

Long Beach Business Journal

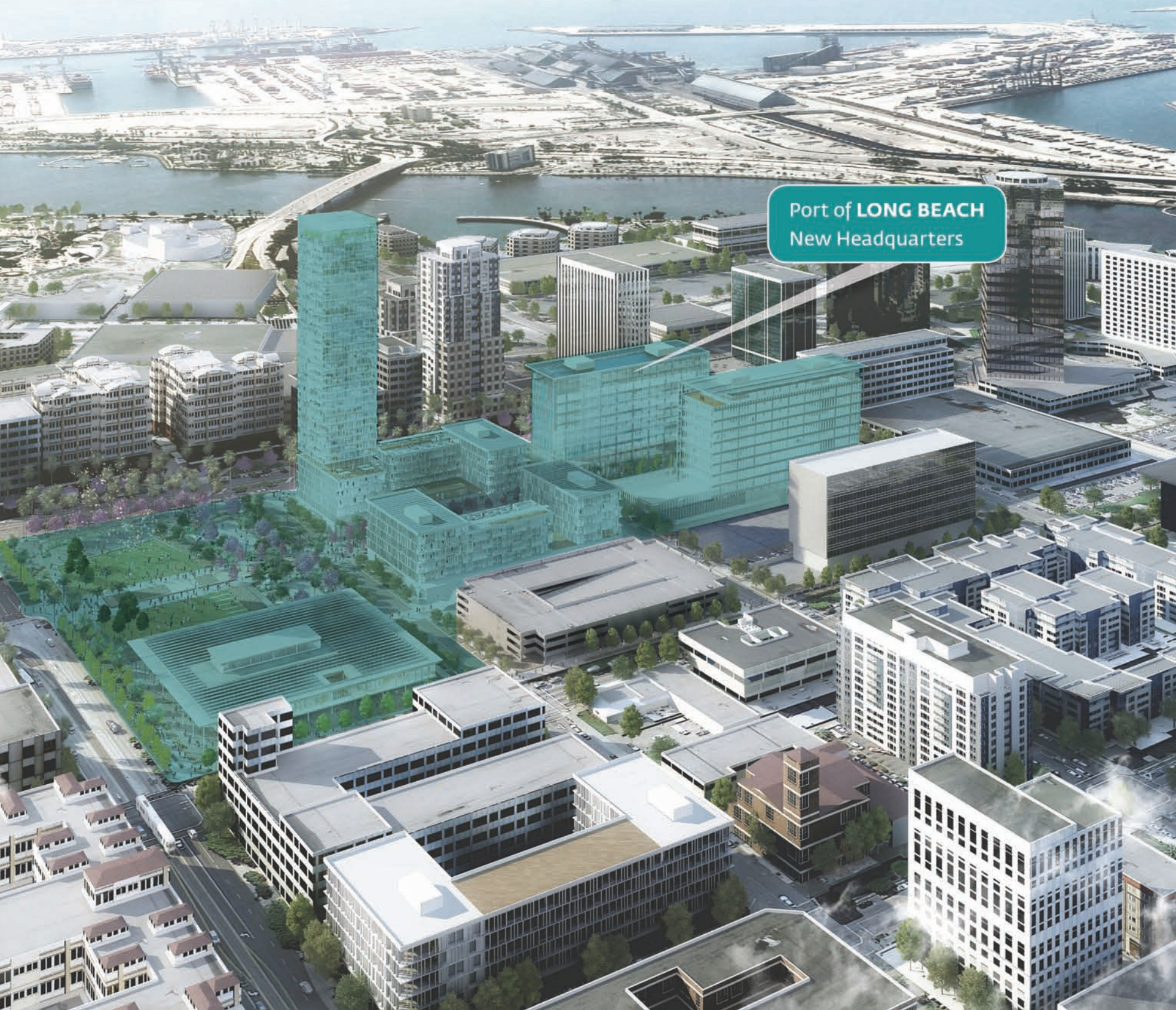
December 2016

Long Beach's Newsmagazine

www.lbbizjournal.com

Focus On Downtown Long Beach





Port of **LONG BEACH**
New Headquarters

On the Waterfront

The Port of Long Beach is proud to be one of the key anchors for the new Long Beach Civic Center now under construction. We're excited that our new headquarters will be at the heart of a downtown Long Beach where we can successfully live, work and play. We're working with our city leaders to create both a sustainable vibrant downtown and the Green Port of the Future.



Port of
LONG BEACH
The Green Port

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Mayor Robert Garcia: The New Downtown #DTLB

Look around Downtown Long Beach, or DTLB as the locals and visitors are beginning to call it, and you will see a community being transformed. Cranes are beginning to fill the skyline, once empty parcels are under construction, and quality retailers are investing and growing in the downtown. Hundreds of millions of dollars in new investments continues to flow into Downtown Long Beach. Our new Civic Center is under construction and moving forward at a brisk pace. Work has begun in Lincoln Park, which is where our new Main Library will be constructed before the park itself is transformed to become a vital new center for our downtown.

We were pleased to welcome WeWork – one of the leading co-working office brands in the world – to downtown this year. Located at Pine and Broadway, the 100 West Broadway building is being remodeled and rebranded as the Hubb and has attracted WeWork and many new, creative businesses to our city. And just around the corner, Perkowitz + Ruth (now known as Retail Design Collaborative) and Studio One Eleven have moved into their new creative office space at 3rd Street and The Promenade. They are the lead tenant and helping to redesign and revitalize the former City Place development that will bring many other new and exciting tenants as neighbors. We expect to see many more openings in 2017.

The Pie Bar opened last year and immediately earned a dedicated following and became a huge success with their amazing pies and desserts. In fact, their success and other local anchors like the Kress Market, has helped spur renewed interest in Pine Avenue as a retail and food destination. We anticipate several other unique stores opening on Pine in coming months. This adds to the expanded retail options than opened last year at The Pike, and adds a great mix of unique Long Beach stores to national brands, which include Nike, the Gap, Forever 21, H&M, Columbia Sportswear, and Restoration Hardware. Interest continues to be strong in the East Village and North Pine as residents and retailers create new and exciting spaces.

My goal is to see at least 4,000 new residential units built in the next 10 years and we recently completed two signature developments that are helping us reach this goal. The Current – a new 17-story residential tower – and the Edison – an adaptive reuse of a mid-century office building – have brought much-needed new units and amenities to our residential market. We have also seen three other residential projects break ground with more to come in 2017. We need new residents living, shopping and spending money downtown to support our local economy and ensure downtown succeeds. We are committed to building a housing market that supports everyone, including our seniors and local working families.

Downtown livability continues to improve. Long Beach became the first city in Southern California to be in the Top-10 nationally for walkability and bikeability. Downtown was the highest scoring neighborhood in both rankings. Beach Streets, our version of the Ciclavia cycling event, introduced many residents and visitors alike to the amenities and neighborhoods in the downtown area. The voter approved Measure A will make significant investments in infrastructure, including street improvements, lighting and additional bike lanes that will improve traffic flow and make life easier for pedestrians.

None of this would have been possible without the great community partners we have. In particular, I want to thank Councilmembers Lena Gonzalez and Jeannine Pearce who represent our downtown. Their leadership and hard work are helping to make these positive changes happen.

I also want to thank the Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Downtown Long Beach Alliance for the outstanding work they do every day to promote, program and clean our downtown. They are indispensable partners. Finally, thanks to the Long Beach Business Journal for devoting this issue to downtown and for the opportunity to provide this update to your readers. ■



Welcome To Downtown

By **KRAIG KOJIAN**, President & CEO
Downtown Long Beach Alliance

By **TOLIVER MORRIS**, Board Chair
Downtown Long Beach Alliance

Downtown Long Beach is buzzing with the excitement of new places, new ideas, and new opportunities. The growing list of businesses, developments and investors continues to multiply as the center city expands and prospers.

With unprecedented growth, the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA) continues its evolution as a community-driven organization with a vast network of involvement and a specific mission: to cultivate, preserve and promote a healthy, safe and prosperous modern Downtown.

We assume the leadership role seriously and are constantly learning from best practices exercised in other parts of Long Beach and from various cities nationwide. This has offered DLBA a unique perspective that ranges from understanding certain public policy to enhancing existing programs and introducing new concepts.

With 154 new businesses making the decision to call Downtown home over the past twelve months, it's safe to say Downtown's business environment is thriving. In our pursuit of serve as a clearinghouse of Downtown information, we introduced DTLB Snapshot, a quarterly economic

report to complement our annual Economic Profile. All while our Signature Events continue to break records, with more than 50,000 people coming to DTLB to be part of it all.

The Downtown community and our organization still faces daily challenges; without them, we wouldn't be doing anything right in the first place. We encourage looking at DTLB from all sides: from the shiny new developments to the more daunting and complex side of homelessness. To embrace the notion that coming together as a coalition rather than separate entities will make DTLB and the Long Beach a better place is a collective goal from all of our partners.

We know great cities don't happen by accident or occur overnight. Community development is not a sprint, but rather, a never-ending ultramarathon. Our neighborhoods and business corridors thrive as a result of collaboration, connectivity and strategy. There are plenty of opportunities to seize success as we look ahead, pledge ourselves, and ask you to join our efforts with the work ahead of us.

Thank you for your commitment, continued support and one-of-a-kind passion to help create the best Downtown.■

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ABOUT THE COVER

John Robinson shot this photo on December 4. Pine Avenue at 3rd Street is in the foreground. The East Village is prominent in the center, and the city's beautiful coastline is on display for all to admire.

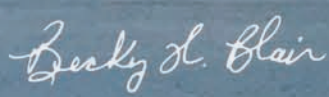
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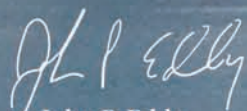
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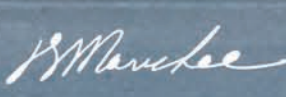
From our family to yours,



Becky Blair, CCIM



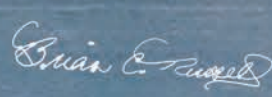
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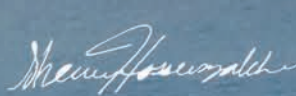
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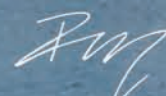
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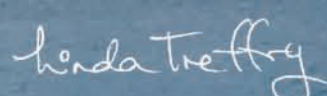
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LOCAL EXPERIENCE. GLOBAL STRENGTH.



City Of Long Beach Downtown Residential/Mixed-Use Development Projects

Completed

- 1** Edison – 100 Long Beach Blvd.; Transit-oriented development across from Metro Blue Line; 114,267-square-foot, mixed-use development consisting of a 12-story apartment complex and more than 3,600 square feet of retail space. Reinvention of original mid-century design and façade and sustainable design approach with on-site bicycle storage areas to encourage alternative modes of transportation.
- 2** The Current – 707 E. Ocean Blvd.; City’s first high-rise apartment complex in over a decade. 17-story, mixed-use complex including 223 luxury rental units; a 25,000-square-foot plaza, and additional retail space on the ground floor. With close proximity to dining and entertainment districts like Pine Avenue and the East Village and easy access to the waterfront, the project is expected to enhance economic energy by attracting more restaurants and shops to the busy corridor.
- 3** Pacific Court Apartments – 245 Pine Ave./250 Pacific Ave.; Adaptive-reuse of the former AMC Pine Square movie theater to a multi-family residential development consisting of 69 loft-style apartment units.
- 4** Sixth Street Lofts – 431 E. 6th St.; Four-story, 30-unit residential apartment building.
- 5** Urban Village – 1081 Long Beach Blvd.; Mixed-use, transit-oriented development; five-story, 129 units.
- 6** Newberry Lofts – 433 N. Pine Ave.; An adaptive reuse project to convert a building that once housed the Newberry department store into a mixed-use complex, including 28 residential units and 6,500 square feet of ground floor retail.
- 7** Studio One Eleven – 245 East 3rd St.; Two-story, 34,321-square-foot office remodel project. New headquarters for architectural firm and its parent company, Retail Design Collaborative (formerly P + R Architects). Completion of the first project as part of the ongoing revitalization of City Place Long Beach was celebrated in October 2016.

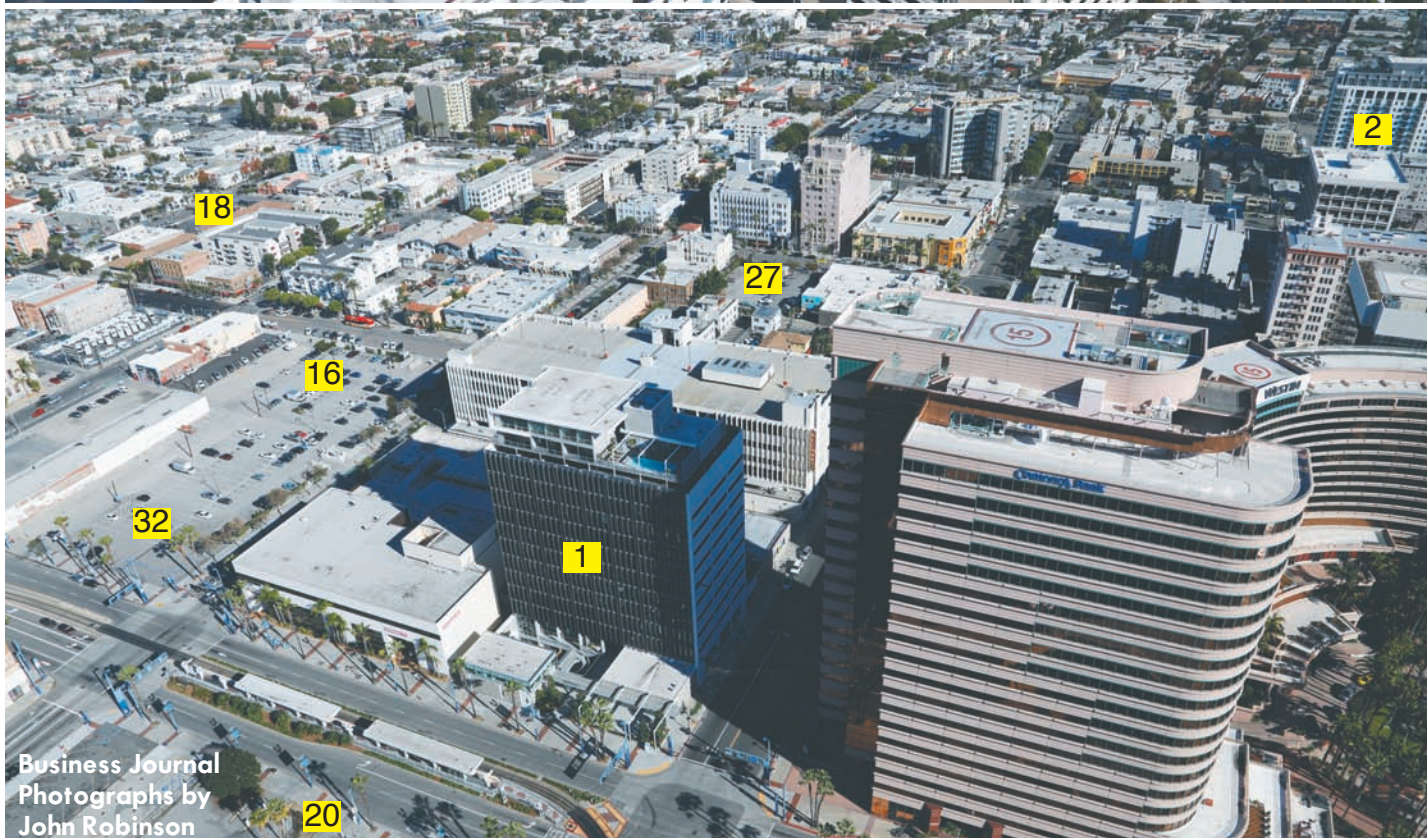
Under Construction

- 8** The Park Broadway – 245 W. Broadway (site of former State Office Building); 222 residential units with 8,500 square feet of retail space on the ground floor, including an art gallery, café, and “bike kitchen.”
- 9** 137 W. 6th St. – Four-story, mixed-use development will include a 10-unit residential component, and an additional 1,200 square feet of commercial retail space.
- 10** 117 E. 8th St. – Adaptive reuse of designated landmark building, including two levels of medical offices, and a six-story, 49-unit assisted living component for seniors.
- 11** Long Beach Civic Center – 411-415 W. Ocean Blvd. – Re-envisioned Civic Center project to include a new 11-story, 254,000-square-foot City Hall; an 11-story, 237,000-square-foot Port Building; a 92,500-square-foot Main Library; and a 73,000-square-foot Civic Plaza with subterranean parking structure; and a renewed Lincoln Park.
- 12** Oceanaire – 150 W. Ocean Blvd. – Groundbreaking held on December 6 for seven-story, 216-unit residential project with 1,500 square feet of retail space located adjacent to the historic Ocean Center Building.
- 13** 442 W. Ocean Blvd. – Mixed-use development, consisting of a five-story building with 94 residential units and 1,455 square feet of retail.

Approved/In Plan Check

- 14** Residences at City Place – 495 Promenade North; four-story, mixed-use project with 20 residential units, and 5,220 square feet of ground floor commercial space.
- 15** Beacon Apartments – 1201-1235 Long Beach Blvd.; 121-unit affordable housing development that

- will serve extremely low- to low-income seniors 62 years and over, and a 39-unit supportive housing building for extremely low-income veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
 - 16** 227 Elm Ave. – Developer City Ventures proposes 40 townhomes consisting of three-story dwellings over one car garages.
 - 17** 101 Alamitos Ave – Mixed-use project consisting of a seven-story, 136 condominium development; including 10 studio units, and 2,560 square feet of pedestrian-oriented retail/restaurant; located in the East Village Arts District.
 - 18** 434 E. 4th St. – Mixed-use project with 49 apartment units over ground floor resident amenities and retail space with 82 parking stalls.
 - 19** 230 W. 3rd St. – Mixed-use residential complex including 163 dwelling units, 261 subterranean parking spaces, community spaces for tenants, pool deck and fitness area.
 - 20** 107 Long Beach Blvd. – Proposed new hotel; 30,620 square feet with 34 guest rooms.
 - 21** 437 E. 5th St. – Mixed-use project; 18 apartment units and 230 square feet of commercial space.
 - 22** Security Pacific National Bank Building – 110 Pine Ave. – An adaptive reuse project to convert office space at the 13-story building into 118 residential units above the Federal Bar.
 - 23** Ocean View Tower – 200 W. Ocean Blvd.; An adaptive reuse project of the Verizon Building, converting over 95,000 square feet into a mixed-use development consisting of a nine-story, 94-unit residential apartment complex with over 4,500 square feet of retail space.
 - 24** 207 Seaside Way – The proposed mixed-use development project includes 113 residential units and 2,000 square feet of retail at a five-story building. Construction has begun on a public pedestrian bridge located adjacent to the site.
 - 25** Ocean Center Building – An adaptive reuse project to convert office space at the historic Ocean Center Building at 110 W. Ocean Blvd. into approximately 74 residential units with ground-floor retail and restaurant space.
 - 26** 777 E. Ocean Blvd. – Part of the Shoreline Gateway Master Plan; East Tower; proposed with 315 residential units and 6,711 square feet of retail/restaurant space.
- ## Pending/Under Review
- 27** 135 Linden Ave. – Proposed five-story building includes up to 44 residential units above about 2,688 square feet of retail space.
 - 28** 320 Alamitos Ave. – Proposed 77 market-rate apartments with 109 parking stalls (located on 2 levels below grade and a grade level).
 - 29** Broadway & Magnolia Apartments – 500 W. Broadway – Proposed seven-story, 142-unit apartment building with 2,954 square feet of commercial space.
 - 30** Pacific Avenue/3rd and 4th – Proposed 325 residential units.
 - 31** 507 Pacific Ave. – Proposed mixed-use project consisting of 134 residential condos with 7,000 square feet of commercial church and retail space.
 - 32** Broadway Block– 240 Long Beach Blvd. – Proposed two-building, mixed-use project consisting of a total of 375 residential units, 5,212 square feet of retail space, and 5,773 square feet of creative office space.
 - 33** 825 E. 7th St. – Proposed 19 residential units.
- (Source: Prepared by the City of Long Beach Development Services Department and the Long Beach Business Journal)



DOWNTOWN PERSPECTIVE

RANDAL HERNANDEZ

Chairman
Long Beach Economic
Development Commission

Downtown Long Beach is alive with renewed energy driven by shiny new housing, stylish new restaurants and refreshed streetscapes. And, the new Civic Center will be a catalyst for more investment in downtown residential, restaurant and hotel developments. This reawakening of downtown is built on a strong foundation of urban pioneers who invested in the “future” of the community many years ago.

While we take pride in the sparkling new buildings, I’m excited about what this revitalization is doing to create new employment, entrepreneurial and housing opportunities for individuals and families. The energy in downtown has also become a catalyst for connecting people with their neighbors, with residents across the city and linking Long Beach to the Southern California region.

Creating new economic opportunities and connecting people across the city is at the core of the Long Beach Economic Blueprint currently under-development by the Economic Development Commission. The success of Downtown Long Beach is part of the foundation on which we hope to drive more economic opportunities in Bixby Knolls, north town, east, central and the Westside . . . indeed in neighborhoods across the city.

Again, the success is not just found in the new buildings rising. Fundamental to this success has been the collaboration among residents, business-owners, developers, government and the community – driven by the Downtown Long Beach Alliance – to create opportunities from the west end, to the ocean, to the east village and throughout the downtown core.

Yes, the future is indeed bright for Downtown Long Beach! The challenge and opportunity now is to learn from this success, leverage the economic energy and connect people together to develop a citywide Economic Blueprint that brings new investment and vitality to neighborhoods across the city.

We invite readers to learn more about the Blueprint including opportunities for comment as well as commission meeting dates and times, at www.longbeach.gov/blueprint.



New Civic Center Under Construction

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held July 8 for the \$533 million Long Beach Civic Center complex. Located at the site of the old courthouse on Ocean Boulevard in Downtown Long Beach, the new center is being financed through a public-private partnership with Plenary Edgemoor Civic Partners and will house the new city hall, Port of Long Beach headquarters and a main library. Combined, the three main structures – scheduled for completion in mid-2019 – total nearly 600,000 square feet. Also included in the project are \$400 million in residential units, a hotel, retail space and Lincoln Park restoration and expansion. Demolition of the existing city hall (pictured at upper left) and main library will occur later in 2019. The park completion is expected by late 2020. During the July ceremonies, former Mayor Bob Foster, who was instrumental in moving the project forward, said, “This is going to be just marvelous for the city. I don’t think we yet understand how impactful it’s going to be once this thing is open. I think it’s going to change people’s view of themselves and their view of this city. This city is in a renaissance, and this is one of the final touches. You’re going to be proud to be a Long Beach person.” ■

Prominent Downtown Corner Ready For A Breath Of Fresh Oceanaire

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Staff Writer

Ten years after Florida-based Lennar Corporation bought land on the corner of Ocean Boulevard and Pacific Avenue, the company celebrated the groundbreaking of a residential project dubbed Oceanaire on December 6.

“The project here has actually been a long time in the making. Unfortunately, [we] got caught in the economic recession,” Ryan Gatchalian, president of Lennar Southern California Urban/Multifamily, said. “We always believed in the City of Long Beach and the potential of this site, and it led us to hold the property throughout that and got us here today.”



Oceanaire, a residential project on Ocean Boulevard west of Pine Avenue, broke ground on December 6. Pictured from left are: Dewey Davis, senior director of construction for LMC, a Lennar company; Tom Garlock, senior vice president of construction for LMC; Darrin Zwick, president of Zwick Construction; and LMC employees JJ Abraham, California division president; Paul Ogier, California senior vice president; Kasey Kepp, director of construction; and Ethen Thacher, director of development. (Photographs by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

Initial plans for the project located at 150 W. Ocean Blvd. contained retail space on the ground floor. However, after working with city staff, the seven-story project will forgo retail and include 216 luxury studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments. Residents of Oceanaire will enjoy an activated park, a pool terrace, a gym area and 406 stalls on two levels of subterranean parking.

The building will front Ocean Boulevard, adjacent to the historic Ocean Center Building, with a multipurpose park space that will include art elements. The rear of the complex, which will be directly across Seaside Way from The Pike Outlets, will engage the community with a public dog park. A massive slide from the street level down to the dog park will also be included.

“I will say that my favorite part of this whole development is the slide. I’m very excited about the slide,” Mayor Robert Garcia said during the groundbreaking ceremony. “[It’s] pretty cool. It’s a great way to activate the space and get people involved.”

When the emcee mentioned that Amy Bodek, director of developmental services, “called dibs” on the first slide when the project is completed, Garcia could be heard from the crowd saying, “We’ll see about that.”

“We have looked at this lot with incredible potential and excitement for this last decade,” Garcia said. “It connects so many pieces of The Pike, of downtown, of Ocean [Boulevard], of the residential community. To have this connect and create the fabric of the street and pedestrian experience is really critical.”

When asked what his favorite part of the project was, Gatchalian said the Bali pool. He explained that this feature is a two-foot-deep pool that will include private alcoves for people to hang out in. Gatchalian explained that the idea came directly from pictures of a resort in Bali. He said it will create waterfront-like balconies for residents surrounding the courtyard and will include LED lights that will shine up like stars at night.

According to Kraig Kojian, president and CEO of the Downtown Long Beach Alliance, the residential units will be a welcome addition to the downtown area. He said the density of downtown is twice as high as the rest of the city with a population growing four times faster.

Being near the prominent corner of Ocean Boulevard and Pine Avenue, Kojian said the project’s proximity to public transportation adds value to it. The Blue Line and nearby Long Beach Transit combined with the area’s walkable and bike-friendly atmosphere will be a benefit to future residents, Kojian explained.

“We like commitments and investment in our downtown,” Kojian said. “I like holes in the ground, and I like cranes in the air. So the more we have of those, the better our downtown skyline will appear in the future. And that’s really what we’re working for.”

The project is scheduled to open during the fourth quarter of 2018, according to Gatchalian. This means it will open around the same time as phase one of the massive Long Beach Civic Center project, which began earlier this year.

“To have those projects come to life around the same time – and then the incredible work that’s happening catty-corner from here as we recreate the library and the park space – is going to be pretty spectacular,” Garcia said. “This is a part of a larger, incredible downtown puzzle.”

Darin Zwick, president and CEO of Utah-based Zwick Construction Company, said he is honored to partner with the city and Lennar to create this project at such a critical location in the downtown area. He assured that his company would construct the building to the highest standards on time and on budget.

“We believe in the people who are going to live here – the families, the individuals,” Zwick said. “This is a great day, but an even better day will be when we are all here for the grand opening.” ■



WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

RETAIL DESIGN COLLABORATIVE



studioneleven

To the new tenants in 2016, welcome Burgerim, Creative Crepes, Party Monkey, Poke Cat, Romeo Chocolates, Table 301, The Plant Junkie, and The Pie Bar.

As work progresses with the first phase of the project, please continue to support the more than 34-plus tenants in the shopping center that includes Big 5 Sporting Goods, Chuck E. Cheese's, Daniel's Jewelers, GNC, Gamestop, Jean Machine, Panda Express, Payless Shoe Source, Ross Dress For Less, Sally's Beauty Supply, Subway, T-Mobile and Verizon, among others.

— from the Shooshani Family

OUR NEW HOME

Invigorating Downtown Long Beach, one block at a time

RETAIL DESIGN COLLABORATIVE



studioneleven

December 4 Business Journal
photograph by John Robinson

Downtown Amenities Attract A Wide Range Of Businesses

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Senior Writer

A central waterfront location, affordable real estate, proximity to a diverse talent pool and a wide range of restaurants, attractions and activities for their employees are just a few reasons business owners say they have chosen to locate in Downtown Long Beach.

Situated between the City of Los Angeles and Orange County, downtown is an ideal spot for businesses with clientele in both L.A. and Orange counties. And with quick access to the 710 Freeway and connecting roadways plus the Metro Blue Line, getting to either place doesn't take too long (traffic depending, of course).

"Geographically, you have to look at its proximity to the waterfront," Kraig Kojian, president and CEO of the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA), said about why businesses locate downtown. The DLBA is the nonprofit organization tasked with overseeing and supporting downtown's business districts. He added that Long Beach is one of the few, if not the only, urban waterfront downtown areas between San Diego and San Francisco.

This is precisely one of the reasons WeWork, an international provider of creative work space, invested in two floors of a downtown office building at 100 W. Broadway, according to Lexey Radcliff, the firm's Southern California area manager. Real estate in other waterfront locales in the region, like Venice Beach and Santa Monica to the north or Newport Beach to the south, come at a much higher price point, she noted.

Challenger Logistics International, a Canada-based transportation and logistics firm, recently opened its newest office at The Hubb at 100 W. Broadway due to downtown's proximity to the port. The company also has an office in Chicago and 11 other offices in Canada.

"As far as the company's growth strategy, it just made a lot of sense given proximity to our current customer base, obviously [at] the Port of Long Beach," John Mansolino, head of U.S. Logistics for Challenger, said. Some of the company's top clients include Kellogg and Toyota, he noted.

The Hubb, which is undergoing a remodeling to elicit a more urban, creative office atmosphere, also appealed to the company, Mansolino explained. "This particular building was really good because we got to pick out exactly the culture and the feel that we were looking for," he said.

One of the company's internal mottos is "people, customer, profit." Locating in an area with amenities for Challenger's people was one of the reasons the firm chose downtown. "We have the best restaurants and a great collection of different businesses," Mansolino said.

Soon to be Mansolino's neighbor at The Hubb is Northwestern Mutual, a life insurance and financial planning company. "Essentially, we're like a franchise model. So my business partner, Tim, has a Newport Beach office, and I am an extension running a separate but [linked] office in Long Beach," said Brendan Diette, who is leading the new Long Beach office for Northwestern Mutual.

Diette is a fourth generation Long Beach native and said he always knew he wanted to open an office in his hometown. "The last several years we have been planning and working on it and looking around different spots in Long Beach," he said.

After visiting The Hubb with local commercial real estate agent Toliver Morris, Diette knew it was the right fit for his office. "Downtown has cleaned up a lot the last several years, and it's getting better," he said. "They're building a lot of new stuff. Restaurants are getting better. I am excited to be downtown where there is a lot of action going on."

Diette noted that the location of downtown "smack dab in the middle



of L.A. and Orange County” also makes it an ideal spot for his business. Northwestern Mutual is known for its internship program, and Diette said he intends to draw interns from California State University, Long Beach – another benefit of being located in his hometown.

Long-established firms in the area have stayed for similar reasons to those of new firms that are coming to the area. Accounting firm Holthouse Carlin & Van Trigt has had an office in downtown for 23 years, according to partner Blake Christian. “We like the walkability factor. We don’t have to get in our car to go to lunch or often even to visit all of our clients,” he said.

Residential developments planned and underway throughout downtown are also appealing to businesses, according to Kojian. “It is one of our number one priorities, to continue with the momentum that has been generated by residential developers in our downtown,” he said. “Obviously, the recent sale of the former redevelopment agency properties to private developers and investors has heightened curiosity and interest among retailers,” he observed. “Success stories like The Pie Bar and Recreational Coffee and some other boutique-style retailers and eateries have also helped tell that story,” he added, referring to businesses that have reported strong growth since opening in the downtown area within the past year and a half.

DOWNTOWN PERSPECTIVE

JOHN C. ABUSAID
President and COO
Halbert Hargrove

Scroll back to 1933: Halbert Hargrove’s birthplace was on Pine Street in “downtown” Long Beach. More than 80 years later, we’re still downtown, with the exact same phone number – except now we’re headquartered around the block at 111 West Ocean Blvd. We’ve expanded beyond our Long Beach headquarters to five additional offices in five U.S. states, but DTLB remains the locus of our growth, is home base to the majority of our associates, and is a phenomenal place to do business.

From the 23rd floor overlooking downtown, here’s what we see:

- A business-friendly environment;
- Great companies choosing to set up shop here in the greater Long Beach area;
- A thriving, engaged community, encompassing philanthropy, the arts, public events, and architecture;
- People attracted not just to work here, but to live here, with beautiful new residential developments.

Recently, we were offered the opportunity to buy our own building, but this would have required moving out of DTLB. Ultimately, the answer for us was a resounding no.

The reasons were numerous. We love everything about our current offices, including our stunning views from



John Mansolino, head of U.S. Logistics for Challenger Logistics International, said the Canada-based firm recently opened an office at 100 W. Broadway due to the building’s industrial, creative vibe and its proximity to clientele at the Port of Long Beach. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

Catalina Island to the eastern mountains. But we also believe that being downtown – particularly in such a high-energy, resurgent downtown – makes a statement about who we are. We are fiduciary investment managers and wealth advisors, and when you work in finance, being anchored downtown carries strong connotations of stability and success. We also just like the idea of how many of our Long Beach-area clients expect us to be here and enjoy walking into this handsome building where we’ve made our home since 1995.

I love my job: I get to be engaged with everything that helps this firm run like a dream and move forward confidently into the future. And I believe there just isn’t a better place for Halbert Hargrove to be than DTLB.

Keeping The Downtown Economy Alive: Programs And Tools For Successful Business

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Staff Writer

Opening a business and thriving in a city can be a challenge for even a seasoned veteran. Tracking demographics, business climate within the city, competitors, new development – all can be a tricky task anywhere, and Downtown Long Beach is no different.

In the last decade, numerous business resources have been introduced to Long Beach, many focusing on small business and the downtown area. In May of 2015, Mayor Robert Garcia and the city council launched the Innovation Team (i-team) using a \$3 million grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies and \$1 million in city funds. The goal of the i-team is to research and develop ways the city can help entrepreneurs start and grow businesses more easily in the city.



Lou Anne Bynum, executive vice president of College Advancement and Economic Development for Long Beach City College, and John Keisler, director of the Innovation Team and incoming director of the economic and property development department for the city, work together to ease the process of starting and growing a business in Long Beach. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

“The i-team’s format is to do prototypes, learn from them and then to make recommendations once we think we have a substantial solution or proof of concept to expand after we assess the success or failures,” John Keisler, director of the i-team and incoming director of the economic and property development department for the city, said.

One such prototype that Keisler’s i-team is continuing to monitor and improve upon is the recently launched BizPort website. BizPort is a one-stop shop for entrepreneurs that will hopefully reduce the cost and confusion of starting a business, according to Keisler. One of the main objectives is to allow entrepreneurs to navigate the startup process faster and easier, thereby decreasing the median days to approval (currently 26 days) by half, he explained.

The site includes a dashboard that tracks the number of sessions, first-time users and activated profiles, among other data. Keisler said as of December 9 there have been 1,572 sessions, 227 login profiles created and 2,204 video views, which equates to about 1,108 minutes of watch time – all this within two months of activation.

“We look at those numbers because our hope is that we are answering a lot of questions that people used to have to come into city hall or call to have answered,” Keisler said. “So we believe that it’s saving people time and money to provide this information online 24/7.”

In addition to the digital navigation tool, Keisler said the i-team is working on developing a team of human navigators to aide entrepreneurs through the startup process, when technological tools may not be enough. The i-team is partnering with Veterans Affairs (VA) to be a part of its Non-Paid Work Experience Program.

Through this program, veterans work for governmental agencies at no cost to the agencies, as the VA pays the veterans for their work. The program runs for six months, allowing veterans to gain valuable work experience.

“We have our first veteran on staff who is helping us to write the training manual and to launch this program in 2017. It’s a really cool program,”

Keisler said. “They will help us manage tools like BizPort, as well as to help people who may not use digital tools so well. The business navigators will help them to do that.”

Another prototype the i-team hopes to launch in early 2017 is visual business analytics that can be utilized by incoming entrepreneurs. The focus of this will be to map business licensing data visually so current business owners can be up to date on their ventures and what is happening around them, as well as allow new investors to see what businesses are where.

Through this mapping, new entrepreneurs can see where certain types of businesses are located so they can make more informed decisions about where to locate their businesses – to cluster with similar locations, to avoid stores or restaurants that are too similar, or to fill gaps in the market. Existing businesses will be able to see the statuses of business licenses, including their own, and remain informed on new businesses in the area.

The fourth improvement area the i-team is currently working on – aside from digital and human navigators and analytics – is what Keisler calls hubs and spaces. The i-team has partnered with the College of Business Administration at California State University, Long Beach, the college’s alumni in-

cubator and Molina Healthcare to provide entrepreneurs with physical spaces to convene for events to talk about what is going on in the city regarding entrepreneurship programs and services.

“We’ve been doing these monthly. And our hope is that entrepreneurs are connecting with each other, they’re connecting with resources, and that they’re identifying opportunities for partnership and investment,” Keisler said. “This first series is considered a pilot. And our goal is to take all the data that we collect from the users and understand the user groups that are attending these speaker series and to understand what they are getting from it so we can come back with a beta version.”

In November, Keisler was named the new director of the Long Beach Economic and Property Development Department, a position he will begin on January 3. Keisler said his primary goal for his new position is not very different from the work he has been doing with the i-team – making it easier to create new businesses and help grow those businesses over time – and he will even utilize similar ideas in his new role.

The first step is to simplify and clarify the processes for starting a business in the city, according to Keisler. He said that, when speaking to business owners, many of them said they were not afraid of the hard work it takes to start a business, but rather they just wish the process were more clear and consistent.

“They want certainty, that they know what to do, even if it’s hard, and that there’s no surprises,” Keisler said. “So we’re really going to be expanding the support services to fill out those navigational tools for both entrepreneurs and staff. That’s step one – really reducing the cost and confusion of starting a business. In year one, that’s going to be a big emphasis.”

The support services Keisler said they would use include those the i-team has been working on and refining since its inception, such as the use of analytics. “We want to be recognized nationally as a leader in the use of data and analytics to drive the startup process,” he added.

In addition to developing tools to ease the process of starting a business, the city has had programs in place for many years to provide seed capital to entrepreneurs, specifically small businesses, according to Seyed Jalali, economic development officer for the city. He explained that many of the loans are micro loans, which do not exceed \$25,000, while others can get as much as \$100,000 or beyond.

The micro loans are reserved for small business startups, while the larger loans are paid for through the Grow Long Beach Fund, which is guaranteed by the United States Small Business Administration.

In some cases, primarily for auto dealers and some shopping centers doing major renovations or expansions, Jalali said the city might participate in the development by sharing sales tax revenue for a predetermined amount of time, offsetting costs for the company. He said the companies must generate a minimum of \$5 million to be eligible for the program, and the amount and share period varies project to project.

“Unfortunately, in light of the dissolution of redevelopment agencies, a lot of the tools – including the enterprise zone, which was subsequently eliminated after they took away the redevelopment agencies – have been taken away from municipalities,” Jalali said. “So we’ve become somewhat limited when it comes to incentives. But we are unique in that we still have something to offer, where most of the cities don’t have these types of resources.”

Much of the legwork for these programs falls to Long Beach City College (LBCC) Small Business Development Center (SBDC). Jalali said everything his office does is really done hand-in-hand and in partnership with the SBDC.

Lou Anne Bynum, executive vice president of College Advancement and Economic Development for LBCC, said the school, along with the city, wanted to establish a Long Beach SBDC but could only achieve that by taking the entire L.A. Regional Network, which covers L.A., Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, in 2006. In 2016 in Long Beach alone, the SBDC has had 55 business startups, had around 200 jobs created and helped businesses in the city obtain more than \$13 million in capital.

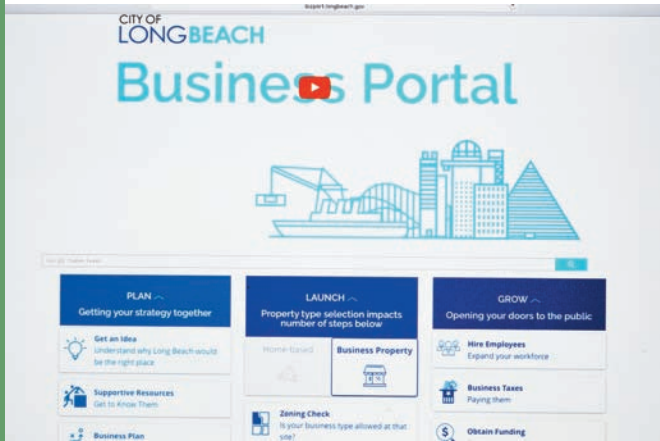
“The whole point is to really help businesses that we have here in Long Beach grow, be competitive, thrive and, of course, create jobs,” Bynum said. “From our standpoint as an educational institution, we want to educate our students. We train the workforce to have the right skillsets but, if you don’t have the businesses thriving and being competitive, then you’re not going to have the jobs available to have a vibrant economy.”

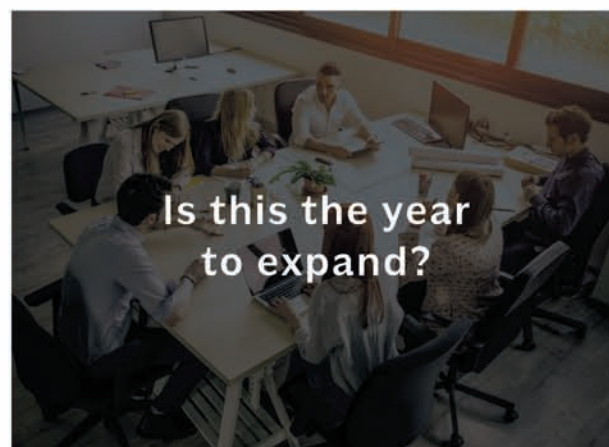
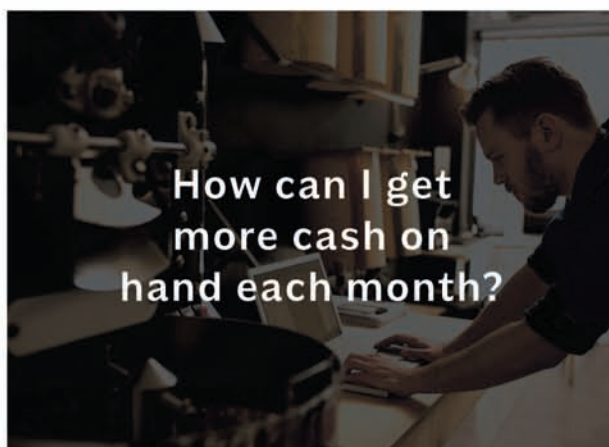
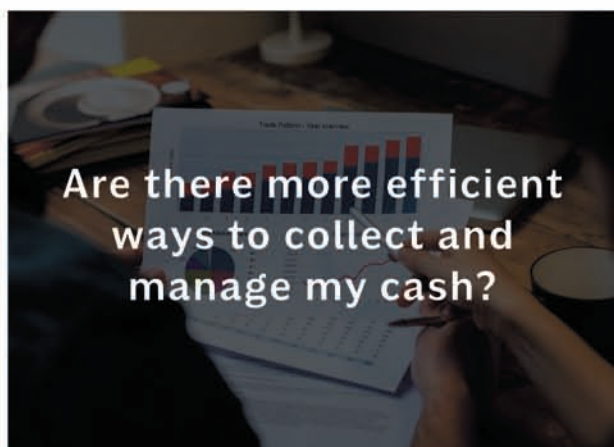
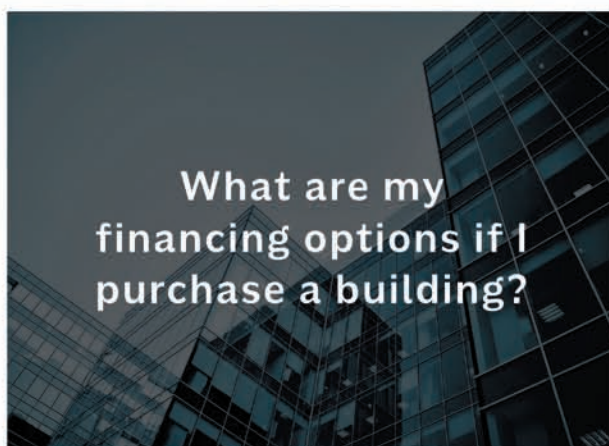
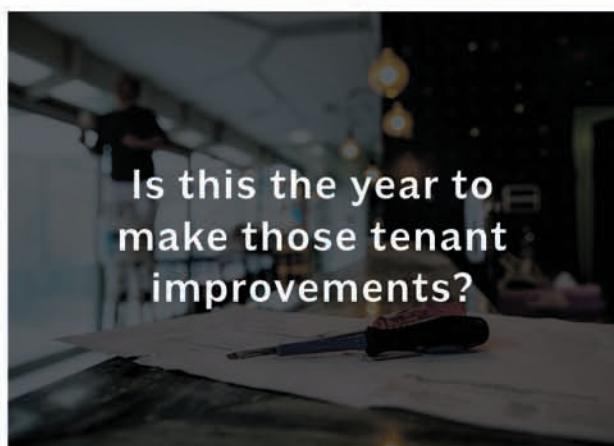
Currently, the SBDC has partnered with MADE by Millworks, a consignment store downtown featuring more than 120 local brands, to offer free consulting that is paid for through the SBA. The organization also recently launched an international business accelerator program, which focuses on small businesses that are or want to be engaged in global markets.

Bynum explained that the program currently has about 20 companies and is putting together a student portal lab that will match top business students from the college with business owners to help navigate resources and programs to aid them in expanding their businesses internationally.

Another program Bynum helps oversee is the Goldman Sach’s 10,000

The Long Beach Innovation Team developed the Business Portal, or BizPort, website to ease the processes involved with starting and growing a business in Long Beach. BizPort tools and assistance can be found at bizport.longbeach.gov.





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Downtown offers a wide range of traditional and creative office space, many with views of the Pacific Ocean. Numerous office buildings stretch along Ocean Boulevard and house many tenants who located downtown due to the proximity of the Port of Long Beach. There are also several office buildings within blocks of the ocean constructed during the early part of the 1900s. (Business Journal photograph by John Robinson)

(Continued From Page 12)

Small Businesses program, which the college has been running since 2012 as the Southern California Regional Center. Since its inception, the educational program has had around 700 scholar graduates, 30% of which were Long Beach businesspeople.

“That’s an amazing program. It’s very intensive. It’s like a mini-accelerator MBA program, but the whole point is for the businesses to put in place a growth plan that will take them to the next level,” Bynum explained. “There have been some amazing outcomes and metrics from that program. During the Great Recession, those businesses – over 50% – were able to hire people and close to 75% of them were able to increase their revenues.”

The nearly 100-hour program is free for business owners or co-owners whose businesses have been in operation for at least two years, have at least four employees and have a minimum of \$150,000 in revenue. Businesspeople fly in from around the country to teach modules in finance, marketing, human resources, managing employees and customers, and outreach, Bynum said. The curriculum was developed by Babson College, which is known as the premier entrepreneurship program in the country, according to Bynum.

With an increase in development, a booming economy, and a mayor and city council that are supportive of entrepreneurs, Bynum said she thinks the city is poised for rapid small business growth.

“I just think the timing is right. With the leadership, the private sector and the public sector, Long Beach is so well poised to be able to take its entrepreneurial activity to the next level,” Bynum said. “I think the timing is right to be able to exponentially take a leap for the city and really attract some other businesses that can come here and serve as a catalyst of growth.” ■

DOWNTOWN PERSPECTIVE

JOHN KEISLER

Director Of Economic & Property
Development, City Of Long Beach

The economic future is bright for the City of Long Beach – particularly in the diverse and dynamic downtown! One does not have to look far up Pine Avenue or down Ocean Boulevard to see new housing developments, creative co-working spaces, and new restaurants opening their doors for business.

Looking down we see excavators and dump trucks, digging the foundation of the city’s future. Looking up we see scaffolds and cranes, announcing the arrival of the new economy. With over 1,400 businesses ranging from trade and logistics, to hospitality and technology, the downtown economy is diverse and resilient – positioned for growth in the modern economy. But the downtown’s future will be defined by its people – not by its properties. With over 32,000 residents now living in the downtown and a median age of 35 years old, the population is young, educated and social, with an eye for creative, connected, dynamic places.

At the Economic & Property Development Department, our vision is that Long Beach, and particularly the downtown, is seen internationally as the “city of opportunity.” Every day, our job at the city is to do what it takes to increase economic opportunities and to strengthen our neighborhoods for all people – entrepreneurs, workers, and investors. This means reducing time and cost to start a business. Increasing access to high quality internet. And creating partnerships with CSULB (with 40,000 students) and LBCC (with 24,000 students), to bring new talent into the city’s workforce.

If we are doing our job right, we will measure our success by growing the number and diversity of businesses; expanding the number and quality of jobs; and, increasing the confidence that people have in the future of the city’s economy. Our approach will be user-centered, forward-thinking, and data driven. It’s an exciting time to be in Long Beach!

Placing A Business In An Expanding Downtown

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Staff Writer

Finding the right location in a downtown area for an office or storefront can be a daunting task for a new business, and even an established one entering a new city.

When it comes to office space, Downtown Long Beach buildings are broken into A, B and C Class. According to Toliver Morris, owner and president of William Morris Commercial, Class C buildings are typically older, built in the early 1900s; Class B buildings were built between the 1960s and early 1980; and the three Class A buildings – World Trade Center, Landmark Square and Shoreline Square – were built in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

“Historically, the Class C market has been kind of lower-end, traditional space. Now, the Class C market has become more and more creative space – the old, cool buildings,” Morris explained. “We’re seeing a lot of the Class B buildings being recapitalized in downtown and are now being converted to creative office. The Class A market is typically more traditional.”

Much of the Class C stock has been lost in recent years due to conversion to residential units, according to Morris. He said the Class C market was small to begin with, around 500,000 square feet, but that half either has been or is anticipated to be converted. This loss has made the Class C market really tight.

In the Class B market, one of the largest creative conversions is 100 W. Broadway, now known as The Hub. In the last year, Morris said the building acquired almost 60,000 square feet of new leases, 33,000 of which were to the shared creative space provider WeWork. He said that 211 E. Ocean and others have caught the creative wave and are making conversions of their own.

“They’re spending a good amount of money on these mid-’80s buildings to convert them into ultimate creative office campuses,” Morris said. “Everyone is looking for creative office space.”

David Smith, senior vice president of CBRE Inc., said that these conversions are the future of Downtown Long Beach. He explained that historically, when a company wanted to move into downtown, the budget would be examined, and it would move into the biggest, highest, most prestigious building it could afford. But times have changed.

“You’ve probably heard the phrase, ‘This isn’t your father’s office anymore.’ The needs of the tenants and their employees have changed dramatically,” Smith said. “Most of the companies nowadays – especially the ones that are hiring younger employees – want something that has a little edge to it, that’s cool, that has amenities very close by that are easily accessible, and that really caters to the lifestyle of its employees.”

In addition to where a business falls on the budget spectrum of buildings, Smith said agents need to understand a company’s long-term goals, who its employees are and where they are coming from, and the aesthetic the company wants the office to have. Some companies may still want traditional office spaces, while others want hip, creative spaces.

From West Gateway to the East Village to Pine Avenue, various pockets

(Please Continue To Page 16)

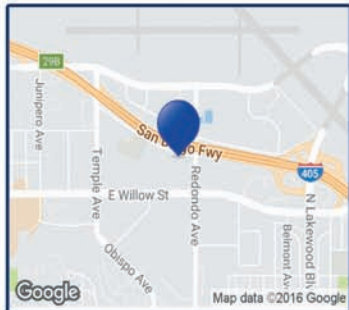
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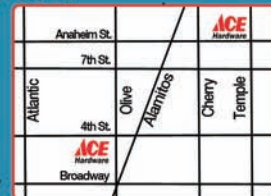


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Downtown
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December 2016
Page 16



Looking south from 3rd Street on The Promenade.
(Business Journal photograph by John Robinson)

(Continued From Page 14)

of the downtown area have different pros and cons, according to Robert Garey, senior director at Cushman & Wakefield. Factors can be parking, scenic views, or proximity to amenities, such as food and shopping; however, whether they are pros or cons is subjective to the wants and needs of the company, Garey said.

“If you’re on the south side of Ocean Boulevard with spectacular ocean views versus The Hubb, they don’t have those views. But they are in the amenity-rich area. So those are kind of pros and cons that are subjective from the tenant’s perspective in their desirability in selecting a building or not,” Garey said. “If there’s a strong bias toward having lots of amenities, being close to nighttime activities and other social activities, then they might not be as concerned about a view space and not looking out over the beautiful ocean and the Queen Mary and Catalina. Those things come into play.”

Likewise, Garey explained that the issue of parking can also be subjective to a potential lessee. He explained that if the company has many employees driving in from areas outside Long Beach, it will most likely be more attracted to buildings that offer the standard three or four parking stalls per 1,000 square feet of space.

However, if the company has few employees or has a majority who live in the city and can walk or take public transit, then it might be willing to forgo parking to enjoy other perks, such as being on Pine Avenue near numerous restaurants, shopping and nightlife.

Becky Blair, president of Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR WESTMAC, said the timing of the company’s move is also a key factor in what space is available to it. With an ever-changing marketplace, Blair said timing could be everything and that she keeps up with availability across the board through internal services and databases.

Over the last 15 to 20 years, Blair said Downtown Long Beach has been a popular location for many companies to have offices. She said many were attracted to Ocean Boulevard, which is one of the top addresses in the city, for its prominence and gorgeous views. Today, with increased residential and commercial development, public transit and an influx of restaurants and bars, especially along Pine Avenue, downtown is more appealing than ever.

“As more of the infill is happening, on 1st Street for instance, then it’s going to be nice to just take a walk, even from Ocean Boulevard coming onto Pine Avenue,” Blair said. “I think, in that respect, the market is doing better simply because of the development that’s occurring right now in the downtown area.”

With a daytime population of more than 40,000, employees being able to park in the morning and walk to nearby amenities is not only beneficial for them but for the surrounding restaurants and retailers, Blair explained. More residents and more office space being leased means more business.

“I think that, when we have that kind of population during the day, retail is more excited about being here, and demographics are such that they know that they can put their business here on the retail side.”

For retail and restaurant space – from the waterfront locations in Shoreline Village to the East Village to Pine Avenue and The Promenade – each pocket of the downtown area has a unique DNA, Noel Aguirre, senior associate at Lee & Associates, said. Aguirre explained that each area of downtown has a clear and distinct makeup where similar operators tend to be located.

For example, starting with The Pike Outlets and moving down along the water to Shoreline Village, large chain restaurants and stores are the overwhelming majority. However, if you walk up Pine Avenue or The Promenade or through the East Village, you’ll find smaller, often local or regional retailers, restaurants and bars. Similar to office space, Aguirre explained that more and more retailers and restaurateurs are seeking a certain look and feel.

“There’s the aesthetic of the real estate itself,” Aguirre said. “Over the years, it’s sort of been the appreciation of the older bones of a building and to sort of have that aesthetic of brick and wood and concrete. It’s sort of become not just where a ‘creative user’ is wanting to have that same look. It’s pretty much across the board.”

Aside from the client’s wants and needs, Elizabeth Dana, a broker associate for INCO Commercial, said it’s also important to consider the needs of the city and community when trying to place a retail store or restaurant.

“I make recommendations to which area within downtown best suits their business needs and vision for their business, while being mindful of the growth of downtown,” Dana said. “I look at the adopted City of Long Beach Downtown Plan for zoning and design requirements and how its use will impact the community. It’s really about focusing on what best supports the business, the residents and the city overall.”

Understanding the business model of a company and how it will engage the downtown area relative to what exists is also key in placing a store or restaurant, according to Catherine Morris of William Morris Commercial. For example, if a restaurant is breakfast-centric, it would be better placed near residential areas of the downtown. If it is lunch-centric, placing it near a cluster of office buildings would be most beneficial.

“I work really hard at helping people, as well,” Catherine said. “I am able to get them competitive rates and help them initiate a Kickstarter, help them find funds from the Downtown Long Beach Alliance – those kinds of things to help new businesses. When I took over Pine Avenue, it was completely empty on both sides. And now it’s fully leased except for one spot.”

Bragging about his wife and work associate, Toliver Morris said she spends a lot of time and energy making sure businesses are placed properly to best serve the community as well as enable the businesses to thrive and grow. He said it’s all about finding the right balance and setting businesses up for success.

“[There is] just a lot of education to make sure that people don’t go in on a whim and then go dark. The last thing we want to see is places open up and then not succeed,” Toliver said. “As retail grows, residential grows, office grows, it all grows together – one pollinates the other. That’s what we’re really selling in downtown. This is a growth market in every sector. It’s really seen an explosion.” ■



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**PACIFIC POINTE
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Multitude Of Industry Sectors Thrive In Downtown

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Senior Writer

Downtown Long Beach’s location – situated halfway between Los Angeles and Orange County and adjacent to the largest port complex in the country – is just one of many reasons the area is a hub for a number of industries. International trade, oil and gas production, health care, financial services, and the hospitality and tourism industries thrive in downtown, and serve as major employers and economic generators for the City of Long Beach.

International Trade

One of the industries most historically synonymous with Long Beach and the downtown area is international trade. The ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles make up the largest port complex in the country. About 40% of the nation’s goods travel through these ports, which support a variety of other industries in the supply chain, such as trucking, rail, warehousing and freight forwarding.

The Port of Long Beach sits on 3,000 acres of land and comprises 4,600 acres of water, with 22 shipping terminals. Its largest operator is Long Beach Container Terminal, a division of Orient Overseas Carrier Line.

“We estimate that one out of eight jobs in Long Beach is generated by port activity,” Noel Hacegaba, chief commercial officer for the Port of Long Beach, told the Business Journal. The port also supports more than 300,000 jobs across Southern California and more than 1.5 million jobs nationwide, he said.

The port’s two largest capital improvement projects are also major job creators. The Middle Harbor Redevelopment Project, which involves combining two aging terminals into an energy-efficient facility able to handle the world’s largest ships, is responsible for generating about 1,000 construction jobs, according to Hacegaba. The Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project, which involves tearing down an old bridge and replacing it with a taller structure, generates about 4,000 construction jobs.

“These are multi-year construction projects,” Hacegaba said. “Obviously the workers eat in Long Beach [and] they shop in Long Beach, so there is a multiplier effect, if you will, by having those jobs located within the city.”

Oil & Gas

The oil and gas industry, too, has a storied history in Long Beach and the downtown area, which sits on the Wilmington Oil Field. The industry’s presence is highlighted in the four THUMS oil islands just off downtown’s shoreline. The islands, built to look like resorts at sea, hide some of the oil rigs that generate revenue for the city.

“Long Beach has a unique position among California cities, since it is the operator of the Wilmington Oil Field,” Robert Barnes, executive vice president of operations for California Resources Corporation (CRC), wrote in an e-mail. “The oil and gas operations have generated \$4.4 billion for the city and the state in direct revenues since 2003. In addition to supporting essential city revenues, CRC is proud to provide good-paying industry jobs for residents of the local community.”

CRC’s southern operations headquarters are located in Downtown Long Beach at 111 W. Ocean Blvd. The firm and its THUMS and Tidelands (state-designated portions of Long Beach along the waterfront, including downtown and the port) affiliates produce oil and natural gas for the city and the state.

“Our current workforce in Long Beach is about 400 employees and 400 contractors who work at the oil production islands and our facilities in the port,” Barnes said. “As oil prices improve, we expect to increase well



Molina Healthcare is one of the largest employers in the downtown area, with about 3,200 employees spread across multiple office buildings, including the one pictured here at 7th Street and Pine Avenue. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

work projects and construction activities, which should provide additional employment opportunities.”

According to Robert Dowell, director of Long Beach Gas & Oil, the city’s oil and gas department, overall oil production in Long Beach is about 12 million barrels per year, with 80% to 90% of that coming from the Tidelands area. “It’s very important. The revenues that are derived in the Tidelands are spent in the Tidelands area,” he said.

“We have a very strong producing field, and they do a very good job of managing it and keeping operating costs to a minimum,” Dowell said. “At present, it is still spitting off revenues, although they are not what they once were. . . . But they are pretty significant.”

Health Care

Molina Healthcare, a national health plan and care provider, is headquartered in Downtown Long Beach, where it serves as a major employer with around 3,200 employees.

The firm, which was founded in Long Beach in 1980, opened its headquarters in downtown in 1991. “Back then, we moved because there was a lot of vacancy and there was cheap space,” John Molina, CFO, recalled. “And there is good access from the freeways and good access for people who live in Long Beach.”

The health care giant is now a major occupant of office space throughout downtown. The firm occupies about 80% of Molina Center, plus twin office buildings at 200 and 300 Oceangate. The company also occupies two buildings at the corner of 6th Street and Pine Avenue and multiple floors at One World Trade Center (along with additional space in the city outside of downtown).

“We keep growing and growing,” Molina said. “At some point as the capacity and vacancy in downtown keeps going down, I don’t know how much more we can put in Long Beach,” he added, noting that recently parking has also become scarcer downtown. “Hopefully Molina [Healthcare], the city and other businesses will collectively figure out some solutions, because that is the one thing that sort of hinders expansion and growth.”

Other health care companies have operations in the downtown area. U.S. HealthWorks Medical Group operates an occupational health care clinic, with urgent and specialty care, at 100 Oceangate. HealthCare Partners has a clinic at 500 Alamitos Ave., and Urgent Care Plus operates at 555 E. Ocean Blvd. There are also many small businesses in the health

(Please Continue To Page 20)

The Middle Harbor Redevelopment Project at the Port of Long Beach is in the midst of its second phase. The project, which involves combining two aging terminals so that tenant Long Beach Container Terminal can service larger vessels, is generating about 1,000 construction jobs, according to Noel Hacegaba, the port’s chief commercial officer. (Business Journal photograph by John Robinson)





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As a company that operates entirely in the Golden State, California Resources Corporation is honored to partner with the city of Long Beach and the State Lands Commission to supply energy for California by Californians.





Jobs tied to the public sector create the largest workforce in Long Beach, with several government offices located within a few blocks of each other downtown. Pictured in the foreground (1) is the Gov. George Deukmejian Courthouse. To its left (2) is the Long Beach Police Department headquarters and to its left (3) the current 14-story Long Beach City Hall. To the right of it (4) are construction cranes indicting the location of a new city hall and the future headquarters building for the Port of Long Beach. The building in the center (5) is the Glenn Anderson Federal Building, which includes offices of the Internal Revenue Service, the Social Security Administration and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, among others. To the far right, near the top (6), is a portion of the building serving as the headquarters for the California State University System. Numerous federal, state and county agencies rent office space in several downtown office buildings. (Business Journal photograph by John Robinson)

(Continued From Page 18)

care industry in downtown, including optometrists, dentists and more. And, of course, major hospital facilities are available at St. Mary Medical Center on the edge of downtown.

Financial Services

Downtown Long Beach is a hub for professional services, particularly those within the financial industry. Several major financial services entities are headquartered in downtown, including Farmers & Merchants Bank, International City Bank, and fiduciary management and investment firm Halbert Hargrove.

Downtown is also home to Wells Fargo’s California Trust Center, accounting firms like Holthouse Carlin & Van Trigt LLP and Windes, and other investment and wealth management firms. This year, City National Bank debuted a new regional banking center and banking branch at 100 Oceangate.

The oldest financial institution native to downtown is Farmers & Merchants Bank, which was founded there in 1907. In 1920, founder C.J. Walker bought land at 301 Pine Ave., where he constructed F&M’s headquarters. Completed in 1923, the bank still operates there today.

“We were founded with a very small amount of money at the time,” Henry Walker, descendant of C.J. Walker and current president of the bank, told the Business Journal. “But today, the best measurement of how we

have grown is our balance sheet. Currently, we sit at \$6.7 billion in total assets, which puts us in the top 2% of the largest banks in the United States.” Walker attributes the bank’s success, in large part, to its focus on relationship banking.

F&M also operates F&M Trust Company – the oldest state-chartered trust company in California – at its Pine Avenue headquarters. The company manages in excess of \$2 billion in assets and estates.

“Our commitment to consistency, to heritage, to our values – that’s a reason we stay downtown,” Walker said. “There were some dark periods in downtown. . . . If we left, the downtown would have struggled further. We

couldn’t do it,” he reflected. “That’s one of those qualitative things that I think gets lost in [terms of] how much we contribute back to the community in Long Beach.” F&M’s presence in downtown has likely attracted other banking institutions to the area, he added.

“We enjoy downtown. And I tell you, we keep getting so many positive comments about what’s going on downtown,” Walker said. “If you look at downtown today, it shows more promise than it has in 30 years.”

Hospitality & Tourism

Downtown’s hotels, attractions, restaurants and drinking establishments make up one of the largest segments of the local economy, according to a recent report for the city by Los Angeles-based Beacon Economics.

In 2016, overnight visitors to local hotels generated \$26.2 million in transient occupancy (hotel bed) tax – the most ever in the city’s history, according to the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau. About 6.8 million people attended Long Beach attractions – like the Aquarium of the Pacific and the Queen Mary – and festivals in 2016, the CVB estimates.

Citywide, more than 20,000 people are employed by the tourism and hospitality industry, the heart of which is seated in downtown. One of the strongest segments of this industry is restaurants and drinking places, which make up 75% of employment in the industry overall, according to Beacon Economics.

Both Pine Avenue and The Promenade have become restaurant rows, with eating establishments taking up most retail spots. The East Village, too, is home to many eateries, ranging from Thai restaurants to southern-style cafes and even a creperie. Shoreline Village is also host to many longtime and popular restaurants, from the original Yard House to Parkers’ Lighthouse and more.

New restaurants and bars continue cropping up in the downtown area. Recent years saw the opening of larger dining establishments like BO-beau kitchen + rooftop and The Federal Bar on Pine Avenue. The trend is continuing at The Promenade, where gourmet hot dog joint Dog Haus opened earlier this year.

Around the corner, Beer Belly just opened at 3rd street and Long Beach Boulevard. Its neighbor, Rainbow Juices, a locally operated raw juice joint, is an example of the locally grown success of many other downtown eateries and drinking places. Chrissy Cox and her business and life partner, Dawna Bass, will soon expand into an adjacent vacant retail pad with a new raw food eatery called Under The Sun.

In the same ground-floor retail development, around the corner from Beer Belly on Long Beach Boulevard, are Recreation Coffee and Beachwood Blendery – coffee and beer joints unique to Long Beach. “Our landlords have been super supportive of local and fresh food options, and they wanted to make that corner more like local crafters,” Cox said. Newly constructed lofts and apartments are home to young professionals who are supporting local eateries, she observed. ■

Founded in Downtown Long Beach in 1907, Farmers & Merchants Bank has been recognized as a leader in downtown’s financial services industry for more than a century. Its current headquarters still reside in this building at the corner of Pine Avenue and 3rd Street, which opened in 1923. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)





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Jesse Dean is the owner and founder of Visualade, a creative sector firm specializing in website and business management applications. Dean is a downtown resident, and opened his office at 405 Pine Ave. in part because of his passion for downtown. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)



A Growing Creative Sector

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Senior Writer

From experiential marketing firms to website designers, public relations agencies, startups, architects and more, creative sector companies are becoming a growing force in Downtown Long Beach. These firms are investing in the downtown area, renovating office and retail buildings, hiring local talent, and spending with local businesses.

A sign of the growth of this sector came when WeWork, an international provider of workspace with locations in 13 countries, recently opened its new creative space in The Hub, an office complex at the southwest corner of Pine Avenue and Broadway. The company completely gutted 33,000 square feet of office space on the third and fourth floors of the building, and opened the doors to the third floor in early December.

The industrial, contemporary-style facility offers offices to rent on monthly payment plans or longer, ranging from one-person setups to an office large enough for 100 employees. Basic membership gets you access to WeWork's common workspace, built-in pantry and kitchen (complete with free coffee and beer on tap) and access to any of WeWork's offices worldwide.

Lexey Radcliff, senior community manager for WeWork's Southern California locations, said the company was drawn to Downtown Long Beach because of its location and its unique place in the Southern California market. The creative sector here, she said, is growing. "More people and businesses are coming down here because it's less expensive, and also, what's not to love? It's a beautiful downtown area right next to the beach," she said while giving the Business Journal a tour of the third floor with her colleague, Sam Stevens, community manager of the Long Beach location.

Stevens pointed out that the city is working on initiatives to grow the creative sector and to encourage startup companies by streamlining business licensing processes. About 30% to 40% of WeWork members are startups, the two noted. Many of these are within the creative sector – PR, marketing, advertising and media companies are common members, according to Radcliff.

"We are right on the water, and there is not a whole lot of available real estate anywhere up and down the West Coast. Long Beach happens to be

kind of the hidden gem," Stevens said. Radcliff chimed in, "We think there is going to be a lot of growth in Long Beach for the next couple of years."

Julia Huang, CEO of marketing firm Intertrend and creative-startup funder Imprint Venture Labs, told the Business Journal that recent investments in downtown by WeWork and architecture and design firms Retail Design Collaborative and Studio One Eleven will attract other creative businesses and entrepreneurs to the area.

"It's really exciting for us because creative people and creative services kind of rub off on each other. And the fact that there are going to be so many of the same kinds of businesses thinking about innovation and thinking about creativity is great," Huang said.

Huang's offices are located in one of the oldest commercial buildings in Long Beach, at 228 E. Broadway, a building known as the Psychic Temple. After purchasing and restoring the property, her firms moved in to the building, which features open creative office space, in June 2015.

"We are on the street level," Huang said. "You kind of feel the atmosphere changing, and all the businesses and the residents around this area kind of responding to that change of atmosphere. And it's just wonderful."

A lifestyle balance of work, live and play is integrated into Huang's business culture, she said. "We were originally [considering] whether or not to build a fitness center within our building, but then we found that there are so many great fitness businesses around downtown, like Groundwork [Fitness], Olive Yoga and KP Pilates," Huang said. So her firm created a program for employees to work out at local fitness businesses at a discount, thereby encouraging an active lifestyle while investing in the local community, she explained.

"It's a trajectory. We already see a lot of small creative shops popping up around," Huang said. "That is just going to bring more creativity and more creative services and people to the city. And we have great restaurants, coffee shops and bakeries and all that to sustain that."

Visualade, an interactive agency specializing in websites and business management applications, originally opened its doors in the Kress building on Pine Avenue in 2001, according to owner Jesse Dean. He relocated the business to the city's Zaferia district on East Anaheim Street in 2004 when the business became more brand development oriented and needed more space. But he ultimately moved Visualade back to downtown in 2008. The creative firm is currently housed on the ground floor of the Walker Building at 405 Pine Ave.

"I have a vested interest in downtown," Dean said, adding that he lives in a loft less than a block away from his office. When he moved back to downtown in 2008, he said, "I got really tired of seeing all these open buildings and office spaces in downtown. And I said to myself, 'There has got to be a way for Visualade to occupy one of these spaces.'" Dean said he makes an effort to hire Long Beach locals and students from California State University, Long Beach.

While Dean said growth in the downtown creative sector has had its ups and downs, the overall trajectory is toward growth. "I think right now is the best I've seen it the entire time I have lived here. I like what I'm seeing, and I like the progress that's being made," he said. "I feel like we have a strong and vibrant creative community, not only with our freelance talent pool that exists in the area but also with some local firms I am friends with in the area, like JLOOP," he said, referencing a creative web, app and software firm in the East Village Arts District.

SET Creative, an international brand experience agency, opened an office in Downtown Long Beach several years ago partially due to the advocacy of Israel Kandarian, the office's executive creative director. The firm has a creative office space at 130 Pine Ave.

"I personally moved to Long Beach in 2010 very strategically," Kandarian said. "So when we were looking at our clients that we had and wanted to

go after, as I was talking to SET I explained why I personally moved to Long Beach. I said [that it has] proximity to Los Angeles and . . . to Orange County," he said. "I also highlighted the fact that the Long Beach Airport has nonstop flights to a lot of the cities where our blue-chip, key clients are based." Plus, SET Creative has clients at Douglas Park, a growing business park adjacent to the airport, he noted.

Being located on Pine Avenue is also beneficial for employees. "We're right here on Pine Avenue. So proximity to The Federal Bar and BO-beau, even down to The Pike for some good old-fashioned fun, we absolutely take advantage [of that]," Kandarian said. "I think George's Greek Cafe might be our official lunch spot."

Kandarian said he likes that Downtown Long Beach has "an edge" to it and has not been completely gentrified like other beach cities. "I feel like Long Beach is an up-and-coming city that has that blue-collar, working-class, we-get-things-done spirit. And I love that," he reflected.

Zwift, a technology firm that has created a digital platform for cyclists to explore, ride and compete with others, opened an office at Shoreline Square on Ocean Boulevard within the past year or so. Scott Barger, founder of the company, told the Business Journal that Downtown Long Beach was chosen for its convenient proximity to Los Angeles and Orange counties, as well as its "competitive pricing and cool arts district." ■

The creative offices of Intertrend and Imprint Venture Lab are in one of the oldest (built in 1905) commercial buildings in Downtown Long Beach, known by locals as the Psychic Temple. The building features exposed brick and open ceilings. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)





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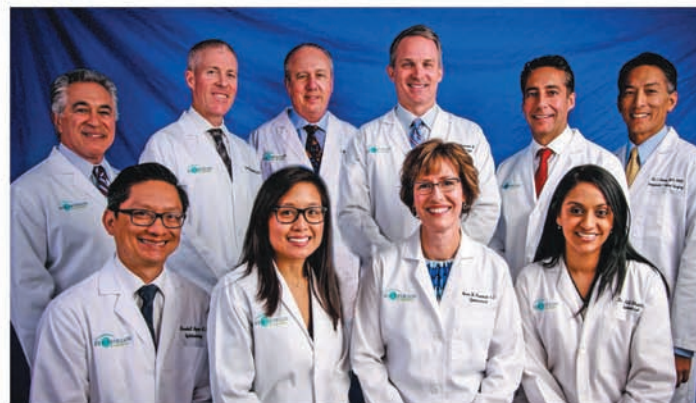
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Local Architects Aim To Impact Retail, Long Beach From The Ground Up

Retail Design Collaborative And Studio One Eleven Redesign/Relocate To City Place

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Senior Writer

Upon walking into the new digs of architecture firm Retail Design Collaborative (formerly P + R Architects) and subsidiary design group Studio One Eleven, it's clear that the way the space had been described for the past three years - "the old Nordstrom Rack" - is history. The architecture and design firms have completely gutted and reimagined the more than 33,000-square-foot retail space at the corner of The Promenade North and 3rd Street. Looking down from an open terrace to the first floor, the view is what an encyclopedia might include as a photo next to the term "creative office space."

Through the doors of The Promenade North entrance is a contemporary, homey kitchen, with a ping-pong table off to the side. The 3rd Street entrance features a community space with conference rooms and a lobby open for use by local organizations and individuals.

Just past each entryway, the enormity of the open office environment makes quite the impression. Vibrant murals and plants decorate the walls, and the space vibrates with the hum of work by more than 130 employees scattered among countless desks.

The transformation reflects the mission of Studio One Eleven - which has had, and continues to have, a hand in many major development projects in Long Beach - to breathe new life into the city. It also is a showcase for Retail Design Collaborative's (RDC) take on the ever-evolving retail landscape in the United States.

RDC founder, CEO and Senior Principal Steve Ruth, sat down with the Business Journal and with his colleagues Alan Pullman, founder and senior principal of Studio One Eleven, and Michael Bohn, also senior principal for Studio One Eleven, in the firms' new offices to chat about their role in this changing retail landscape as well as in Downtown Long Beach's revitalization. Tony Shooshani, managing member of Shooshani Developers, which

owns the City Place shopping center, joined in to discuss their partnership and the evolution of City Place.

The firms moved into the newly renovated space in October from their previous location in a downtown high-rise office building. In addition to being a tenant, Studio One Eleven has been tasked with redesigning all six city blocks of the shopping center. The first phase of the revamped City Place, the half block from Harvey Milk Park to the corner of Long Beach Boulevard and 3rd Street, should be completed in the first quarter of 2017, Shooshani estimated. Around the same time, City Place will get a new, yet to be determined, name.

"For Retail Design Collaborative, it really is [about] looking at a rapidly evolving world in retail, and how do we stay ahead of the curve and help be thought leaders in that process," Ruth said of his architecture firm's mission. "Creating our own story here really is part of the process that the entire country and world is going through right now and how retail is changing and being affected."

Shooshani said when he heard the architects were looking for a ground-level space for a new office, he picked up the phone and asked them to tour the old Nordstrom Rack. "We heard that they were looking for a new location, and my thoughts were that this is a perfect way to repurpose the property and the project, and redirect and reface downtown," he said.

"We toured the project, and I talked about my vision of where I thought retail was going," Shooshani continued. The trend, he said, is away from big-box spaces of 45,000 square feet or more. "We as retailers have to think about how we are going to reposition our properties. And this was a perfect match."

This philosophy aligns with the perspectives of RDC and Studio One Eleven, which believe retail is moving towards a more experiential format with multiple uses. "The trend for many years has been to standardize everything and create a bigger and bigger box," Ruth observed. "I think what it has really led to is a homogenization of the retailers across the country. And that doesn't really serve local communities very well."



In addition to being tenants of the revamped City Place shopping center with its parent firm Retail Design Collaborative (RDC), Studio One Eleven is working with the center's owner, Shooshani Developers, to redesign and reposition the six-block property. Pictured in front of the architecture firms' new offices are: Steve Ruth, founder, CEO and principal of RDC; Tony Shooshani, managing member of Shooshani Developers; Alan Pullman, founder and senior principal of Studio One Eleven; and Michael Bohn, senior principal of Studio One Eleven. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)



Inside the new creative offices of Retail Design Collaborative and Studio One Eleven at 245 E. 3rd St. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

Urbanization – a trend towards living in urban environments with amenities within walking and biking distance – is playing into that trend, according to Pullman and Ruth. “You see that more and more. People want to be where the energy is and where they can spend money on experiences,” Ruth said.

E-commerce has also played into changes in designing for the retail sector. Now that people can buy many things online from the comfort of their homes, retailers are being impacted, Pullman explained. “Retailers are going out of business or merging, and that’s changing the whole landscape,” he said. “But we know people want to go out, they want to shop, they want to eat, they want to have an experience.”

The appeal of urban centers is one of the reasons the firms decided to lease the space they’re in now. “We wanted downtown,” Pullman said. “This location perfectly suited us because it’s a place where people love to hang out, to live. And it really serves our needs for the future talent we are trying to attract to our firm.”

The decision to relocate to City Place was also about impacting the community. “We wanted to find a place where we could make a change by plopping 135 architects, with visitors every day, to bring some activity into an area that was perhaps overlooked for a long time,” Bohn explained. With a glance over at Shooshani, he added, “Nordstrom Rack had been empty for about three years, and we heard rumors of a Dollar Tree coming in. And we thought that we might be a better anchor to really start causing some change in this neighborhood.”

Shooshani acknowledged that he could have placed a discount retailer there but that ultimately it would not have served the needs and desires of the downtown community. “It’s not just about making money as a developer and a property owner. It’s about giving back to the community you are a part of,” he said.

Studio One Eleven and RDC designed their offices so the corners of the property on 3rd Street facing The Promenade North and Long Beach Boulevard could be used for restaurants in order to activate the street outside, Bohn said. Additionally, the parts of their offices that do touch the street are activated by the office’s open kitchen – which passersby often mistake for a restaurant, Bohn said with a chuckle – and a community space. The latter, which fronts 3rd Street, is already being used for community gatherings and meetings and will be used in the future perhaps even as pop-up shops for retailers or satellite exhibition space for local museums.

Shooshani has secured a number of new leases for the center, including Table 301, a new restaurant concept by the owners of Signal Hill restaurant Delius; an acai bowl eatery; poke restaurant Poki Cat; Burgerim; and others. During the course of the interview, another signed lease was delivered to him.

The center will not exclusively be filled by restaurants, however. “We have 2,500 to 3,000 apartment units that are going to be built [downtown] in the next three to four years,” he said. “[City Place] is going to evolve and change as those communities grow.”

“I would imagine a lot of different uses – office, retail, food services,” Bohn said of the shopping center’s future. Downtown Long Beach, unlike other Southern California cities built up in later decades, has an authenticity quality to it – and it is that quality Studio One Eleven and Shooshani hope to inject into City Place, according to Bohn.

“It’s going to be a combination of cool streets,” Shooshani said. Parklets – seating areas built over parking spaces to create patios and to slow traffic – are planned along 4th Street and Pine Avenue, he noted.

While City Place is set apart visually – it has its own lighting, sidewalks and façade styles – Studio One Eleven’s designs will re-integrate it with the surrounding districts of downtown, Bohn said. The next phase of construction for City Place will be the block of The Promenade North extending past RDC/Studio One Eleven’s office to 4th Street.

The last piece of the puzzle will be figuring out what to do with the now-vacant Walmart. That will be up in the air for some time because Walmart still has a five-year lease agreement, and the giant company takes its time with decision-making, Shooshani explained.

“Having other forward-looking firms come here and see this and want to be located in our downtown, that will be the biggest success that we could have,” Pullman said. “That’s the goal.” ■



The first phase of renovations at the City Place shopping center in Downtown Long Beach are nearly complete. Pictured at lower right are the offices of architecture firm Retail Design Collaborative and subsidiary Studio One Eleven, which comprise about 33,000 square feet of the newly renovated section of the center. The corners of the building are being left open for restaurants. (Business Journal photograph by John Robinson)

Creative Placemaking Projects Make DTLB A More Fun And Livable Place

■ By **SEAN WARNER**
Placemaking Manager
Downtown Long Beach Alliance

Along with new construction cranes dotting the landscape and new businesses opening throughout downtown, our public spaces are also evolving – into more welcoming, fun, engaging spaces for all members of our community. As more people and businesses move into downtown our public spaces will become even more integral in making downtown a more vibrant place. Several benefits emerge from investing in interesting and creative public spaces – enhanced economic vibrancy, fostering connectivity amongst neighbors, and greater marketing potential of



The Loop, an art installation at the southeast corner of Pine Avenue and Ocean Boulevard, was installed to activate an empty lot that sits on a key connection point between downtown's waterfront and its Pine Avenue business district. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)



Scramble crosswalks in Downtown Long Beach enable pedestrians to cross to any corner. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

downtown. The Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA) is committed to creative placemaking because it understands the increasingly important role it plays in ensuring our public spaces reflect the needs of the community.

Giving People Reasons To Explore

In April the DLBA, in partnership with the City of Long Beach, opened The Loop at Pine and Ocean, a 7,500-square-foot public space that has transformed a dead corner into a fun and relaxing place for community members to gather. The Loop attracted over 67,700 visitors in its first six months and in the coming year attendance is expected to grow with more events and activities planned.

This year also saw the introduction of Long Beach Bike Share. Bike share has given workers, residents, and visitors to downtown a larger footprint of exploration. An office worker on the west side of downtown can now hop on a bike and grab a bite to eat in the East Village during her lunch break.

Encompassing more than just physical improvements, placemaking is also about activating spaces through unique programming. In March, downtown hosted Beach Streets, an event where city streets are turned over to pedestrians and bicyclists for the day. To activate the route the DLBA hosted mini-versions of several of our events held during the year and handed out an urban exploration map. Every second Thursday of the month unique public and private spaces become venues for live music during Live After 5. The Loop, Arts Park, Psychic Temple and Scottish Rite Event Center are just a small sample of out-of-the-way spaces that come to life every month.

Long Range Vision

Several of these projects are the result of foresight and planning. The Loop at Pine and Ocean was born out of a DLBA-commissioned study tasked with finding solutions to improve pedestrian connectivity between the waterfront and the downtown core. To further enact the solutions proposed in the study, the DLBA created a Waterfront Task Force. That task force is finalizing its recommendations for the next iteration of projects that will improve the downtown pedestrian experience.

In May, the Long Beach City Council approved the Downtown and Transit-Oriented Development Master Plan, a document that provides policies and guidelines that support increased walking and transit use. The plan includes a prioritized list of more than 30 pedestrian infrastructure projects that will be implemented over the next 15 years, including alleyway enhancements and improved beach access.

In August, DLBA launched an automated pedestrian counter system that provides 24/7 data on the number of pedestrians at eight locations in downtown. Understanding pedestrian traffic volumes and patterns will be a powerful tool for businesses, investors, city planners and the DLBA in making decisions on how to allocate resources.

On The Horizon

2017 will see new and improved park spaces throughout downtown. The opening of Gumbiner Park will introduce a new 0.8-acre park located at the confluence of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Alamitos avenues, and 6th and 7th streets. The project also reintroduces two-way traffic to 6th and 7th streets creating a safer environment for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Changes will also be seen at Harvey Milk Park and Equity Plaza as the city begins work on reimagining the park as a collaborative space that encourages creativity and interaction. This December, members of the community were invited to test and vote on the types of furniture, charging stations, and technology solutions they would like to see incorporated into the redesign. The

DLBA is partnering with the city to test augmented reality technology that has the potential to teach visitors about the legacy of Harvey Milk, provide info about city and DLBA services, promote local businesses, and push advertisements for local events.

The DLBA has also partnered with the city on a new wayfinding signage project with the goal of making it easier for visitors to navigate downtown without feeling frustrated, confused or getting lost. Currently, much of downtown wayfinding is plagued with multiple aesthetics, aging signage, and conflicting or out-of-date information.

Creative placemaking is having a huge impact on how we experience downtown. Get outside and enjoy the uniqueness that is Downtown Long Beach. You'll always discover something new. ■

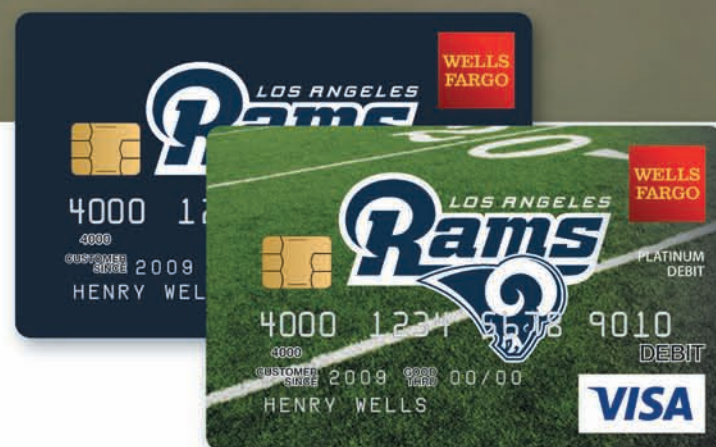
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Downtown Evolves As A Desirable Place To Live

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Senior Writer

From high-rise condominiums with ocean views to historic single-family homes in one of the oldest parts of the city to urban lofts amid bustling business corridors, Downtown Long Beach has a wide variety of housing to suit many lifestyle preferences and pocketbooks.

Local real estate agents specializing in Downtown Long Beach residential real estate have long held firm that the area is one of the most affordable in Southern California for waterfront living. “It has always been the least expensive coastal community up and down the coast,” Barbara Irvine-Parker, realtor associate with Coldwell Banker Coastal Alliance, told the Business Journal. Irvine-Parker specializes in the condo market in downtown.

Prices for residential properties downtown are based on a building’s size and location, as well as its view, Irvine-Parker said. “This year, condo sales [prices] have ranged from \$190,000 to \$1,894,500,” she noted. Rental rates for apartments range from \$1,350 to \$6,140 per month.

Mike Dunfee, real estate broker and agent with Doma Properties, said that there are currently 114 homes listed for sale in the downtown area, ranging in price from \$142,000 to \$1.4 million. “I think we are the best value, period. Just period,” he said. Apartments and condos make up the majority of downtown’s housing stock, but the city’s Wilmore district – one of the oldest parts of Long Beach – features historic single-family homes, he explained.

While new apartment buildings recently completed in downtown are higher-end, like The Current and Edison, their prices are affordable in comparison to similar luxury apartment buildings in other Southern California beach cities, Dunfee said.

Many of Dunfee’s clients are young professionals and empty nesters who,

while at very different stages of life, are attracted to downtown for similar reasons – proximity to restaurants, nightlife and the beach.

Eric Gray, president of the Downtown Residential Council (DRC), has lived on The Promenade for nine years and moved there for the same reasons. “I love that we have restaurants and wine bars at our fingertips,” he said. “I love that we’re close to the waterfront, the convention center, the water taxis. You can walk to Shoreline Village. And it’s interesting to see new types of businesses open up in downtown.”

The DRC is a forum that brings together downtown’s six neighborhood groups – the Ocean Residents Community Association, the Promenade Area Residents Association, the East Village Association, the North Pine Neighborhood Alliance, the West Gateway Neighborhood Association and the Wilmore City Heritage Association. Members of these organizations live in a wide variety of residences, Gray noted.

Downtown has gone through a lot of change in recent years, Gray pointed out. “We have seen a lot of new restaurants open up, a lot of new small businesses really trying to make it,” he said. “I have seen a lot of neighborhood enhancement projects like tree plantings. I have seen a lot of community events. So I have definitely seen it improve.”

Gray is fully supportive of the array of residential real estate development projects currently taking place in practically every region of downtown, which he said will create economic growth opportunities.

One such development is Shoreline Gateway, a two-tower project at the corner of Ocean Boulevard and Alamitos Avenue. The first phase was The Current. Completed this year, the 17-story luxury apartment building is more than 70% leased, according to Jason Silver, development project manager for co-developer Ledcor Properties Inc. Ledcor is a partner in the project with AndersonPacific LLC and Qualico Developments Inc.

The Long Beach City Council recently approved changes to the second planned tower. Although retaining its originally planned height of 35 stories, the apartment floor plans have been reduced to about 900 square feet, allowing the addition of 94 units. When completed, which will likely be in the year 2020, the tower will have 315 units. “We see sufficient demand in the area for this number of units, and quite frankly more,” Ryan Altoon, executive vice president of AndersonPacific, said.

Altoon pointed out that there are many residential developments planned in Downtown Long Beach – so many that he said the area will soon see a “tremendous boom” of activity.

“We are still looking for other opportunities in the City of Long Beach, especially the downtown area,” Silver said of Ledcor. “We have got a couple we are looking at now, but I am not at liberty to say which ones.” He added, “We do feel the city is ripe with opportunity, hence our continued investment with the City of Long Beach and AndersonPacific.” ■

DOWNTOWN PERSPECTIVE

ERIC GRAY

President

Downtown Residential Council

I believe the future of Downtown Long Beach is looking bright for the many area residents who call downtown their home. Over the past number of years, we’ve seen a steady rise in new development, small businesses opening their doors, and economic opportunities presenting themselves for entrepreneurs, workers, artists, and musicians.

With all that being said, downtown does still face critical challenges and will need strong leadership to ensure it continues to grow and thrive into the future. My hope for downtown is that it embraces new corporate development near public transportation to attract high tech, the creative industries, port related businesses, and other growing sectors of the economy. I also hope that investing wisely into personnel, such as a more robust homeless outreach team who can help people experiencing homelessness off the streets and into a more sustainable lifestyle, is at the forefront of Long Beach’s strategy moving forward.

The future for Downtown Long Beach will see increased residential development attracting new residents while also sustaining “upwardly mobile” existing residents who enjoy the urban lifestyle downtown provides. Trends across the country show younger generations moving back into the cities, driving up costs, yet opening up new opportunities for families to find more affordable homes in the surrounding suburbs.

All in all, the future will see Downtown Long Beach continue to improve with a strong focus on urban renewal and economic development. This future will be realized with the help of current projects already underway like the City Place mall revitalization, and new residential projects slated to begin or which have already started the construction process. It’s just a matter of time until the next crop of savvy CEOs see the economic and social benefits of opening up their businesses in our beloved coastal city.

133 Promenade Walk has a variety of owned residential units, including lofts, townhomes and flats. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)



The historic Walker Lofts building at 115 W. 4th St. was once the site of a department store. The ground floor is now retail and offices, and the upper floors house residential lofts. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)





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- 🍂 Cooler temperatures mean grass and plants need less water. Remember landscape watering is on Tuesdays and Saturdays only before 9am or after 4pm.
- 🍂 Rain is a sprinkler, so turn yours off during the wet months or upgrade to a weather based irrigation controller. And the State prohibits watering during or within 48 hours after measurable rain.
- 🍂 Remind holiday visitors to help conserve water by taking one-song showers.



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Downtown Shopping, Dining And Drinking: New And Creative Meets Tried And True

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Staff Writer



Bobby Hernandez and his wife, Coreene, opened Recreational Coffee at 237 Long Beach Blvd. in October 2015. He said foot traffic and sales have increased every month since opening. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)



Samantha Argosino, owner and founder of The Brass Lamp, a craft beer, specialty wine and coffee bar combination located at 245 The Promenade N., said there is a strong sense of community between small business owners in Downtown Long Beach. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)



Gabriel Gordon, owner of Beachwood BBQ & Brewery, located on The Promenade near 3rd Street, said city officials made bringing his business to Long Beach an easy experience. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)



Amir Zolghar (left) and Kamran Assadi opened their Utopia restaurant on 1st Street and Linden Avenue in 1999. They said they're impressed with how the area has evolved and the number of businesses that have moved in. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

The atmosphere for shopping, dining and drinking downtown can be summed up with one word: eclectic. Outlet stores, boutiques, national brands, wine bars, craft beer, craft coffee, chain restaurants, local eateries – Downtown Long Beach truly encompasses a diverse gathering of food, drink and shopping.

“The whole downtown has changed. The whole atmosphere has drastically changed,” Kamran Assadi, co-owner of Utopia, a restaurant in the East Village, said. “When we started our business, in our neighborhood maybe there were two or three other restaurants. Now I can’t even count them. There are so many different restaurants open, and retail shops and other businesses opened in the last 10 or 15 years. It’s a different neighborhood.”

Utopia opened its doors on the corner of 1st Street and Linden Avenue 17 years ago. Assadi recalls that at the time, when he and his business partner, Amir Zolghar, told friends and family of their plan to open a restaurant at that location, they called the pair crazy and thought they were fools. When the restaurant opened, Assadi said the neighborhood was terrible and that he is amazed at the pace at which it has become such a desirable location.

Compared to other locations in the city, such as Belmont Shore, which Assadi said has a much more family-friendly atmosphere, downtown has a younger, hipper demographic nowadays. He said in 1999 when the business started, he had never seen so many elderly. But with the growing number of restaurants and bars, as well as entertainment, more young people are drawn to the area.

“We’re looking forward to the growth and success of downtown. We were lucky we got into that area when we did, instead of other places,” Assadi said. “We’ve paid our dues. The early years were an absolute ghost town, but it’s definitely a happening place now.”

Samantha Argosino, owner and founder of The Brass Lamp, a craft beer, specialty wine and coffee bar combination, opened her doors in October 2015, a time that she said saw many hip and trendy businesses moving into the city. She said this is a very exciting time for food and drink in the city, with creativity and a craft focus becoming more of the norm.

She said customers are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about different types of beers, wines and coffee, though she will still have the occasional request for a macrobrew beer, like Bud Light or Stella Artois.

“In the coffee industry, they’re referring to this time as the third wave. The first wave being like Folger’s Coffee. The second wave being Starbucks,” Argosino said. “Now this third wave, it’s very crafty, very specialized, very customized, having a lot of art aspects to it. That is where the need is right now, that is the demand – that customized, move-away-from-the-big-chain type of food and drinks.”

As development of residential units continues in the downtown area, Argosino said diverse food and drink options will continue to pop up. This will only add to the already strong sense of community between startup business owners, Argosino explained.

The downtown area is fortunate that more and more independent operators are opening their doors instead of Cheesecake Factory-type restaurants, according to Gabriel Gordon, owner of Beachwood BBQ & Brewing.

“It just seems to be a very vibrant and cool food and drinking culture. There’s quite a few different types of restaurants and bars, and there’s specialized stuff. I think all in all it’s come a super long way in our downtown area,” Gordon said. “It’s almost entirely filled with mom and pop independent businesses, which I think is the most special thing about what’s going on with the renaissance of downtown.”

Gordon said the density of downtown, which is still increasing, is what allows these types of businesses to thrive. He explained that, to have a vibrant food and drink culture, a city has to have many restaurants doing their own thing, and it has reached vibrant proportions when specialty spots begin popping up, such as the Blind Donkey, a whiskey bar in the East Village. A specialty bar or restaurant cannot come into a city without other cool restaurants or bars surrounding it, according to Gordon.

Downtown Long Beach is past the point in craft beer culture where some spots carry it and some don’t, Gordon explained. “Even places that don’t necessarily care, that aren’t putting a ton of thought into their beer programs, know that you have to have craft offerings to exist in the current marketplace,” he said. “So that’s really cool – you can go to almost any bar in Downtown Long Beach, and there’s a good chance that you’ll find OK beer.”

Gordon attributed downtown’s proximity to the ocean and hardworking city officials to the growing success of the area. He said working with the city to expand his business to Long Beach five years ago was vastly easier and an overall better experience than what his peers encountered in other cities.

Before opening their coffee shop downtown, Bobby and Correne Hernandez literally walked the neighborhood to see if surrounding residents were satisfied with their coffee, according to Bobby. He said that around 92% of the people they spoke to said they would be willing to pay a little extra for a better quality craft coffee. With this information in mind, the pair opened their shop in October 2015.

“People are looking for something more unique, better quality, and are invested in throwing down extra money for it on a consistent basis,” Bobby said. “The fact that we have been seeing numbers that have been topping themselves every month, being here now over a year, it’s definitely a good indicator that not only are they wanting it as a one-time thing but it’s a repeat buy for everyone. It’s a good thing. People are stoked on it.”

Hernandez said he has seen growth in food and drink experimentation and craft around the city, even by their neighbors, Beer Belly, a restaurant with specialty food and craft beer, and Beachwood Blendery, which brews craft beers. Helping to drive this creative



The Pike Outlets is a series of shops, restaurants and entertainment venues – including a Ferris wheel – located across the street from the Long Beach Convention Center on the east, and just north of the Aquarium of the Pacific. Within the past year, The Pike has added well-known retailers such as Nike, Restoration Hardware, Gap, H&M and many more. (Business Journal photograph by John Robinson)

trend is the unique positioning of downtown to cater to residents, business people and tourists, all on a consistent basis. With such a wide range of people, Hernandez said it was inevitable for a foodie culture to emerge.

“Every time there’s a convention, there’s a brand new rotation of people that are from all over the country, all over the world,” Hernandez said. “Literally every day we have two or three Australian pilots who will come, and they are on rotation. They’ll come every two months, and they are regulars. Nowhere else in Long Beach, in my opinion, can you get that type of unique customer than what we have here.”

The creative and crafty restaurant, bar and coffee shop owners are never satisfied with their products and are continuously trying to outdo themselves, Hernandez said. This passion, along with a population that appreciates these types of products, creates a perfect storm for the renaissance of foodie culture in the downtown, Hernandez explained.

Shopping in the downtown area has become as diverse as the food and drink scene. With an ever-expanding maker and boutique culture integrating with high-end stores and national and international brands, shoppers are not short on spots to splurge in.

“Shoreline Village is always a great destination because we are on the water. We provide a great view for looking out over the harbor. You can see the port, the lighthouse, the lights on the Queensway Bridge,” Debra Fixen, manager of the property, said. “So it’s a nice place to have a good meal. We have several waterfront restaurants to choose from. And then you can take a nice stroll.”

Fixen explained that Shoreline Village offers many unique shops and dining experiences that cannot be found anywhere else in the city. Other features that help to set it apart from other shopping and dining destinations in the city, according to Fixen, are live music on most weekends depending on the weather, bike rentals and other activities and treats, including an arcade, ice cream and funnel cake. All of these options create a trip that can last several hours or even a full day, she said.

The newest commercial retail space in downtown is The Pike Outlets. The space was given a \$65 million face-lift and celebrated its grand reopening in October 2015. To go along with the Cinemark movie theater, DDR Corp., The Pike’s property management company, has filled the space with outlets from national and even international companies, such as Nike, H&M and Forever 21.

“The Pike Outlets provides a fun and vibrant atmosphere for shopping and dining for Long Beach visitors and residents,” Brent Gonzalez, general manager of The Pike Outlets, said. “What separates us from other shopping centers in Long Beach is the great, complementary mix of retailers and restaurants, including Gladstone’s Long Beach, California Pizza Kitchen, Auld Dubliner and Famous Dave’s.”

Gonzalez said The Pike shifted to outlet stores as DDR thought it was an underserved market in Long Beach, with the next closest outlet center, Citadel Outlets, being 20 miles away. He explained that off-price retail is one of the fastest-growing retail concepts today. The company is working to fill in several vacant storefronts, with multiple discussions and deals in the works, including G by Guess, which is scheduled to open in 2017.

“We’re happy to see the strong momentum in economic development in Long Beach with several other commercial real

estate projects happening, and we’re excited to play a role in the revitalization of Downtown Long Beach,” Gonzalez added.

Downtown revitalization has affected not only large retailers in the area: Smaller, locally owned stores have also seen a boost in business thanks to community improvements, which also have brought many new businesses in.

“The whole area here seems to be safer and cleaner. When I started over 20 years ago, it was pretty slummy over here. The building that I’m in now, I had to completely redo it. But with all the apartments and condos coming in, there are new customers,” Tyler Barnes, owner of Long Beach Ace Hardware on 4th Street, said. “The atmosphere is good, and the economy seems to be better. Long Beach is a pretty vibrant city, pretty amazing. Just the fact that there are so many different types of people here, it’s very dense, it makes it good for my business.”

Barnes said his store has over 200 accounts with property management companies and hotels, and it services more than 450 customers per day. Aside from community improvements, Barnes said the improved economy has put money back into the pockets of residents, which allows them to spend more on shopping and dining.

Michelle Qazi opened her vintage home goods store, 6th and Detroit, in the East Village this past June. She said foot traffic has gone up each month she has been open. Qazi said she has lived in Long Beach since 2003 and never hung out in the downtown area in the past. However, now she said she loves watching the area becoming more of a destination every day, with small shops and restaurants popping up all the time and residents welcoming them with open arms.

“I think there’s just so much more awareness of small business and local craft makers. I think people are making an effort to focus on that for food and shopping, as opposed to just going to the mass-made stuff,” Qazi said. “I think people are more into supporting the little guys these days. There’s definitely this pulse that’s happening right now and this energy around downtown.” ■



Since opening Long Beach Ace Hardware at 746 E. 4th St. in what is now the East Village, owner Tyler Barnes said the area has changed from slummy to vibrant. Barnes is pictured second from left with his store managers: Oscar Baez, Rory Barker and Tammy Nakao. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

Heather Kern, manager of MADE by Millworks on Pine Avenue, said the hipster community is moving away from technology and toward working with their hands and purchasing handcrafted goods. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)



Downtown Fosters A ‘Tight-Knit’ Maker Community

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Staff Writer

With her two eldest sons suffering from eczema, Meredith Wilson decided to concoct a treatment that was natural – no chemicals or steroids for her boys. The end result was ultimately the formation of LB Love Organics, Wilson’s handcrafted line of skincare products.

What started as a way to help her children slowly morphed into a business as acquaintances began asking if Wilson’s products were for sale. This was her first true introduction into the artisan and maker culture in Long Beach.

“Two years ago, I got connected with MADE, and it was really an awakening for me as to what the maker community is like in Long Beach,” Wilson said. “I didn’t really have any experience with it. I was just kind of in the throes of raising little kids. We’re a foster family. So my circle of life experience was a little smaller.”

MADE by Millworks, a consignment store that features more than 120 local brands in the heart of downtown, has been a hub for the locally crafted goods movement since it opened in 2014. Heather Kern, manager of MADE, explained that the resurgence in handcrafted goods is a nationwide phenomenon.

“I think the return to artisanship and craftsmanship has been brewing for a while,” Kern said. “The hipster scene

has been moving away from technology. It’s sort of just the way human nature is – all of a sudden we explode, and we have no more artisanship left. And it’s all big-box stores. But then, of course, there’s a rejection to it.”

Kern said she thinks MADE was a pioneer in championing locally crafted brands and pushing the support of local artists and makers. She said other boutiques in the downtown area might have been selling handmade wares, but they were not highlighting the fact that some were locally crafted.

According to Kern, many who found themselves involved in the maker community did so out of necessity during the recession. She said many people were forced to look for alternative means to make ends meet. Now that momentum has built, Kern said the idea of local has become a bigger deal as the city continues to grow, and residents are proud of the culture, which is the reason people are drawn to the downtown area.

“There are some people that make just because they are compelled, just like any other artist who creates. So they’re just thrilled to have a place to

put it,” Kern said. “I just think if there’s a way to emphasize how important it is to support local art, I’d say that it’s a way to retain our culture. And we like to say here that it’s your civic duty to shop local.”

Mike Rischa, founder of Long Beach-based Nothing and Company handmade eyewear, said that MADE was one of the first stores to give him the chance to showcase his entire line of sunglasses. Now, Rischa said his glasses sell in 10 stores in the United States, as well as 15 to 20 stores in Japan.

The brand launched at the beginning of 2015, and each style has a name derived from Long Beach – from streets to city founders.

“I think it’s pretty cool. And it’s sparked a fun, interesting side of Long Beach in terms of creativity and seeing what people can do and what art they like to have,” Rischa said when talking about makers in the city. “They’ve been given a voice. They’ve been given a chance to express. You go around Long Beach now with all the murals that are painted, there’s just been a door that’s been opened. It just goes back to the melting pot of what Long Beach is.”

Aside from local pride in maker culture, Rischa said tourism in the downtown area is helping to fuel the growth of the movement. He explained that visitors to the city come to downtown boutiques in search of unique gifts for family and friends, something more than “just buying a shot glass that says ‘Long Beach’” or the equivalent of an I Love NY T-shirt. Rischa said the uniqueness of handmade or locally crafted products gives each piece significance and meaning, which is more interesting to visitors.

The maker culture in Long Beach is still in its infancy, according to Rischa, and is still trying to find a balance in how far it can push the culture. In comparison to areas like San Francisco, Rischa said Long Beach is just now coming out of the shadows and is still finding its identity, but it is on the right track.

“You can go on Etsy and get tons of handmade stuff – and people still do. But I think there’s a lot of pride in Long Beach. People who live in Long Beach really love Long Beach,” Adriane Errera, another vendor who can be found in MADE, said. “One of my products that I make is a little key fob with a heart that says ‘Long Beach.’ And I see a lot of local people with that. They like it here, and they just want to see it thrive.”

Made by Adriane uses repurposed leather to create one-of-a-kind purses and accessories. Though her wares are sold in several stores around the city, including 4th & Elm and further up 4th Street on Retro Row, Errera acknowledges that it can still be difficult to make sales in stores that do not focus on local brands because “you can’t compete with the \$10 item from China” when that is a shopper’s budget.

Despite the challenges, Meredith Wilson said she thinks Long Beach is becoming more of an urban hub with its own vibe, and downtown is the focal point of the growing culture. She explained that, among the artisans and makers, there is more of a sense of community than competition for sales – a fact that she appreciates.

“It’s a really tight-knit community, and people are very supportive. It’s exciting to be a part of it. It really is,” Wilson said. “To put something that I make out into the world, it’s pretty wonderful. And I feel really proud to be a part of that culture here in our city.” ■



The Clay Pottery Studio is located in downtown’s East Village. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

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A Diverse Downtown Arts And Entertainment Scene

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Senior Writer

On any given day in Downtown Long Beach, you can let loose with some laughs at a comedy club, take in the sounds of a symphony, see a theatrical production or stroll through galleries featuring the works of local artists. With its own arts district, the Long Beach Performing Arts Center and a variety of small venues and galleries peppered throughout the downtown footprint, the area has a diverse arts scene.

The Long Beach Performing Arts Center is home to the city’s largest performing arts groups. This year, Long Beach Camerata Singers, Musical Theatre West, baroque symphony Musica Angelica, and Long Beach Opera all joined International City Theatre (ICT) as resident performing arts groups within the Beverly O’Neill Theater, an 825-seat venue at the center.

ICT has called the theater, renamed for former Mayor Beverly O’Neill this year, home for more than two decades. The nonprofit puts on a season of five theatrical productions each year and is heavily involved in arts education. The 2017 season kicks off on February 15 with the musical “Forever Plaid.”

Musical Theatre West (MTW) performs its main season of fully staged productions at the Carpenter Performing Arts Center at California State University,

Long Beach but has long hoped to join the downtown arts scene, according to Executive Director and Producer Paul Garman. “We had always dreamed of, at some point, having some kind of presence in Downtown Long Beach,” he said.

MTW recently moved its Reiner Reading Series – staged readings of lesser-known or infrequently produced musi-



International City Theatre’s production of “Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike” at the Beverly O’Neill Theater. (Photo by Caught In The Moment Photography)

icals – to the Beverly O’Neill Theater. MTW also kicked off its new Broadway in Concert series there on September 24 with Davis Gaines, who is perhaps best known for performing in Andrew Lloyd Weber’s mega-hit “The Phantom of the Opera” more than 4,000 times.

“We are very excited to be a part of the Beverly O’Neill Theater as one of the resident groups,” Garman said. The Gaines performance sold well beyond expectations, and the theater company’s first two Reiner Reading Series shows at the theater went over very well with audiences, he noted.

Michael Betts, co-producer of the Reiner Reading Series, said audiences appreciate MTW’s presence at the new venue. “The audience seems to have really embraced the space,” he said.

Garman said having multiple performing arts groups within the same theater should help each build off of each other’s audiences. “Each of the groups will see an increase in attendance because of the fact that the building is being used more and there are more new people coming into the building,” he explained.

The larger performance venue within the performing arts center is the

3,000-plus-seat Terrace Theater, which fronts Ocean Boulevard. The Long Beach Symphony calls this venue home, and each winter the Long Beach Ballet puts on a production of “The Nutcracker” there. The venue is also host to a variety of guest entertainment, from comedians to bands to cultural performance groups.

Both the Beverly O’Neill Theater and the larger Terrace Theater have undergone recent refurbishments that are helping to attract new acts to the center, according to John Braun, assistant general manager of the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center.

“We are starting to see a lot more interest in the [Terrace] Theater and the [Long Beach] Arena,” Braun said. “We just booked [the band] Chicago in February and [musician] Bonnie Raitt in February.” Braun has also been getting more calls from representatives of big-name comedians. Within the past year, Jerry Seinfeld and Chris Tucker both performed at the Terrace, he noted.

In addition to the medium- to large-scale productions and entertainment available at the performing arts center, Downtown Long Beach is also home to a variety of small venues. For example, The Garage Theater – self-

ArtExchange Executive Director Jay Hong, left, and Ron Nelson, who sits on the board of directors and oversees art vision and curation, are pictured at the newly renovated ArtExchange at 356 E. 3rd St. The space showcases works by Long Beach artists. All artwork is for sale, with all proceeds going directly to the artists. (Photographs by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)



DOWNTOWN PERSPECTIVE

CARYN DESAI
Artistic Director/Producer, International City Theatre

The future for our downtown is very promising with so much development taking place, both residential and commercial. If we are going to attract more urban dwellers, they will need something more than shopping and eating to have a fuller, more meaningful quality of life.

Any sophisticated city has a vibrant arts scene. We are heading in that direction, bringing major arts organizations downtown to the Performing Arts Center. With greater city support and a major marketing effort for the arts, Long Beach has the potential to compete with other major cities. It’s also easier to get around Downtown Long Beach and it benefits from its geographic location between Los Angeles and Orange County. This can attract increased numbers of people supporting other businesses, restaurants, and other cultural activities. All this will add to the economic engine for the entire city.

International City Theatre is Long Beach’s resident professional theatre company at the Long Beach Performing Arts Center, with a national reputation for excellence and more than 350 professional awards. Because International City Theatre resides in Long Beach, it offers six distinctive educational programs serving every demographic in all nine city council districts. International City Theatre plays an important role in not only the future for a vibrant downtown but also for the present. It has been serving this diverse, amazing city for the past 31 years. International City Theatre’s reputation for presenting new works and new ideas plays a unique role in the city and the theatre world. Curtain up on the future!



Former Mayor Beverly O'Neill, left, and Caryn Desai, artistic director/producer of International City Theatre, proudly showed off plans for renovations to the Center Theater – which included renaming it after O'Neill – in 2015. The renamed theater is now not

only home to ICT, but also to Musica Angelica, Long Beach Opera, Long Beach Camerata Singers and Musical Theatre West. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

described as a “humble” venue known for producing original, innovative and alternative productions – offers year-round performances at 251 E. 7th St.

The Found Theatre, a black box theater with a maximum capacity of 66 people, is just a brief walk from the Garage at 599 Long Beach Blvd. For many years, Found has solely produced original works developed by its company members, according to Executive Director Virginia DeMoss. The company typically plans one show at a time in order to produce content that is timely, she explained.

“The arts community in Long Beach in general is really strong,” DeMoss said. “Any downtown community or community in general needs the arts as part of their overall mix. So I think it’s really important that people like us and the Garage are downtown.”

Downtown is also a hot spot for the visual arts community in Long Beach, with a number of art galleries and institutions in the area. The Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum, which showcases artwork from the islands of the Pacific Ocean, is located at 695 Alamitos Ave. and is open to the public for a fee of \$3 to \$5 Wednesday through Sunday.

The Pike Outlets is home to entertainment venues Sgt Pepper’s Dueling Pianos and The Laugh Factory.

The East Village Arts District is the locale of professional galleries and studios like Hellada Gallery & Photography Studio, which is also open to the public on Wednesdays through Sundays. Clay, a pottery gallery and studio on 1st Street, offers pottery classes for children and adults.

The Arts Council for Long Beach, a nonprofit organization that promotes and advocates for the arts community in Long Beach, is also located in the East Village. The organization provides grants, marketing, internships and other services to local artists and arts venues.

The ArtExchange, a campus of four contiguous historic buildings at the corner of 3rd Street and Elm Avenue, recently debuted to the public after undergoing renovations. The nonprofit organization, which is dedicated to providing a hub for the arts community through gallery showings, classes and more, is under new management by Executive Director Jay Hong.

A newly renovated 3,000-square-foot gallery space – which features original brick and concrete floors and high ceilings – showcases the works of Long Beach artists. “Everything that we hang in our gallery will be for sale,” Hong said. “We have a little bit of a different model from a typical gallery. With all the art for sale, the proceeds go back to the artist, and we simply ask the artists that, if they want to make a donation to the ArtExchange, that they do that.”

The ArtExchange has also recently opened studios for use by four local artists. “We are really trying to be an incubator for the artists to really let them express their creative side but then [also] to teach them really how to run a business,” Hong said. The artists (a photographer, a glass fusion artist, a painter and a leather fabricator/jewelry maker) have each agreed to stay in residence for one to three years.

“We are a 501(c) nonprofit, and what we want to do is to expose the different communities of Long Beach to programs through the use of art,” Hong said. The ArtExchange is launching a series of regular art classes and hopes to connect with many aspects of the Long Beach community, Hong noted. ■



Baroque symphony orchestra Musica Angelica offers a full season of performances at the Beverly O'Neill Theater. (Photograph provided by the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau)

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Music Scene Contributes To ‘Artistic Nature’ Of Downtown

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Staff Writer

With each passing year, the live-music footprint grows and expands in Downtown Long Beach. On any given night, residents and visitors can find live music in one form or another while cruising the streets looking for a spot to eat, drink and be merry.

Countless restaurants and bars now have a live-music element several nights of the week. Whether it’s a small jazz band, a pianist, or a singer with an acoustic guitar, musical ambiance is a growing trend.

Downtown has also seen an increase in the number of music festivals and events, including the Music Tastes Good festival, Live After 5 events, Buskerfest, the Long Beach Jazz Festival and many more.

“Seeing the number of businesses that are supporting the music industry by having musicians in to perform and do events, and how most of the programming downtown is now music-based, it seems like something finally clicked, and people realize that music is a great reason for people to get together,” Rand Foster, owner of Fingerprints record store, said.

Foster’s record store was originally located on 2nd Street in Belmont Shore but relocated to its current location on 4th Street in the East Village at the end

of 2010. One of the main pushes to move was support from the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA) to hold the Summer and Music series in the downtown area. Foster saw an opportunity for a more musical culture in the downtown area and wanted to be a part of it.

Fingerprints is host to sporadic live shows, including acts such as the Foo Fighters, Thrice and Taking Back Sunday. Foster said that, at one point, his shop was one of the only places that had live music events downtown and that, by encouraging more business owners to support local music, he may have made his own events a little less special. But, he continued, that

is a small quibble because he has furthered his goal of helping to create a music scene, and he has kept local musicians playing in town.

“I think it’s extremely important. I think that music, almost singularly, has the ability to really change a space for the better,” Foster said. “[Visual] art does it to an extent. But art tends to be less interactive, with some people viewing it as an extension of wallpaper, where music really does kind of grab onto you and engage you. Music, to me, is the most immediate of all the things we file under ‘art.’”

Dan Halperin, talent buyer for the Music Tastes Good festival, said that music events and festivals are a great way for Long Beach to bring bands and artists to the city that otherwise would never play here, opting instead for established venues in Los Angeles and Orange County for tours. Festivals and one-off performances get them in front of Long Beach residents.

“It’s just what makes this city great. We can all live without it, but I just think it adds so much to how vibrant this city is. People are taking notice,”



The 2015 New Year’s Eve event, which featured several stages of live music, attracted nearly 13,500 people. (Photograph courtesy of the DLBA)

Halperin said. “It’s just such an eclectic city. I wouldn’t live anywhere else other than Long Beach.”

Halperin said that, little by little, large-scale music events have been occurring responsibly and demonstrating to city officials that they can be worthwhile economic drivers, as well as add to the vibe of the downtown.

“I think it contributes to the artistic nature of this city. There’s a reason why POW! WOW! comes here and does its events. And there’s a reason why The Loop exists over there on Pine and Ocean,” Halperin said. “There are so many musicians who live in this city. So many bands formed in this city. So many bands broke up in the city. I mean, it’s silly for us to only have a handful of venues to see live music.”

Summer and Music had more than 12,000 in attendance over the course of the events, inducing Buskerfest and Shugazi, according to Gina Dartt, marketing and events manager for the DLBA. She added that Live After 5 has featured 130 bands and artists at 24 shows since beginning in 2014. Also, last year’s New Year’s Eve event attracted about 13,500 people.

“Having events like this to really shine a light on our local talent is paramount to keeping the arts scene thriving,” Dartt said. “Downtown’s New Year’s Eve has unquestionably become a staple for music lovers, not just in Long Beach but throughout the Southland.”

Music festivals and events benefit not only the city’s economy and the residents who get to enjoy the music and the atmosphere, but also the local musicians themselves. Daniel Perkins, guitarist and lead vocalist for Long Beach band Tall Walls, said the way the city civically takes bands from the scene and gives them so many public opportunities to perform is unique.

Perkins described events like Buskerfest as a marriage between the business community, the city and the artistic community, which really benefits everyone by allowing musicians to play locally and bringing patrons to the surrounding businesses.

“Our band was the winner of the Buskerfest just over a year ago. And, without a doubt, that gave us the springboard to go outside of the city,” Perkins said. “We played an event at the Rose Bowl that was promoted by Goldenvoice that was a vegan beer and food fest. We played in the backyard of the executive producer of ‘The Simpson’s’ for a private party with Weird Al Yankovic, Rancid and The Specials.”

In a more tangible expression of the band’s benefit from the city’s musical events, they received a cash prize as the winners of Buskerfest, which Perkins said effectively funded the band’s latest record, “Oil & Gas,” that was released on November 17.

“Businesses are lucky to have the artists, and artists are lucky to have the businesses and the city to help them out,” Perkins said. “As a resident of Long Beach, kind of taking off my musician cap for a minute, I think it’s a really great part of what’s creating a lot of momentum in this city – authentic cultural momentum.” ■



Tall Walls, a Long Beach band, won the 2015 Buskerfest, which included a cash prize that enabled the group to release their latest record, “Oil & Gas,” on November 17. Pictured from left are: Gregory Moore, percussionist; Roberto Escobar, bassist; Jay Penev, former drummer; and Daniel Perkins, singer and guitar player. (Photograph by Sylvana Uribe, courtesy of Tall Walls)

DOWNTOWN PERSPECTIVE

RAND FOSTER

Owner, Fingerprints and , Founding Partner of Summer of Music

While others will likely point to development, business growth, and our continued development as a destination, I would like to take a moment to speak to the role played, and the excitement generated, by the growing downtown art scene. Whether it’s fine art, street art, live music, or other forms of local culture – Long Beach remains on the front edge of the idea of city as not only venue, but also as participant in its own thriving cultural scene. From the mural project Pow! Wow!, coming into their third year in Long Beach, and their impact with regard to international press, increased visitors, and the improvement of the visual esthetic of our city, this young art project has already left a lasting imprint on Long Beach, turning our alleys and parking lots into a world class art gallery.

While it’s also early, exciting things seem to be happening at the newly revitalized Art Exchange space, where they’re boasting curation by Ron Nelson of the Long Beach Museum of Art, and a calendar and mission designed to turn this space into a hub for downtown’s growing fine art scene.

For the performance side of the art world, look no further than last year’s Music Tastes Good festival, which brought a world-class music festival to the streets of the East Village. Ambitious? Absolutely. Inspired? Unquestionably. Seamless? Not yet, but expect this fledgling crew to rise to the challenge of their amazing vision for their 2017 event.

These events, coupled with what are becoming legacy downtown events like the DLBA’s Live after Five and Summer & Music (720 Pine, Twisted, Shugazi, and Buskerfest), it’s easy to see the positive impact of creative programming in the public space. Combine it with strong support from residents and local businesses, and you have a recipe to shape not only the look and feel of downtown, but also to help it find its heartbeat.



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Filling In The Market Gaps For Music Venues Downtown

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Staff Writer

As the music scene in downtown continues to thrive and flourish, permeating every aspect of the culture and vibe of the area, there are still a few missing pieces to the puzzle – more official music venues.

While live music can be found all around downtown on any given night of the week, often it is in a bar or restaurant as ambiance, not the focal point of the evening. Guests can hear a jazz band in the background while they sip their craft cocktails and chat with friends or listen to a pianist tickling the ivories while they dine. But venues where guests pay specifically to see a musical act are still scant in Downtown Long Beach.

“We’re still thin. As much as I can say we’ve made huge strides with supporting the local music economy, I feel like there’s a tremendously long way to go on a larger scale,” Rand Foster, owner of Fingerprints record store and founding partner of the Summer and Music festival, said. “We don’t get the national touring acts anywhere near as regularly as a city the size of Long Beach should, and a lot of that [is because] we don’t have a lot of world-class venues.”

Another challenge for Long Beach in attracting artists is the city’s location between Los Angeles and Orange County venues that have already built fan-bases and have relationships with national promoters. Many of these venues include a radius clause when they book a band, which prohibits the band from playing within a certain number of miles for a specific amount of time before their show to ensure maximum attendance.

Falling within the radius clause of established music venues is not ideal for Long Beach’s music scene, but Foster said that before that issue is addressed, the city needs places for bands to play. He explained that the city should have a Troubadour-sized room (500-person capacity) and a Fonda



Harvelle’s Long Beach, located at 201 E. Broadway, is open Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and features live performances, including music, burlesque and cabaret shows. (Photographs courtesy of Harvelle’s Long Beach)

Theater-sized room (1200-person capacity). Spaces of this size are currently in the works downtown.

Ron and Riley Hodges, owner and general manager, respectively, of Irish pubs Shannon’s on Pine downtown and Shannon’s Bayshore Saloon in Belmont Shore, are nearing completion of At the Top – a music venue with a capacity of more than 400 people on the second floor of the Art Deco Rowan-Bradley Building on the northwest corner of Pine Avenue and Broadway.

“After we took over the space upstairs, we thought this would be a really cool music venue. Knowing that it used to be Birdland West, which was a successful venue, was also pretty inspiring as well,” Riley said. “I’m very passionate about music, being a musician myself. There’s a community of people down here that really want to see something happen, and the team we have building is really inspired by the renaissance that’s happening on Pine Avenue.”

The space is lined with 32 double-hung windows and has skylights, which Riley said bring in beautiful natural light during the daytime and will allow them to hold other events in the space, such as wedding receptions and private birthday parties. However, for live music, Riley said a lot was invested in top-of-the-line, high-quality lighting and sound systems.

The venue will have a bar that Riley said will be set apart from what is served downstairs in Shannon’s. He said the handcrafted, serpentine bar will have bottled and draft beer as well as higher-end spirits, to be more in line with other restaurants and bars on the street.

The stage – measuring 28 feet wide, 16 feet deep and 16 inches tall – will hopefully host live music events five nights per week, according to Riley. He said he would like to see open mic nights, professional jams and genre-specific nights, such as country, indie and alternative rock and reggae, combined with nights where larger national touring acts will come through town.

“We’ve been talking to different contacts at Live Nation and bigger companies that [typically] might not do a smaller venue, but they’ll throw musicians your way that are really interested in doing a smaller venue [because] they might be a bigger draw. So we’re looking to get some good names in here as well,” Riley said.

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Ron Hodges, left, owner of Shannon’s On Pine and Shannon’s Bayshore, and his son and general manager, Riley, are nearing the completion of At the Top, a music venue located on the second floor of the Art Deco Rowan-Bradely Building at the corner of Pine Avenue and Broadway. The venue will have a 400 person capacity and feature state-of-the-art lighting and sound systems. (Photographs by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

CITY OF LONG BEACH

BID OPPORTUNITIES

TITLE	BID NUMBER	DATE
Furnish & Deliver Aqua Ammonia	WD-05-17	12/21/2016
Furnish & Deliver Sodium Hypochlorite	WD-04-17	12/21/2016
Development Environment Assessment	RFP DV17-026	12/21/2016
Electronic Patient Care Reporting System (ePCRS)	RFP TI17-028	12/23/2016
Furnish & Deliver Liquid Caustic Soda	WD-03-17	12/28/2016
Dana Library Carpet Replacement	ITB PW17-029	01/05/2017
Workstations – LBPD South Division	ITB PD17-032	01/05/2017
North LB Sewer Improvement Phase 1 (SC-0280)	WD-15-16	01/10/2017
Firefighting PPE for Airport	ITB FD17-017	01/10/2017
Ford Transit F350 Van with High Roof REBID	ITB FS17-020	01/10/2017
Annual Contract for Street Improvements	R-7084	01/11/2017
Apparel with Embroidery and Screen Print	ITB LB17-023	01/26/2017

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

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CITY OF **LONG BEACH** ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES BUREAU
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(Continued From Page 38)

Riley said he is anticipating a grand opening event in late January, with several soft opening events earlier in the month. He said several acts are already confirmed to play the space, but dates have yet to be finalized.

Downtown’s Fonda-sized gap will be filled with the long-anticipated re-opening of the former Vault 350 space, or “That-Which-Will-Not-Be-Called-The-Vault,” as Michelle Molina, managing partner of Millworks and owner of the building, likes to call it. Once completed, Molina said the venue capacity will be around 1,500.

Since buying the venue in June 2015, which had been vacant since 2008, not much progress has been made on the project. The building has been in a state of mid-construction since work ceased after the previous, short-lived owner abandoned an attempt to reinvent and reopen the space.

“With a venue of that size, we really want an effective bar partner because that’s really where most of the revenue comes in. We really just want to make the right decision,” Molina said. “We think Long Beach deserves that. So we’re going to be patient, and we ask the community to do the same. Just give us time to make the right decision, not just any decision.”

Molina said she had entered a couple of joint venture agreements, one with a local operator and one with an out-of-state operator, but passed on both. Currently, she said there are around 10 different groups interested in partnering with Molina on this project, and negotiations are taking place.

Construction will not begin on the space until a bar-savvy partner has been found that can give insight on trends, which will guide the interior design, according to Molina. In the meantime, Molina said a lot of shows are being booked at the Packard on West Anaheim Street, another building owned by Millworks, to foster relationships with different promoters and liquor distributors.

At the Top and the former Vault location will join two established, though underutilized, music venues in the downtown area: The Federal Underground and Harvelle’s, which have a capacity of 300 and 250, respectively.

“I don’t think that there’s any other place like Harvelle’s in Long Beach. Our focus is the show,” Cevin Clark, owner of the club, said. “Unfortunately, people don’t really see the space as just a bar to go to. We make our money at the bar, but we’ve got to bring entertainment into that space to do it.”

Opening in 2011, Clark said he quickly found that Long Beach was not responding to music at his venue. What people did respond to were burlesque and cabaret shows, which is now the primary focus of the club when you peruse its calendar of events.

One reason for the lack of music, according to Clark, is that local musicians have told him they are intimidated by the professional atmosphere of his club – clean, nice stage, good sound and light systems with quality technicians operating them. He said they feel more comfortable at dives. He explained that this is not what he wanted to happen rather what he learned through his interactions with musicians.

Clark said he has considered teaming up with nonprofit organizations that focus on music that might be willing to rent the space from him and hold music events. He said he would possibly lower the drink costs and suggest donations to the organization by patrons. This is one alternative method to bringing live music to his venue and the downtown area.

But for now, to keep the doors open, Clark said he needs to follow the money, which is currently in burlesque and cabaret, with the occasional music act thrown into the mix.

“I’d love to be exclusively music. I hope to bring more music to Long Beach. If the people want it, I’ve got a great room for music, and I’d love to be doing music seven nights per week,” Clark said. “I love Long Beach. It’s



Jeff Osborn, pictured top, is general manager of The Federal Bar, located at 102 Pine Ave. He said the Knitting Factory, which owns the bar and attached venue The Federal Underground, hopes to increase the number of live music performances. Dengue Fever can be seen playing in the venue that has a capacity of 300 people. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan, live photos courtesy of The Federal Underground)

real. I just want to fit in and be part of the community that works and that the community embraces.”

The Federal Underground has been consistently booking music performances for nearly a year and a half, Jeff Osborn, general manager of The Federal Bar, said. He explained that the shows have been hit-or-miss as far as attendance and sales.

“I feel like Downtown Long Beach, with certain shows, we are still struggling to get people here. But then other times we sell out,” Osborn said. “It’s a learning experience. We’re just trying a lot of things and seeing what works out.”

The venue books only three or four shows per month, according to Osborn, but the company would like to see the amount of music increase. The bar and venue are owned by Knitting Factory Entertainment, a company known nationwide for its music venues and shows. Because of the music industry ties, The Federal Underground will continue to strive to build and invest in live music until it finds its niche in Long Beach, Osborn said.

“I think as more places start to open and [Long Beach] becomes a little more recognized for live music, it will start to build,” Osborn said. “That’s what we’re anticipating is going to happen. So we are going to keep doing live music and hopefully build it to something great.” ■

Music And The City 2: Doers On The Rocks

■ By **JUSTIN HECTUS**
Guest Writer

One year ago this week, the Long Beach Business Journal was kind enough to publish a guest column that I wrote about how “music and Long Beach are inextricably intertwined.” In the piece, I tried to make the case for the community and business benefits of re-doubling our efforts to make Long Beach a true music city – a place where live performances happen every day, often in small and unexpected spaces, and throughout the year on a more grand scale in our streets, in our parks, in our parking lots and even on our rooftops. Our ability to approach that goal with both velocity and staying power took a massive hit this year when Josh Fischel passed away. Josh was a gifted musician and producer, a lover of Long Beach and a man of outsized ambition and accomplishment. As his lovely wife, Abbie, said, “His strength was his ability to make pipe dreams reality.” With Josh’s passing, as with the loss of Ikey Owens, Markus Manley, Mark Bixby, Shaun Lumachi and others in recent years, the challenge is to continue to be inspired by both their accomplishments and their lack of understanding of their limitations long after they are gone.

In music and community building, we need more

doers and we need to create an environment that incubates and encourages doers. We need more programs like the DLBA’s Live After 5 and the Arts Council’s Microgrants so that new artists and producers with new ideas can plug into institutional support and funding. We need more places like The Expo and The Packard so that ambition can team up with four walls and a roof and have a place to blossom. We need more people like Blair Cohn, John Molina, Kraig Kojian, Rand Foster, Casey Terrazas and Michelle Molina who are patrons of and friends to the arts; people who know that sometimes you just have to open the

door for a wild idea to help make it happen and other times you need to open your checkbook and take a risk because the upside is worth more than money. We need boots on the ground like my sister, Ashley, Takotah Skye Ashcraft, Gina Dartt and Alyssandra Nighswonger to actually get the job done. And, we need more Tim Grobatys and Brian Addisons to get the word out about what a good thing we have going.

So, as we wind down the year and toast to absent friends and the doers still among us, let us also find inspiration in all that they turned from thought into action and let us do likewise. There is much in this world right now that is maddening and seemingly out of our control – 2017 should be the year when we each do our part to make amazing things happen in our own backyard.

If you have an idea and don’t know where to start, send me a quick message at justin@summerandmusic.com and I’ll do my best to connect you with other like-minded doers.



Justin Hectus (left) and the late Josh Fischel worked hard to bring live music events and festivals to Downtown Long Beach. Hectus co-founded Summer And Music and continues to foster a musical atmosphere in the city, while Fischel organized the new Music Tastes Good (MTG) festival. Fischel died on September 29 just days after his inaugural MTG festival concluded. (Photograph courtesy of Justin Hectus)

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The popular Rainbow Harbor, with its harbor cruise vessels and well-known restaurants, is home to the Aquarium of the Pacific at far left. The Aquarium, which attracted a record 1.8 million visitors this year, is breaking ground in February on a new wing known as Pacific Visions. (Business Journal photo-graph by John Robinson)

The historic Queen Mary is about to undergo \$15 million in renovations, while the adjacent Carnival Cruise Line is expanding its terminal within the dome to accommodate a larger vessel. (Business Journal photograph by John Robinson)



Aquarium, Queen Mary Top Downtown’s Many Attractions

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Senior Writer

The past year has been a big one for the attractions of Downtown Long Beach. A \$15 million renovation of the historic Queen Mary is getting underway, with a planned development of surrounding land to follow in the future. The Aquarium of the Pacific also had a major announcement this year, unveiling its plans to build a new wing with a 660-seat theater, an art gallery and a new live animal exhibit.

The Queen Mary has been an icon of Long Beach and its downtown since its arrival from England in 1967. In addition to being an attraction in and of itself with its storied history and architecturally significant interiors, it is also a hotel and an event venue.

The new leaseholder of the Queen Mary, Los Angeles-based Urban Commons, plans to revamp the ship’s hotel rooms and create chic, Art Deco-inspired lounges and gathering areas at either end of the ship. The firm will likely invest in technological upgrades for visitor use, including more connectivity for mobile devices throughout the ship and in the rooms, the company’s partner told the Business Journal earlier this year. Urban Commons and the City of Long Beach are also investing millions into much-needed repairs to the vessel over the next decade.

The ship will remain open during the course of its refurbishment, allowing visitors the opportunity to enjoy its wide array of offerings, from dining and shops to daily tours and events. The vessel also boasts a 4-D theater and a long-running exhibit, “Diana: Legacy of a Princess,” which features clothing worn by the former Princess of Wales. That exhibit will close at the end of 2017 to make way for new planned exhibits, according to a spokesperson for Urban Commons and the Queen Mary.

The Queen Mary is host to a variety of annual events. Its staple events are Dark Harbor, a spooky maze that runs throughout October, and CHILL, a holiday-themed event with rides, activities and elaborate ice sculptures. The ship is also well known for playing host to the long-running Scots Festival and Art Deco Festival and, more recently, the Ship-Kicker country music concert. WET Carnival, an outdoor music festival with water-themed rides and activities, is coming back in 2017 for its second annual run.

“Starting in January 2017, Urban Commons will introduce a monthly ‘Local Band Hangout’ program spotlighting local artists and bands performing at the Observation Bar onboard the ship,” spokesperson Erica Feher told the Business Journal in an e-mail. “Also new in 2017, the team is planning to host a rock music concert at the Queen Mary. The annual holiday events will feature top talent including singer-songwriter Taylor Dayne for Valentine’s Day and pop group The Pointer Sisters for the All-American 4th of July party.”

Carnival Cruise Line offers cruises to Hawaii, the Mexican Riviera and Baja Mexico from its terminal in the dome adjacent to the Queen Mary and will soon start offering Alaska cruises as well. It is expanding its terminal within the dome to prepare for a larger ship, the Carnival Splendor, coming to Long Beach in 2018. Urban Commons eventually plans to build Carnival a new terminal so the dome can be used for event purposes.

Located on the downtown waterfront at Rainbow Harbor, the nearby Aquarium of the Pacific is also undergoing improvements, with a refurbished sea lion exhibit slated to open this year. The groundbreaking for the Aquarium’s new Pacific Visions wing will take place in February, with construction expected to be complete in mid-to-late 2018.

The theater within the new wing will be a first-of-its-kind educational tool for an aquarium, according to the nonprofit’s CEO, Jerry Schubel. The theater

DOWNTOWN PERSPECTIVE

JERRY SCHUBEL

President and CEO, Aquarium Of The Pacific

The next few years will be pivotal for the Aquarium as we break ground on the new Pacific Visions wing, our first major expansion since we opened to the public in 1998. Slated to open in late 2018, the new wing will accommodate our growing number of visitors, making room for 2 million visitors annually. It will be a job creator and a driver of tourism in the region. Architecturally, the blue biomorphic glass façade will transform the Long Beach waterfront and serve as a modern, dynamic new landmark in the downtown area.

Featuring a high-tech interactive theater with seats for 300, an art gallery, and additional space for live animal exhibits, Pacific Visions will also change the way people view aquariums – it will be the most powerful educational platform for communicating the challenges and opportunities of the World Ocean, and it will allow people to understand the ocean in ways never before encountered in an aquarium setting. It will redefine the role of aquariums by providing state-of-the-art technology, innovative educational experiences, and powerful messages of hope and opportunity to our guests.

The City of Long Beach is playing a crucial role in this expansion as a major funder and supporter, and this partnership extends beyond construction. The Aquarium serves in an advisory capacity on helping the city become resilient to the impacts of climate change. We began to address this issue together with greater emphasis in 2015, when Mayor Robert Garcia commissioned a report from the Aquarium on the city’s vulnerability to climate change, and the work to create community-level action plans with stakeholders continues. With our community’s diverse population, important coastal infrastructure, and love of the ocean, preparing our city for climate change is both a necessity and an opportunity to use innovation and technology to make Long Beach the model of a climate resilient city.





The outdoor patio at Renaissance Long Beach’s SIP Bar + Lounge on Ocean Boulevard. (Photograph provided by Renaissance long Beach)

will be used as a forum to educate visitors about humanity’s link to changes in the environment and impacts on marine life.

This year, a new exhibit, “FROGS: Dazzling and Disappearing,” will debut on May 26. The Aquarium will continue to host its annual events like the Pacific Islander Festival, the Moompetam: Native American Festival, the Baja Cultural Splash Festival and many others. The Aquarium will also continue its popular after-hours Night Dives, Shark Lagoon Nights, and discounted late nights.

In addition to downtown’s attractions, there are a variety of activities for visitors and locals looking for a day or night out on the town.

For those looking to get out on the water, a number of local companies, like Spirit Cruises, offer tours of the local harbor area. Harbor Breeze Cruises offers daily whale watching and wildlife tours, and Catalina Express has cruises almost hourly to Catalina Island.

Active types might enjoy a visit to Wheel Fun Rentals at Shoreline Village, where they can rent bikes, tandem bicycles, Segways and more to take for rides up and down the scenic beach path. Long Beach Heritage, a local nonprofit, offers Saturday walking tours of historic and architecturally significant areas of downtown.

The Downtown Long Beach Alliance holds monthly, free live music events and keeps a calendar of other happenings in downtown at www.downtownlongbeach.org/events-calendar. ■

Getting Around Downtown

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Senior Writer

By bus, rail, boat or bike, there are plenty of ways to get around Downtown Long Beach. Public transit provides several options to move around downtown. Long Beach Transit (LBT), the city’s public transit agency, operates the free Passport bus route that stops at the Queen Mary, the Aquarium of the Pacific, the East Village Arts District, Pine Avenue, multiple places along Ocean Boulevard and other downtown areas. Soon, the city plans to roll out a fleet of zero-emission electric buses on this route, according to Dana Pynn, LBT government relations manager.

From the end of May through the end of October, LBT offers water taxi service that connects with its bus routes. The AquaBus service glides along downtown’s waterfront area, with stops at the Aquarium, Catalina Express’s landing by the Queen Mary, the Hotel Maya, South Pine Avenue and Shoreline Village. The AquaLink water taxi stops at the Aquarium and Catalina Express, and takes passengers down the Long Beach coastline to Belmont Pier and Alamitos Bay Landing.

The Long Beach Transit Mall on 1st Street extends from Pine Avenue to Long Beach Boulevard and serves as a hub for LBT’s bus services. Public transit bus lines from other cities such as Torrance and Los Angeles stop there, too. The mall is also a station for the Metro Blue Line light rail, which stops at Pacific Avenue, 5th Street and 1st Street.

Bikestation Long Beach is located at the transit mall as well. The facility offers 24-hour parking for bicycles, bike rentals and repairs, and other services.

In the past year, the City of Long Beach rolled out its new bike share program in which residents and visitors may rent bikes at hourly or monthly pre-paid rates. There are bike share stations located throughout the downtown area, where anyone can grab a bike, pay and go – then drop it off at any other bike share station in the city.



The Long Beach Bike Share Program allows anyone to rent bikes by the hour and return them to designated stations throughout the city, including in downtown. Monthly plans are also available. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

This year, Long Beach was named the 10th most bike-friendly city in the country by real estate website Zillow. Walk Score, an endeavor by real estate company Redfin that analyzes the walkability of U.S. cities, ranked Long Beach the 10th most walkable city in the nation in 2016. ■

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Shoreline Comics

The newest “superhero” for comic fans in Long Beach might just be Shoreline Comics – home to a vibrant, colorful space adorned with comics, memorabilia and collectibles. Opened in September 2015, the comic shop is also home to a real-life adventure for owner Feon Cooper, a former EMT and reserve firefighter who has brought his lifelong love for animated characters to life for many happy customers.



Feon Cooper, Owner

“This is probably the best job I have ever had,” Cooper, whose fascination with comics and toys dates back to his younger five-year-old self, says of opening his shop.

Located inside the Shoreline Village shopping center at 419-N Shoreline Village Dr., the specialty shop offers an array of comic and fantasy books, toys, collectibles, anime and movies, along with character appearances inside the store. In addition to comic books, the shop’s most popular sellers are Funko Pop! Figurines, “blind bags” containing mystery figurines (a hit among the younger kids), and, of course, anything Pokémon, Cooper says. “It’s been a wonderful experience,” Cooper says of his experience as a small business owner in Shoreline Village. “I’ve gotten a lot of support from the community – the mayor has been fantastic and Shoreline Village has been fantastic. It’s just a great area, great atmosphere, great community . . . It was one of the best decisions I could have ever made.”

Ahimsa Vegan Cafe

In the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions, “Ahimsa” is commonly translated to mean non-violence – a fitting name for Downtown Long Beach’s popular vegan and vegetarian eatery, Ahimsa Vegan Cafe. The family-owned business was opened three years ago by lifelong Long Beach resident Ashley Jade Mullery and husband-and-wife team Tukaram and Radhika Garvey. “We wanted to have a place where we could serve our community clean food, healthy food and ethical food,” Mullery says, “and have a space where people could nourish themselves on the inside.”

Tempeh Reuben served with sauerkraut and fresh arugula on toasted rye, avocado jalapeno cheeseburger, Hippy Kale Bowl with organic tempeh and seasonal veggies, and authentic samosas are but a few crowd favorites at Ahimsa Vegan Cafe, located at 340 E. 4th St. The international menu features vegetarian and vegan fare, catered toward the highly diverse clientele in the International City. “The type of people that come into a vegan restaurant are usually really open-minded, so we get to meet cool people all the time,” Mullery says. “There’s always good conversation happening here between strangers.” But the staff of 12, Mullery says, are anything but strangers. “We’ve built a family here,” she explains. “Everybody is on the same page as far as wanting to give back to our community in a way that aligns with our morals. It’s been a really satisfying experience.”



Ashley Jade Mullery, Owner

Great Society Cider & Mead

Within the first week of its opening in August 2016, Great Society Cider & Mead doubled its staff to accommodate the overwhelming curiosity among patrons to Southern California’s only all-cider tap house. The pub, located at 601 E. Broadway, is owned by husband-and-wife team Brenda and Otto Radtke, who saw downtown as the perfect location for their “passion project.” “We love the city,” Otto says. “It’s just a vibrant area down here in the East Village . . . and it’s just the kind of city where it’s relaxed, yet people are interested in a lot of alternative things. That’s what we sell – an alternative that most people haven’t been exposed to in any significant manner.” Great Society offers 20 ciders and meads on draft and more than 100 bottles, including a popular Danish Viking mead called “Viking’s Blood,” a “Topsy Buddha” infused with Matcha green tea and yuzu, and classics such as a beautiful French brut cider that Otto likens to fine wine.

The couple – who both hold jobs outside of Great Society (Otto runs an employee benefits insurance business, while Brenda is a marketing consultant) – have their hands full with ever-evolving offerings. Great Society recently added a brunch menu and has made the bottled beverages available for purchase. In recognizing their own successes, the longtime Long Beach residents say they would encourage other businesses to look at the city as a place for growth. “The community here is completely supportive of small business,” Brenda says. “The community has been absolutely fantastic about checking us out and helping us survive in the neighborhood – and thrive. It’s been a really good feeling being where we’re at, and I couldn’t imagine us opening up anywhere else.”



Otto and Brenda Radtke, Owners



David Rigby and Hilda Sanchez, Owners and Robert Perez, Operations Manager

Minuteman Press

When asked how long she's been in the printing industry, Hilda Sanchez says with a laugh, "Oh, since the day we opened our doors." Prior to opening Minuteman Press with her husband, David Rigby, in 2002, both Sanchez and Rigby had long careers in technology. "I lost my mind," she says jokingly of her decision to transition from corporate America to becoming a small business owner. After researching business-to-business opportunities, the couple decided to open a Minuteman Press franchise. "We jumped in, even though on day one our customers knew more about printing than we did," Sanchez recalls.

Today, nearly 15 years later, the Long Beach residents run a successful company at 137 W. 5th St. Minuteman Press offers full-service printing and marketing services, including direct mail and promotional products, with a specialization in quick turnarounds. Rigby's artistic background lends itself to creative designs for clients, while the company's state-of-the-art equipment helps the business keep up with the latest trends and customer demand, Sanchez says. With years of expertise under their belt, the couple confidently guides client projects from concept to completion, striving to deliver high-quality products and services on time and within budget. The bulk of Minuteman's customer base is small-to medium-sized businesses in Long Beach and surrounding communities. The couple's leap of faith in 2002 has certainly paid off, according to Sanchez. "It's been great," she says of being a small business owner. "I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Support Local Small Businesses

Mark Schneider Fine Jewelry

Unlike many, Mark Schneider knew from a young age what he wanted to do when he grew up. The third-generation jeweler, owner of Mark Schneider Fine Jewelry at 245 The Promenade N, heads up one of the oldest family-owned businesses in Long Beach, maintaining a strong tradition that began in 1945 right in Downtown Long Beach. "I've seen so many changes and the evolution of Downtown Long Beach," he reflects. "It's a great place to work and live."

The award-winning designer and Long Beach native – a graduate of California State University, Long Beach, where he studied art and jewelry design – specializes in contemporary, custom designs and is known nationally for his bridal line. Schneider holds the unique distinction of being one of the few living designers to have a piece of jewelry – a stunning 12.11-carat, trillion cut tanzanite ring – on permanent display at the Smithsonian Institution. Schneider enthusiastically dives into his projects with a vision to create jewelry designs as wearable art – and he also creates many smiles along the way. "I enjoy designing jewelry and sitting down with a customer and making something that absolutely reflects their wishes," he says. "We deal with very happy people." In addition to custom design, Mark Schneider Fine Jewelry boasts a large repair department, and its downtown location is home to manufacturing, wholesale and retail divisions. All of the company's jewelry is made in the United States, using re-refined gold and ethically minded gemstones, from diamonds to colored stones, Schneider notes.



Mark Schneider, Owner

Ay Que Vintage

Shoppers looking for one-of-a-kind pieces can look no further than Ay Que Vintage in the East Village Arts District, a vintage clothing shop offering unique pieces from a variety of eras – with a contemporary flair. "We have only one of everything in the shop," says owner Lizette Suarez, a lifelong fan of vintage clothing. "One of the things that we try to do here is to meet current trends. So, even though it's vintage, we try to find items that you can see someone wearing every day."

Suarez originally opened her shop in the Bluff Park area of Long Beach in April 2010, and relocated to Downtown Long Beach (105 Linden Ave #A) four years ago. The South Bay native says she was attracted to Long Beach for its potential. "Long Beach is known for small business opportunities, so I chose to come and open a business in Long Beach because I really believe in the potential that it has," Suarez explains. "I've always wanted to showcase the stuff that I love and be able to have this for people to come shop locally." Ay Que Vintage caters to the spectrum of age ranges, with its diverse clientele ranging from high school students to baby boomers. An added bonus, Suarez says, is the competitive pricing on all of its unique items.



Lizette Suarez, Owner

Articles by
Contributing
Writer
Thyda Duong;
photographs
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Larry Duncan

Cuppa Cuppa

Radhika and Dhiraj (Raj) Chougule's passion for coffee began while living on the East Coast, where they engaged in creative, at-home experiments with different types of brewing equipment. Their eventual move to California – and their mission to learn as much as they could about third wave



Radhika Chougule, Store Manager,
and Dhiraj Chougule, Business Manager

coffee and business theory – became the launching pad for turning their passion into a thriving local business. In September 2016, the couple opened Cuppa Cuppa, a modern, yet rustic, café in the historic Cooper Arms Building at 455 E. Ocean Blvd.

Cuppa Cuppa's specialty brewing methods include Aeropress, Pourover, Syphon and Chemex, and the artisan coffee bar offers espresso, black coffee, lattes, filtered coffee, fresh brews, tea, as well as breakfast items, sandwiches and wraps. The Chougules continue to add to the menu and have expanded their operating hours to 6:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, seeking to offer a welcoming gathering place for the community. Long Beach, the Chougules say, was an attractive city for them due to its rich diversity. "At Cuppa Cuppa, we're not only all about providing our customers with the rich coffee experience along with delicious food servings, but it's also about getting people together and enjoying each other's company," Raj says. "We believe that we can bring people together to create a more caring and inclusive community."

Mabel's Gourmet Pralines

Since 2006, Sandra Christmas has been gifting the community with a Southern favorite. The Louisiana native opened Mabel's Gourmet Pralines in Downtown Long Beach 10 years ago, drawing on her Southern roots and a family recipe that has been passed down through many generations. The shop, located at 625 Pine Ave, is named after Sandra's mother, who taught Sandra how to make pralines when she was just a seven-year-old girl who loved gathering pecans from her backyard and waiting anxiously in the kitchen for a taste of the delicious treats as the aroma of fresh pralines filled their home.

Christmas says she is proud to share her family recipe, especially with the close-knit community in Long Beach. "My customers – and the relationships I've developed with them over the years – are the greatest, and they are what I enjoy most about doing business in Long Beach," she says. Prior to starting her business, Christmas worked in the legal field – a vast difference from being a small business owner, she says. Unlike her previous life as a paralegal, "when my customers come, they come happy and they leave happy," she says. In addition to a selection of pecan, peanut and chocolate pralines, Mabel's Gourmet Pralines offers a Southern style banana pudding – another family recipe with a twist – that's made fresh daily using all-natural ingredients.



Sandra Christmas, Owner

Support Local Small Businesses

The Potholder Cafe Too

Looking for a breakfast challenge? Try finishing an 18-inch pancake, two eggs, and two pieces of bacon or sausage. Finish this "Mac Daddy" challenge at The Potholder Cafe and you'll be one of the brave who go home with not only a full stomach but also a T-shirt to mark your achievement. Or, try the aptly named crowd favorite, "The Couch," which serves up eggs, pancakes or French toast, bacon, sausage and "super spuds" (potatoes with cheese, avocado, sour cream and mushrooms). "It's called The Couch because that's where you'll end up after eating it," says owner Kevin Pittsey. Kids (and kids at heart) can treat their taste buds to the popular Flintstone French Toast, dipped in Fruity Pebbles. Or perhaps you'd enjoy the bottomless Mimosas on Saturdays. With more than 30 different egg dishes and unique breakfast items, The Potholder Cafe remains a favorite breakfast destination for Long Beach residents more than 40 years after opening in 1973 at 3700 E. Broadway.

The Potholder Cafe Too, the restaurant's downtown location at 301 W. Broadway, opened in 2012 after Pittsey sought to expand the business and accommodate the growing customer base. Then, in 2015, came The Potholder at 2246 N. Lakewood Blvd.

Pittsey, a Long Beach resident, has grown with the business, having started as a kitchen manager in 1993 and the owner in 2003. "We're definitely not a cookie-cutter place – we have items that you just can't get anywhere else," he says, adding that the restaurant's introduction of a gluten-free, vegan and vegetarian menu has taken off as well.



Owners Rich Rowan, Mercedes Pittsey and Kevin Pittsey

L’Opera Ristorante

Long Beach landmark L’Opera Ristorante not only houses floor-to-ceiling windows, beautiful marble columns and renowned artwork, but also a rich history in Downtown Long Beach. The critically acclaimed dining destination – recognized for 23 years with the coveted Golden Sceptre–5 Star Award from the prestigious Southern California



Terry Antonelli, Owner

Restaurant Writers Association – opened its doors in April 1990. Having been at the frontline of the downtown evolution, owner Terry Antonelli says he sees great promise for Long Beach. “I feel the city is on the right track with its development,” says Antonelli, also a member of the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau’s Board of Directors. “I believe they are doing a wonderful job displaying and selling the city throughout the country . . . All of these buildings are only going to enhance [our] image and bring the business community into town.”

L’Opera, located at 101 Pine Ave., recently completed a two-year, roughly \$400,000 remodel that Antonelli says is poised to carry the restaurant forward for another two decades. The journey hasn’t always been smooth, Antonelli admits, recalling the struggles of the “Great Recession” that had widespread impacts on many industries. Riding the wave of ups and downs over the past nearly 27 years, the long-time restaurateur credits consistency as the key to his success. L’Opera’s 47 employees include more than 20 who have been with the restaurant for 26 years or longer, and the award-winning food is ever-evolving, with menus changing every six months to feature new, farm-to-table options. Customer favorites include calamari, Cappellacci di Zucca (homemade butternut squash and ricotta cheese ravioli) and Lasagna di Pollo, and crowds are flocking to the restaurant’s happy hour. The restaurant makes all of its breads, pastas and desserts on site.

The Den Salon

The first designs for The Den Salon were sketched on a cocktail napkin as husband-and-wife team Andy and Allison Kripp dreamed of opening their own small business in Allison’s hometown. In January 2009, their longtime dream was realized when the couple opened their doors at 300 E. Ocean Blvd. It was a trying time for the couple – getting married, opening a business and becoming pregnant all within a three-month time period in the midst of the “Great Recession.” The couple ate loads of ramen and watched a lot of Seinfeld for comic relief, Allison Kripp says jokingly, noting that the lessons learned during that time have served the couple well. The couple’s guerilla marketing and intensive outreach to other local business owners resulted in a successful venture in The Den Salon, now home to six artists – including Allison’s husband, Andy, a nearly 20-year industry veteran – who serve a diverse clientele and specialize in cuts, color and customer service. “We really wanted to bring back the art and also what the clients really wanted – sitting in the chair and having us listen to them,” Allison says. “We wanted to bring back true customer service.”

Coming from a long line of small business owners with family roots in Downtown Long Beach, opening The Den Salon was a natural fit for Allison. In fact, Allison notes that the couple is looking forward to expanding soon, with hopes of opening another location in their beloved Downtown Long Beach.



Andrew M. Kripp, Owner / Master Hair Stylist and Judy Irwin, Salon General Manager

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