant relocation assistance program, and that’s only in concept. We could not reach any sort of agreement with respect to the terms or the details,” Rivera said.

SPOA opposes additional regulations. “We are not necessarily ones to support regulation for the market. I think it’s one of the reasons why Long Beach has been a very affordable beach city for the State of California,” Kennedy said about the limited tenant regulations in Long Beach. Hutchinson added that the policy options discussed in the meeting could deter future real estate investment and construction in Long Beach. “What we’re saying is: [if] you load up the city with all these policies, like relocation fees, what developer or even what owner is going to be able to withstand the burden that will place?”

SPOA members expressed concerns that the proposed policies were an alternative way of pushing rent control, a concept the group vehemently opposes and one that failed to garner enough signatures to be placed on the November 2018 ballot in Long Beach. Under current law, Long Beach landlords are free to raise rents at their discretion, but are required to notify tenants within 30 days for rent increases below 10% and 60 days for increases above 10%.

The city’s September focus group presentation did not include rent control as a policy consideration. But Hutchinson said she felt pressured to either sign onto some of the tenant protection policies presented or face another push for rent control down the line. “What we have heard various politicians say is: if you give us relocation fees, then we won’t support rent control,” Hutchinson said.

SPOA members believe that Councilwoman Gonzalez’s request for a report on tenant protection and assistance policies was sparked by a real estate boom in 2017, which they say led to a spike in evictions and lease terminations as investors sought to make a profit flipping older properties, especially in the city’s 1st District. “The market’s changed, so that the 2017 housing crisis is considerably less [severe] today. The free market took care of it and might finish the job if it’s left alone,” Steve Warshauer of Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR WEST-MAC said.

Murchison argued that this activity was driven by “syndicators and investors,” and not “the majority of property owners in Long Beach.”

Data collected by the real estate analytics firm CoStar showed a property sale spike in the second quarter of 2017. After a subsequent dip in sales volume, property transactions continued to increase, but at a slower pace.

The effect of rising sales on the number of evictions in Long Beach is unclear. According to The Eviction Lab, an organization that provides city-level eviction data, at least three evictions occur in Long Beach per day. The organization’s website notes that this number appears to be unusually low, likely as a result of state laws governing public access to eviction records. “Many eviction records are sealed at the end of a case in California,” the lab’s website states. “As a result, we cannot see if or when these evictions took place, creating an undercount.”

Rental rates in Long Beach continue to increase while median household incomes, as estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau, have stagnated and even decreased when controlled for inflation. Kennedy said landlords don’t have control over the income levels of their tenants, and that small property owners like himself and his fellow SPOA members would struggle to cover the additional costs created by policies such as increased tenant relocation fees. “I don’t think that because we’re housing providers, we should take on additional responsibility,” Kennedy said.

Hong and other tenant advocates said they believe regulations are necessary to combat housing insecurity and protect tenants from evictions. “How is it possible that this is the one business that affects everybody, that is totally unregulated?” she asked.

Without any significant congruence between the policy desires of landlords and tenant advocates, it will be up to the city council to decide what level of tenant protections and assistance the City of Long Beach will implement. De La Torre said the report would be presented to the city council “in the near future.” ■

(Continued From Page 1)

nearby residential areas.

“We thought this land was going to be the hardest to develop because it’s on the backend of the project,” SRG Senior Vice President of Commercial Development and Investment Larry Lukanish told the Business Journal. “Now that everything is built out and retail is next door, it has actually become some of the best land because it’s got walkable amenities.”

Comprised of four industrial buildings ranging in size from 74,723 square feet to 138,413 square feet, Pacific Pointe Northwest is located on the southwest corner of East Carson Street and Worsham Avenue, adjacent to the 26-acre Long Beach Exchange retail center and two hotels.

“Douglas Park is a special project,” Lukanish explained. “We’ve built in other places – and they’re great projects – but because this is a true mixed-use business park, we’re getting better corporate headquarters for industrial users because of these walkable amenities. It’s a great base for these guys to locate their businesses.”

Pacific Pointe Northwest buildings are identified using numbers that are a continuation of previous Douglas Park development phases: Building 14 is 87,605 square feet with 145 parking stalls; Building 15 is 94,525 square feet with 151 parking stalls; Building 16 is 138,413 square feet with 229 parking stalls; and Building 17 is 74,723 square feet with 144 parking stalls. Each building also has a secure truck court – areas adjacent to loading docks where trucks maneuver.

Over the years, Lukanish said SRG and

Carrie Hoshino of Irvine-based DRA Architects – the firm that designed much of Douglas Park – went through about 20 different iterations of site plans. “We worked on a lot of different build-to-suits for different clients over the years that didn’t come together, but this one flowed the best,” Lukanish noted.

Building 16 will be the first structure completed in July, according to Lukanish. Construction of the three remaining buildings will be finished one at a time, with the last expected to be completed in September or October. CBRE’s Brian DeRevere and John Schumacher are handling leasing for the new buildings and, while no proposals have been made, Lukanish said numerous regional companies have been inquiring.

For Sale: Parkview Village In Northeast Long Beach

Parkview Village, the long-time East Long Beach commercial center on the northwest corner of Carson Street and Bellflower Boulevard, is for sale by the property owner, according to a listing by investment sales advisors at Holliday Fenoglio Fowler LP (HFF). The portfolio includes five one-story buildings and seven two-story buildings totaling 116,371 square feet of retail, restaurant and office space. The six-acre site is 90% occupied and was originally constructed in 1950s, with several renovations and additions since.

The portfolio is being marketed as a site for value-add repositioning or future redevelopment, according to HFF documents. “Best Offer,” is listed under pricing; however, a report by HFF analyzing potential return on in-

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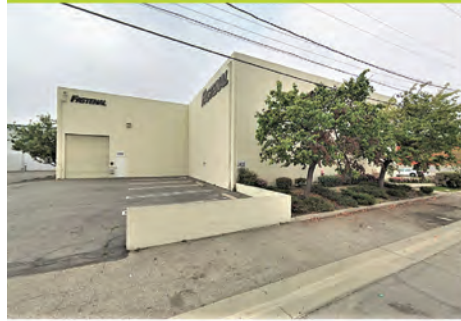
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Realty Views

The Plight Of California Renters



By **TERRY ROSS**

It is no secret that our state has some of the highest costs in the nation when it comes to housing and other items that are basic to consumers. What this means in terms of how and where people live is largely determined by their ability to afford the basics – such as housing.

When it comes to renters – who in many instances want to buy a home but can’t or don’t for various reasons – the economic fundamentals appear to be inhibiting a majority of them because of the high-priced rental market in California, relative to incomes.

vestment used the example of a purchase price ranging from \$34.5-\$35.5 million.

HFF notes that current rental rates at the site are “substantially below” market value, adding that repositioning the buildings could attract higher-paying tenants. Regarding the prospect of future redevelopment, HFF states that the current zoning allows for commercial use with a height limit of two stories, but that zoning variances could allow for a mixed-use development with taller buildings. According to Long Beach Development Services staff, height variances are only made under special circumstances, which are not present at Parkview Village. This means variances would not be issued to develop buildings higher than two stories in the area, according to city staff.

Under the city’s land use element (LUE), a future development guideline adopted by

In recent report by Apartment List, the plight of California renters is spelled out by location and in relation to other parts of the country. According to the statistics compiled by the company using the latest figures from 2017, California has a considerably higher average number of renters who are considered “cost-burdened” than the national average. The report defines cost-burdened as the need for a household earning the average area income needing to spend more than 30% of its income to pay for their city’s median-priced rental.

Here in California, the study found that 55.2% of all renters were cost-burdened, compared with 49.5% nationally. Because this study examines both income and their relationship with rents, sometimes the areas that have the greatest imbalance are somewhat surprising. For instance, in California, the highest percentage of cost burdened renter households is the Riverside area, which also has a large 30% of its renter population classified as severely cost burdened because they

the Long Beach City Council in March of last year after much community debate, Parkview Village is zoned for community commercial use with a maximum building height of two stories. Early iterations of the LUE allowed for moderate density housing in the area, with buildings up to four stories tall. However, after community pushback, the city reduced the plan to match the use and heights already in place.

The Westin Undergoing Millions Of Dollars In Renovations

Construction is underway on \$22 million worth of renovations at The Westin Long Beach. From the main lobby to the restaurant to the rooms, the hotel is receiving a fresh, new look, according to Managing Director John Thompson.

“This is such a great time to be in Long Beach. There is so much growth and an

spend 50% or more of their income on rent.

Riverside is second nationally in cost-burdened renters at nearly 60%, behind only Miami. These findings are more a testament to low wages as opposed to high-priced housing. For example, two Bay Area counties – which are known for some of the nation’s highest housing costs – both in rents and home values – are at the bottom of the California list. Santa Clara County and San Francisco have extremely high rents, but income growth has kept up with this trend much better than in places like Riverside or Miami. These two areas are even below the national average when it comes to rent-burdened households.

In Southern California, Los Angeles County, Orange County and San Diego County all have near 60% cost-burdened renters, not far behind Riverside. But the tide may be turning with rising incomes.

Statewide, the percentage of cost-burdened renter households declined slightly from 55.4% in 2016 to 55.2% in 2017. In Los

overall elevation of our city. More and more we are able to compete with Los Angeles and other major markets for convention business,” Thompson said in an e-mail to the Business Journal. “Our location and the warm hospitality of our residents and workers has a lot to do with this, but as businesses like the Westin upgrade, [Long Beach] truly becomes a world class destination.”

While guest rooms are being freshened up, the most notable renovations are being made in the lobby and restaurant area, which will include an altered floor plan, new furniture, new white marble flooring, a new color scheme and a “larger than life” living wall, according to Thompson. The space was designed by architect Houston Tyner and designer Vanrooy Creative Group.

The restaurant is being renamed Navy Proof Food & Spirits, a concept created by Howe & Brown Hospitality specifically for the hotel. A three-story sculptural chandelier will hang above the restaurant and bar

Angeles and San Francisco, the numbers also decreased in these areas, with L.A. dropping from 58.3% in 2016 to 57.8% in 2017.

For those who are renting and aspire to be homebuyers, the outlook is more mixed, noted the report. Home prices have increased relative to incomes. For example, the average home price increase in 2017 was 8.6%, but incomes only averaged a 4% jump. Rising mortgage rates through the end of last year didn’t help, which put a damper on purchasing power. Analysts believe that this trend will cause prices to fall back this year in response to this trend, with them leveling out in 2020-21 and creating a buyer’s market and a housing rebound.

For those who are renting, don’t look for rates to come down – but income growth should help soften the blow moving forward.

(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.)

to “set the tone for a new way to gather, interact and connect over curated cocktails and bold new food,” Thompson said.

Australian-inspired coffee shop, cafe and lifestyle brand Bluestone Lane is also coming to the ground floor of the Westin. The shop will serve premium coffee and healthy food options to hotel guests and Long Beach residents alike.

The Westin Long Beach was originally built in 1988 and consists of 469 guest rooms and 51,000 square feet of meeting space. The guest room renovations are expected to be completed by mid-April, while the public space renovations are anticipated to wrap up in mid-May.

“Transformations like the one we are currently going through bring a new, fresh dynamic to the overall cityscape of Long Beach but also instill a sense of pride for the many long-term associates who have been with the hotel for up to 30 years,” Thompson said. “We are so happy to honor

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Top: The Westin Long Beach is undergoing \$22 million worth of renovations to guest rooms and common areas, which are expected to be completed in mid-April and mid-May, respectively. Above: Anchored under a three-story sculptural chandelier, The Westin’s new restaurant, Navy Proof Food & Spirits, is an original concept by Howe & Brown Hospitality. (Renderings courtesy of The Westin Long Beach)

their service with the gift of renovation.”
L.A., National Multi-family Markets Expected To Remain Strong Through 2019

Across the country, the vacancy rate of Class A multi-family properties is expected to increase to 5.8% this year due to an influx of market-rate and luxury developments, according to Marcus & Millichap's 2019 North American Multifamily Investment Forecast Report. The nationwide vacancy rate for Class B properties is expected to remain stable at around 4.7%, with the Class C market tightening to 3.9% – the lowest year-end level in 19 years. On the National Multifamily Index, a system that ranks 46 major areas to show relative supply-and-demand conditions at the market level, Los Angeles County dropped two slots to number four. For all unit sizes combined, the average effective rent countywide is expected to increase 4% this year after climbing 6.1% in 2018. Developers delivered 9,700 new units countywide last year and 14,800 additional units are anticipated in 2019. The vacancy rate in the L.A. market is expected to increase by 0.5% to 3.9%.

Recent Local Transactions

The following is a list of recent multi-family and office property transactions by the teams at Centennial Advisers, Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estate Services, Marcus & Millichap's Bogie Investment Group and Stepp Commercial:

• **2789 Long Beach Blvd.** – Lee & As-



sociates Principals Shaun McCullough and Jeff Coburn completed a 10-year lease valued at \$3.2 million for this 8,947-square-foot medical office building directly across the street from MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center. McCullough and Coburn represented the landlord, 2H Property 4101 LLC, while Justin Cheung of Realty Advisory Group represented the tenant, Frese-nius Medical Care Long Beach LLC.

• **640 Stanley Ave.** – Stepp Commercial Principal Robert Stepp and Senior Vice President Michael Toveg represented the seller, Long Beach-based Keely Partners LP, and the buyer, a group of private investors, in the \$5.2 million sale of this 16-unit apartment property in the Rose Park neighborhood. The two-story complex was

built in 1973 and is composed of two-bedroom, 1.5-bathroom townhome units.

• **910, 918, 924 and 930 Freeman Ave.**



– Stepp represented the seller, Long Beach-based VMG Properties LLC, in the \$11.05 million sale of this 36-unit multi-family portfolio. Stepp Commercial Vice President Todd Hawke and Stepp represented the buyer, Long Beach-based Raven Properties LLC. The transaction included four two-story buildings, each with a single one-bedroom unit and eight two-bedroom units. All but nine of the units were renovated last year.

• **1088 Alamitos Ave.** – Marcus & Mil-



lichap's Bogie Investment Group founder Steve "Bogie" Bogoyevac and Vice President of Investments Shane Young represented the seller in the \$4.6 million sale of this 22-unit apartment complex across the street from Lincoln Elementary School. Built in 1979, the property consists of 18 one-bedroom units, two studio apartments, two two-bedroom units, on-site laundry and 28 single-car garages.

• **1867 Temple Ave., Signal Hill** – Stepp and Toveg represented the seller, Long Beach-based Wallup LP, in the \$5 million sale of this 24-unit apartment complex. Stepp represented the buyer, VMG Properties. The two-story hilltop property was built in 1964 and includes 13 one-bedroom units, 11 two-bedroom units and 24 subterranean parking spaces.

• **3211 E. Wilton Ave.** – Centennial Ad-



viser's Ryan Rayburn and Eric Christopher represented the seller in the \$1.2 million sale of this four-unit multi-family building near the traffic circle. ■



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Hospital Executives Weigh In On Emergency Room Wait Times

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

Depending on when someone visits an emergency room, the wait time can range between minutes to several hours, according to health care executives. For those waiting hours, a number of questions and concerns arise, chiefly among them – why is this taking so long?

Dr. Muhammad Husainy, a spokesperson for the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) who has worked as an emergency room (ER) doctor for 10 years, told the Business Journal that approximately 75% of all hospital admissions are attributed to their emergency departments. Patients who seek care in an ER and must then be admitted to a hospital for surgical or medical reasons have to wait for an available bed – and often, there aren't any, Husainy said. As a result, that patient is left waiting for hours in the ER, which can cause a back-up during times of overcrowding, he explained.

"We keep patients in the emergency room for prolonged periods of time basically because we don't have a room to put them in," Husainy explained to the Business Journal. This issue of admission throughput is one of the top reasons for extended emergency room wait times, he noted.

Husainy, who works at Hellen Keller Hospital in Alabama, noted that ER wait



Carolyn Caldwell, president and CEO of St. Mary Medical Center, said that while the hospital administration has plans to eventually build a new emergency department, in the mean time progress is being made to expand the existing facility to accommodate more observation bays. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

times become overcrowded during specific times of the year, particularly during winter months when the flu is more common. "All

of the sudden [when] you have crowding, you have patients who are probably put in places like hallways or are forced to wait in triage longer just because there are no true surge capabilities of most emergency departments," he said.

According to Husainy, In 2018 there were about 142 million visits to emergency rooms in the United States. Ten years prior, there were 100 million. He attributed the increase to population growth, the aging Baby Boomer generation, and a shift in attitudes about care among younger generations.

While Husainy said older generations preferred to make appointments to seek care, younger people often prefer not to wait. "People my age and younger are like, 'I'm not making an appointment because I'll never keep it. I'll forget about it or I'll be traveling, or I'll be busy,'" he explained. He noted that while lab tests or scans ordered by primary care physicians take time to schedule, patients who visit an ER are able to receive results within hours.

Prolonged wait times in emergency rooms result in the increased likelihood that a patient will experience "an adverse event," according to Husainy. "It is a huge risk."

In Long Beach, MemorialCare Health System's closure of Community Hospital in July 2018 has impacted emergency departments, according to executives at Dignity Health – St. Mary Medical Center and MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center (LBMC). "The primary impact was that we saw more ambulance runs because our numbers increased relatively closely to the ambulance runs that they [Community] historically received," John Bishop, CEO of LBMC and Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach, said.

Carolyn Caldwell, president and CEO

of St. Mary, said that her hospital has experienced a "significant increase" in ER patient volumes since Community Hospital closed. "With the closure of Community Hospital, [St. Mary] has seen around a 33% increase in the number of 911 calls," she said. "Since the closing of Community Hospital, our emergency services have seen an additional 200 ALS visits per month, or advanced life support visits, and about [an additional] 135 BLS, or what we call the more minor, basic life support visits, compared to six months ago ending December of 2018."

In 2018, LBMC's emergency department treated approximately 109,000 patients. St. Mary's treats about 56,000 patients per year.

Both hospital executives said that they were prepared for the increase in patient volumes. Long Beach Medical Center hired some of the ER nurses who had worked at Community after its closure, Bishop noted. Additionally, he said, "We set up some processes to be able to increase our throughput by creating some additional beds." Patient volumes in LBMC's emergency room actually decreased from 2017 to 2018, because 2017 was a particularly bad year for the flu, Bishop noted.

St. Mary Medical Center had already put in action some new strategies to reduce ER wait times before Community closed, according to Caldwell. "We were already working on a patient throughput process where we looked at the entire process of a patient being admitted, pulling in all the multi-disciplinary teams, even including housekeeping, which plays a huge role in patient throughput," she said. "So, we have been able to manage the volume appropriately."

In 2018, LBMC's emergency department treated approximately 109,000 pa-

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tients. St. Mary's treats about 56,000 patients per year.

Hospitals triage ER patients to assess the acuteness of their condition. According to Husainy, Bishop and Caldwell, patients are typically assessed within minutes of entry to the ER. Those with potentially life-threatening conditions are put at the front of the line to see a physician, while those who can wait – such as someone with an ankle sprain – receive less priority.

“Our goal is to be able to triage the patient and have a medical evaluation within 10 minutes. Our average for the past six months is actually seven minutes,” Ike Mmeje, chief operating officer of LBMC and Miller Children's, said. However, at LBMC, patients who are not acutely ill could wait as long as 10 hours for care during particularly busy times, which typically include weekends, Bishop noted. The hospital increases staffing during busy hours, he added.

Caldwell said the majority of St. Mary's emergency room patients “are assessed within 30 minutes of their arrival.” She explained that the wait time for non-acute patients increases when multiple trauma patients come through the ER.

Both LBMC and St. Mary employ “fast-track” procedures to process patients through their ERs. “We have a fast track in the emergency department where we try to get the patients with a physician within 30 to 45 minutes to begin any lab work or any pre-testing to assess whether or not they need to be treated on a more urgent basis,” Bishop said.

At St. Mary, patients who are deemed non-acute are put on their own fast-track. “Those patients are able to get in and out pretty quickly,” Caldwell said. She noted that it typically takes four to five hours to process patients who need to be admitted to the hospital.

To try to combat emergency department overcrowding, MemorialCare Health System has opened numerous outpatient, urgent care and imaging facilities in Long Beach, according to Bishop, who added that the centers are a less costly, more efficient method of care for patients. Mmeje said that the health system is working to educate the community about the convenience of these centers.

Both LBMC and St. Mary have ER expansion plans. At LBMC, “We have a plan at this point to add nine additional observation bays,” Bishop said. St. Mary has plans to construct a new ER due to state seismic requirements, Caldwell said. But, in the meantime, the hospital administration plans to add up to 10 treatment bays in its ER.

Challenges For Hospitals And ER Physicians

One challenge for hospital emergency departments is caring for patients who come in for behavioral health care, according to Caldwell. “Most of our facilities, we are acute care facilities. We don't have behavior health beds,” she explained. “It does provide a challenge for our emergency room because we have to provide one-on-one support for those patients. We utilize our case workers . . . to try to

have those patients transported to a more appropriate facility as quickly and as safely as possible.”

In Long Beach, specifically, another challenge is a higher than average volume of homeless patients. “One thing I have noticed being in Long Beach now for almost two years is we do seem to have a pretty significant homeless population. And I am very happy that our mayor and our community is really taking this seriously,” Caldwell said. Last year, the city convened a task force to develop a plan to tackle homelessness. Caldwell and Bishop participated, as did representatives from local colleges, the business community, nonprofits and city agencies.

Bishop said that insurance reimbursements are a challenge for emergency departments. “One challenge that exists for

every emergency department is you treat all patients regardless of ability to pay,” he said. “We've also seen an increase in our uninsured population now that the individual mandate was repealed as part of the recent tax cuts.”

Husainy said that dealing with insurance companies has become a hindrance for emergency room physicians and administrators. At particular issue is that some insurance companies violate federal law and initially refuse to pay for care if, for instance, a patient visits an ER thinking he or she is having a heart attack, but is ultimately diagnosed with acid reflux, he explained. “The American College of Emergency Physicians has levied several lawsuits against Anthem and other insurance companies recently in the last 12 to 18 months,” Husainy said.

“Without trying to sound too heroic, you're asking me to take somebody I have never met before who comes in with an acute complaint, and within about three to five minutes figure out what's wrong with them, and in about 10 minutes have a treatment plan,” Husainy said. “And oh, by the way, try to make them happy at the same time and satisfied that they got what they want, which is a very complicated thing. It's hard enough to do that when you're getting paid, and it's even harder to do it when you're constantly trying to work and have to defend yourself from insurance companies and reimbursement.”

Husainy added, “Our aim as a college of medicine . . . [and] as someone who came into this to be an asset to all patients, is to be honest and to do the right thing.” ■



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Blood Shortage Highlights The Importance Of Donating

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
STAFF WRITER

January was not a productive month for blood donations, according to the American Red Cross. The humanitarian organization reported that snow storms and freezing temperatures in parts of the United States, coupled with the 35-day government shutdown, resulted in the cancellation of more than 16,000 scheduled blood and platelet donations.

“A lot of our blood drives are done through our state and federal partners,” Veronica Garcia Davalos, executive director for the Greater Long Beach Chapter of the American Red Cross, told the Business Journal. These drives, also hosted by local and military agencies, were canceled across the country due to furloughed government staff.

The Red Cross tries to maintain a blood



Dr. Emanuel Ferro stands in the blood collection center at MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center. “Just at Long Beach alone we probably transfuse between 45 and 55 blood products a day to various patients for various things,” he said. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

supply to last the nation for at least five days, Davalos explained, but the setbacks in January have diminished that supply to about three days. The director and her organization are requesting Americans sign up to donate as soon as they can. “We never want to be caught in that situation, where we can’t do what we need to do locally,” she said. “We want everyone to have the blood they need to be helped.”

A common misconception is that any blood given can be shelved for later use,

Davalos said. In fact, donated blood has an expiration date.

“Red cells, generally speaking, can only be kept for about 42 days,” Dr. Emanuel Ferro, the medical director for clinical pathology and the blood bank at both MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center and Miller Children’s & Women’s Hospital Long Beach, told the Business Journal. “Platelets, which are also one of the products we transfuse . . . only have a shelf life of about five days.”

Ferro went on to explain that donated blood may be separated into several components or “products” to serve different medical needs. A “whole blood” donation, which lasts up to 35 days, includes red cells, white cells, platelets and plasma, and is commonly used in surgery. Red cells are used to treat trauma patients or those with anemia, while platelets are often used in the oncology department.

Cancer patients at Long Beach Memorial are frequently in need of blood products, Ferro said, because some cancer-fighting drugs can injure bone marrow and impair patients’ ability to make their own blood. “They depend on the blood of donors to get them through the treatment,” he said.

Both Ferro and Davalos emphasized that the need for blood donations is constant, especially during the holidays. “During the weeks of Christmas and New Year’s, we collected 27,000 fewer donations than we typically collect,” American Red Cross Communications Manager Christine Welch said. Holiday travel and shopping are major factors, she explained, as is the cold and flu season.

Disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes and wildfires, impede donations in particular regions of the U.S., Davalos said. This requires a responsive network of blood donation and delivery across the country. “Every day, the Red Cross must collect more than 2,500 platelet and about 13,000 blood donations for patients at about 2,500 hospitals nationwide,” Welch said.

Though Southern California does not experience extreme shifts in weather like those in other states, Welch said the region follows the national trend of reduced donations in wintertime. For those in the Golden State who are able to donate, she added, the Red Cross welcomes them throughout the year. For the So Cal region, Welch said the organization aims to collect about 700 blood donations every single day, with blood collected at the Long Beach Red Cross serving more than 120 hospitals in the region alone.

Long Beach Memorial Medical Center contracts with the San Diego Blood Bank for most of its blood, according to Ferro, and supplements that with its in-house blood donation center. The hospital’s trauma center, which cares for patients suffering from injuries related to car accidents and violent assaults, has a high priority for these donations. “We get all kinds of people that come in who are in dire need of blood, and they would die without it,” Ferro said.

Donated blood is also used in obstetrics and gynecology, he added. “A fair number of mothers that deliver . . . sometimes will have a bad hemorrhagic event that will have to be treated with blood products,” he explained.

Reggie Harrison, director of the Long Beach Department of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Communications, told the Business Journal that a healthy blood supply would be essential if an earthquake or tsunami struck the city. “Having a baseline level of blood available at all times for the public, just for the general accidents that occur, is extremely important,” he said. “That need gets ratcheted up 10 times more in a major emergency or disaster.”

Head injuries, either from people falling or being struck by debris, are common in such events, Harrison said. There is also a high risk of foot injuries, “especially in an earthquake when people start walking or running,” he explained. “They’re stepping on glass and so immediately you have a lot of foot injuries that occur.”

Because it may take days for paramedics and emergency services to arrive after a major disaster, injuries may become more severe and require more blood by the time a patient is transported to a hospital. “That blood loss is going to have to be accounted for once they arrive,” Harrison explained.

Building and maintaining a strong blood supply is an ongoing process, Ferro said. “We don’t have a specific limit and say, ‘Oh, we have enough today, you can all go home.’ That never happens.” When there is a greater shortage than usual, especially during this time of year, Ferro said the hospital will appeal to those visiting patients or even staff to augment their supply. “We always are interested in taking people who are willing to donate,” he said.

For more information about donating blood, contact the American Red Cross Greater Long Beach Chapter at 800/RED-Cross or Long Beach Medical Center at 562/933-0808. To find a Red Cross blood drive near you, visit redcross-blood.org/give.html/find-drive. ■

HealthWise

Life With Heart Failure



By **Cindy Peters**

Heart failure is becoming a more common health care term. On first reference, it may seem like the heart is no longer working. However, heart failure actually refers to a chronic condition where the heart isn’t pumping enough blood to meet the body’s needs, and congestive heart failure is a type of heart failure that requires immediate medical attention.

When heart failure begins, the heart tries to compensate by enlarging, developing more muscle mass, pumping harder, narrowing blood vessels, and diverting blood away from the rest of the body.

This can temporarily hide symptoms of heart failure, but it doesn’t reverse the condition. These compensations actually make it worse.

Since the heart tries to compensate for less blood pumping, it’s important to meet with a doctor regularly to catch heart failure early. There are some common signs of heart failure that should be discussed with a doctor:

- Shortness of breath
- Persistent coughing or wheezing
- Edema – buildup of fluid
- Tiredness/fatigue
- Lack of appetite
- Confusion
- Increased heart rate

While all hearts weaken with age, heart failure results from other health conditions that can damage the heart. Conditions that may lead to heart failure, include:

- Coronary artery disease
- Past heart attack
- High blood pressure
- Abnormal heart valves
- Heart muscle disease
- Congenital heart defects
- Severe lung disease
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Sleep apnea
- Severe anemia
- Overactive thyroid
- Abnormal heart rhythm

Since heart failure is a chronic condition, it can be an overwhelming diagnosis, but when the condition is managed, a person can live a healthy and happy life. If someone has been diagnosed with heart failure, it is important to:

- Continue receiving medical care
- Follow physician orders
- Take prescribed medication as directed
- Avoid foods high in sodium
- Start a doctor-approved exercise plan

This February, during American Heart Month, I encourage everyone to know their personal risk for heart disease and take the necessary steps to lead a heart healthy lifestyle.

(Cindy Peters, RN, MSN, ACNP, is a nurse practitioner at the MemorialCare Heart & Vascular Institute at Long Beach Medical Center) ■

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D.J. Scorza is the manager of the Anytime Fitness located at 3rd Street and Pine Avenue. The gym offers yoga classes, one-on-one training as well as small group training in classes of three to five. "I actually do like that there are so many options," Scorza said of the multiple gyms on Fitness Row. "At the end of the day, we're a business, but we're a business in getting people healthier – and however people get healthier is great for society." (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)



One reason people stop going to the gym, DTLB Crossfit owner Garrett Scales said, is their solitary approach. "People do the New Year's resolution thing and they last a month or two and they quit, because they're bored. There's no one to really do it with them." Members of DTLB Crossfit participate in a variety of free weight and aerobic exercises together, Scales said, and that helps them to stay motivated and get in shape. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)



Members of KP Pilates Plus exercise on machines called Megaformers to work their core muscles. "You're working your slow-twitch muscle fibers, which actually help you to burn calories longer throughout the day," KP owner Kelli Parsley said. "You don't have to put your body through so much wear and tear to get in a good workout, and that's the great thing about the Lagree method." (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

(Continued From Page 1)

Owner Kelli Parsley said she viewed the presence of fellow fitness businesses as encouragement rather than competition. "We all have something different to offer," she told the Business Journal. "It's getting busier [downtown], and we appreciate our neighbors."

Speaking on behalf of the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA), a nonprofit that manages the two property and business improvement districts in the area, Research and Policy Manager Austin Metoyer said that the emergence of Fitness Row was not planned. The DLBA may make suggestions to a new business that wants to lease in downtown, but the decision is entirely up to the owner, he noted. The success of the various fitness centers on Pine is due to their specialization, he speculated. "They all serve a particular interest or need," he said.

Parsley said her establishment stands out from other Pilates studios by focusing on the Lagree method. This form of Pilates utilizes a sliding machine called a Megaformer to train the muscle fibers in the body's core. "It's high intensity but low impact," Parsley explained. This means the exercise does not put too much direct force on the body's joints, which makes it ideal for fitness training at all ages. "I used to be a runner, but [with] my knees, I just can't do it anymore," Parsley said. "With the Lagree method I can still maintain that physique I want."

KP offers eight to 10 classes every weekday, and three morning classes on Saturdays and Sundays. There are no more than 10 spots available per class, which keeps the instruction focused and in high demand. Parsley said she has many long-time members and is excited for the new housing projects downtown to bring in a fresh crop of residents.

D.J. Scorza manages the Anytime Fitness located at 301 Pine Ave. as well as the two

on East Anaheim Street and Los Coyotes Diagonal. Scorza said the Pine facility, which has been open for nearly two years, is the most popular of the three. "We already had an established fan base, and when we opened the downtown club we actually had a lot of members checking that one out and transferring over," he told the Business Journal.

The Pine Avenue Anytime Fitness offers staffed hours Monday through Saturday, but members are free to use the 5,000-square-foot gym every day and hour of the year. "We don't really need as many people [for staff], so we hope that everybody can come in, get their workout in, get on whatever piece of equipment they want and get on with their day," Scorza said.

Regarding the abundance of fitness clubs downtown, Scorza said that while he does recognize them as competition, he sees no reason why the business on Fitness Row can't coexist as a thriving center for exercise. As a personal trainer, Scorza said he likes that his clients have multiple options for getting fit. "We tell people to try them all out, because at the end of the day you're going to find which one fits you most, and whatever makes you happy is going to help you get healthier."

Celeste Ayers, owner of Polarity Fitness on 501 Pine Ave., likened the options to having a McDonald's next to a Carl's, Jr. The diversity allows businesses to cater to varying tastes. "One day you want Carl's, Jr. hamburgers, the next day you want McDonald's," she said.

Now in its fifth year, Polarity Fitness offers aerobic pole dancing classes, private training and dance workshops. "Any fitness where you can dance your booty off, that's what we offer," Ayers said. Classes are scheduled every evening of the week except for Fridays and Sundays. Ayers said her membership has grown each year as Pine has attracted new businesses and residents.

Gold's Gym Long Beach, located at 345 Pine Ave., first opened its doors on October 1, 2001. Membership has remained steady ever since, General Manager Jose Sandoval told the Business Journal. The gym features 38,000 square feet for strength and cardio-training areas, as well as a steam room, "Kids Club" and space for various fitness classes. "We pride ourselves on our world-class coaches and supportive, motivating community along with our wide variety of fitness experiences, group exercise classes and membership options," Sandoval said.

As to being located near so many other studios and clubs, Sandoval said, "Everyone has a unique fitness journey. It's great that our community offers so many options for potential members to compare and make the best decision for themselves."

DG Boxing at 745 Pine Ave. specializes in strength and conditioning for boxers, with both one-on-one and private sessions. General Manager George Orduna said the business has benefited from pedestrian traffic and Long Beach Transit's free Passport buses that loop around the downtown and waterfront area. Though Orduna believes the addition of new gyms has likely diluted the club's

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562/624-0900 • 333 Pine Ave
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KP Pilates Plus

562/704-6772 • 245 Pine Ave #140
kppilatespluslb.com

Polarity Fitness

562/308-6677 • 501 Pine Ave*
www.polarityfitness.com

* Same address but two separate workout spaces.

These aspects are combined into one-hour classes that can fit into busy downtown schedules, the owner said.

Scales views nearby fitness clubs as healthy, even inspiring, for his business. "They feed me," he said. Whereas members of large gyms work out by themselves and get bored, at DTLB Crossfit they train and push each other to succeed, Scales said. "It's the old saying, misery loves company," he went on. "They come in, they do a group work out . . . they suffer together. And that makes it a lot more enjoyable."

Featuring group classes as well as personal training, Groundwork Fitness at 333 Pine Ave. was the first establishment to open an active fitness parklet in the United States, according to owner Giovanna Ferraro. In fair weather conditions, this repurposed pedestrian area is filled with active members and exercise equipment – which does wonders for marketing, Ferraro said. "I had a gentleman come by last night as I was closing up and he caught the last five minutes of the class. I gave him a pass," she said. "It's pretty amazing."

One of the newest classes available at Groundwork is "aerial silks," which involves gymnastic movements performed on silk ropes hanging from the ceiling. The class has grown in popularity and is now open to both adults and children, Ferraro said. "There's definitely a kids' course and that has gained momentum. They love it."

Ferraro has also formed a nonprofit, KeepLBCFit, that works with health organizations and the city to provide free workouts and health education for the homeless. The nonprofit has partnered

with Pacific Gateway, the city's workforce development agency, to help employ those at risk of becoming homeless.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the immediate effects of "moderate-to-vigorous physical activity" include reduced blood pressure, diminished feelings of anxiety, better sleep and more efficient conversion of carbohydrates to energy. The long-term benefits include lowered risks of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer.

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, a 2018 HHS report based on current health science, recommends that adults engage in at least 150 minutes of "moderate-intensity" physical activity each week, with

"brisk walking" being given as an example. The report states that regularly engaging in this level of activity can lead to lowered risks of Type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, depression and obesity. Furthermore, it can strengthen bones and joints, heighten energy, improve balance in the elderly and increase one's chances of living longer.

"This is what's going to keep you out of the doctor's [office]; this is what's going to keep your heart healthy," Parsley said of her Pilates studio. Speaking about exercise in general, she highlighted how important it was that gyms offer classes and space to work out within the urban environment. "Your body needs to move, and I think that's what a lot of people miss. The fact that we have this to offer right in downtown is amazing." ■



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CSU Long Beach And Long Beach City College Partner With Industry To Prepare A Skilled Future Workforce

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

During an era of fast-paced technological advancements and economic growth, higher educational institutions in Long Beach are strengthening partnerships within growing industries to ensure their curriculums keep up with in-demand skillsets and to create new programs designed for the future workforce.

Program heads at both Long Beach City College (LBCC) and California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) regularly consult with contacts in industries experiencing growing employment opportunities, according to leadership at the institutions.

High job-growth fields in the region include advanced manufacturing, cyber security, cloud computing, welding, advanced transportation and health care, according to LBCC's research. CSULB's research reveals other fields with increasing job opportunities, including hospitality, engineering, logistics, supply chain management, project management and human resources management.

Reagan Romali, superintendent-president of LBCC, referred to these as "rapidly changing industries," particularly with respect to associated technologies.

"We conduct industry research to find out what are the jobs of today and what are the jobs of the future in terms of market demand," Romali said. "We're in constant touch with our industry advisory groups – for all of our major career and technical programs, we have advisory groups that are made up of major industry players. They are continually meeting and providing us advice on curriculum that they need, particular soft or hard skills they need from our students, particular equipment or software that they need to be trained on, industry certifications that might be needed," she explained.

"We are members of the L.A. Economic Development Corporation, and they do that research and share it with us," Jane Close Conoley, president of CSULB, said. She also noted that academics within CSULB's economics and business colleges conduct their own research on the local business community. Most of the university's colleges have multiple industry advisory councils specific to individual departments or programs, she noted.

Both LBCC and CSULB update curriculum and even form new degrees and certification programs based on input from industry advisors. For example, LBCC created a number of new programs because "the economy is really cranking out manufacturing jobs," Romali said. These include an associate's degree in science and advanced manufacturing technology, a certificate of achievement in advanced manufacturing technology, and programs centered on core skills in that industry.

"To give you an idea of the kind of job a student can get with that curriculum, they can get a logistician job that pays upwards of \$75,000 with that kind of a degree in their pocket," Romali said of LBCC's manufacturing-related programs. "They could get a job as a business operations specialist making around \$66,000. . . . That is just one example



Top, a student learns welding techniques at Long Beach City College. According to Superintendent-President Reagan Romali, welding is a high-demand skill in the booming construction industry. Above, an instructor demonstrates a welding machine used to train students on campus. (Photographs by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

of how we partner with industry to understand what is the need today, what is the demand 10 years out, then specifically how do we need to shape our curriculum to meet particular industry demands so there is not a skills gap in Long Beach."

LBCC students have an advantage when it comes to the expanding field of cybersecurity, according to Romali. "LBCC has been named a national center of academic excellence in cyber defense education by the National Security Agency [NSA], and we're only the third community college in California to have this designation. By 2021, it's anticipated that there is going to be three and a half million jobs in this industry," she said. "Students who go through the LBCC program get an additional certificate from the NSA and the Department of Homeland Security . . . so our students are going to have a leg up when it comes to trying to snare some of those government jobs." These occupations typically earn more than \$80,000 per year, she noted.

Justin Hectus, chief information officer for Long Beach-

based law firm Keesal Young & Logan, is an industry advisor for LBCC. He and others within his firm have worked with the college to push for cybersecurity programming and provide feedback about changing industry dynamics. "We have got a pretty informed field of view on where the opportunities and challenges are, and . . . how it is really rapidly changing environment," he said of his firm.

"We just feel like they run a really quality program. They turn out good candidates, and we want to be a good community partner to them," Hectus said of LBCC. "As recently as six months ago, we needed to hire an engineer with some cybersecurity [training] and . . . they found us a candidate who I think just completed or was completing his program at LBCC. And he is amazing. He works with us on an ongoing basis and has done work for some of our tenants in the building as well."

CSULB has numerous industry partnerships that create direct interaction between students and prospective employers. "For example, in engineering we actually have a Boeing lab on campus, so our faculty and students are working side-by-side with Boeing scientists on aerospace industrial applications," Conoley said. "They have worked with them on developing new substances, new materials."

When it comes to health care, CSULB has partnerships with local hospitals including MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center, Dignity Health – St. Mary Medical Center and others, Conoley explained. "All of our nursing candidates are interning or having practicum experiences in the hospitals . . . and what they tell us there is that they love to hire our students and that the students are already oriented [to their procedures]." Academic staff in CSULB's nursing program have partnered with Kaiser Permanente and other health care providers to ensure curriculum is up to date, she said.

Degrees added due to industry demand in the past few years include a bachelor's in biomedical engineering and a

master's in supply chain management. The latter falls under CSULB's Center for International Trade and Transportation (CITT), which operates within the College of Professional and Continual Education (CPCE).

Tim Mozia, associate dean of CPCE, said that most programs within his college have individual industry

advisory boards "because each program has its own unique needs and requirements." Program staff confer with advisors every other month, he said.

Tom O'Brien, executive director of CITT, said the university uses grant funds to pilot test professional training programs. "Right now, we're piloting a class that we call 'the battle for the curb,' which is [about] how do you plan for all of the demands on new spaces in urban areas, from freight to Uber and Lyft to scooters to bike lanes, and that sort of thing, using grant funds," he said.

O'Brien noted that certification programs and skills courses are increasingly popular. "This is a big change in the educational sector over the last few years. There is a generation emerging that appreciates a more a la carte option, where they like to choose specific competencies they want to focus on. And our programs help to respond to that demand," he said.

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One of CSULB's newest buildings is home to courses geared towards professional and trade education. Pictured at the building are Tom O'Brien, left, executive director of California State University, Long Beach's (CSULB) Center for International Trade and Transportation, and Tim Mozia, associate dean of CSULB's College of Professional and International Education. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

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Conoley noted a decline in interest in humanities degrees as students "migrate toward more professionally focused degrees." For example, she said, "fewer people are choosing to learn foreign or international languages, and I think that's a big mistake. We've been doing things to try to make that easier for students to either upgrade their existing bilingual skills or add at least one other language."

Employers aren't just looking for job candidates who have

certain technical skills, Conoley observed. "They are also looking for people who write well, speak well, show up on time, who work well in a group, can manage conflict and so on," she explained. Additionally, she reflected, "It's a complicated business to prepare students to be not only experts in a particular area, but really have a breadth of skills that give them the chance to remake themselves – because all the literature we read tells us that it's unlikely that you'll stay in the same profession or job for the rest of your career."



The EduCare Los Angeles at Long Beach center will soon open its doors to 159 preschool students, ages three to five. The program, which was partially funded by Measure K bond dollars, had previously been housed in temporary classrooms on the campus of Barton Elementary school, which is also home to the newly constructed center. The new facility offers free and low-cost preschool as well as federally-funded Head Start education programs to children from the area and "serve as a hub for modeling how early learning programs can provide quality early childhood education, partner with families and advocate for education practice and policy," according to a Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) press release. (Photograph courtesy of LBUSD)



Renovations to Long Beach's Renaissance High School for the Arts are complete. Begun in fall 2016, modifications included the construction of a two-story theater and a new physical education building, plus upgrades to accessibility and fire safety, energy efficiency, earthquake retrofitting, the removal of portable classrooms, new landscaping and fencing and a new parking lot. According to the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), funding for the \$40 million project came from Measure K school bonds. "The district has now invested millions of dollars in this campus, and it is fantastic," Mark Zahn, the school's former principal, said in a press release. "Renaissance is back, and I'm sure it's back well into the 22nd Century." (Photograph courtesy of LBUSD)

Moving forward, both schools plan to expand relationships with the regional business community to leverage job opportunities for students. The Long Beach College Promise program – a partnership between the City of Long Beach, Long Beach Unified School District, LBCC and CSULB – was recently updated to include its first industry partner, the Port of Long Beach, which opened an institute at LBCC. More partners are coming, according to Romali.

"We are soon going to be signing on another city, terminal operators at the port, construction companies and a variety of companies . . . and what they are going to be doing is allowing our students an opportunity to interview for jobs and internships," Romali said. "They are going to be able to post on a job board what their open careers are, and then partner with our career planning and placement center to funnel students into interviews for the positions."

CSULB is working on creating one point of contact for all employers, according to Conoley. "The idea is we'll build an electronic portal so that industry [employers] can put who they are, what they do and what they are looking for. Do they want to be on an advisory board? Do they want an intern? Do they want a high school kid? Do they have a paid internship available?" she explained.

Higher education isn't just about earning a certificate or degree – it's about a student's entire life, Romali reflected. "I haven't done my job if I just let them graduate and walk out with a degree," she said. "I want them to walk out with a life. And the way I do that is to get them excited about what education can do for them, where it can take them, how it can create prosperity in their life, and then ultimately land them a job, ideally in the Long Beach surrounding area."

The overall idea of industry partnerships, according to Romali, is this: "Ultimately what we want to do is make Long Beach an attractive location for companies moving in – so we're giving them skilled labor." ■

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Timothy White has served as the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU) since 2013. He was recently awarded the Leadership Champion Award by Leadership California, honoring men whose work "champions women leaders and is dedicated to advancing women to leadership positions," according to a CSU press release. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

"We're the seed corn of tomorrow's economy, tomorrow's society." **CSU Chancellor White Hopeful That New Funds Will Produce More Diverse Graduates**

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
 STAFF WRITER

In the current academic year, almost half a million students are enrolled across the California State University's (CSU) 23 campuses. With its operations spanning the state from Humboldt in the north to San Diego in the south, CSU's most successful venture this year took place in Sacramento. California's new governor, Gavin Newsom, proposed his budget for the year on January 10, which included a significant increase in allocations to the university's funds.

"The governor's proposed budget has provided a chance to grow our university across the 23 campuses," CSU Chancellor Timothy White told the Business Journal during an interview at CSU's headquarters in Downtown Long Beach. Newsom has proposed a \$300 million increase in permanent funding as well as two one-time grants of \$247 million for infrastructure repairs and improvements, and \$15 million to provide food and housing assistance to low-income students.

In addition to a tuition freeze stipulated in the governor's proposal, White said the university will continue to invest in its Graduation Initiative 2025, which includes several programs aimed at increasing completion rates and ensuring more students graduate on schedule. "It's creating more opportunity for every one of our students □ around their reality □ to earn their degree sooner and go on to grad school, professional school or into the workplace," White explained.

The university president said it was crucial for the state to invest in education that is accessible and beneficial to its diverse population. "By 2030, the state's going to be

about a million [academic] degrees short of what it needs to support the economy," White noted. That projection, which was published in a report prepared by the Public Policy Institute of California, should serve as an affirmation that investments into the state's university system were crucial for its continued economic success, White explained. "We're the seed corn of tomorrow's economy, tomorrow's society."

In return, the CSU president made a pledge to taxpayers that the university would produce a return on their investment. "Accountability is a big part of this, and it's absolutely appropriate. I want us to be accountable," he said.

The university's freshman graduation rates have increased continuously over the past three years. In 2018, 25.5% of CSU freshmen graduated within four years, compared to 20.7% in 2016. In the same year, 61.2% of students graduated after six years of school, compared to 59.3% in 2016. These numbers put the university on par with the goals of its graduation initiative. "For the dollars the state is putting into our operating budget, there's a remarkable return, financially and socially," White said.

To ensure that those returns remain sustainable, the university is planning to invest in its aging infrastructure and expand on-campus residences to alleviate the effects of elevated housing costs for students in tight rental markets like the Bay Area, where the school has four campuses. To fund further infrastructure improvements, the state would have to take up additional bonds, White said, financing what he called a "jobs-for-jobs" program: construction jobs in the short term, more job-ready graduates in the long term. "We're going to be pushing hard on this one," he promised.

While statewide politics have played out in the univer-

sity's favor recently, White expressed concerns about political developments at the national level. The CSU president strongly opposes U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' planned changes to the Title IX statute, a federal law that sets guidelines for the investigation of sexual assault and harassment allegations on and around university campuses.

"We're deeply concerned," White said. "We're committed to a fair process to those who have been accused of sexual assault, but the DeVos proposal just misses the mark dramatically." In late January, White submitted an official comment to the secretary's office, outlining the university's opposition to a number of planned policy changes, which include narrowing the definition of sexual assault and giving alleged perpetrators an opportunity to cross-examine their accusers. "Some of the things that are in the draft they're proposing are draconian and inappropriate," White noted.

Changes in immigration policy are another point of concern for White. "It's been very, very personal for many of our students as well as many of our employees," the president said, pointing to the uncertainty faced by undocumented students or students whose family members lack legal immigration status. "It gets in the way of their ability to concentrate on their studies."

Under the California Dream Act of 2011, undocumented students are able to apply for scholarship and financial aid, information the university shares through its student services department.

"The other point we're making to our students is: earn your degree. Because, no matter what happens in the world of politics, nobody can take that degree or that knowledge or that skill and experience away from you," White said. ■

(Continued From Page 1)

philosophies – something we didn't invent, as I'm sure many of our Baby Boomer parents would remind us.

Long Beach has quite a few New Age stores that cater to those who delve into metaphysical and alternative practices, and curiosity has brought me to quite a few of them. I'd hazard to guess that the addition of such a shop in Belmont Shore, appropriately called "House of Intuition," has something to do with the fact that Millennials are reviving an interest in these philosophies.

Make fun of them all you want, but such practices are frankly akin to beliefs not any less mystical than those of widely accepted religions. So what if you want to buy some crystals because you think they have healing properties? And so what if, by placebo or actual crystal magic, it helps? Unless you're throwing the rocks at people, it's not harming anyone.

My question isn't whether or not alternative belief systems, and my age group's openness to them, is problematic. My question is – what happens when we become so open-minded that we cease to question at all?

Gwyneth Paltrow has made a fortune with her lifestyle line, Goop, a health-oriented company that advocates for a number of alternative practices, one of which includes

sticking a jade egg somewhere. . . inadvisable. That is according to most gynecologists interviewed on the topic, who have noted that such an act can result in infections or (grimace) it getting stuck. A task force made up of 10 California county governments investigated Goop's claims that the eggs would help regulate hormone levels and strengthen bladder control. Ultimately, government attorneys fined the company \$145,000 for unsubstantiated marketing.

But guess what? Goop still sells the eggs. Because people are still buying them. Not only that, but Paltrow's ideas are so popular that she is getting a show on Netflix to hock her other goopy lifestyle advice. And, as I wrote in my last column, "The Subliminal Power of Netflix," if the success of "Tidying Up With Marie Kondo" is any indication, we should all be worried about Paltrow's potential power over Millennial binge-watchers.

On the flipside, OBGYNs might see their profits go up, so there's that.

More alarming to me even than potential health risks of some pseudo-scientific treatments is that, for some people, a willingness to believe in unproven theories and mysticism too easily morphs into an openness to believing fake news and conspiracy theories that are ultimately detrimental to society. It might seem like a bit of a leap,

but consider, if you will, the Cult of Robert.

Recently I met a Millennial in his mid-thirties who turned out to be an unfortunate example of what happens when open-mindedness does a full circle loop around the horseshoe of mindfulness to its several times removed cousin: ignorance.

Over a drink at a local watering hole, this Mindful Millennial chatted me up about charts. "Not astrological charts or natal charts," he assured me, but some kind of new chart that had been devised by someone MM kept referring to only as "him." (Lord Voldemort called – he wants his shtick back). He talked circuitously about how they would reveal my true nutritional needs, my inner desires, and basically all truths about my life.

Apparently, these charts came to "him" when "he" heard a voice, MM said. I took a sizable sip of my drink. "What's this guy's name? Is he famous?" I asked.

Matter-of-factly, as though revealing a universally accepted truth, MM said, "It's Robert." I looked nervously toward the exit and asked if I was about to be recruited to Scientology, a joke he did not appreciate.

Because I am a glutton for punishment/wanted to see if I could find out more about Robert-Who-Has-No-Last-Name, I did not end the conversation. That

turned out to be a mistake, because when he changed topics to a recent DNA test that led him to dig into his family history, what had up until that point been nothing more than an Seinfeldian exchange took a turn. He told me he'd discovered his German ancestors were Jewish. So, he did some research on Jews and found out that the "race" was very prominent in Hollywood, and government, and music, and –

I interrupted him, wondering if he had read my recent column on anti-Semitism and was trolling me. I urged him to be careful what he read, noting that narratives like that are often used to perpetuate a conspiracy theory that Jews control the world through power in government and industry. MM nodded seriously. Thank goodness, I thought, thinking he'd change the subject out of embarrassment.

But then, he said, "It was just so crazy to me that my German relatives were Jewish. I didn't even know there were German Jews." I felt as though I had wandered into another plane of existence. After a long, nauseous pause, I told him Hitler had had quite a lot to say on that subject, but that I couldn't blame his confusion, seeing as he had made sure there weren't many German Jews left, hadn't he?

Later that night I wondered what had happened to MM to make him so susceptible to conspiracy theories and revisionist history.

If you retrace it back to the start, this Twilight Zone of a chat plots out what happens when open-mindedness bends toward ignorance. Those who are open to considering alternative lifestyles – like trying a New Age method of personalized nutrition that has no scientific backing invented by some self-proclaimed guru – might also be more open to considering philosophies that are divergent from the mainstream. Considering is fine. Accepting alternative versions of history, or of the news, without questioning them, is not. Much like you shouldn't subject your intestinal tract to what you think is a "detox tea" because a Kardashian is selling it (when actually, it's a laxative) – you shouldn't subject your brain to "alternative facts." It'll turn it to mush.

While anyone is open to such influence, it's Millennials who were raised to primarily get their information not from journalistic sources, but from the vast and gloriously unruly Internet. Maybe that's why we're often open to divergent ideologies.

Don't get me wrong. This is not an anti-hippie diatribe. What it is, is a call to question. Did you read that study linking autism to vaccines? Instead of knee-jerk deciding not to vaccinate your kids, here's what you should do: research. Not the kind sourced from the hivemind of the Internet. The kind sourced from scientific journals that have, again and again, debunked that study. The kind sourced from major trusted news outlets that reported its author had his medical license revoked for misconduct.

We cannot be the generation that popularizes the acceptance of alternative facts – including mistruths about an entire culture's history – at face value. This amounts to willful, self-aggrandizing ignorance masked as open-mindedness. So, fill your living room with salt lamps. Buy a stack of tarot cards. Investigate and question traditional philosophies. But do your research. Don't buy into outright lies.

And let me know if you ever meet Robert. ■

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