

LONG BEACH BUSINESS JOURNAL

An edition of the Long Beach Post



Tess Kazenoff / Business Journal

Members of Housing for All Long Beach Community Land Trust Mayra Garcia, Jared Garcia-Cortez, Antonia Leon, Mayra Garcia-Cortez, Gary Hytrek and Gretchen Swanson at 14th Street Park in Long Beach. The group filed its articles of incorporation in July 2022 to begin the process of creating a community land trust in Long Beach as a means of creating affordable housing.

Long Beach pursues a new approach to affordable housing

By Tess Kazenoff

As affordable housing becomes more and more scarce across the state, a growing movement of community land trusts could be a piece of the solution, and through a new initiative spearheaded by Long Beach Residents Empowered, or LiBRE, a tenants advocacy organization, Long Beach could be seeing its first community land trust in the coming years.

In January 2021, LiBRE established a formation group to

lay the groundwork for a local land trust, and in July 2022, this effort, now known as the Housing for All Long Beach Community Land Trust, filed its articles of incorporation.

While community land trusts can take many forms, ranging from green space to commercial development, what Long Beach would likely adapt would be a tenants model, where Housing for All Long Beach Community Land Trust would tentatively purchase an existing apartment or mixed-use building, and lease out its units, while maintaining

ownership of the land itself.

As a flexible model that functions as its own nonprofit, community land trusts are intended to ensure affordability and stability for lower-income and marginalized communities.

In recent years, community land trusts have become an increasingly popular initiative, as housing and displacement pressures have spread to historically affordable parts of the state, including Long Beach, the Central Valley and the Inland Empire, said Leo Goldberg, co-director of the California Community Land Trust Network, an organization that supports community land trusts throughout the state.

Particularly since the pandemic, the depths of the affordability crisis and subsequent homelessness crisis have been illuminated even more, said Goldberg.

“A lot of people are looking for innovative solutions, not just status quo programs,” Goldberg said.

Community land trusts have even gotten the attention of Long

Precarious economy will continue to impact real estate market this year

By Tess Kazenoff

After a year of rising inflation and interest rates, the impacts are being felt throughout the Long Beach and Southern California real estate markets.

The Federal Reserve increased interest rates a notable seven times throughout 2022, significantly cooling the real estate market after two years of target rates in the 0% to

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Coalition challenges 226-unit project along LA River

By Jason Ruiz

A community group is suing to block the construction of a 226-unit housing development along the Los Angeles River that was approved by the City Council in November, claiming that the project’s environmental review omitted important factors that should have been publicly disclosed.

The Riverpark Coalition, a group that has been advocating for more park space along the LA River in Long Beach, has filed a suit against the city over its approval of the River Park housing development that is slated to be built on a parcel of land north of Wardlow Road on the east side of the river.

In a suit filed last month, the coalition’s lawyers argue that the environmental impact report that is required under the California Environmental Quality Act was incomplete and left out potential impacts to rare plants and animals that may populate the site.

The suit claims that the report also didn’t analyze the potential for future floods along the river, consistency with existing equestrian plans and the loss of future park space if the project moves forward.

The project consists of 74 two-story single-family homes, 99 two-story row townhomes and 53 carriage townhomes, 12 of which are being reserved for very-low income buyers.

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Editor's note: A story on the cover of the December 27, 2022, edition titled, "San Pedro Bay ports successfully navigated the squall that was 2022—but not unscathed" incorrectly named the organization negotiating with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. The organization is the Pacific Maritime Association.

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader,
Since 1987, the mission of the Long Beach Business Journal has been to provide you, the founders, owners, leaders and workforce of our local business community, with all of the information you need to succeed, while challenging city leaders to use their power to improve our city and help Long Beach grow. Over our 35-year history, the Business Journal has gone through many changes, and the past few years have been no exception. In 2020 founder and longtime publisher George Economides retired; that same year we came under new ownership at Pacific Community Media alongside the Long Beach Post. In 2021, I joined as editor and, most recently, our amazing design team has given the Business Journal a fresh, modern look.

Today, I'm writing to you to share the latest update that will ensure we can continue to serve you as the voice of business in Long Beach for decades to come.

I'm excited to announce that the Business Journal has launched a new print and digital subscription program that will give you exclusive access to our industry-leading reporting and analysis as well as high-quality data and actionable information you won't find anywhere else. It's no secret that in today's media landscape, organizations big and small have struggled to find profitable business models that can allow for long-term success. As a member of the business community, you know better than most that the past few years have not made things easier, for anyone. No publication is immune to the financial challenges of this industry, but we hope that by becoming a part of the solution, to ensure the Business Journal's future so we can continue to bring you the kind of local coverage and information you need and deserve, you'll gain a greater sense of community and ownership in your local news source.

We're in this for the long haul, for you. That's why our new subscription program is so important. You've been with the Business Journal through many phases—and each new chapter has allowed us to become an even stronger voice for you. This upcoming chapter is no different, and I hope you'll join us for it.

Whether you're a longtime reader or new to our publication, I want to thank you for your support of the Long Beach Business Journal, and I look forward to serving you for many years to come.



Hayley Munguia
Business Journal Editor

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1st phase of new 432-unit East Village apartment community slated to open Feb. 1

A 24-story, 190-unit high-rise of one-, two- and three-bedroom units will open next month.

By Tess Kazenoff

After about three years of construction, a new 432-unit apartment community is coming to Long Beach's East Village.

Split into two phases, the first phase—a 24-story, 190-unit high-rise of one-, two- and three-bedroom units—is slated to open Feb. 1, while a mid-rise building comprising studios, one- and two-bedroom units is scheduled to open in May or June, said Onni Group property manager Joey Bommarito.

The development, formerly known as Broadway Block, was initially proposed to the city by a developer partnership between Ratkovich Properties, Urbana and The Owl Company, although it has since been taken over by the Onni Group.

Apart from its housing units, Onni East Village also consists of 12 commercial spots which have yet to be filled, although Bommarito hopes for a grocery store such as Whole Foods or Trader Joe's and a coffee shop.

Part of the historic facade of the lot's former occupant, Acres of Books—an independent bookstore that initially opened in Long Beach in the 1930s and closed in 2008—has been preserved, according to Bommarito.

Although more specifics were unavailable regarding what exactly has been preserved and what the future space could entail,

Bommarito hopes that the area will be repurposed into a food court.

While housing specifically for Cal State Long Beach students was part of the initial plans for the site, this element is no longer included, Bommarito said.

However, there are expected to be 32 units that will be fully furnished and meant for short-term stays of at least 30 days.

Overall, 14 units will be affordable, with seven affordable units in each of the two buildings.

Market-rate prices will begin at \$2,858, and can go up to \$15,046 for a penthouse, Bommarito said.

All units include air conditioning, a large washer/dryer, 24-hour guest services and high-speed wireless internet, among other features.

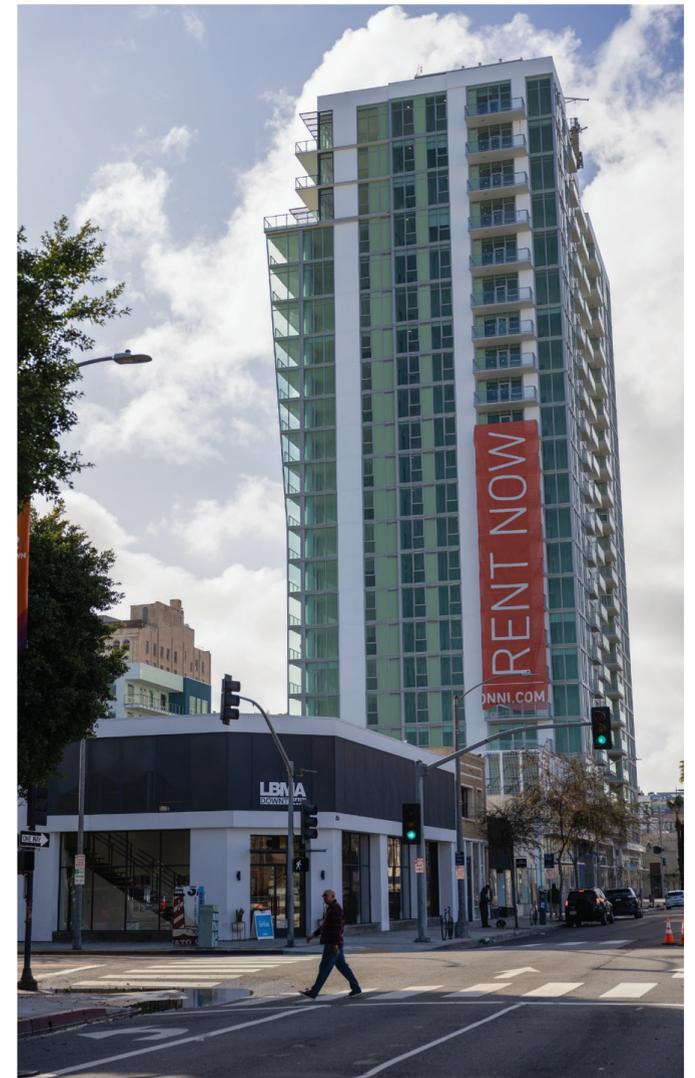
On-site parking will be available for a separate charge.

The amenities of Onni East Village are “the best in Long Beach,” Bommarito said, and include a basketball court, a full-size swimming pool and jacuzzi, a sauna and steam room, a dog washing station, a dog park and a courtyard divided between two buildings that will also be publicly accessible for any pedestrians visiting future businesses.

Additionally, Onni is in the process of establishing relationships with local businesses that can offer incentives to residents. Participating businesses currently include Recreational Coffee, Thai District, Sushi Zen Maru, Ground Hideout and others.

Onni East Village is currently pre-leasing, with 8% of units currently pre-leased, according to Bommarito.

“We're looking forward to opening and getting our future residents moved in and building a sense of community . . . where we're one big family,” Bommarito said. ■



Units are now available for rent for the first phase of Onni East Village in Downtown Long Beach, which is slated to open in February.



Courtesy of Onni Group

All Onni East Village apartments will include features such as air conditioning, a large washer/dryer and high-speed internet.



Courtesy of Onni Group

A rendering of Onni East Village. Amenities are expected to include a two-story gym, a co-working space, barbecue grills, a game room, a theater room and an indoor bar and lounge.

Affordable Housing

Continued from cover

Beach city officials—on Dec. 9, the city released a request for proposals, which will award \$800,000 of Recovery Act funds to provide seed funding, according to Richard De La Torre, a community information officer for the city of Long Beach.

Further details are still unclear, and at this time, no other funds have been earmarked to support a land trust.

A different look at affordable housing

A key distinction between community land trusts and other affordable housing models is the guarantee of remaining affordable for its low-income renters, homeowners, or commercial tenants.

While most publicly-owned housing projects are generally only required to remain affordable for a minimum of 30 years after construction, community land trust properties will never go on sale to the highest bidder, instead becoming a community asset for the long term, Goldberg said.

With a 99-year ground lease, and restrictions on rent levels and resale prices, housing costs are continuously monitored by the stewardship organization to

remain affordable.

Based on Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development standards, housing that is affordable costs no more than 30% of a household's gross income.

Although it is unknown if this would be the standard used to measure affordability in Long Beach's community land trust, cost will be determined based on funder and lender rules and restrictions, the cost of acquisition and development, and resident input, according to Sylvana Uribe, communications director of LiBRE.

According to Long Beach Development Services data, 43% of households in Long Beach pay more than 30% of their monthly income in rent or a mortgage, and rent has gone up 20% citywide over the past 10 years.

For Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) who are most affected by the shortage of affordable housing and gentrification, a community land trust can provide a real stake in ownership, and an opportunity to participate in community-owned housing, unlike with typical affordable housing models, Goldberg said.

"When we're talking about BIPOC communities that have been marginalized from decision-making processes and ownership in many

ways, and for a long time, that's a really important part of a community land trust," Goldberg said.

According to a 2021 survey conducted by the California Community Land Trust Network and researchers associated with UC Berkeley, 80% of California community land trust residents are Black, Indigenous or other people of color, and 60% of residents have an annual income of under \$40,000.

This is due to community land trusts largely reflecting the low-income neighborhoods that they typically operate in, Goldberg said. Many land trusts specifically seek to address historical racially discriminatory housing policies and narrow the racial wealth gap, and while affordable housing cannot be reserved for people of a specific race or ethnicity, it is typically targeted to lower-income households, which in California, are largely residents of color, Goldberg said.

Apart from maintaining affordable housing (generally with the help of state or local subsidies), many community land trust organizations are committed to supporting upward economic mobility, through providing financial counseling, homebuyer classes and support, and employment workshops and opportunities. About 68% of households who responded to

the survey have participated in a community land trust event.

And for many of its residents, community land trusts have proven to improve feelings of economic security.

Of those who responded to the survey, only 40% reported that they felt "mostly" or "very" economically secure before moving into their land trust home, but 76% report feeling "mostly" or "very" economically secure after moving in.

Overall, 60% of residents reported an increase in their family's economic security after moving to a community land trust home.

Behind the formation process

Land trusts typically stem from community organizing among those who want to address economic and housing challenges, such as groups of tenants or existing organizations like LiBRE in Long Beach, Goldberg said.

Advocates at LiBRE became involved after they were approached by The California Endowment and Southern California Association of Governments to explore the housing needs and potential benefits for Long Beach communities facing housing insecurity. LiBRE also applied and received some funding from the National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders for community land trust purposes.

From November 2020 to October 2022, the organization utilized about \$45,000 for a housing needs analysis and for filing its articles of incorporation, according to Uribe.

After filing to become a 501(c)(3), groups must then embark on a period of fundraising and evaluating opportunities to acquire property, whether that is existing housing or a development, a process that can take anywhere from a few months to several years, Goldberg said.

LiBRE estimates that its land acquisition costs will begin at \$150,000, with additional funds needed as the project progresses to develop possible site options.

But even after a building has been acquired, many properties purchased for the purpose of being a land trust are in need of significant rehabilitation, and construction costs are high in California and have only been exacerbated by the pandemic, Goldberg said.

A growing movement across California

Community land trusts are not a new idea—but the concept is new for Long Beach.

The history of community land trusts in the United States spans back decades—the first community land trust grew out of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, as a means to center community control for Black communities in the rural South.

California's first community land trust in Berkeley was incorporated in 1973, and they began to pop up more, particularly in the early

2000s, and then again over the past couple of years, Goldberg said.

Currently, there are 29 community land trusts in California associated with the California Community Land Trust Network, and at least six in Los Angeles County, with many more currently in development throughout the state.

Notable land trusts in the region include the Los Angeles County Land Trust Program, a community land trust partnership pilot program initiated by the LA County Board of Supervisors in September 2020, which enabled five established land trusts to acquire, rehabilitate and preserve tax-defaulted properties for long-term affordable housing. In November 2020, the program expanded to secure unsubsidized multifamily housing in areas with displacement risk.

With an initial county investment of \$14 million, the pilot program secured eight multifamily properties with a total of 43 residential units, providing stabilized, affordable housing to 110 individuals—95% of whom are people of color.

In Irvine, a city that has become increasingly affluent over the years, the Irvine Community Land Trust, in partnership with the city of Irvine, has expanded to nearly 500 units of affordable housing since its 2006 incorporation—a process that began with start-up funding from the city of Irvine, although the community land trust is now a self-sustaining nonprofit.

According to the California Community Land Trust Network survey, community land trusts heavily rely on bank loans and local government subsidies for capital funding that's needed to acquire, develop and invest in housing.

But throughout California, there has been a growing interest among officials in exploring community land trusts, and statewide support has been exemplified through the passage of legislation to better facilitate the creation of community land trusts, which the California Community Land Trust Network also advocates for, Goldberg said.

On Sept. 28, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed three of the network's top priority bills into law: AB 1837, which fights displacement and strengthens community ownership by evening the playing field at foreclosure auctions; AB 1206, which adjusts the taxation of community land trust rental properties; and AB 2651, which extends the welfare tax exemption for community land trust projects during construction.

The organization also championed the creation of a program that was included in the 2021 budget called the Foreclosure Intervention Housing Preservation Program, Goldberg said.

"That's going to create \$500 million from the state housing department for community

organizations including community land trusts, to buy and preserve apartment buildings that are in foreclosure or at risk of foreclosure, and preserve that as affordable housing," he said.

As the state is in the process of implementing the program, funds have not yet been disbursed, Goldberg said.

"We're hoping to see that money very soon, and we think that's gonna have a big impact," Goldberg said.

In the coming year, the California Land Trust Network is looking to support a few more bills with that general mission, including creating a program called the Community Anti-Displacement Program, or "CAP," which would provide hundreds of millions of dollars for land trusts and similar mission-driven organizations and nonprofits, to buy market rehousing and turn it into long-term affordable housing, although without a foreclosure focus, Goldberg said.

"That would be just a really powerful tool, so our members are really excited."

Next steps in Long Beach

For many community land trusts, funding the acquisition of land or necessary construction is one of the largest challenges.

Apart from acquiring the land itself, significant funding is needed for long-term sustainability, and similar to other affordable housing models, there is a constant need for investment from the public sector, including local and federal government and philanthropy, Goldberg said.

"CLTs are always hustling to maintain funding for their buildings," Goldberg said. "When you're providing housing below market rates, or rental housing, it means CLTs are going to have to be creative about finding funds."

While community land trusts can be a promising way to address the housing crisis, it is unclear whether they could reach a scale necessary to truly turn around gentrification displacement and the affordability crisis, Goldberg said.

"Without public investment, no housing solution will reach the scale to have the impact that we want it to," Goldberg said. "They'll certainly have major impacts for the families directly receiving their benefits, and maybe the neighborhoods they're working with, but until those resources come in, we'll have trouble making an impact at the state level in terms of the overall housing situation."

This year, LiBRE plans to begin its education and outreach efforts with the community to assess what exactly a community land trust in Long Beach could look like, with an emphasis on language access, said Gretchen Swanson, LiBRE board advisory member involved in the efforts.

"We started with the idea, we're investigating it, so we're starting

from zero, we're not coming in with a building or a particular scenario," Swanson said.

In a city of nearly half a million residents where about 60% are renters, Swanson speculated that there could be hundreds of thousands of people in Long Beach that would potentially be interested in a CLT, she said.

"The potential is much greater than our capacity," Swanson said. "The biggest thing is getting a community of people who feel confident in the idea and how they get to participate, because no one's asked them before, and giving them the tools that they can use to build that."

After evaluating potential housing opportunities along with a team of experts from throughout Los Angeles, "then we can bring this back to our community and ask them: 'What of these scenarios are you most interested in?'" Swanson said.

Of its community needs assessments so far, it is clear that Long Beach residents don't want to move, Swanson said.

"They didn't really want to change Long Beach per se," Swanson said. "What they wanted was an investment in the types of things that they see that are done in other parts of the city of Long Beach."

A community land trust has the

potential to be a mobilizing force, although it takes years to organically develop, Swanson said.

"In addition to reducing barriers for communities . . . you're also stabilizing communities, and ideally, curbing the displacement of communities from their existing neighborhoods," said Uribe. "It really brings a restorative element to the neighborhoods where folks are currently living, working and want to continue embedding themselves as part of that community."

Swanson recounted visiting New Orleans recently with other housing advocates, where there were three buildings on one street that belonged to a community land trust.

This changed the entire nature of the street, Swanson said.

"People slowed down, people knew people on the street . . . we were kind of walking in the middle of the street—you'd die here in Los Angeles if you walked in the middle of the street," Swanson said. "People just knew that this is a place where people live, their kids come out and play, they can ride their bicycles. I know that sounds simple, but we've taken that away from many people here in the city."

Anyone wishing to get involved in the community land trust or stay in the loop about upcoming workshops is encouraged to email communitylandtrust@wearelibre.org. ■

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People cross the street in front of Hotel Mai at the corner of First Street and Long Beach Boulevard. The hotel has been under construction since 2018, and officials estimate that the work could be completed within the next three quarters.

Hotel Mai to wrap up construction this year

By Tess Kazenoff

Work on the five-story, 34-room hotel at the corner of First Street and Long Beach Boulevard will likely wrap up this year, according to city officials.

The project, which has recently been named Hotel Mai, will bring a new look to the Downtown area, with an approach to architecture that deviates from many of the hotels currently seen in the neighborhood. The design is almost reminiscent of a style seen in Miami,

particularly through tiles used along the base of the building and the orientation of the balconies, said project planner Cuentin Jackson.

“Even though those are two different cities, you have certain similarities that are shared between the city of Long Beach and Miami, as far as proximity to the water, and just diversity of culture,” Jackson said.

The hotel’s entrance is angled to cut between both First Street and Long Beach Boulevard, adding to the prominence of the entrance itself, Jackson said.

While other details or potential amenities are still unclear, and are limited due to the hotel’s relatively small size, plans most likely include a pool on the third level, Jackson said.

The hotel proposal by independent developer Yogesh Patel spans back to 2015, said Jackson. Patel was not available for comment.

Although the project didn’t need approval from the Planning Commission due to its smaller size, the entitlement process still saw delays due to a shortage of parking, Jackson said.

After reconfiguring plans to incorporate a parking lift system, which allows for more parking in the same square footage by using mechanical equipment to allow the vertical stacking of vehicles, it took additional time to find a manufacturer, Jackson said.

After nearly a year, he said, plans were able to move forward.

“We did have to work with the applicant to find a creative solution to ensure they could meet the parking requirements of the Downtown Plan,” said planning manager Alison Spindler-Ruiz.

To facilitate the parking lift, the hotel will offer 100% valet service, and it’s one of the first projects in Long Beach to utilize this type of system, Spindler-Ruiz said.

The project was entitled in 2017, and after a couple more changes regarding the exterior and balconies, construction finally began in 2018.

Typically, for a project like this, it can take a couple of years for construction to commence and complete, and additional delays are not uncommon. But the pandemic slowed the project down even more, Jackson said.

“From the city side, we do everything we can to help projects move along,” Spindler-Ruiz said. “But there’s a global set of challenges related to construction and timeframe and material shortages, et cetera.”

While a specific timeline is still unclear, Jackson estimates that construction will be completed within the next three quarters.

“To have this new and unique type of boutique hotel right near our Visitor Convention Center and our coasts and the core of our Downtown is very exciting,” Spindler-Ruiz said, “and will add to the growing vibrancy and character of that part of our Downtown.” ■

Long Beach resumes Mills Act tax-break program for owners of historic properties

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach is restarting a program that allows owners of historic buildings to get breaks on their property taxes if they perform agreed-upon upkeep and preservation projects.

The city paused the program, which is authorized through the statewide Mills Act, in 2020 because of a lack of city resources to process applications and oversee the contracts, which can offer steep cuts on property tax bills.

Now, Long Beach is reopening the application process for property owners starting with a Jan. 28 pre-application workshop and a Feb. 18 application workshop. The pre-

application workshop is mandatory and will provide an overview of the program, its benefits and what’s required for eligibility, according to a city announcement.

The program can benefit recent buyers of historic buildings or designated landmark sites who have plans to restore their homes or business properties. In some cities, the tax benefits can be as much as a 50% discount on annual property taxes, but it requires the owners, and any future buyers, to honor a contractual preservation plan, which generally covers 10-year increments.

Owners who have already finished improvements to their properties are not eligible, and condo owners or

buildings overseen by a homeowners association must have their entire complexes agree to honor the contract to be eligible.

The city hands out only a limited number of the contracts each year, and it will prioritize projects based on factors such as applicants using local contractors and whether the building is a new landmark outside of a historic district.

In 2019, the last year the city administered the program, it only allowed 12 Mills Act contracts for single-family homes and 10 other contracts for duplexes, triplexes other multi-unit residential buildings and commercial spaces. Long Beach currently has 117 properties with

Mills Act contracts, according to the city. It’s unclear how many could be added this round.

Any contracts recommended by the city’s planning staff for an award must be approved by the city’s Cultural Heritage Commission and the City Council. Property tax savings are generally seen in the following year’s October reassessment period. The deadline to turn in an application is March 3.

The Jan. 28 pre-application workshop is scheduled for 10 a.m. to noon at the Jordan High School auditorium at 6500 Atlantic Ave. The Feb. 18 application workshop is scheduled for 10 a.m. to noon at the Long Beach Energy Resources Department at 2400 E. Spring St. ■

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ZIPping around Long Beach: Today, the greenery of 90808

This is the fourth edition in an ongoing series looking at real estate in Long Beach's different ZIP codes. In our last edition, we took a peek into 90807. This time, the focus is on 90808.

Long Beach's 90808 ZIP code area is fully located in what Realtors have taken to calling the East End. It's a large area, less dense than many parts of the city, with about 40,000 residents sharing nearly 7 square miles.

The boundary of the ZIP stretches north from Spring Street up to Del Amo Boulevard between Bellflower and Lakewood boulevards and north to Carson Street east of Bellflower Boulevard. It's mostly between Lakewood to the west and east to the 605 Freeway and beyond to include El Dorado Park Estates.

The 90808 is largely made up of detached single-family homes. Most of them went up in a hurry in the 1950s as baby boomers started their post-war families and flocked to the area, snapping up three-bedroom, two-bath homes as quickly as construction workers could put them

up—7,854 houses, more than half of the homes in the area, were built during the '50s.

Residents in the area are, in terms of median household income, the wealthiest in Long Beach, at \$111,163, compared to the city median of \$66,410, and the homes are among the priciest overall, with November's median home price at \$920,000. There are no homes that approach the high-dollar homes of Naples and the Peninsula in 90803, but they are fairly uniform in prices ranging from the high \$700,000 to a bit over a million dollars in the Ranchos neighborhood, which has been among the hottest areas in local real estate during the last couple of years.

Residents in the 90808 can't complain about green space, leading the city in that category thanks to El Dorado East Regional Park at 388 acres, along with Heartwell Park's 122.5 acres and

Wardlow Park's 15.8 acres. The area also includes a pair of golf courses at Heartwell and Skylinks.

For shopping, there's the Towne Center on Carson Street, as well as a raft of grocery stores, including Amazon Fresh, Pavilions and Stater Bros. on Spring Street off Palo Verde Avenue.

The area is relatively new to Long Beach, with most parts voting to annex to the city rather than Lakewood in the 1950s. One noticeable holdout was an area of Carson Park bordered by Heartwell Park and Conant Street to the north and south, and Woodruff and Palos Verdes avenues to the west and east. That parcel of land voted "none of the above" during the annexation wars and remains an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County.

Here are a few selected homes currently for sale in the 90808.



Courtesy of Redfin

A stock model home at 6736 Wardlow Road.



Courtesy of Redfin

A mid-modern home at 3096 Hackett Ave.



Courtesy of Redfin

5836 Parapet St.

While most of the tract homes in the 90808 neighborhoods have been modified with additions and exterior improvements, our first three-bedroom, two-bath home at 6736 Wardlow Road is pretty close to the stock configuration at 1,206 square feet and with an affordable, well under-median price tag of \$720,000, a drop from its original list price of \$769,000.

Don't recoil in horror from the listing's non-staged photographs. Sure, it needs some gussying up, if not a thorough upgrade of the kitchen and baths. That's reflected in the price. By the time you get the home up to turnkey shape, you're likely looking at closer to the area's median price.

Knock off a few more points for its location on Wardlow, just west of Studebaker Road, where you're going to be hearing traffic at all hours, with

some irritating hot-rodding late in the evenings.

On the plus side you've got the home's large backyard, new windows and solar panels.

The listing agent is Valeska Nemetz. The 1953 home has been on the market since October.

Our second home, a thoroughly upgraded Mid-Century Modern home at 3096 Hackett Ave. in a quiet neighborhood near Cubberley K-8 school, has the standard three-bedroom and two baths in 1,333 square feet. Listed by Realtor Suzanna Willingham, the home has a new kitchen, bathrooms, flooring, light fixtures, paint and landscaping and is ready for a quick move-in.

The house has great curb appeal, with large concrete pavers leading to a deeply recessed entryway. The inside is bright and airy with plenty of windows, as is mandatory with the mid-modern style. It's especially noticeable

in the primary bedroom, with floor-to-ceiling glass looking out to the spacious backyard that's big enough for a pack of dogs or for an addition to the house.

It's priced at \$1.149 million.

Finally, we have a good-looking home in the quiet South of Conant neighborhood at 5836 Parapet St. with an inviting front exterior and entry. It's got the usual three bedrooms and two baths. The baths as well as the kitchen are upgraded with particularly nice flooring in the bright and white kitchen.

The 1949 home is large for the area at 1,672 square feet, and its primary suite takes up a lot of that and includes a fireplace and a sitting room.

Listed by Gloria Heck of Balboa at \$995,000, the home has been on the market for about four months. ■

LA River Project

Continued from cover

The project was approved to be built on a piece of land that had served as an oil field wastewater treatment site for decades and requires significant remediation before homes can be built on top of it.

"I think our No. 1 issue has been and is the fact that our city leaders never really follow through on our aspirations and their promises to West Long Beach for more park space," said Juan Ovalle, president of the Riverpark Coalition.

The City Attorney's office did not respond to a request for comment.

The ratio of park space in West Long Beach is about 1 acre for every 1,000 residents, compared to 16 acres for every 1,000 residents in East Long Beach. The group cited the city's park strategic plan, which set a goal of reaching 8 acres per 1,000 residents citywide, in its filing.

Ovalle said that his group would be willing to work with the developer if the firm comes back with an alternative project, but he wouldn't go into detail on what kinds of changes the group would like to see.

"We'll cross that bridge when we get there," he said.

The project was proposed by Integral Communities LLC, which developed the Riverwalk residential development in North Long Beach that was also the subject of a lawsuit in 2015 by a different resident group.

The Riverpark Coalition has been fighting development along the river for years and was handed a victory in October when a judge sided with the group in a separate suit over the development of another parcel of land located north of the River Park housing site.

That legal battle focused on the development of 3701 Pacific Place into a storage facility, which was approved by the city without an environmental review. An Oct. 19 ruling found that the project would have to be paused until the developer completes an environmental review.

The River Park housing project, meanwhile, is slated to be built at 712 Baker St., which is located on the opposite side of the 405 Freeway from the Pacific Place parcel.

CEQA lawsuits are commonly used by community groups across the state to block or delay projects, and members of the Riverpark Coalition have acknowledged in the past that suits filed under the state law can, at minimum, add to a project's timeline—if not block it altogether. But the group's members insist they're not anti-development.

"Sometimes people misinterpret that as NIMBYism and we're anti-development, but that's not right,"

said Leslie Garretson, a member of the coalition. "We're about what's best for the community."

The group has pointed to city and regional plans that have said certain areas along the LA River could be developed into park space, and it cited those plans in the suit as an element that was left out of the environmental review.

But city officials have pointed to significant costs that could be associated with converting certain parcels into parks. A report put out by the city in April 2021, before the council's vote to approve the storage facility at Pacific Place, said that buying land to develop into park space could cost tens of millions of dollars.

City officials have said the Baker Street parcel was not considered because it was a privately owned lot, and its history as an oil wastewater site means making it safe for open space would be even more expensive.

Part of the proposed housing development, though, would include a new 5-acre park inside the private community that would be open to the public, as well as improvements to the existing Baker Street Park and a nearby dog park.

Ovalle and Garretson said they would continue to push for open space in West Long Beach and environmental justice for its residents.

"We are just neighbors that have grown up here and want to make sure that our kids grow in a better place," Ovalle said. ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

A community organization is suing the city of Long Beach over its approval of a 226-home development at 712 Baker St.

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Real Estate

Continued from cover

.25% range.

The effects of rising interest rates have rippled across the housing market throughout last year—in January 2022, 30-year mortgage rates were in the 3.2% range, but as of last week, the current rate for a three-year fixed mortgage is 6.63%, according to Bankrate.

“A higher cost of borrowing and lending has had a significant negative effect on the real estate market across the country, including Los Angeles,” William Yu, an economist with the UCLA Anderson Forecast told the Business Journal in December.

While the hikes in interest rates are meant to combat inflation, which is currently exacerbated by supply chain issues due to the pandemic as well as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, experts speculate that a recession could potentially be looming within the next couple of years as a result.

“We need to be very careful about the speed and scale for these kinds of tightening monetary policies,” said Yu.

If history is any guide, a recession typically begins about 26 months after the start of a tightening cycle, which in this case, began in March 2022, said Yu.

“So, I’m not surprised that recession is not here yet, because historically, it takes a while,” he said.

According to Yu, the current economic situation is reminiscent of the late 1970s and early ‘80s—however, unlike in recent recessions, he expects this one will be mild.

“But there’s a high chance (of one),

so we need to be prepared,” Yu said.

Navigating rising inflation while preventing unemployment is a balancing act, Laura Gonzalez, associate finance professor at Cal State Long Beach, told the Business Journal in December.

While inflation rates of around 2% are indicators of a growing economy, inflation has more than tripled in the past two years, said Gonzalez.

However, consumers have had some relief in the past couple of months, as inflation has decreased slightly, said Gonzalez.

While Gonzalez expects inflation to be under control this year, “the biggest fear is that unemployment will start increasing before inflation is under control,” she said.

“To control inflation, (the Fed needs) to increase interest rates, and to create employment, they need to decrease interest rates,” Gonzalez said.

Today’s higher interest rates are significant enough that they’ve led to lower home prices—while the median price of a home in Long Beach was around \$900,000 a year and a half ago, the number has dropped down to the \$820,000 range, Phil Jones, Realtor and past president and director of the Greater Long Beach Board of Realtors told the Business Journal in November.

Yu noted that a decrease in home prices is a fairly healthy adjustment in response to rising interest rates, however, prices in LA County are still considered high, he said.

Yu does not anticipate lowered interest rates this year, he said.

“In the past two decades, because of globalization, because of China, because of the global savings glut, we got to enjoy very low interest rates and very low inflation rates, so that gave us an illusion we can always get

away with low interest rates,” Yu said.

Despite the rise in interest rates, local real estate agent Gloria Bradley has been able to connect some clients to lenders with mortgage rates in the 3 to 4% range, she said.

However, current rates have overall made purchasing a home more challenging, Bradley said.

“I’ve had clients that went on hold . . . they wanted to purchase but because the interest rate went up, it knocked them out of it,” Bradley said. “Not only I couldn’t help them, I’m not able to bring in any income, and I think that’s something a lot of people don’t look at, especially when you look at workers who are independent.”

First-time home buyers in particular could feel the impacts of the current housing market, Jones said.

“More so than anybody, first time home buyers, generally speaking, don’t have the wherewithal to make larger down payments,” Jones said.

While some programs exist that can make it possible to buy a home with as little as 3% to 5% down, payments will be higher.

“It makes it really difficult for first time home buyers that don’t have equity coming out of a previous home they’ve owned,” Jones added.

In 2023, Jones anticipates that home prices will moderate, although he expects that mortgage rates will remain high through the first half of the year.

“Consequently, we see the number of units, the number of sales continuing to decline, at least through the middle of” this year, he said.

Despite the challenges of the current housing market, the tax benefits and long-term appreciation of real estate still make the investment worth it, for those who

are able to afford to do so, Jones said.

“Our industry has been accused of saying it’s always a good time to buy—I believe that’s still the case,” Jones said.

For those who pay a high interest rate now, there is the opportunity to refinance in the future, Jones said.

However, some experts advise potential home buyers to wait at least a couple of months.

“Watch the market, and watch the particular neighborhood because all real estate is local,” Edward Coulson, director of research at the University of California, Irvine’s Center for Real Estate told the Business Journal in November. “You should be cautious about buying right now.”

The impacts of the real estate market could even trickle down to renters this year, with a recent USC report indicating that Long Beach rent prices could increase 5 or 6% in 2023 and next year, partially due to low vacancies and outward migration.

“Long Beach, in some ways, is a microcosm of the region in terms of the demographics, the income inequality—Long Beach has some very wealthy areas like Naples, and not very wealthy areas,” said Richard Green, co-author of the rent forecast.

While in the past, Long Beach was considered affordable, that is no longer the case, Green said.

In Long Beach, a city where 60% of residents are renters, there is a significant need for more tenant housing, along with workforce housing and housing for ownership, said Jones.

Regarding development in the area, “even though we’re doing relatively well, we’re not doing enough—but ironically, we’re doing more than the majority of cities in California,” Jones said. “It’s a serious problem statewide.”

While in 2022, Long Beach initiated several housing development projects, including an affordable housing Habitat for Humanity project in the Washington neighborhood, a higher cost of borrowing can further slow down development costs, which are already highly regulated and costly in California.

For Long Beach, a city becoming increasingly unaffordable for many of its residents, 2023 could signal innovative solutions to the housing crisis.

A community land trust is in the works, with a Long Beach-based group filing its articles of incorporation in July 2022. Throughout the spring of this year, the group plans to begin outreach efforts to educate the community on what a community land trust can look like, with hopes of bringing one to Long Beach in the coming years.

As the pandemic accelerated shifts to online shopping as well as hybrid and remote work models, in 2023, the city may even look to adapting unused office spaces—which reached record vacancy levels in 2022—and commercial spaces for housing. ■

Volunteers are needed for next week’s MLK Day of Service event in Long Beach

Jan. 16 will mark the 13th year of Leadership Long Beach’s Day of Service.

By Kat Schuster

For more than a decade, Long Beach residents have been given the opportunity to make Martin Luther King Jr. Day a moment for service through a widespread event organized annually by Leadership Long Beach.

Jan. 16 will mark the 13th year of the nonprofit’s Day of Service, which gathers thousands of volunteers to take part in dozens of community service projects. Projects will be available for volunteers to jump on throughout the city’s nine council districts.

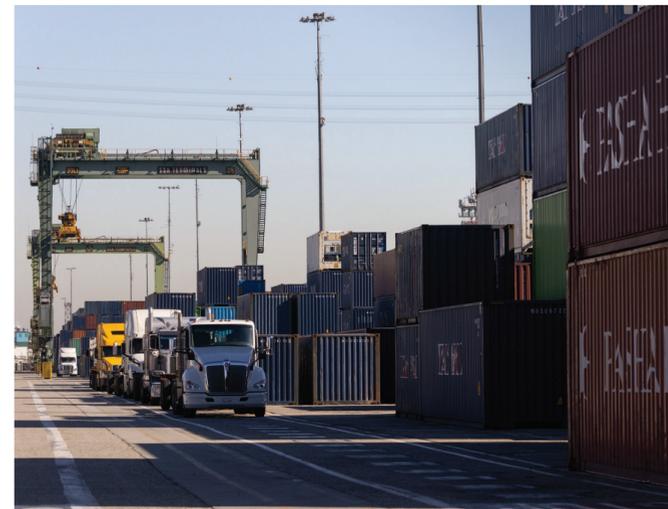
Organizers urge residents to get involved and make the bank holiday a “day on, not a day off.”

Volunteers of all ages will be able to sign up for a variety of projects including the opportunity to help restore Willow Springs Park, send a letter to a senior in a Long Beach care facility and more.

The day will begin at Martin Luther King Jr. Park at 1950 Lemon Ave., where participants can eat pancakes, learn about the event and meet other volunteers.

Volunteer Tony Bell announced on Facebook last week that four West Long Beach projects were recently approved and sponsored by Westside ELEVATE. The four new projects in need of volunteer signups include helping to water 100 baby trees, door-to-door sharing of the free Go Long Beach App, pressure-washing the Santa Fe business corridor sidewalks and painting “happy” designs on trash cans to be placed along the same corridor.

Anyone who wants to learn more or sign up for one of the many Long Beach projects can do so online at leadershiplb.org/mlk. ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Trucks that will soon be loaded with containers at the Port of Long Beach.

Long Beach loses No. 2 U.S. container port ranking for 2022

By Brandon Richardson

After holding the ranking as the second-busiest container port in the United States for decades, the Port of Long Beach was overtaken by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey after a shift in market share toward the East and Gulf coasts over the past two years.

Long Beach set all-time cargo records six out of the first nine months this year. The other three months were nearly record-setting. In September, however, cargo volumes in Long Beach and neighboring Los Angeles began to slip.

By the end of October, the East Coast port had overtaken Long Beach in container volumes year-to-date. The gap widened further after November figures for the ports were released.

Through November, New York-New Jersey handled 8,880,653 20-foot-equivalent units, or TEUs (the standard measure of a shipping container), while Long Beach has moved 8,589,554. Data for December was not available as of press time.

“We believe at least some of this cargo will return and we’re working hard to make that happen,” Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said in an email Friday. “The Port of Long Beach has built some of the most advanced and efficient terminals anywhere in the world, offering customers a full spectrum of options to get their goods to consumers in the way that best suits their needs.”

The Port of LA, meanwhile, is

hanging on to the the No. 1 spot, having moved nearly 9.2 million TEUs through November.

While shifting market share is not uncommon, especially as East and Gulf coast ports make investments to improve operations, Cordero and Port of LA Executive Director Gene Seroka noted that the shift in cargo away from the twin ports became more dramatic amid unprecedented congestion brought on by the pandemic.

The backlog of ships outside the San Pedro Bay port complex has dissipated after two years but ongoing labor negotiations continue to cast a cloud of uncertainty over the ports.

Negotiations between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the Pacific Maritime Association began in May after the old contract expired in July.

Work at the ports, however, has continued uninterrupted for now. Both executive directors have said they are confident an agreement will be reached without the need for a strike or slow down.

Despite the loss in market share, Cordero noted that through November, the port moved 8.6 million containers. He added that 2022 was the port’s second busiest in its 111-year history, just behind 2021 when dockworkers handled nearly 9.4 million TEUs.

“I think it’s quite premature to write the obituary of West Coast ports,” Cordero said. “There will always be challenges but I am confident in our services and we are still the best and fastest commercial gateway from Asia to America.” ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Real estate agents prepare for an open house in Long Beach’s Los Altos neighborhood.

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A man without housing walks along Ocean Boulevard in Downtown Long Beach.

Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

City officials may declare state of emergency due to homelessness

By Jason Ruiz

The Long Beach City Council will decide at its first meeting of 2023 whether to declare a state of emergency over the city's growing homeless population.

An agenda posted last week for the Jan. 10 City Council meeting includes a declaration that, if passed, would expand some of the powers of the city manager to enter into contracts, pursue grants and obtain emergency funding from state and federal entities to help get more people housed.

Last month, newly installed Mayor Rex Richardson and Councilmember Mary Zendejas called for the city manager to draft a declaration for the council to consider in the new year.

The declaration also calls on Gov. Gavin Newsom and the state legislature to declare a state of emergency and to direct resources to Long Beach and other cities that are trying to help their homeless populations.

Long Beach's homeless population increased by 62% from 2020, the last year the city did a point-in-time count due to the pandemic. Last year's count, conducted in February, found 3,300 people living in some state of

homelessness in the city, with over 2,000 without shelter.

City Manager Tom Modica said in a letter to the council about the state of emergency declaration that 101 unhoused people died in Long Beach in 2022. Their average age was 47, and over 75% of those deaths were not from natural causes, according to the letter.

In total, homelessness in Long Beach has grown by 77% since 2017, outpacing the city's efforts to build shelter capacity and for more affordable housing options to come online.

Housing affordability in the state has been tied to the homeless population's growth in recent years, and Modica's letter cites expiring protections for renters that barred evictions during the statewide COVID-19 emergency declaration as a reason to declare a local emergency on homelessness.

The statewide emergency declaration for COVID-19, which provided cities with monetary help to keep people housed, and countywide protections for renters, both expire in February, requiring "immediate action in order to create replacement and additional housing and shelter," according to the declaration.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Long Beach received over \$70

million in state and federal rental assistance, which it distributed to landlords who were owed money from renters who missed payments.

The city also set up an emergency rental assistance program, which over 34,000 people registered for. But just 8,708 payments were made, underscoring the need and the potential number of people who could be eligible for eviction when renter protections expire.

Long Beach has about 1,300 shelter beds and is projecting it will have 15,346 supportive and affordable housing units online "soon," but just 1,546 units have been completed and 319 are under construction. Another 500 units are in pre-development, according to the city.

If the council does adopt the emergency declaration, it would last for six months but be reviewed every 14 days, according to Modica's letter.

Some things that would be analyzed to determine if the state of emergency should end include the number of people who have been placed into housing, the number of temporary and permanent housing units built, a decrease in the number of unhoused people dying and a decrease in the number of people falling into homelessness.

The city is expected to complete the 2023 homeless count on Jan. 26. ■

Continued on page 17

Alder & Sage opens on Retro Row

By Kat Schuster

On a drizzly Tuesday morning last week, Kerstin Kansteiner was delighted to spot two familiar faces outside of her newest Long Beach restaurant, only minutes before the doors opened for its first day of business.

The pair arrived bright and early as they routinely did, just one block away at Portfolio Coffeehouse, which closed its doors permanently last year after operating on Retro Row for 32 years.

Alder & Sage, which officially opened Jan. 3 at 366 Cherry Ave., borrows elements from both of Kansteiner's previous endeavors, Portfolio and Berlin Bistro—sister cafes that were long beloved by locals. And just a few hours into Day One, Kansteiner was beginning to feel that Alder & Sage could reassemble a similar melting pot.

"There were people that came in today who were standing in line and recognized each other as [previous Portfolio] customers and hugged," Kansteiner said. "That was really heartwarming to see."

There are plenty of details customers of the shuttered cafes will recognize, including a painting of Portfolio Coffeehouse, which hangs near the entrance, and Berlin's large community table, which sits in the backyard. But a full kitchen—offering bites such as the Jidori chicken lettuce wrap or the prismatic beets and burrata dish—is what sets the new location apart from the former entirely.

"It's a grownup version of Portfolio with comfortable seating," Kansteiner said. "And the space is big enough indoor or outdoor that whether you're here on a laptop or you're here with friends, that's awesome."

Matt Azen and Bryan Wilson, who live nearby, were regulars of Portfolio and were also fans of Berlin. As they sat at a long table by the window at Alder & Sage on opening day, they said they were happy to be back in a similar environment.

Portfolio "was always kind of hoppin' and just a friendly space to sit, read and hang out as long as you needed to," Wilson said. "It had that sit and hang out kind of coffee shop vibe without it feeling like it was 1997. It wasn't too dark, or carpeted."

Azen, who works remotely and often frequents coffee shops, said he was excited about the new location's outdoor fire pit lounge and just to have somewhere close to his home again.

"On the flip side, I think there's a tendency for coffee to be a sort of snobby thing that a lot of other new places don't feel welcoming," Azen said. "So it's great to find that sweet spot where you have great coffee but

This Long Beach bookstore owner is on a mission to make books accessible for everyone

Antonette Franceschi-Chavez has achieved her long-held goal to create community spaces where people, especially kids, can come together and engage with stories they can connect with.

By Fernando Haro Garcia

Through her new business, Casita Bookstore, and the work of her nonprofit, Equity Through Literacy, Antonette Franceschi-Chavez has a clear goal in mind: Make books accessible for everyone.

The 35-year-old mother of two is passionate about literature, and she understands all too well what it's like to grow up with books out of reach.

Franceschi-Chavez is from the Los Angeles area, where she was raised in a single-parent household by her mom who worked three jobs to support her and her brother.

Back then, Franceschi-Chavez's only access to books was during the yearly Scholastic Book Fairs or when the bookmobile would go to her school, she said.

To a kid like Franceschi-Chavez who loved reading, those moments were "like magic," she said.

They also became one of the driving forces behind Franceschi-Chavez's mission to create community spaces where people,



Antonette Franceschi-Chavez, 35, stands in her new business, Casita Bookstore at 1440 E. Fourth St., Friday, Dec. 23, 2022.

Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

especially kids, can come together and engage with stories they can connect to.

"Most kids don't read because they can't find connections to the books," Franceschi-Chavez said. "So that's our biggest thing is we want to make sure that the books are engaging, and kids can see themselves, or if it's not a book that represents them, physically or culturally, it's a book that they can make a connection through sports or art or something

that will keep them engaged [and] wanting to read."

Almost three years ago, Franceschi-Chavez used her expertise as a parent engagement coordinator at the Main Library in Long Beach and a former dual language program teacher to start the nonprofit Equity Through Literacy with co-founder Marysol Perez.

The goal of the nonprofit is to provide parents and families with tangible resources to bridge the

literacy gap within their communities.

"What we do is we go into communities in L.A., the marginalized communities, underrepresented communities, communities that might be considered, like a book desert where libraries are kind of far and few in between ... and we give away books," Franceschi-Chavez said.

Since Franceschi-Chavez and Perez started Equity Through Literacy, the nonprofit has partnered with

Continued on page 15



The former Portola Coffee Roasters inside The Hangar at Long Beach Exchange where the new Cassidy's Corner Cafe location is expected to open in February.

Jason Ruiz / Business Journal

Cassidy's Corner bagel shop to open at LBX

By Jason Ruiz

The Hangar dining hall at the Long Beach Exchange is getting a new tenant in the coming months as Cassidy's Corner Cafe is planning to bring its bagels, breakfast sandwiches and coffee to the popular East Long Beach center.

Cassidy's Corner, which has its flagship store in Lakewood, is replacing Portola Coffee Roasters, which closed its location at The Hangar last year. A representative from Cassidy's Corner

said in an email that they expect the LBX location to open in February.

The menu includes an array of breakfast sandwiches that can be ordered on the cafe's fresh bagels or even glazed donuts. Cassidy's Corner also serves lunch sandwiches and acai bowls.

The cafe has six other locations. The one at The Hangar will become the third in Long Beach, including one in Bixby Knolls and a new location opening in East Long Beach at the intersection of Los Coyotes Diagonal and Spring Street. ■

Waters Edge opens new Downtown location

By Kat Schuster

From Bordeaux, France, to a few hours' drive up the 101 Freeway, Long Beach's Waters Edge Winery has sourced an extensive wine list for its new location in Downtown.

The city's first winery reopened just after Christmas to a historic brick-and-mortar at 149 Linden Ave., about five months after it shuttered its 217 Pine Ave. location. The rustic winery and bistro became a dimly lit fixture in Downtown as it drew in wine connoisseurs and passersby over the three years it was open.

The Pine Avenue location, which replaced the Mariposa nightclub that closed in 2014, was shuttered as a "last resort" over the summer after several months of back-and-forth with the building's landlord, owner and winemaker Collin Mitzenmacher said in an email to Waters Edge members at the time.

Mitzenmacher could not immediately be reached for comment on the reopening.

"We intended to keep downtown Long Beach as our home base," he said in late July. Mitzenmacher was able to do just that by moving into the first floor of the historic



People walk by Waters Edge Winery as they are reflected in the restaurant's window at its new location at 149 Linden Ave.

Broadlind Hotel building on the corner of East Broadway and Linden.

"As we open the doors to our new location, we look forward to welcoming our guests to a new neighborhood and winery space..." Mitzenmacher said in a statement. "In a state known for its vineyards and fine wines, we found a way to bring the winemaking and tasting experience to our neighbors right

here in Long Beach."

The establishment calls itself a "micro-winery," since you won't find a vineyard crammed into the Broadlind. Alternatively, grapes are sourced from vineyards around the world, but the grape juice is fermented locally, according to Mitzenmacher. This model chops 60% of the costs associated with operating a full-blown winery, he

told the Post in 2019.

From Argentina to Italy or one of the wine countries of the Golden State, Mitzenmacher and his crew have reintroduced his extensive lineup of globally sourced and locally fermented grapes.

A new menu curated by head chef Leo Favella lists food options under their appropriate wine pairings. Under "white bistro pairings," patrons can choose dishes like breaded calamari, penne pasta with shrimp or a fresh grilled branzino plate. For red pairings, diners can choose between short rib and polenta, shrimp and grits, pasta primavera and more.

The winery's wine club service remained active through the closure and offered members a price decrease on the monthly membership fee. Now, three wine clubs are available for people to join. The three-tiered clubs range from \$25 to \$149 per month and offer perks such as winery credits, discounts, complimentary tastings and priority access.

The winery is open from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, noon to 11 p.m. on Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Reservations can be made at wewlongbeach.com. ■

Casita Bookstore

Continued from page 13

publishers such as Penguin Books and Lil' Libros to give away roughly 10,000 books to underserved communities.

And her work to make books more accessible hasn't stopped there.

In October, Franceschi-Chavez had just quit working at the Main Library because she wanted to spend more time with her newborn daughter, Valentina, when she saw

a little green home available along Fourth Street in Alamitos Beach.

It was Franceschi-Chavez's dream to open up her own bookstore someday—maybe in the future, she said, when her daughter was old enough to go to school.

But this particular space caught her attention, Franceschi-Chavez said. So she focused on figuring out a way to spend time with Valentina while operating her first business.

On Dec. 4, less than two months after first spotting the building, Franceschi-Chavez opened Casita

Bookstore. The name Casita, which is Spanish for "Little House," comes from the exterior design of the business, in addition to the "welcoming feeling" Franceschi-Chavez worked hard to create.

"It looks like a little house... and my big focus is increasing the amount of bilingual Spanish books that are in this community," she said. "So Casita just made sense."

It's a small space, with walls painted in a vivid shade of orange that give off a warm feeling. There's a large selection of

books and bold titles that catch attention from a distance. And each one is meticulously chosen by Franceschi-Chavez to make sure they are representative of Long Beach's communities.

"Long Beach has such a diverse population, so I hope that's exemplified in the store because I want everybody to feel welcome," Franceschi-Chavez said. "I want to make this a staple here in Long Beach and make it an open community space."

Casita Bookstore is located at 1440 E. Fourth St. ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Owner Antonette Franceschi-Chavez helps a customer at her new Fourth Street business, Casita Bookstore.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Owner Antonette Franceschi-Chavez holds her 8-month-old daughter Valentina behind the counter after checking out a customer at Casita Bookstore.

New Year's resolutions you can check off without having to leave Long Beach

By Kat Schuster

The start of the year typically ushers in opportunities and motivation to eat better, clean out your closet, contribute to your community or all the above.

Whether it's deciding on a new exercise routine or making it out to that beach cleanup you keep swearing to sign up for, here are five resolutions you can fulfill in 2023 without having to leave town.

1. Exercise and wellness

This is probably the most common New Year's resolution out there, but that doesn't make it any less important. Luckily, Long Beach has loads of gyms, yoga studios and other places for wellness practices such as meditative and restorative classes.

Tristan Mercadel, senior membership advisor over at Iconix Fitness in Belmont Shore, said people were already flocking in to sign up for January memberships in the days after Christmas.

"It usually starts right about

now," he told the Post. "People are done eating like crazy and drinking like crazy. And they may have one more night, but we're definitely starting to see that switch in energy within the community."

Like many other gyms, Mercadel said Iconix typically waives certain start-up fees for new members as they sign up for the new year.

It's to "help urge people to get back into the gym and treat themselves a little bit better—give back to themselves," Mercadel said. "So, we want to encourage that for people. We make it a little bit easier."

Other local start-up membership offers can be found at 24 Hour Fitness, 3030 N. Bellflower Blvd., where initiation fees are waived and the first month is free. At Crunch, 4280 Long Beach Blvd., you'll find the same deal.

If you're looking to break a sweat while flowing into a new wellness routine, studios like Ra Yoga, The Hot Room and Purple Yoga all offer new student discounts and packages.

And for those looking to take it easy on the wallet, Yagalution offers

donation-based classes as well as free classes on the bluff. Every day, including holidays, class begins at 11 a.m. on the corner of Ocean and Junipero on the grassy stretch overlooking the ocean.

2. Eat or grow food locally

Another popular resolution people often make is the goal to shift to a healthier, greener diet. You might consider hitting one of Long Beach's six farmers markets to buy fresh fruits and vegetables.

You can also order a fresh box of fruits and veggies from Long Beach Farms. Their regular sized box is \$28 and includes 8 to 12 goodies such as carrots, potatoes, leafy greens, culinary herbs and even flowers.

But what if you could tend your own vegetable garden? The Long Beach Community Garden allows residents to purchase their own garden plots for \$160 per year. Plots are 600 square feet and membership fees cover water, manure, mulch and disposal of garden waste and trash.

"It's just a piece of heaven," said Carol Meyer, treasurer of

the community garden, which encompasses 9 acres.

LBCG was founded 40 years ago and has resided within the city's nature center for 27 years. It's one of nine community gardens in Long Beach and is among the largest community gardens in Southern California, Meyer said.

The nonprofit also has an orchard of more than 100 trees. Fruit is given to members, while a portion is donated to the organization's food bank program, which distributes to the Long Beach Rescue Mission and other organizations serving the homeless in the city. Although three garden plots are dedicated to the food bank, members are urged to grow a row of vegetables to donate, Meyers said.

"Just being outside in the dirt, and the fact that it's just this quiet place where everybody is interested in growing their own vegetables and knowing that those vegetables have no fertilizers, no GMO, I mean everything is just really fresh," said Meyer, who's been with the garden for a decade. "It's also the fact that you have that community of 300

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Outgoing Congressman Lowenthal secures nearly \$13M for Long Beach projects

By Brandon Richardson

Ten community projects in Long Beach will receive millions in funding through the \$1.7 trillion federal omnibus spending bill approved by Congress in December, 2022.

Former Rep. Alan Lowenthal announced that he had secured nearly \$17.3 million in funding for projects for his district, including over \$12.9 million for Long Beach.

"I came to Congress with the overriding goal of listening to my constituents and helping them improve their lives," Lowenthal, who retired last year, said in a statement. "These projects, prompted and proposed by my communities and constituents, will do just that."

Over half the funds are going toward improving Long Beach's Anaheim corridor from Termino Avenue to the Anaheim Street Bridge, which is regarded as one of the most dangerous areas for pedestrians. This year four people—two on foot and two cyclists—have been killed within that 3-mile stretch.

The \$7 million project is meant to improve safety with upgrades to traffic signals with protected turns, create pedestrian refuge medians and add turn restrictions to "collision hot spots," according to the announcement.

Community Medical Wellness Centers, USA, also on the Anaheim corridor in Cambodia Town, will receive \$2 million to expand behavioral health and substance use disorder services through increased staffing, Lowenthal announced.



Pedestrians cross Anaheim Street, one of the busiest and most dangerous corridors in Long Beach.

The funds also will help the facility provide transportation to increase access as well as purchase furniture, computers and software.

Other Long Beach projects receiving funding include:

- \$980,000 for Arts and Services for Disabled, Inc. for renovations of its adult day programming facility.

- \$750,000 for the expansion of Long Beach Learning Hubs, which administers free internet hotspots and computing devices as well as technical support. The city program also offers virtual digital literacy courses and includes four learning hubs for Long Beach Unified School District students to access online learning and after-school programming.

- \$750,000 for Habitat for Humanity of Greater Los Angeles for the construction of 20 affordable homes in Long Beach's Washington neighborhood for families making 80% or below the area median income.

- \$575,000 for TCC Family Health for new medical, clinical and dental equipment and furnishings, and furniture for offices, lobbies and meeting spaces.

- \$500,000 for APLA Health & Wellness-Long Beach Health Center to expand services to the LGBTQ+ community with medical, dental and behavioral health care as well as sexual health services such as STD screening and treatment, HIV testing, PrEP and PEP.

- \$250,000 for Long Beach Day Nursery for increased childcare education staffing.

- \$56,950 for Cambodia Town, Inc. to provide weekly free online Khmer classes.

- \$50,000 for the Books & Buckets program that provides youth outreach, education and violence prevention in the Washington neighborhood.

Lowenthal also secured funding for road improvements in the city of Avalon on Catalina Island, the Ben Em Dang Co Ta Foundation in Garden Grove, a mental health facility in Orange County through the BPSOS Center for Community Advancement, Cypress College and the Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance.

Community projects from across the district were submitted to Lowenthal's office by community organizations and local governments. The requests were selected through a competitive application and vetting process, according to the announcement.

After representing California in the House of Representatives for the last decade, Lowenthal, 81, announced he would not seek reelection in 2022. Prior to his stint in Congress, Lowenthal served as a state assemblyman from 1998 to 2004 and as a state senator from 2004 to 2012.

"It has been my honor during my tenure in Congress to fight for our district to ensure that we get the federal funding we need to improve the lives of local families, advance infrastructure needs, create jobs, and support the economy," Lowenthal said. ■

Long-awaited 51st Street Greenbelt project gets \$2M in federal funding

By Jason Ruiz

The 51st Street Greenbelt project in North Long Beach could finally have the funding it needs to kickstart construction now that the U.S. Congress has allocated \$2 million toward that goal.

Transforming the undeveloped plot of land that separates the community north of Perry Lindsey Academy from the Los Angeles River has been talked about for years, but it could now move forward with the new funding that was included in

the recently adopted federal budget.

The roughly one-acre parcel could include a walking trail, play areas for children, new trees, native landscaping and stormwater capture features once it's redesigned, according to a memo put out by the city's Parks, Recreation and Marine Department in July 2021.

Completing the greenbelt project would add green space to an area of the city that has historically lacked it. City leaders have acknowledged that North, West and Central Long Beach are park poor, with those areas averaging about one acre of park

space per 1,000 residents. That ratio is about 16 times worse than in more affluent parts of Long Beach.

The funding for the project was requested by the city and advocated for by Congresswoman Nanette Bargain, who now represents a larger part of North Long Beach after last year's redistricting process. Long Beach also pledged \$2.4 million in grant match funds in its five-year infrastructure plan approved during the city's budget process that concluded in September.

Long Beach also received \$13 million of federal funding for other

projects through former Rep. Alan Lowenthal's efforts, with the largest portion of that funding (\$7 million) going toward a revitalization of the Anaheim Street corridor that the city says will improve pedestrian safety.

A city memo announcing the funding noted that, because of an anticipated stalemate in Congress, this may be the last bill the city sees in "quite some time" that provides funding for community projects. Democrats maintained control of the U.S. Senate after the November 2022 election but Republicans won control of the House of Representatives. ■



Men play a drum during a protest over the name of Lincoln Park. A coalition is calling for a new name due to the former president's ties to Native American deaths.

Coalition continues campaign to rename Lincoln Park in Downtown Long Beach

By Jason Ruiz

Protestors erected gallows in front of the giant penny at Lincoln Park in Downtown Long Beach late last month as part of a protest to demand the park be renamed because of President Abraham Lincoln's role in ordering or overseeing the deaths of Native Americans during his presidency.

The Change the Name Coalition, which includes indigenous activists who live in Long Beach, has called for the renaming of the park since the start of 2022 and showed up to the park on Dec. 26 to honor the 38 Dakota men who were hanged by the United States government in 1862. The gallows had 38 individual nooses to honor the men who died 160 years ago, said Stefanie Mushrush, a member of the coalition.

"Our city is progressive, diverse and forward-thinking," Mushrush said. "This [penny] is not in alignment with those values."

The protest included prayers for the 38 men who died as well as a reading of each one of their names as cars drove by on Ocean Boulevard, some honking in support.

Mushrush said the group chose to protest in front of the penny because "it was new." The penny was installed before the park reopened this year but after the city's Framework for Reconciliation was adopted in August 2020, which called for the city to address inequities and racism existing in the city.

Lincoln Park dates back to 1880 and is the oldest park in the city, according to the Parks Department. It was originally called Pacific Park but had its name changed in 1915 with the installation of a statue commemorating Lincoln.

George Funmaker said the group

would like to see the park renamed after Toypurina, a Tongva woman who helped lead a rebellion against Spanish settlers in 1785. Long Beach is the historic home of the Gabrielino-Tongva people, whose empire stretched from coastal islands to San Bernardino. Earlier this year the City Council agreed to look into the feasibility of creating a city commission dedicated to tribal issues.

Funmaker pointed to recent high-profile renamings of the major sports franchises and said that his group would continue to advocate to city officials and protest at the park until the name is changed and the Lincoln statue and penny are removed.

"I promise you, if that process doesn't work we'll take other measures to take it down," Funmaker said to the crowd.

Coalition members cite three specific events that Lincoln is linked to as reasons why the park should not be named after the 16th U.S. president. They include the 1862 hanging of the 38 Dakota men, reportedly the largest mass execution in the nation's history, the "Long Walk" of 1863 that saw 8,000 Navajo people marching 450 miles that led to more than 2,200 deaths and the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre.

The Sand Creek incident saw American soldiers kill around 230 Cheyenne and Arapaho people "composed mostly of women, children and the elderly" according to the National Park Service.

The city's Equity and Human Relations Commission voted in June to approve a letter to be sent to the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission to consider renaming the park because of the effect its being named after Lincoln could have on native people living in Long Beach, among other things.

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Alder & Sage

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you don't have to be a coffee elitist."

The new cafe will serve Rose Park Coffee and pastries during its first two weeks. Then, likely for the rest of January, the cafe will serve food from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. until dinner service begins in February, which will extend hours until about 10 p.m. All the while, the team is working on securing a beer and wine license.

From the moment the doors opened, the place was bustling with both previous patrons and new customers eager to find a seat within the cozy mid-century building. Apt for its name, the subtle scent of sage and charred wood chips permeated the air as baristas prepared whiskey caramel and maple sage lattes.

Due to the drizzle, the cafe's backyard remained empty, but Kansteiner said she is excited to see locals and dog owners fill the '70s-style conversation pit, with its two fire pits and lounge seating.

The name of the space was long debated, Kansteiner said.

"Is it Portfolio, is it Berlin—Berlinpolio? We felt like it was such a new beginning and such a new concept that we didn't want to bring either, although we do have a little homage [to Portfolio] at the entranceway," she said.



Kat Schuster / Business Journal

Alder & Sage is Retro Row's newest restaurant and coffeehouse. The cafe was founded by the previous owner of Portfolio Coffeehouse, which operated just up the street for more than 32 years.



Kat Schuster / Business Journal

On Jan. 3, Alder & Sage owner Kerstin Kansteiner said she was already spotting regulars of Portfolio Coffeehouse, her previous cafe, which permanently closed on July 31, 2022.

Kansteiner ultimately settled on a name that embodied a more natural feel—"alder" for the wood used in the building and "sage" for a symbol to usher in a new era, leaving the past behind.

"I felt like I needed some sage-ing after the Portfolio experience," she said of the lengthy landlord dispute and four-year legal battle that led to the shop's closure on July 31, 2022. Kansteiner said that will extend hours until about 10 p.m. All the while, the team is working on securing a beer and wine license.

Although both cafes closed for good, Kansteiner noted that she was able to re-employ all workers of both Berlin and Portfolio, except one, who found a job elsewhere nearby. So naturally, opening day began smoothly with a familiar team, she said.

Kansteiner, a resident of Long Beach for 35 years, said she's grateful for the opportunity to raise a fusion of her two former cafes on Retro Row, close to her home, rather than Downtown, where Berlin Bistro operated.

"I've always lived in this area so it feels really great coming back.

"There's a real community here," she said. "Nobody really lives Downtown so you never had this community feeling where you see people on a daily basis. In the months we've been working here, every single day, two to three people have stopped by...that felt really good." ■

Long Beach to get \$780K to tackle the opioid crisis



Charles Krupa / Associated Press

This file photo shows discarded used hypodermic needles at an encampment where opioid addicts shoot up along the Merrimack River in Lowell, Mass.

By Laura Anaya-Morga

After joining more than 3,000 cities, counties, and states in suing drug manufacturer Johnson & Johnson and three major distributors for their contributions to the opioid crisis, Long Beach will soon see over \$780,000 to help prevent deaths related to opioids such as fentanyl, heroin or oxycodone.

Opioid-related deaths in Long Beach soared from 17 in 2017 to 96 in 2021, representing a 465% increase, according to the Long Beach Health Department. There were a total of 230 deaths in Long Beach related to opioids over that five-year period.

The money is coming to Long Beach as a \$26 billion nationwide settlement was finalized last year

with J&J and distributors McKesson, AmerisourceBergen, and Cardinal Health. Long Beach will receive a total of approximately \$782,117, which it plans to use toward a youth education and prevention campaign in partnership with the Long Beach Unified School District, among other harm reduction efforts, according to the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services.

The city has already received \$241,579 from the distributors' settlement and will receive another payment of \$253,887 next year, according to Health Department spokesperson Jennifer Rice Epstein. Another \$286,651 is expected from the J&J settlement as well, Epstein said.

Local governments receiving settlement money will have the discretion to decide how to best use

the funds, as long as the spending adheres to certain criteria. In California, which is estimated to receive \$2.05 billion over the next 18 years, the Department of Health Care Services has outlined that the funds must be used for "activities tied to the ending, reduction or lessening the effects of the opioid epidemic in communities and include prevention, intervention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery services."

The Long Beach Health Department is looking into three core investments, Epstein said in an email to the Post, which include partnering with the LBUSD on an opioid and overdose prevention campaign in schools, increasing access to naloxone and fentanyl test strips in the city and partnering with local nonprofit organizations in their harm reduction efforts.

In a Health Department meeting on Dec. 9, 2022, Long Beach Health Department Director Kelly Colopy said that typically this kind of harm-reduction and opioid funding goes to Los Angeles County, not individual cities like Long Beach.

"We're excited," Colopy said. "We've never had resources to do opioid prevention where the funding comes directly to us."

Reduction efforts focused on youth are a top priority for the city, and the LBUSD has already started opioid use prevention and education efforts in schools, according to LBUSD spokesperson Chris Eftychiou.

"We recently expanded our substance use counseling services,

opening wellness centers at every middle and high school in the school district," Eftychiou said. "These centers offer general social-emotional support as well as referrals to outside agencies for help with drug dependence and alcohol use."

The school district offers comprehensive health education starting as early as kindergarten, he said.

This year, the district sent out two communications warning LBUSD parents of the dangers of fentanyl-laced pills in schools, following several overdoses among students in LA County and the death of a 15-year-old girl at Bernstein High School in Hollywood on Sept. 13 of last year.

While there is no direct connection to overdoses among LBUSD students, Eftychiou said the district plans to continue with these education efforts in the future.

In LA County, methamphetamine and fentanyl accounted for 56% and 55%, respectively, of all alcohol- and drug-related overdose deaths in 2021, making them the most prevalent drug types reported as a cause of death, according to a report released late last year by the county Department of Public Health.

Fentanyl overdose deaths in the county increased from 109 in 2016 to 1,504 in 2021, according to the report.

The report also noted that while all age groups had a dramatic rise in fatalities, the rate was greatest among adults aged 26 to 39 and young adults aged 18 to 25, making the need for youth prevention even more urgent. ■

Studebaker Road project could bring big changes to East Long Beach this year

By Jason Ruiz

Big changes are in store for Studebaker Road.

Long Beach officials gave the first glimpse last month of what the thoroughfare could look like after the city breaks ground on a renovation project that will add a protected bike lane and other safety features between Los Coyotes Diagonal and Second Street.

City officials have sought to complete the Studebaker Road project for years and have worked to secure the funds to carry out the "Complete Streets" improvements, which could increase safety for cyclists, pedestrians and drivers.

Public Works Director Eric Lopez said the designs are still being finalized, but the department plans to put the project out to bid in the spring or summer, with an expectation of breaking ground in the fall.

"I know at least three of us are elated," said then-Councilmember Suzie Price, who represented areas of the city that include the southern parts of the project. "We've been asking for this project to be completed and prioritized for a very long time now."

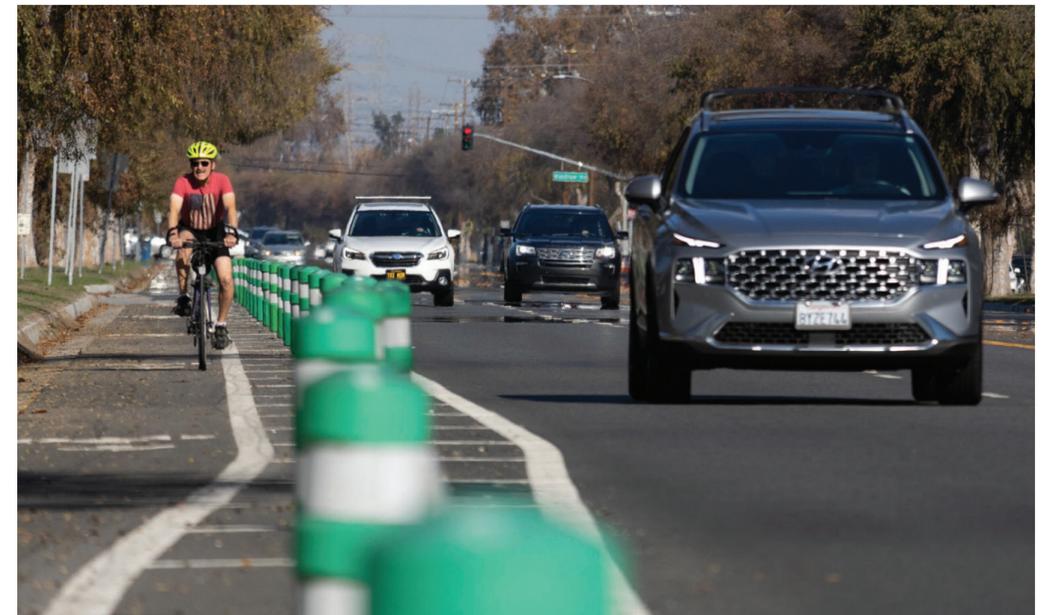
Conceptual plans shared with the City Council show a protected bike lane on the west side of Studebaker Road stretching along the 5-mile segment from Second Street to Los Coyotes Diagonal. Some segments will be separated from traffic by being located on the sidewalk while other stretches will be separated by a concrete barrier.

"That concrete barrier will replace those bollards and create a real buffer for cyclists and create a buffer that's more appealing for the community at large," said 5th District Councilmember Stacy Mungo Flanigan, referencing the green bollards that had been a contentious issue for some East Long Beach residents.

Other improvements could include things like new curb ramps, bus stop enhancements, new crosswalks, flashing beacons and a gateway entry sign where Studebaker intersects Los Coyotes Diagonal.

The council voted Dec. 6 to accept an \$8.75 million grant from LA Metro to help pay for the project. The total project cost is estimated at over \$18.5 million, with the city using other county tax revenue and Measure A bond money to help fund the project.

Studebaker Road, Anaheim Street and Market Street were all corridors identified by the city for major overhauls in the most recently



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

A cyclist rides south along the Studebaker Road bike lane near Wardlow Road. The entire stretch of the street from Second Street to Los Coyotes Diagonal could be overhauled, including a new protected bike lane with cement curbs and no green bollards.

adopted budget, for which the city allocated about \$34 million.

The Studebaker project could introduce lane reductions between Second Street and Loynes Drive, as a median with hardscape and drought-tolerant plants could be installed to separate north and southbound traffic, according to the concepts.

The project would also reconfigure the intersection of Los Coyotes Diagonal and Studebaker Road, which currently meets in a "T" with medians that don't allow northbound traffic to make left turns onto Los Coyotes and prevents southbound traffic on Los Coyotes from making a left onto Studebaker.

While the designs are not final, the concepts show the existing medians being removed and smaller medians with landscaping that allows for turns being added. Northbound traffic on Studebaker would also be redirected by a new curb extension on the southeast corner of the intersection with Los Coyotes.

"These are some safety improvements that will also improve the efficiency of pedestrians trying to cross the street and vehicles trying to pass through this busy intersection," Lopez said.

The city has a number of street improvements aimed at improving driver and pedestrian safety, like the Market Street and Artesia Corridor projects that broke ground earlier this year and other projects Downtown meant to increase walkability. ■

CITY OF LONG BEACH Bid Opportunities

Title	Bid Number	Due Date
Purchase & Development of 15th St Parcels - Quality Affordable Housing	DV-23-187	01/12/2023
3004020020 Rebid: Davenport Park Phase II - Park Expansion	PW-23-197	01/12/2023
Sale and Development of the Former Fire Station 9 at 3917 Long Beach	ED-22-149	01/17/2023
On-Call Professional Engineering Services	WD-23-041	01/24/2023
ESG & Measure H - Re-Housing and Homeless Prevention	HE-23-190	01/26/2023
R-7182 Fire Station 14 Workforce Privacy Project	PW-23-188	01/27/2023
Renewable Natural Gas Supplier	ER-22-173	01/30/2023
(10) Fire Engine Pumps	FM-22-175	01/31/2023
Notice of Funds Available to Establish a Community Land Trust	DV-23-186	01/31/2023

Bidder Registration

To receive notifications of bid opportunities, register with the city, and download additional bid details, visit www.longbeach.gov/purchasing.



Auto Lien Sale Auction

3111 E. Willow Street Jan 17 & 31, 2023
Long Beach, CA 90806 Registration & Viewing:
(562) 570-2828 8:00 A.M. - 9:50 A.M.
<http://www.longbeach.gov/autoauction>



Resolutions

Continued from page 14

people with a like interest. You create a lot of friendships."

3. Appreciate art in Long Beach

No one ever said New Year's resolutions had to be about dieting and working out. You can activate your right brain by indulging in the arts within one of Long Beach's many museums and galleries.

The city happens to be home to one of the only museums in the nation dedicated to modern and contemporary Latin American art: MOLAA, which was founded in 1996. The museum currently houses seven different exhibitions—from the works of 90-year-old active artist Fernando Botero, of Colombia, to a group exhibition that explores the iconography and cultural symbolism of the Virgen de Guadalupe.

General admission is \$15, but students and seniors pay \$10, while children under 12 years old can

enjoy free entry.

Right across the street, you can visit the compact but richly vivid Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum. Docents take visitors on a historical journey of the art and wisdom of the Pacific Islands people of Oceania. General admission is \$5, while tickets cost \$3 for seniors and students. Children under 12 may enter for free.

Residents can also visit the Long Beach Museum of Art, which overlooks the ocean, and the Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum, located on the campus of Cal State Long Beach.

4. Give back

Now that we've covered wellness, fitness and local art appreciation, let's take a look at some do-gooding to consider adding to your list of 2023 resolutions.

The end of the holiday season doesn't have to place a cap on the giving spirit. There are several Long Beach nonprofit organizations that will be on the lookout for helping hands in January.

If it's food insecurity you're

hoping to lend yourself to, you can prepare and serve meals with the Long Beach Rescue Mission. The rescue mission provides meals, shelter, clothing and even spiritual guidance to folks experiencing homelessness and those in need. Volunteers are needed to help distribute and prep meals, as well as help tutor in their learning center, work in their thrift store or serve as a mentor.

Remember that beach cleanup you mulled over? Every third Saturday of the month, volunteers can participate in a 30-minute beach cleanup at Rosie's Dog Beach with Justin Rudd.

Do you love kittens? Who doesn't. The Little Paws Project is always seeking volunteers to help run its kitten nursery.

5. Clean out your closet

Make Marie Kondo proud and start your decluttering process. The new year is a great excuse to dissect your wardrobe and start pulling out what you haven't worn in five years.

The good news is, you can also

turn this jump start on spring cleaning into a way to help others.

Christian Outreach in Action's Clark & Atherton Mercantile accepts gently used clothing to distribute to people experiencing homelessness as well as low-income families and seniors. Clothing donations are accepted Wednesdays from 1 to 3 p.m. at 515 E. Third St.

Out of the Closet, a thrift store at 3500 E. Pacific Coast Highway, accepts clothing donations. Residents can call 800-558-8220 to schedule a free donation pickup, according to the city. Proceeds from those who shop at Out of the Closet go directly to people living with HIV and AIDS.

The American Cancer Society Belmont Shores Discovery Shop accepts donations of gently used clothing, shoes, jewelry, housewares and furniture. All donations are tax deductible and proceeds support the society.

There are also four Goodwill locations and one Salvation Army donation center you can donate to in Long Beach. ■

Long Beach's annual Literary Women Festival of Authors returns next month

A literary festival that has showcased women's work for some 41 years in Long Beach will bring seven accomplished authors to the city's convention center in February.

By Tess Kazenoff

Tickets are now on sale for Long Beach's annual Literary Women Festival of Authors, which returns to the Long Beach Convention Center on Feb. 11.

The all-day conference includes coffee, lunch and the opportunity to listen to and interact with the event's featured authors, said Literary Women chair Anne Emigh.

This year's featured authors are:

- Aamina Ahmad, author of "The Return of Faraz Ali"
- Nina de Gramont, author of "The Christie Affair"
- Laurie Frankel, author of "One Two Three"
- Xochitl Gonzalez, author of "Olga Dies Dreaming"
- Nana Nkweti, author of "Walking on Cowrie Shells"
- Nita Prose, author of "The Maid"
- Mary Roach, author of "Fuzz: When Nature Breaks the Law"

The festival began in 1982 when its two founders, Harriet Williams and Virginia Laddey, were shocked



Courtesy of Anne Emigh

The Literary Women committee reads year-round to find each year's featured authors.

to discover their children's high school reading syllabus included barely any female authors.

Although today's syllabi are generally split more evenly, there is still great value in promoting women authors and their voices, Emigh said.

"It's uplifting and encouraging to women everywhere," she said.

The organization also supports an emerging writer program, which invites writers from programs at California State University Long Beach, Long Beach City College, Chapman University and PEN America Los Angeles to the festival, seating them at a table with an author they admire, said Emigh.

Since the event began four decades ago, authors such as Mary

Higgins Clark, Lisa See, Barbara Kingsolver, Aimee Bender, Roxane Gay, Isabel Wilkerson, Octavia Butler and Rae Armentrout have attended the festival.

Featured authors typically speak for about 40 minutes, sharing their backgrounds and writing processes. They are chosen by the Literary Women committee, who read year-round to select a diverse group of both established and emerging writers, whose books span a range of topics and genres.

"If you look at that room, everyone is at rapt attention, they're like rock stars to us," Emigh said. "You really could hear a pin drop."

In the early days of the festival, people would race home from work as

soon as registration forms were sent out on Dec. 31, and would race to the post office to mail their registrations as soon as possible, Emigh said.

"If you didn't get in right away, typically you couldn't. It was that popular," Emigh said.

Although registrations are now online instead of by mail, over the years, the event has continued to attract hundreds of authors and bibliophiles, with many mothers, daughters and old friends attending together each year, Emigh said.

"I'm just so proud of us. It's hard for a lot of nonprofits, and we are an all-volunteer organization," Emigh said. "It was the passion of these ladies, and the passion of all the members who love to read and want everyone to enjoy our diverse authors and amazing storytellers, and it's the passion of Long Beach—the culture here is that people look forward to this event all year long."

Tickets are \$120, plus a \$5 processing fee and can be purchased online.

"We have been subsidizing ticket prices every year, last year, tickets were \$115, but it actually costs \$182 per person," Emigh said.

Emigh hopes to add more sponsorships to future festivals to make the event more affordable. This year's new sponsors include the Don Temple Family Charitable Foundation and Emigh Dental Care.

"Everybody who comes feels it's well worth it, but we want more people to be able to attend," Emigh said. "Every year people say, 'That was the best festival,' and we hope we have that feeling this year." ■

Lincoln Park

Continued from page 17

Commissioners said the letter should include the demands of the coalition that the 13-foot-tall penny and the Lincoln statue be removed from the park, a new monument honoring native people be installed and the park be renamed in consultation with area tribes. It did not include a formal recommendation, but coalition members are hopeful that momentum to rename the park will pick up now that the new City Council is seated and election season has passed.

It's unclear if the letter was actually transmitted to the council, but if it was, it would be up to a member of the City Council to put the issue on the agenda to discuss the name of the park

and whether it should be changed.

Lincoln Park's upgrades were part of a \$900 million makeover of the city's Civic Center in Downtown that included a new City Hall, headquarters for the Port of Long Beach, a rebuilt main library and a new park, which opened to the public in February.

The city released renderings of the park in 2021 that showed a large penny that former Mayor Robert Garcia said he thought would be "one of our most Instagrammed moments and sites across the city."

The penny, which city officials said cost about \$168,000, has served as another painful reminder of Lincoln's legacy, funmaker said.

"People call Lincoln 'The Great Emancipator,'" Funmaker said, adding that he won't bring his children to the park because of who it's named for. "We call him the 'The Great Executioner.'" ■



Jason Ruiz / Business Journal

A man adjusts nooses on gallows set up at Lincoln Park in Long Beach as part of a protest and remembrance of the 38 Dakota men killed in 1862 by the United States government.

Vendors at Alpine Village Swap Meet protest looming closure

By Laura Anaya-Morga

For nearly 17 years, Esthela Nevarez, 52, has built a life for herself selling botanas like chips, drinks and candies at the popular and historic Alpine Village Swap Meet near Torrance, where hundreds of vendors gather weekly to sell merchandise, clothing, tools and more.

For decades, the swap meet has been her lifeline, Nevarez said.

Now, uncertainty looms after vendors were given a two-week notice that the swap meet could permanently close at the end of the month.

"Nos agarraron de sorpresa," she said. "They caught us by surprise."

When she first began selling snacks at the swap meet in 2006, Nevarez, who lives in Lakewood, said she did not know of the profound impact the place would have on her. Not only does she depend on the money she makes there to pay her bills, her mortgage and her groceries, she says it's become like a second home, and the people she has met have become her second family.

Following the deaths of her two sons in October 2021 and last January, the friends, colleagues and customers that she met at Alpine Village helped her through the grief. "Todos conocían a mis hijos, así que ahora siento a mis niños allí también," Nevarez said. "They all knew my sons, so now I feel my boys there too."

As she nears the first anniversary of her young son's death on Jan. 28, she said the pain she feels is hard to put into words, and this news has made it worse.

The sudden announcement came on Dec. 27 when Nevarez said she received multiple calls from confused colleagues who were told by Alpine Village staff that the swap meet would be closed from Jan. 16 through Jan. 31 and that it may not reopen again in February.

Alpine Village then reiterated the message on Dec. 29 in a written notice to the hundreds of anxious vendors, but the letter offered no resolution or reasoning.

The German-style shopping center, located at 833 W. Torrance Blvd., is home to various shops, a deli, a bakery and the swap meet and was designated a historic landmark by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in September 2020. The swap meet is open six days a week, Tuesday through Sunday, from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"At the present time, we do not know if the swap meet will re-open February 1, 2023," the announcement reads.

Dozens of vendors staged protests last week in front of Alpine Village in response to the closure, which they described as an unjust eviction and disrespectful lack of communication to those who have depended on the swap meet for years.

In an email correspondence obtained by the Post between

concerned vendors and Alpine Village spokesperson Angie Klokkevold, Klokkevold told vendors on Dec. 31 that Alpine Village is a corporation that is operated by a board of directors and has the right to shut down the swap meet as it sees fit.

Klokkevold wrote that while it is unknown whether the swap meet will reopen on Feb. 1, vendors have no right to insist that they stay open, nor do they have the right to any information from Alpine Village regarding the reasoning for the closure.

"While the swap meet is operating, Alpine Village obviously does not have the right to insist that a vendor participate, or to dictate when or how a vendor participates, or to require that a vendor inform Alpine Village as to the vendor's reasons for not participating," Klokkevold wrote. "Similarly, a vendor obviously does not have the right to determine whether the swap meet will operate, or when or how, and does not have the right to require Alpine Village to inform the vendor as to any reasons why Alpine Village has made or will make any decisions as to any such matters."

Klokkevold ended the email stating, "...if any vendor presently wants to do their vending at another location, they are obviously entirely free to do so (as they have always been free to do so)."

Klokkevold and Alpine Village did not respond to questions from the Business Journal.

Simply moving to another location is not that simple, said Juana Lopez, 51, who lives in Bellflower and has been working at the swap meet every month since 2003.

When her husband lost his job last year, they began working at Alpine Village every Tuesday through Sunday selling general merchandise. In the winter, that means warm hats and gloves, and in the summer, sombreros—along with face masks, kitchen supplies and more.

The money she and her husband make is enough to pay rent, buy food for her kids and pay the bills, she said, and they've worked hard to build up their clientele for 20 years. "At other swap meets, there is no space for us."

"De aquí, la verdad, yo no sé qué vamos a hacer. No quiero caer en depresión, no quiero llorar, quiero estar fuerte, confío en Dios y lo pongo en sus manos," said Lopez. "From here, the truth is, I don't know what we are going to do. I don't want to fall into depression, I don't want to cry, I want to be strong, I trust in God, and I put it in his hands."

Lopez said she has been calling lawyers and frantically searching for someone who could help them.

There are over 200 vendors estimated to work at the Alpine Village swap meet, many of whom have been there for over 35 years, according to Lopez.

"They (Alpine Village) are killing a vital vine that keeps us all alive,"



Protest video screenshot

A swap meet vendor at a protest holds up a sign that says, "Respeto para los vendedores de Alpine!!!" or "Respect Alpine vendors!!!"

Nevarez said.

At the Jan. 3 protest, vendors braved the cold and the rain and held up signs in Spanish that read "Queremos justicia!", which means, "We want justice!" and "Respeto para los vendedores de Alpine!!!" which means, "Respect for Alpine vendors!!!"

As they wait to hear back from Alpine Village officials, vendors said they will continue to fight and ask

for the public to listen.

"No porque trabajas en un swap meet no tienes valor," said Nevarez. "Somos los que más valor tenemos porque trabajamos con el sudor en nuestra frente."

"Just because you work in a swap meet doesn't mean you have no value. We are the ones who have the most value because we work with sweat on our foreheads." ■



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Long Beach Ronald McDonald House eyes partnership with local hospital for new initiative



Courtesy of Cheri Bazley

The honorees at the 8th Annual A Few Good Men Gala in October 2022, at which the Ronald McDonald House raised \$1 million.

By Tess Kazenoff

For families with critically ill children receiving care in Long Beach, the Long Beach Ronald McDonald House provides not only shelter, but also much-needed comfort and connection.

While the first Ronald McDonald House opened in Philadelphia in 1974, it wasn't until 2011 that the Long Beach location opened its doors, after an 18-month, \$6.2 million capital campaign, said executive director Cheri Bazley.

Hundreds of families from within Long Beach and from outside of the county, the state and even the country have since come to the house each year; in 2022, the Long Beach program served 318 families, or 920 people total.

As one of 186 programs in the United States and about 380 worldwide, Bazley is "proud to be a part of that large global family," she said, with hopes of offering even more support to families in coming years.

Currently, the organization is in early discussions with Miller Children's Hospital and Harbor UCLA to discuss the future of a Ronald McDonald family room program in Long Beach, an initiative currently in 276 locations across the world, with 144 in the United States.

Essentially, the program aims to replicate the mission of the Ronald McDonald House on a smaller scale, within the hospital itself, explained Bazley.

While the Long Beach location is roughly 20,000 square feet, a family room program would be a 1,000-to-2,000-square-foot miniature version, providing families who are unable to leave the hospital a space to decompress and relax, Bazley said.

"The reason those are needed and successful, is there are families with such serious circumstances with their kids, that they don't feel comfortable walking across the

street to stay with us," she said. "But if there's a space, literally steps down the hallway from their child's room, they might be able to take a break."

Within the next couple of years, Bazley hopes that one or two family room programs will be in place in Long Beach, and in 2023, Ronald McDonald House also hopes to improve access to clinically educated resources to make support for both families and staff more readily available, Bazley said.

While the organization serves families coping with a range of scenarios, it is not uncommon to house families with premature children, or children with newborn illnesses.

A large percentage of families also have children in oncology units, according to Bazley.

"Sometimes it's more difficult than other times, because the family's stories don't always have a happy ending," she said. "Families do experience loss."

Families are typically referred to the organization by a social worker or a medical care provider, and while the average length of stay generally ranges from nine to 12 days, some families have stayed significantly longer—for months or even for nearly a year.

With 23 rooms, the Long Beach location is considered medium-sized, a decision made by the hospital and board based on the number of children and families served.

"It could be a reason to expand in the future," Bazley said. "But now, we're able to accommodate families that really need us."

From providing laundry supplies in its two laundry rooms, to travel-sized toiletries in each of the 23 guest rooms, plus an assortment of toys, books and other amenities, the organization does its best to provide small things that make a big difference in families' stays, Bazley said.

"Emergencies aren't always

prepared for," she said. "A family might come to us in the middle of night, because they could've been in an accident or they could have had a traumatic situation with their child that required them to just get in the car and come."

Amid the challenges of caring for a critically ill child, from enjoying a home-cooked meal, to having a place to watch television or sit outside with a coffee, the space is conducive to helping families connect with each other and receive comfort during a traumatic situation, Bazley said.

Particularly for the many families who have traveled from far distances, a bond is created, Bazley said.

"I've had family members tell me hundreds of times over the years, how they've made lifelong friends with people they met staying here, that they otherwise wouldn't have known or met," she said. "Really, it's the common bond with their children receiving treatment that's kept them together."

An overarching theme at the Ronald McDonald House is community—and some families even return after their child has gotten healthy, to cook a meal for current guests, Bazley said.

"They remember what a beautiful thing that was for them when they were going through such a difficult time," Bazley said.

One of the families that stayed at the Ronald McDonald Long Beach House the first night it opened, back in December 2011, even returns every year on the Fourth of July to host a barbecue for the families, Bazley said.

"They feel that's a small thing they can do to give back, because they remember what a wonderful experience that was and how much that helped them heal," she said.

Support from the greater community has also uplifted the

Ronald McDonald House's work over the years, particularly during the organization's annual galas.

"Just when I think I've seen the most amazing thing, I'm proven wrong by yet another exceptional outpouring of support," Bazley said.

This past October, the organization celebrated its eighth annual "A Few Good Men" event, its most successful gala yet, with over 900 guests in attendance, and over \$1 million raised for the nonprofit.

"I'm continually pinching myself that the community is so giving, and supports the important work we do," Bazley said. "It's quite inspiring and I'm incredibly grateful to each and every one of the people that support us here."

Even in the midst of the pandemic, when the nonprofit was unable to accept volunteers but continued to operate 24/7, community members continued to reach out with gift cards and donations, allowing the organization to financially carry on its work, Bazley said.

"One of the things I'm most pleasantly surprised with year over year is how passionate the community has been about our important work," Bazley said. "I've never experienced such an amazing community as the Long Beach community in terms of how it embraces our mission."

"Seeing the impact we have in such a positive way with families going through the most difficult time in their life, I think it's much more rewarding than I had ever dreamed," Bazley said. "It's definitely a lot of hard work and sometimes it's challenging work, but I feel that I leave every day feeling like I've made a small difference in the lives of these families going through such a critical time."



Courtesy of Cheri Bazley

A Long Beach Memorial Medical Center ICU group has provided meals, baked, fulfilled wish lists and donated toys to the Long Beach Ronald McDonald House.

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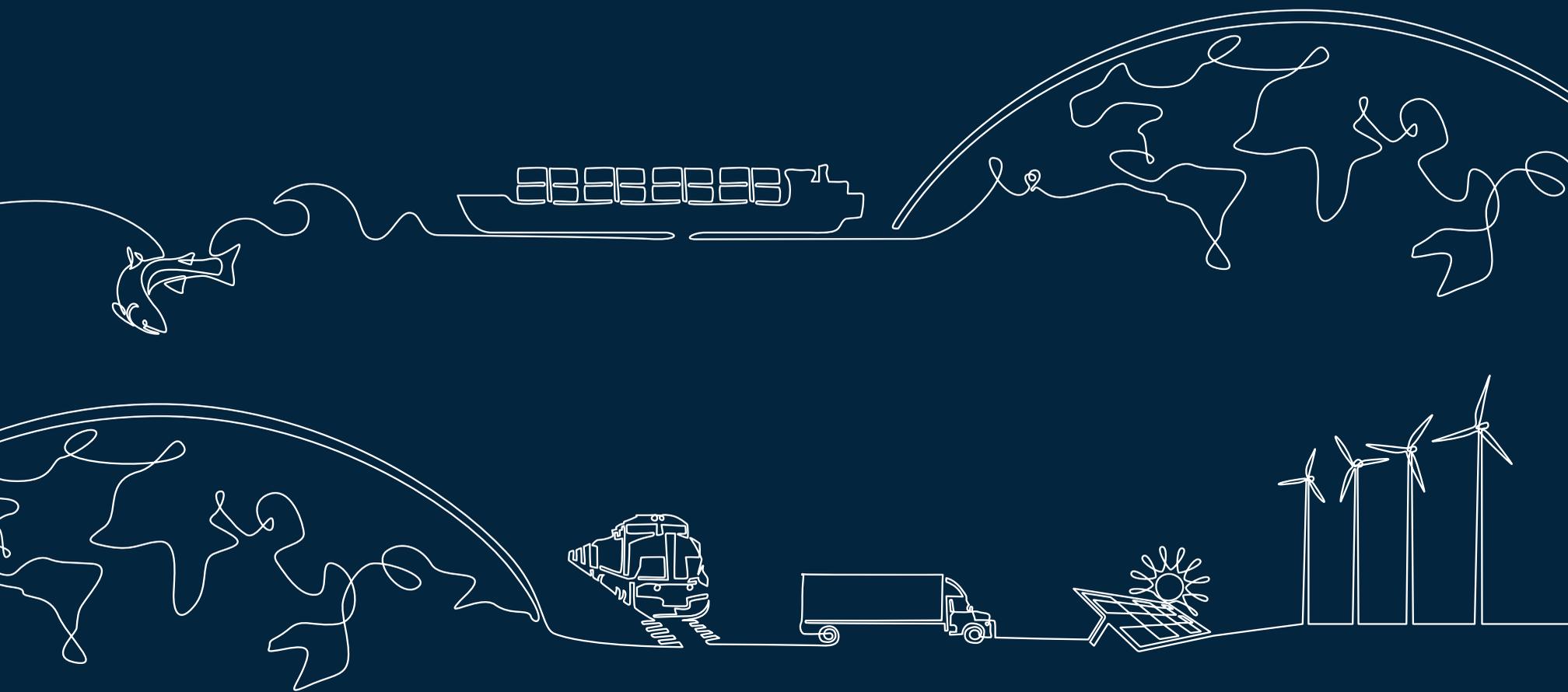
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