As Final Convention Center Improvements Come Together, Long Beach Grows Its Competitive Edge

By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER
Assistant Editor

T his year, 242 conventions and meetings are scheduled at the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, a lineup that the Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) estimates will bring more than $247 million in estimated economic impact (EEI) to the city. When all tentatively scheduled events are added to that list, the numbers swell to 361 meetings and conventions generating, an EEI of more than $668 million. (Please Continue To Page 16)

Selling Long Beach In The Nation’s Capital

The Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) traveled to Washington, D.C., last week on its annual sales mission. As national and regional economic growth continues, Long Beach’s hospitality industry is benefiting. Hotel managers are reporting strong occupancy and room rates, and the sector is experiencing an injection of investment with new hotels planned and underway in the airport area and downtown.

Occupancy of Downtown Long Beach hotels held strong through the first quarter at a rate of 80.7%, according to Bruce Baltin, managing director of CBRE Hotels. “I can’t say for sure it’s an all-time high, but I would expect it is,” he said. (Please Continue To Page 20)

A City Election Where No One Votes?

By GEORGE ECONOMIDES
Publisher’s Perspective

I magine if Long Beach held an election and no one got a chance to vote. Sound silly? It’s possible, and it could happen as soon as next April. The city’s primary is set for the four citywide seats – mayor, city attorney, city auditor and city prosecutor – and five city council posts – the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th District representatives.

All nine incumbents have either announced they’re seeking reelection or will soon make it official. (Please Continue To Page 15)

Hotel Occupancy Skyrockets

Long Beach Hotels Well Above National Average

By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER
Assistant Editor

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‘No Magic Bullet’ To Solve Westside Issues

By BRANDON RICHARDSON
Senior Writer

W ith about 300 businesses located within the Magnolia Industrial Group area just east of the Los Angeles River (bounded by Magnolia Avenue, Anaheim Street and Pacific Coast Highway) and another 400-plus businesses west of the river in the Westside Industrial area (to the city’s western boundary, from the port to just past Pacific Coast Highway), substantial tax revenue is generated for the city in that area alone. Many of these businesses, however, feel marginalized by city officials.

“It’s not that they overlook the Westside a lot. They overlook the Westside, period,” Daryl Phillips, president of Phillips Steel Company, said. “The Westside doesn’t have a relationship with the city. But relationships help resolve this, [that is] having an understanding of the neighborhood.”

Phillips said that city officials will listen to the concerns and complaints of Westsiders but that the wheels of action move very slowly when it comes to taking action and resolving problems, which he said is frustrating. However, he explained that business owners take this fact with a grain of salt because the area is such a great place to conduct business overall.

Concerns about the future of the Westside have been festering in recent months. Phillips noted the Port of Long Beach’s proposed Pier B on-dock rail yard as a primary concern of Westsiders. Additionally, homelessness.

ILLENNIAL PULSE

The Travelers And Travel-nots

By Assistant Editor Samantha Mehlinger

If I see one more dating profile that says “looking for a travel buddy” or “must love travel,” I’m going to throw my phone at something.

Among the many Millennial stereotypes, one I actually believe to be true is this: we value experiences over things. And a huge part of that is travel. I cannot tell you how many online dating profiles are riddled with pictures of dudes scaling Machu Picchu, cuddling drugged tigers in some “zoo” in Thailand (FYI, guys,
DeLaGarza is the new city clerk. A 16-year veteran of the city government, she had been serving as assistant city clerk. DeLaGarza, a certified municipal clerk, received her bachelor’s in finance management from Tulane University. In addition to overseeing municipal, college district and school district elections, she is responsible for maintaining most city documents and a full record of city council meetings and voting. . . Patti Brown is the new president of the Assistance League of Long Beach. She has served in several leadership positions since joining the organization in 2009. The 2017–2018 Board of Directors include: President-elect JoAnn McDonald; 1st VP Philanthropic Programs Diane Gleason; 2nd VP Fund Development Susan Rivard; 3rd VP Special Events Darlene Hopkins; 4th VP Finance Cindy Summers; 5th VP Membership Kerri; Secretary Marilyn Wittkop; Treasurer Catherine Vandenberg Smith; Thrift & Vintage Shop Chairman Liz Breslauer; Marketing Communications Chairman Linda Drummond; Strategic Planning Chairman Cynthia Terry; Rick Rackers Auxiliary Chairman Katelyn Conley; Las Hermanas Auxiliary Chairman Ann Taramo; CAMEO Professional Auxil-
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that's not cute – that's animal abuse), placing calls in a red telephone booth, et cetera. A heck of a lot of these folks have traveled the world. And the same goes for a significant chunk of my Facebook friends, now that I think about it.

In my senior year of college, I went to England for a month, and I count myself lucky for that brief adventure. But that was seven years ago. The only places I have been to outside of California since then are Las Vegas (once) and to a couple eastern states to see family. Honestly, I’m starting to feel like I’m not the norm when it comes to Millennials and traveling—at least, not the kind that gets blasted all over social media.

It seems to me that there are two sorts of well-traveled Millennials. There are those who aren’t yet sure what they want to do with their lives or haven’t been able to land a dream job. Instead of being miserable in their parents’ houses, they decide to take what money they have and get out in the world in the interim. These types often work for room and board while abroad. I’ve known multiple people to take advantage of the Worldwide Organization for Organic Farming program, for example, in which you work on a farm abroad for meals and a place to stay but travel and explore when you aren’t working.

Then there’s the sort of well-traveled Millennials who are career-oriented but are also blessed with the Golden Millennial Ideal: “work-life balance.” These lucky folks actually get to go more than a few days off for vacation at a time—and have the money to do it, too.

Then there’s the rest of us who, either for lack of money or lack of time, can barely get as far away as Palm Springs for a weekend, if at all. You won’t find many articles online about our sort, although you’ll find an unending torrent of articles discussing our better-traveled brethren. I suspect this is because we’re not as glamorous. More about that after I predictably digress into some statistics so that you know I’m not the norm when it comes to Millennials. Plus, who will feed my cat?

A 2016 Eventbrite study found that 78% of Millennials would choose to spend their money on an experience or event over a tangible good. They might be killing it at work. They might find yourself stressing this to someone else, considering their circumstances. They might be broke. They might be broke. They might be killing it at work. Or they just might not have someone to feed their cat.

A report released by Airbnb in November 2016 found that 90% of respondents in the UK and China ranked travel as more important to them than buying a car, paying off debt and purchasing a home. U.S. Millennials, however, equally ranked travel and buying a car.

Well, I’ve got a car, so there’s that.

“In addition to prioritizing travel, Millennials feel that travel is core to their identity,” the Airbnb report stated. “Over 70% of Millennials surveyed in each country said ‘travel is an important part of who I am as a person,’ and over 65% of Millennials said that ‘regular travel is an important part of my life.’”

While this attitude is a defining aspect of our generation, it is one that is at times blind to certain realities. I can’t count the number of times when, after listening to a friend or acquaintance regale wonderful tales of travel, I have had to say simply that I would share some of my own, but I don’t have many. I’ve been too focused on my career.

This response is typically met with condescension and encouragement to at some point just “drop everything and go.”

Sure, I could quit my job and travel the world with some of the savings I put away while living at home a few years ago. Or . . . I could continue pursuing my dreams and hope that, at some point, I will have the time for adventure. It’s a choice I consciously made. Opportunity came a knockin’, as they say. I don’t think that choice makes me any less a Millennial.

Plus, who will feed my cat? Then there are the many, many Millennials who I am certain would love to travel but just can’t afford it. Are they any less well-rounded than this Bumble (that’s a dating app) dude whose profile I literally just pulled up—really, it only took me one second to find someone with this perspective, who writes: “I enjoy exploring new places and going on spontaneous adventures. . . . World traveler.”

So my point is this, fellow Millennials. Travel is indeed important. I would wager it is more important than spending money on material goods. But the next time you find yourself stressing this to someone else, consider their circumstances. They might be broke. They might be killing it at work. Or they just might not have someone to feed their cat.
FACT:

Los Angeles has the Dirtiest Air in the Nation

Heavy duty diesel trucks are the No. 1 source of air pollution that causes asthma and many other health problems for our children and our communities. Underserved communities, in particular, are disproportionately affected by our region’s filthy air.

Get informed. Act NOW. Start breathing cleaner air.

We can eliminate up to 90% of greenhouse gas and smog-forming emissions by switching the 16,000 trucks that serve the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to new low NOx engines powered by clean, renewable natural gas.

Find out more at ACTNowLA.org for clean air NOW.
The Security Pacific National Bank Building at 110 Pine Ave. was sold to an unnamed buyer. The former office building is currently to be converted into 118 residential units; however, it is unclear if the buyer will follow through with plans. (Business Journal photograph)

**Development News**

**Historic Downtown Building Sold**

The Security Pacific National Bank Building located at 110 Pine Ave. has been sold, commercial real estate services firm CBRE Group Inc. announced on June 8.

Laurie Lustig-Bower and Kadie Presley Wilson of CBRE represented seller Grand Pacific 7-28 LLC, a local private investor. John Buckley Gordon of Irish Commercial Brokerage and Barry Block of Berliner Commercial represented the buyer, an LLC comprised of several private investor entities that wished to remain anonymous.

“This property is entitled to be converted into 118 residential units, but the buyer has not yet revealed their exact plans for the building,” Lustig-Bower said. “The new project will offer both ocean and city views. In addition, this property is an ideal location to take advantage of all the growth and the best Long Beach and this area has to offer.”

The 13-story property was built in 1925 and most recently served as an office building, but it is currently vacant except for the ground floor and basement level. The Federal Bar, a Knitting Factory Entertainment company, is a restaurant, speak-easy and live entertainment venue that occupies 16,000 square feet of the building. The facility will continue operations through the renovation process.

The purchase includes a 150-space parking structure located on 1st Street. According to Gordon, once entitlements go through, the buyer will release more details regarding the sale and future plans for the site.

**Mayor Garcia Announces CSULB Village Downtown**

During a presentation on new development in the City of Long Beach, Mayor Robert Garcia announced a new housing tower for California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) students and faculty, dubbed CSULB Downtown Village.

“Long Beach is quickly becoming a model city for strategic development that supports a more livable, innovative and sustainable future,” Garcia said. “The proposed CSULB student village is a homerun for the city and the university. Student and faculty housing will activate our downtown core with new economic opportunities and academic partnerships.”

Located between Promenade North and Long Beach Boulevard from 4th and 5th streets in the former City Place, the proposed project would house more than 1,000 CSULB art students and faculty. The 22-story project includes 800 student beds, 50 units for faculty and staff, 16 meeting rooms, a 5,000-square-foot Innovation Incubator, a 10,000-square-foot art gallery and museum space, and 45,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space, according to project developer Shooshani Developers.

“The location, innovation, diversity and vibrancy of the city mirror our own aspirations as a university. Developing the downtown as a place where our students, staff and faculty live along with offering art, learning experiences and other campus cultural events in Downtown Long Beach is an additional way for us to add to the natural synergies we already have,” CSULB President Jane Conoley said. “We are already close partners in education and hope to add more of our precious asset, our people, to the downtown renaissance. We are better and stronger together.”

“The CSULB Village is a gigantic win for the downtown core and will further activate the six-block area. This is the vision that we’ve long had for this site,” Tony Shoooshani, principal at Shooshani Developers, said in a statement. “We have been working with CSULB representatives for many years on possible projects in the area. The CSULB Village will expand the University’s presence in the city and offer workshops, housing and additional amenities that will be an asset to the community.”

The mayor’s presentation also highlighted the development of 5,000 residential units in various stages, from completed to conceptual, as well as $500 million invested in affordable housing over the last decade. Garcia attributed growth and development to the planning and economic development efforts.

**Realty Views**

**Stagnant Homeowner Movement May Be Profitable**

By **Terry Ross**

Statically, homeowners are putting a foot in one foot as likely to move as during the boom period before the housing recession of 2008. And given the latest statistics from one of the leading property data websites, this might be the best course for today’s owner if they are looking to maximize the profit potential of their house.

According to the property database website Zillow, which annually calculates how long a homeowner needs to live in a home for it to be more cost effective than renting, the national average break-even point is getting longer and is now one year, eleven months - or a month longer than the previous year. The site makes its calculations based on comparisons of homeownership costs with renting over the same period, using forecasts of rental increases and home appreciation.

Moody’s Analytics – another data firm – now says that homeowners are moving less at any time since before the Great Recession. The average homeowner stayed in a house an average of 8.7 years, according to statistics for 2016 – compared with about 3.5 years in 2008. Analysts point to job insecurity, declining incomes and tougher lending standards as some of the reasons, along with other unsettling remnants of the recession.

“We are coming out of a deep, dark hole called the housing bust, but we are a long way from normal. And we may never get back to normal, if normal was the average person stayed in their home for four or five years,” said Mark Zandi, chief economist of Moody’s. “We’re at eight-plus now, and even under the best of circumstances, maybe we get to six.”

This has led to a tightness in available homes for sale that has had an upward influence on prices and made it doubly tough on first-time buyers – mostly younger – tainable future,” Garcia said. “The proposed CSULB student village is a homerun for the city and the university. Student and faculty housing will activate our downtown core with new economic opportunities and academic partnerships.”

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**Economists also point out that the Baby-Boom generation, which is now reaching or has reached retirement age, was negatively impacted by the recession in a large way and has been slow to move as well because of financial concerns. It is predicted that group will eventually sell in order to downsize – and the greatest influx could be in a new housing peak that would hit in 2020-21. According to Zillow’s estimates, before owning pays off, a homeowner will need to own their home for 2.1 years in Riverside to be better financially than renting, up from 1.8 years in 2015. In addition, the numbers are 2.2 years in Bakersfield, up from 1.7 in 2015; 2.4 years in Sacramento, up from 2.1 in 2015; 2.5 years in Fresno, the same as 2015; 4.1 years in Los Angeles, the same as 2015; 4.1 years in San Diego, up from 3.4 in 2015; 4.5 years in San Francisco, up from 2.9 in 2015; and 5.1 years in San Jose, up from 3.2 in 2015.**

But for right now, Zillow advises being patient – especially in the more expensive and desirable coastal areas, where it will take several years for homeownership to pay off versus being a renter. It appears that many more people are doing that already, which could prove to be more profitable in the long run.

(Terry Ross, the broker-owner of TR Properties, will answer any questions about today’s real estate market. E-mail questions to Realty Views at terryross1@ixcs.com or call 949/457-4922.)
Beacon Apartments Breaks Ground

On June 12, construction on the first phase of Beacon Apartments began at 1201-1235 Long Beach Blvd. Phase one, Beacon Place, will consist of 39 units of support housing for extremely low-income veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, with an estimated completion of spring 2019. Phase two, Beacon Point, which is not yet under construction, will provide 121 one- and two-bedroom rental units for low to extremely low-income seniors over the age of 62. “Beacon Apartments is yet another example of the city’s commitment to meet the critical need for additional high-quality affordable and workforce housing in Long Beach,” Mayor Garcia said in a press release. “The city is working to implement new housing policy recommendations adopted by the city council, and a number of affordable housing developments for veteran, seniors and families are ready to break ground in the near future.” Century Housing is developing the project.

Another Step For New Fireboat Stations

At its June 12 meeting, the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners approved engineering design services for fireboat stations 15 and 20. In addition, baseline budgets of $50.1 million for station 15 and $51.6 million for station 20 were approved. “These fireboat stations will safeguard the port and our customers in this new era of big ships,” Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said. “They will provide the best waterside response possible, maximize landside firefighting coverage and serve as a home for our new, state-of-the-art fireboats.”
Seaside Way Development Underway

Construction has begun on Ensemble Real Estate’s five-story development at 207 Seaside Way, behind The Breakers. The project includes 113 residential units and 2,000 square feet of retail space. Also pictured is the construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting The Promenade along Pine Avenue to the Long Beach Performing Arts Center. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

Real Estate News

Two Multimillion-Dollar Sales

Principal Robert Stepp and Vice President Michael Toveg of Stepp Commercial represented Pacific Palisades in the $4.65 million sale of a 16-unit property located at 1175 E. 2nd St. A private investor from Orange County was the buyer. "This property offered the buyer an excellent rental location in Alamitos Beach and a nice mix of recently renovated units securing strong rents, as well as the opportunity to upgrade the remaining units to add more value as leases expire," Toveg said. The three-story property was built in 1964 and includes six one-bedroom units, 10 two-bedroom units, a central courtyard, eight private garages and a laundry facility. Eight of the units were recently fully renovated.

Stepp and Toveg also represented PS Realty Holdings LLC in the $2.4 million sale of Forty-Ninth Street Apartments located at 30 W. 49th St. to a private investor from Los Angeles. "Forty-Ninth Street Apartments provides the buyer with an ideal opportunity of adding value to the asset by upgrading the units and bringing rents up to market rates. It is one of the nicest properties in the neighborhood," Stepp said. Toveg added, "What many Los Angeles-area apartment investors may not know is that Long Beach is a non-rent-controlled market which provides the opportunity to realize a solid return by upgrading older product, as compared to other areas in the region that are limited by rent control restrictions." Built in 1963, the two-story property includes one one-bedroom unit and 11 two-bedroom units.

City Council Calls On Vacant Lot Owners

At its June 13 meeting, the Long Beach City Council approved the creation of the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone (UAIZ) program and the establishment of a Vacant Lot Registry. Owners of vacant lots will now be obligated to register their properties every year and adhere to stricter maintenance standards. According to Vice Mayor Rex Richardson, the registry will allow the community to access a publicly available database to become informed about vacant land opportunity sites that could be utilized for specific community-serving uses. Richardson said one such use could be the UAIZ program, which will give tax breaks to property owners who allow their vacant lots to be used as community gardens or urban farms.

Retail News

New Suit Store In North Long Beach

Suit City By Sorento is now open at 5536 Atlantic Ave. – Sorento, a specialty soccer store with multiple locations, will do some minor work to the building and hope to open by August.

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Retail News

Bixby Knolls Update

Blair Cohn, executive director of the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association, provided the Business Journal with the following update on new business activity in the Bixby Knolls area:

- 4047 Long Beach Blvd. – Summerjax, a design and branding studio, has already moved in and is currently renovating the building with an expected completion in August.
- 4310 Atlantic Ave. – Niky’s Sports, a specialty soccer store with multiple locations, will do some minor work to the building and hope to open by August.
- 4121 Atlantic Ave. – Edgar & James, a Goodwill specialty store and donation center, is undergoing major construction at the former Trader Joe’s location, with an estimated opening in August or September.
- 3803 Atlantic Ave. – Bixby Trading Post, “a group-owned marketplace for handmade and locally sourced goods,” described as a “general store meets the farmstand,” opened on May 5. Also opening May 5 at 3803 Atlantic Ave. – Sisters LB, a women’s clothing store.

New Suit Store In North Long Beach

Suit City By Sorento is now open at 5536 Atlantic Ave. The business operated for 10 years in the San Fernando Valley before moving to Downtown Los Angeles where it operated for the past 15 years. The business relocated to Long Beach to expand and opened the 2,000-square-foot store at the end of May. Store manager Arash Kashani said they chose Long Beach because the space is nice, with a storefront and walking traffic. For more information, call 562/422-0399.
Mayors Garcia, And Garcetti Commit To Zero-Emission Ports By 2035

By Michael Gouis Contributing Writer

The ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles plan to aim for zero-emission operations by 2035, and together they will push other ports and cities on the West Coast toward a similar goal, the mayors of the two cities said last week.

In a joint declaration outlining their intentions, Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti made it clear that they were making a statement in response to the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris agreement on climate and environmental protection.

And they also wanted to make it clear that on environmental issues, the two – together, by far the country’s busiest port complex – would not be competitors but collaborators, working together to create a market to drive clean technology for cargo moving equipment, trucks and rail vehicles.

“Most of you can remember, like I do, what the air looked like just 10, 20 years ago,” Garcia said at a news conference along the waterfront in San Pedro. “This is not just a step forward for the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. It is a direct statement that we will not go backward in this country, in this region, that we will push back every step of the way to ensure that we meet the goals of the Paris agreement, and that Long Beach and Los Angeles continue to lead when it comes to clean air and environmental protection.”

Washington may not care about clean air or think that environmental justice for people who live near our ports isn’t anything to be concerned about,” Garcetti said. “You can be damned sure that we do. These are our communities. We’re not letting anyone move us backward. We’re going to fight for our air, we’re going to fight for our families, and we’re going to fight for our jobs.

“There are 10 times the number of jobs in clean energy in this state than there are coal jobs in this entire country. China gets it – these are the jobs of the future. Europe gets it – these are the jobs of the future. And the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles get it – there are jobs connected to getting this right.”

While emissions have been dramatically reduced since the Clean Air Action Plan’s adoption in 2006, the ports remain the single largest source of air pollution in Southern California, said Los Angeles City Councilmember Joe Buscaino, who represents the San Pedro region. And it doesn’t take much to remember the foul, polluted air in Southern California when he was growing up, he said.

“Many of us remember when there was a heavy, brown haze hanging over the ports and over our cities. It was easy to forget that we actually had mountains to the north of us,” Buscaino said.

At the news conference, the mayors committed to complete the 2017 update of the Clean Air Action Plan for the ports by November. It is the latest step toward meeting the environmental goals laid out in the plan, which has been implemented during the past 10 years. Specific targets identified by the mayors include 100% of the cargo handling equipment in the ports to emit zero pollutants by 2030 and for all trucks to emit zero pollutants by 2035. Currently, the ports are working on a draft of the latest update of the plan. In public comments to date, shippers and cargo handlers have questioned whether pursuing a zero-emissions goal would miss the opportunity to implement ultra-low-emissions technologies much earlier than 2035.

Garcia and Garcetti also announced that they would be taking their ideas on the road to other port operators, with the intention of creating a demand for zero-emissions equipment for cargo handling and transportation. The Green Ports Collaborative’s goal is to get ports and cities to commit to purchasing zero-emission vehicles and to cut emissions from vessels while at dock and in the port complex.

The collaborative is a new initiative of the Climate Mayors group, an organization of U.S. mayors who have committed to environmental and climate protection policies in their cities and to meet the standards of the Paris climate agreement.

Nearly 300 mayors in the U.S., representing more than 60 million residents, have signed on to the Climate Mayors association, with the number more than quadrupling in the days since federal officials announced the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement.

The collective purchasing power of the Climate Mayors communities and associations like the Green Ports Collaborative will be the force that ultimately drives the technology needed to further reduce emissions and pollutants, Garcetti said.

“We don’t want people undercutting each other at the price of the residents in their communities. We want to build a marketplace that builds a demand for zero-emission trucks and equipment,” he said. “We know when we approach the
Pacific Harbor Line moves 140 tons of cargo per second.

Three years in the Army had prepared Mike for just about anything.

Pacific Gateway linked PHL with 28 new employees, and paid 50% of their wages during their training period. Many of them veterans, like Mike.

Strong businesses need hardworking people. We make the connection.

CONTACT:
Cort Huckabone • (562) 570-4576 • cort.huckabone@pacific-gateway.org

pacific-gateway.org/business
A free business service from the City of Long Beach.
Teslas and the GMs, the Fords and the Nissans of the world – when all of our cities come together – they see a marketplace that is worth their investment.”

“This is really brave new territory. We will set these goals. There will be setbacks. They might be scientific setbacks. The technology might not be there. Other times, we will surpass our goals. We will see technologies emerge more quickly than we ever thought possible. But only because we stay unified and have a joint commitment. If we don’t keep pushing, if we don’t have these goals, we will never get there,” Garcetti said.

Garcetti said the technological advancements needed will prove to be the largest obstacles that will have to be overcome to meet those goals. But fear will be an obstacle that must be overcome en route to creating the necessary advances in technology, he told the Business Journal.

“I think it’s technological – and then just psychology, the fear: Does environmental mean fewer jobs for my members, or less business?” Garcetti said after the news conference had ended. “I think we’re showing that by going green, the state has created more jobs. There is a practical reason other nations are signing on to Paris. They know that there are solar installation jobs, there are manufacturing jobs. Los Angeles, Long Beach and California understand that, even if the White House doesn’t.”

San Pedro Bay Ports Experience Busiest May Ever

By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER
Assistant Editor

Both the Port of Long Beach and Port of Los Angeles experienced the busiest May in their histories this year, achieving record highs for the month in cargo traffic volumes.

At the Port of Long Beach, 648,287 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of cargo passed through in May. Total cargo volumes increased by 1.2% compared to May of last year. Imported container traffic increased by 1.8%, while export traffic decreased by 14.3%. Shipment of empty containers increased by 12.6%, according to the port.

Year to date through May, overall traffic at the Port of Long Beach (POLB) increased by 4.1%. The port attributed its growth to new vessel-sharing alliances and increased terminal use.

The Port of Los Angeles (POLA) experienced a 3.4% increase in overall cargo volumes in May, with 796,216 TEUs moving through its facilities. Import traffic increased by 3.1%, exports rose 4.4%, and empty container movement increased by 3.1%, according to POLA.

As officials from the Port of Long Beach and the City and Port of Los Angeles look on, Mayor Robert Garcia of Long Beach, left, and Mayor Gil Garcetti of Los Angeles display the joint declaration they signed “that sets ambitious goals for the ports to make the transition to zero emissions in the Clean Air Action Plan (CAAP).” In a statement, Garcia said, “CAAP will include new investments in clean technology, expanding airberth emission reductions, and launching a zero emissions drayage truck pilot program in the next few years.” (Port of Los Angeles photograph)
Recognizing Their Legacy
Historic Long Beach Businesses And Organizations

The last edition of the Long Beach Business Journal featured a listing of 223 historic businesses that opened in Long Beach prior to 1970 and continue to operate in the city. We also listed 46 nonprofit membership organizations. Businesses and organizations not included were encouraged to reach out to add their names to the list. We received calls from the following: 
- Oberjueg Auto Repair, 228 Redondo Ave., founded in 1946 as Vern Halter, Public Accountant. 
- DiPiazza’s, 5205 E. Pacific Coast Hwy., founded in 1952. 
- Oberjueg Auto Repair, 228 Redondo Ave., founded in 1946 as Vern Halter, Public Accountant. 
- Oberjueg Auto Repair, 228 Redondo Ave., founded in 1946 as Vern Halter, Public Accountant. 

To view the original article, visit http://bit.ly/2swOKyz.

L.A. Port Releases Supplemental EIR For China Shipping Terminal

By SAMANTHA MIKINGER

Assistant Editor

The Port of Los Angeles has released a draft supplemental environmental impact report (EIR) to the original 2008 EIR, which addressed the construction and operation of the China Shipping Container Terminal. The supplemental document examines the continued operation of the terminal with new or modified mitigation measures and takes into account expected higher cargo volumes than were originally estimated.

Based upon forecasted cargo growth, the EIR “examines whether potentially new significant environmental impacts or substantially more severe impacts would occur in the areas of air quality, greenhouse gases and ground transportation,” according to a port statement.

A 45-day public comment period takes place from July 16 to July 31. Public comments are also being accepted at an open meeting on July 18 at 6 p.m. at the Port of Los Angeles Administration Building, 425 S. Palos Verdes St., San Pedro.

The document is available to view online at www.portoflosangeles.org/EIR/China Shipping/DSEIR/dseir_china_shipping.asp and at the following locations:
- Port of Los Angeles Environmental Management Division, 222 W. 6th St., Suite 900, San Pedro
- L.A. Public Library, San Pedro Branch, 931 S. Gaffey St., San Pedro
- L.A. Public Library, Wilmington Branch, 1300 N. Avalon, Wilmington
- L.A. Public Library, Central Branch, 630 W. 5th St., Los Angeles

Written comments may be submitted via e-mail to ceqacomments@portla.org or by mail to: 
Port of Los Angeles, Chris Cannon, Director of Environmental Management, P.O. Box 151, San Pedro, CA 90733-0151.

Questions about the project may be directed to Lisa Ochsner, project manager, at 310/732-3412. For more information, visit www.portoflosangeles.org.

Another Step Toward A City Styrofoam Ban

By BRANDON RICHARDSON

Senior Writer

During the June 13 meeting of the Long Beach City Council’s Environmental Committee, Public Works Environmental Services Bureau Manager Diko Melkonian made a presentation regarding the proposed ban on polystyrene (Styrofoam) in the city. The three-member committee is chaired by Councilmember Daryl Supernaw and includes Vice Mayor/Council Rex Richardson and Councilmember Jeannine Pearce.

As part of the original request by the city council in December, environmental services has gathered stakeholder input during five meetings, including June 13. Melkonian made similar presentations during another environmental committee meeting in February, at a sustainable city committee meeting in March, and economic development meetings in March and May.

“At each one of these meetings, there was opportunity for public input, and there was quite a bit of public input,” Melkonian said during his presentation. “If you attended any of those meetings, you would find that there are people that are very passionate on both sides of this issue, and we were fortunate enough to be able to include them and take their comments into consideration.”

In the latest presentation, a timeline for the implementation of various phases was included. Phase one of the ban would go into effect on October 1 and would apply to all city departments, facilities and events. Phase two would apply to large restaurants and go into effect on April 22, 2018. Phases three and four would go into effect on October 1, 2018, and would apply to small restaurants.

Written comments may be submitted via e-mail to ceqacomments@portla.org or by mail to: 
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(Please Continue To Next Page)
rants and other businesses, including caterers, hospitals, nursing homes, grocery stores, hotels and schools.

Melkonian said city staff is still trying to determine how to differentiate between large and small restaurants, adding that the number of seats is being considered as an option.

“One of the big concerns out there was from mom and pops, smaller restaurants, having concerns about the impacts on them,” Melkonian said. “So we felt by giving them these separate phases, we could give a little bit of relief upfront and give these smaller restaurants a little more time to come into compliance.”

The proposed implementation dates are tentative, Melkonian explained. He said the final timeline would ultimately be set by the city council after hearing all stakeholder input. During the committee meeting, Richardson and Pearce said they would like more time between phases two and three to give small business owners more time to adjust to the transition.

“When we come up with these things at city council, we try to be good stewards of the planet and we try to be environmentalists. But sometimes we forget about the small guy,” Richardson said. “I’m glad to see that there is a phase in.”

The products chosen by each business to replace polystyrene, according to Melkonian, will determine the economic impacts on businesses caused by the ban. He explained that some alternatives could be less expensive, cost the same or be more expensive. However, he said other cities that have implemented similar bans report higher initial costs, with a reduction as more businesses transition and supply and demand takes over.

Additionally, Melkonian said staff is looking at developing cooperative purchasing opportunities to help businesses save money and would assist restaurants in linking with vendors, as well as including an undue hardship clause to exemption requests.

The ordinance would also include a public education element featuring a multi-language website and print materials, openhouse meetings and a hotline. Melkonian said staff is also considering temporary waivers, incentives for businesses that comply early and exemptions for businesses to exhaust existing polystyrene inventory.

“We will have enforcement provisions in our current operations,” Melkonian said. “The health department will be looking as they do their annual health inspections that restaurants are coming into compliance with whatever format the ordinance may take.”

Some public commenters, such as members of the Surfrider Foundation and Don’t Waste Long Beach, praised the proposal as a step in the right direction and a means for Long Beach to lead the way for surrounding cities. While restaurateurs, the California Restaurant Association and the Plastic Food Service Packaging Group maintained that the ban would unnecessarily hurt business owners and would do little to solve litter issues, as most polystyrene litter does not come from the food service industry but rather packaging materials.

City staff will incorporate the most recent public comments into the information provided to city council for further deliberation. A date has not been set for the meeting before the full city council.
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Lawsuit Filed Against Proposed Belmont Pool

By Brandon Richardson
Senior Writer

On June 13, local activist group Citizens About Responsible Planning (CARP) filed a lawsuit at the Los Angeles County Superior Court challenging the certification of the environmental impact report (EIR) for the Belmont Beach and Aquatic Center.

“While the city’s effort to provide more swimming pools for the public and even a new competitive swimming venue,” Joe Weinstein, CARP board president, said, “But the city didn’t adequately inform the public of all the adverse impacts of building the facility on the beach site and utterly failed to identify and consider superior sites in other parts of the city.”

The complaint claims inadequate analyses of impacts from foreseeable sea level rise, visual and aesthetic degradation, violations of height-limit ordinances and a lack of traffic and biological studies, according to a press release.

Organizations such as the Surfrider Foundation, Long Beach Area Peace Network and El Dorado Audubon argued that officials should have more seriously considered other downtown or inland sites that would be cheaper than the proposed $103 million project and grant better access to the public citywide.

“The concern raised by the [California] Coastal Commission staff about inadequate analysis of sea level rise and impaired coastal views were nearly identical to concerns CARP expressed at the hearing.” Ann Cantrell, a founding member and CARP boardmember, said. “We are disappointed the city didn’t choose to consider alternatives which would have provided more benefits for the public and avoided all these challenges.”

The activist group had filed an appeal to the Long Beach City Council with the same claims, however, the council voted to approve the project at its May 16 meeting. The project still requires coastal commission approval and CARP has filed an appeal to the commission, in addition to its lawsuit. Long Beach City Attorney Charles Parkin said the city has no comment at this time.

Land Use And Urban Design Elements Reviewed by Council, Commission

By Samantha Mehlinger
Assistant Editor

Both the Long Beach City Council and Long Beach Planning Commission held study sessions on the proposed updates of the Land Use Element and Urban Design Element of the General Plan during the week of June 12. Long Beach Development Services (LBDS) staff gave presentations to the governing bodies to discuss what the elements entail and how their goals are aligned with the city’s future needs.

State law requires the city to update the Land Use Element, which was last revised in 1989. The Urban Design Element, formerly known as the Scenic Routes Element, was created in 1975 and never updated.

According to the presentations, which were delivered by Advance Planning Officer Christopher Koontz, 11 years’ worth of public input went into the documents. Since the Land Use Element was last updated, the city has gained 44,000 more residents and will likely have another 18,000 by 2040.

A City Election Where No One Votes?

(Continued From Page 1)

Zip for the citywide seats. The odds are very high that Mayor Robert Garcia, City Attorney Charlie Parkin, City Auditor Laura Doud and City Prosecutor Doug Haubert will run unopposed, guaranteeing each one another four-year term without campaigning or receiving a stamp of approval from the voters.

Among councilmembers, only one person—in the 3rd District—has filed an intent to run. “Intent” is not the same as actually running—which, among other requirements, includes a filing fee. If this person is a serious candidate, they will file the paperwork necessary to form a campaign committee and raise money.

The filing deadline to “officially” run is not until January 12, but let’s face it, if one is going to mount a legitimate challenge to an incumbent, he or she would have already been campaigning for months, created a campaign committee, sent out press releases to maximize news coverage and raised money—lots of it.

So, yes, accountability be damned, we just might have an election next April 10 where not one of the city’s nearly 275,000 registered voters has a voice.

Incumbents will certainly be angling for money to build up a war chest. Here’s some advice to voters: Put away your checkbook. Don’t donate unless the incumbent has a challenger. An elected official with integrity will not pressure you to donate.

And a note for incumbents, specifically to city councilmembers, who are the ones setting policies for all residents and business owners: Don’t assume getting a free ride is the same as “you’re doing a good job.” There is a long list of issues that have irked constituents, including tax increases, crime, homelessness, street/sidewalk repair prioritization, union issues with hotels, project labor agreements, code inspections, rental housing policies, the rejection of international flights, and the minimum wage (you knew the state was going to act, but you had to push it anyway, causing a lot of anxiety among the small business community that you all claim you support).

If it were up to me, incumbents without challengers would still have to face the voters. “Do you support or oppose (name of incumbent)? Check the yes or no box.”

You need 50% plus one to stay in office. The majority still rules! (Note: Next edition: It’s time to be able to vote for more than one councilmember.)
As CVB President and CEO Steve Goodling and convention center General Manager Charlie Beirne tell it, the key to booking this business has been the transformation of the center into a versatile facility with turnkey event venues that are not only, as Beirne frequently says, “very cool,” but also offer enormous cost savings to clients.

The Cove, a new special events space beneath the Terrace Theater Plaza, is now complete and ready for events ranging from loungey to urban chic and beyond. In a few short weeks, the new pedestrian walkway connecting the Terrace Theater Plaza and the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center’s Pine Avenue promenade will be complete. And by Thanksgiving, the fountain at the plaza will be transformed into a showpiece reminiscent of the famous fountain at the Bellagio resort in Las Vegas, although of course on a much smaller scale.

These venues and infrastructure are the culmination of about $60 million in improvements made to the center — an investment which is already earning the facility an award-winning reputation in the meetings and convention industry.

Most recently, trade publication Successful Meetings named Goodling one of the Top 25 Most Influential People in the Meetings Industry, a designation for which he was also recognized by the Long Beach City Council on June 6. In March, he was inducted into the BizBash Hall of Fame by BizBash Media, a news and ideas resource for meetings and special events industry professionals and organizations.

The improvements to the facility, spearheaded by Goodling with Beirne’s partnership, were in response to shifting trends in the conventions and meetings industry that Goodling tapped into when the convention center was host to the now world-renowned TED Conference.

“TED was ahead of the curve,” Goodling said. As he explained it, TED changed the communication pattern of conventions. Rather than an event centered on someone making a presentation and attendees having to sit, listen and then go back to their hotel rooms, the event’s organizers devised a formula that was flexible and conducive to making connections.

“TED broke those barriers and those molds of, you don’t have to be the good student and sit in the front,” Goodling said. “You can also be a little bit of the rebel and hang out in the lobby and still take it in. But you take it in at whatever pace and engagement you want.” In addition to allowing attendees to tweet and text in questions during talks, the organizers created breakout lounge areas where attendees could grab customized food and drinks and connect with others while still catching the talks on big screens.
Things are different here. We’ve designed a new place that didn’t exist before — The Cove, with its turnkey light and sound, saves thousands of dollars in comped features. An outdoor mezzanine, with an atmosphere that doesn’t skimp on wow factor, your next meeting will be something that hasn’t happened before.
"It was all TED inspired," Goodling said of the convention center improvements. "All the furniture pods, TED inspired. All the decor, TED inspired. If you go through our promenade, you will see cool furniture. You will see cool chandeliers. You will have charging stations."

Goodling continued, "In addition, then we activated spaces that were basically underutilized because they were outdated. So the first project, of course, was the arena project."

The Long Beach Arena is home to the Pacific Room, an events venue featuring a full theatrical rigging system that sometimes offers up to hundreds of thousands of dollars in cost savings depending on the size of the event. The Terrace Theater Plaza and Lobby have also been equipped with stage lighting, and any part of the convention center is now able to be transformed with temporary furniture and decor available through the convention center. Beirne said the arena is such a hit that he hardly has any open dates to book events there. He also doubled his stage crew, which operates full time on staff at the center.

“We are creating unique spaces, and nobody else has done it yet,” Goodling said. “Convention centers aren’t there yet. The private sector is there in terms of creating social spaces. But they aren’t there yet in terms of creating unique special event venues.”

In addition to wanting venues that can “wow” attendees into sharing photos and posts about events on social media, meetings planners are also seeking venues that can accommodate what Beirne has dubbed the three C’s: connecting, collaborating and communicating. “I think that’s the most important key, and it has been for the last couple of years,” he said.

Convention and meeting planners are now seeking to work with CVBs that will work closely with them to ensure the success of their event, according to Goodling. In years past, they were simply looking for “rates and dates” – a space to rent for an affordable price.

“In our type of field, we’re now competing with large box hotels which have expanded significantly in Southern California and across the nation,” Goodling said. “We are competing with thousand-room hotels that have the same amount of convention space that our center has. . . . Now our main competitive advantage is we have unique special event venues and they don’t.”

Goodling and Beirne believe Long Beach is competitively positioned in the regional and national convention marketplace. In addition to the upgraded facilities, they believe the partnership between themselves and their staff, as well as the greater hospitality and tourism industries in the city, puts Long Beach at an advantage.

During the week of June 12, CVB staff was joined by Long Beach hotel managers on a trip to an annual trade show in Washington, D.C., where major national organizations interact with convention center and CVB staff from across the country to decide where to host their conventions. In years past, the mayor has attended as well.

When prospective clients visit the city, the CVB and convention center partner with Long Beach’s major hotels to host a lunch and site inspections. “I have had many clients say in their decades of doing this, they have never had any city show up with full representation to welcome them and show them that they are there as a partnership,” Goodling said.
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Baltin attributed the strong figures – which well surpass the national hotel occupancy average of 65.5% – to Long Beach’s strong position as a leisure and convention destination. “The convention center renovations that have been done in the last several years have done very well. They have been well received,” Baltin noted. “A walkable hotel supply and a strong convention center and a good convention bureau I think bodes pretty well for the near-term future.”

The strength of the market has led to investments in new hotels in the city, with at least one planned in downtown at Ocean Boulevard and Pine Avenue and others in the works. Inland, a new Hampton Inn & Homewood Suites is under construction at Douglas Park, while a Staybridge Suites is planned adjacent to the renovated Holiday Inn Airport Hotel. Baltin said the new hotels are needed. “At 81% [occupancy], we’re well above the national average. And conventional wisdom is that with occupancy at 70%, there is room for additional supply,” he said. “Long Beach is well in that range. And frankly, I think additional hotels downtown would help the convention center.”

Mark Becker, area vice president and general manager of the Hyatt Regency Long Beach and Hyatt Centric The Pike, views the new hotels as a positive addition to Long Beach, so long as demand remains strong. “We certainly don’t feel the market is saturated. I think it gives the CVB other alternatives to help fill guest rooms for citywide conventions,” he said.

The Regency, which is located adjacent to the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, is benefiting from a strong convention calendar this year, according to Becker. “We’re having a year that is a little bit better than we had projected at both hotels,” he said, referring both to occupancy and average daily room rates. So far, it appears that 2018’s convention and meeting bookings are pacing behind 2017, which is a concern for Becker. “We’re keeping our eye on that, and we’re certainly doing everything we can to help the CVB close on citywide business,” he said, noting that convention business does tend to dip every other year. “The Centric is a little bit different of a mix and, certainly, we do more individual travel and leisure business at Centric than we do group [bookings],” Becker said. “But believe it or not, with the space we have available, we are seeing small, corporate in-house pieces of group business.”

Becker said improvements to the Queen Mary, which is beginning full renovations, and other investments in the city will further the appeal of Long Beach as a destination. However, he did mention one failed initiative in the past year that disappointed him. “I was personally a little disappointed in the decision regarding JetBlue,” he said, referring to the Long Beach City Council’s decision last year not to pursue a request by JetBlue to add international flight service at the airport. “I think anytime you can increase air lift into your city, it only helps from a visitor perspective. I certainly appreciate the reasons why that wasn’t done. . . To me, anytime we get an opportunity to increase traffic into our great city, I see it as a real positive thing.”

At the Hilton Long Beach, located adjacent to One World Trade Center, occupancy is down a bit so far this year, according to General Manager Greg Keebler. “Occupy is down very slightly, and [the average daily room] rate is holding flat,” he said. “We do expect to have a little bit of a slow summer but a very strong fourth quarter and, most likely, will end up achieving our goals by year end.”

Keebler observed, “I think in most cases people are really waiting a little bit more before they make their travel plans. Not as much advanced planning seems to be going on for leisure travel.”

Long Beach Hotel Occupancy Soars

(Continued From Page 1)

Imran Ahmed, general manager of the Long Beach Marriott, said the hotel’s guests are typically visiting Long Beach on corporate or government business. The hotel, adjacent to the 405 Freeway, features 308 rooms, a large outdoor pool and event space, meeting rooms, and the new Tamarindo’s Margarita Bar & Cantina. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)
The Hilton primarily hosts business travelers and conventioneers, Keebler noted. “I think the planners who see everything that Long Beach has to offer are extremely excited about bringing their business here,” he said. “I think our future years are going to continue to get stronger because of the work that has been done by the city and by the CVB.”

The Hilton is in part to word spreading about the hotel’s renovations, which were completed in 2015. “Occupancy at the Hilton Long Beach Airport and the Long Beach Marriott, are both reporting increased occupancy so far this year. These hotels and others in the area principally serve business and corporate travelers, as well as some transient guests generated by airport traffic.”

Occupancy at the Long Beach Marriott was up 7% through May compared with the same time period last year, according to General Manager Imran Ahmed. “We had some additional groups that our sales department went after and booked that we did not have last year,” he said but noted that transient stays have decreased by 3% to 3.5%. “It’s just the government travel has slowed down from last year,” he said of the drop.

The hotel is doing better than it has done in previous years,” Sowards said. “We are currently about six points in occupancy better than last year.” Average daily rates (ADRs) charged for hotel stays have also increased a bit compared to last year, but Sowards speculated that there likely would not be significant rate growth until hotel room renovations are completed.

Two of the city’s major inland hotels, the Hilton Long Beach Airport and the Long Beach Marriott, are both reporting increased occupancy so far this year. These hotels and others in the area principally serve business and corporate travelers, as well as some transient guests generated by airport traffic.

“Revenues are better, but [on] ADR we are taking a $5 hit every month,” Ahmed said. Despite higher occupancy, rates have decreased because the occupancy has primarily been generated by group bookings, which are made at lower rates, he explained. Despite that, Ahmed foresees “healthy growth year over year in occupancy and rate and revenue.”

“Revenues are better, but [on] ADR we are taking a $5 hit every month,” Ahmed said. Despite that, Ahmed foresees “healthy growth year over year in occupancy and rate and revenue.”

Ahmed has concerns about the new hotels being built in the area. “If the market remains the way it is right now, we will be OK. But if there is any downturn, we will all be suffering,” he said.

Demolition of the old wings at the Holiday Inn Long Beach Airport and construction on the new Staybridge Suites will begin sometime this fall, according to Holiday Inn General Manager Mooyon Kim. The Staybridge Suites, which is to be owned and operated by Intercontinental Hotel group, will feature 125 suites with full kitchens, he said. “As part of the project, we are expanding our pool and the common areas as well,” he noted.

Occupancy at the Holiday Inn is up 15% over last year – an increase Kim attributes in part to word spreading about the hotel’s renovations, which were completed in 2015. Its new top floor restaurant, Vue Bar & Restaurant, opened this year. He estimated that the hotel’s ADR increased by about 10%. “And overall, the RevPAR, the revenue per available room, also went up,” he added.

While most of the hotel’s guests are corporate travelers visiting Boeing, area aerospace companies or the regional headquarters of Mercedes-Benz USA at Douglas Park, Kim noted that some transient travelers book rooms overnight before heading out on Carnival Cruise Line trips. Carnival plans to expand its presence in Long Beach by swapping out one of its vessels with a larger ship, a move that Kim expects will benefit his hotel.
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How The CVB Uses Social Media To Grow Relationships, Attract Business

By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER
Assistant Editor

For the Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), social media is anything but an afterthought. It is a hard-worked strategy meant to establish and foster relationships in an effort to accomplish the CVB’s main objective: bringing people to Long Beach, whether for business or leisure.

According to Digital Communications Director Loren Simpson, the growth of the CVB’s social media division is due to Steve Goodling, president and CEO, recognizing the value of communicating via social media before its use was as mainstream as it is today.

“It’s refreshing to see that people understand the power of social media because it’s very powerful,” Simpson said. “It’s so important. It’s vital. That’s why so many large organizations and companies have a department dedicated to it.”

Assisting Simpson with the CVB’s social media efforts are digital communications managers Erica Morris, who started a year ago, and Jamie Weeks, who was first hired to the CVB as an intern about three years ago.

Morris manages the Terrace Theater’s social media accounts, as well as the Meet in Long Beach accounts, which are aimed at meeting and convention planners and attendees. Weeks covers the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center’s social media handles and assists Simpson with the leisure travel oriented Visit Long Beach accounts. Each of these are found on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Through the Meet in Long Beach handle, Morris coordinates with CVB remote staff working trade shows in other cities to help attract more people to the CVB’s booths. “We try to help them drive attendance to their booth and meet new people by doing some social media campaigns,” she said. “So we just encourage people: hey, go to our booth. Take a selfie. Post it with our hashtags.”

This year, the CVB launched a new social media campaign for its Meet in Long Beach accounts. “One that we have been doing lately is Choose Your Chucks,” Morris said, referring to Converse Chuck Taylor shoes. At trade shows, visitors to CVB booths are encouraged to take a photo and post it with a specific hashtag to get a chance to win the sneakers. This both generates new social media traffic to the Meet in Long Beach accounts and incentivizes people to interact with the CVB.

“It has actually gotten a lot of good traction. People, once they have won, they want to tweet back out how they have customized their shoes,” Morris said. In one instance, the campaign resulted in a connection at a San Francisco trade show – the winner, who was a meeting planner, and a CVB sales executive ended up having a lunch meeting, Morris noted.

At that two-day trade show alone, the Choose Your Chucks campaign generated 370,000 social media impressions.

The Meet in Long Beach handle is also used to communicate with convention planners and meetings professionals who are visiting Long Beach. “Something that we do with our meeting planners and attendees is, across all channels, we personalize welcome messages to each of them,” Weeks said.

“Meet in Long Beach is also used to get people interested in visiting the city. ‘We do a lot of targeted posts. So if we know that someone can drive two hours and be here, then we are making sure that we are targeting that audience,’” Simpson said.

“And when big articles like from Thrillist or LA Weekly are talking about any of our restaurants, we are pushing that out too, showing people we’re not just like a sister city to Los Angeles,’” Weeks added.

Visit Long Beach social media accounts are the principal vehicles for the CVB’s Beach with Benefits campaign, a summer sweepstakes in which winners receive VIP hotel stays and visits to Long Beach attractions. Beach with Benefits also features smaller contests year-round.

“We use social media also as our way of pitching things too,” Simpson said, noting that the Visit Long Beach handle is used to reach out to digital influencers with many followers, publications and other outlets.

“We have a lot of people – once we have reached out to them and responded to those tweets – who will say back to us like, ‘We had the greatest time,’ or, ‘Hit our record attendance,’” Weeks said. “And I think it just helps them develop or feel like they are developing a personal relationship with us and the city. And they want to come back to somewhere they feel welcome.”

Simpson reflected, “It’s tons of strategy and planning and work. But in the end if it opens up a door for our sales department or it assists in someone trying to plan their summer vacation and they choose Long Beach versus somewhere else, I mean, it makes all the difference for us.”
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Sights, Sounds And Sales
CVB’s VIP Site Visits Land Business For Long Beach

By THYDA DUONG
Contributing Writer

It’s safe to say that meeting planners and conventioneers rarely find urban meeting places in the United States where the waterfront is their backyard and the sky is their ceiling. And when they choose the City of Long Beach for a site visit, the sky is the limit.

That’s because the Long Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) is thoroughly prepared to promote the city and its amenities, offering an interactive and comprehensive tour that caters to the unique needs of every client, says CVB National Sales Director Mary Jane Myers.

The process of getting a client to visit the city to experience its amenities, however, can be quite arduous. It can take more than a year, beginning with sending initial information about the city and its events to intrigue potential clients, followed by a series of conversations and proposals. In the process, the CVB is also competing with other cities, making it critical for staffers to become aware of and knowledgeable about what its competitors have to offer.

Once clients make it to Long Beach, however, the payoff is clear. “It takes a long time, but it’s so worth it,” Myers says. “Once we get the client to Long Beach, it’s pretty easy to sell them because it’s an amazing city.”

“The convenience of the hotels to the convention center, how compact the city is and its walkability lends to people connecting when they’re in town, which gives them the ability to collaborate with one another, and that builds a stronger sense of community within the organization,” Myers adds. “And clients love that.”

While many clients may have already been introduced to the City of Long Beach through prior video and presentations, the in-person site visit typically seals the deal.

“I tell them you will feel this welcome – the feeling of home,” Myers says of the city’s ambiance. “It’s a community feeling you won’t get anywhere else, and I think they feel that even before they get to the city. So they’re not surprised when they get here, but they are pleasantly welcomed, and they really love what they see.”

Site visits to the city typically last for a day and a half to two days, with a detailed and thorough schedule in place that is highly coordinated amongst the CVB, hoteliers, restaurants and political leaders. For instance, information is sent to all of the hoteliers involved with housing the group on what’s important to the client, challenges they see with coming to the city, and how the city can overcome those challenges.

“When a meeting planner comes into town, they will envision their meeting happening in this city and how convenient it will be,” Myers says. “And we help convince them that this will be the right choice.”

Prior to the visit, the CVB develops a comprehensive client profile that paints a picture of the client’s interests, including their favorite food and drinks, favorite sports teams, hobbies, and if they have children and pets, among other things. VIP gifts are then placed in the client’s hotel room according to their preferences.

While Myers says developing a client profile is standard at most CVBs, Long Beach is distinguished by its strong hospitality.

“I have had multiple clients say that their site visit to Long Beach was the best they’ve ever had,” she says. “[They talk about] how fun it was and how much they felt cared for. I once had a client say, from the mayor to the bellboy, everybody made them feel so welcome.”

A client’s visit often begins with breakfast at a local hotel, where the general manager and director of sales/marketing are waiting and ready to greet the client with a special beverage, followed by a personalized sit-down conversation.

“Everybody’s ready to go when we get to the hotel,” Myers says. “And that speaks volumes over and over again – at every hotel and at the convention center.”

The CVB then hosts a special luncheon hospitality reception that convenes general managers and directors of sales from hotels involved with hosting the client’s event, key members of the CVB, and many times city leaders such as the mayor.

“Everyone focuses on that client and their needs,” Myers says. “They’re the center of attention. That is so appreciated by the client because they feel really special and [enjoy] being in the beautiful waterfront location and having excellent hotels and hoteliers who go out of their way to truly make them feel welcome.”

Myers notes that the city’s hoteliers also work together well in marketing the city.

“They understand that it really takes the city to make this happen, so there’s not that competitive edge going on,” she explains. “There’s a welcoming and a coming together in Long Beach.”

Dinner is arranged at another local restaurant, oftentimes in a different part of the city to showcase Long Beach’s unique neighborhoods, Myers notes, adding that fun excursions such as boat rides or a water taxi to the Queen Mary are also incorporated into the client’s visit.

Special requests, such as fireworks and customized food tastings, are also accommodated. “We once had someone who wanted a tasting of comfort food, but they didn’t define what comfort food meant,” Myers recalls. “The convention center did a taste testing and it was off the charts. They did an amazing job. The client loved it and they ended up booking.”

Catering to client needs is key when it comes to a successful site visit, Myers says.

“We focus in on paying close attention to client needs and the needs of the meeting,” Myers explains, “and showing them under no uncertain terms how they will have an amazing and successful meeting in Long Beach.”

Mary Jane Myers, national sales director for the Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), places an emphasis on getting to know clients so that once they make site visits to the city, the CVB is able to make them feel right at home. It’s just one strategy in a detailed process aimed at booking business for the city. (Photograph provided by the Long Beach CVB)

Kristi Allen, vice president of hotel operations for Ensemble Real Estate, whose portfolio includes the Hotel Maya, a DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, welcomes potential clients and meeting planners to Long Beach. (Photograph provided by the Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau)
Veronica Quintero has been working at the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center since 1979, when she was just about to finish high school. Now, she not only oversees food and beverage operations at the center, but also at the Aquarium of the Pacific and the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

Longtime Convention Center Employee Veronica Quintero Reflects On A Storied Career With More Years To Come

By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER
Assistant Editor

Veronica Quintero is one of the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center’s longest-time employees, having started at the center as an office manager in 1979 as she was finishing out her last year in high school. In 1984, she was promoted to oversee the center’s food and beverage operations and was thereby catapulted into a management role during one of the landmark events in the center’s history – the 1984 Olympics.

It was this event that cemented Quintero’s future here in Long Beach – one she had previously thought would be devoted to medicine. “I spent my whole high school career planning to be a doctor,” she recalled. “So I was very heavily invested in my academics in high school, and I was actually on a pre-med rotation and was a nurses’ aide while I was working here.”

Quintero originally came on to the convention center when her boss at the Golden Sails Hotel on Pacific Coast Highway transferred there and asked her to join him. “I lived in Orange County, so I was like, what is a convention center and where is Long Beach?” she said. “I started off as an office manager, counted money, did paperwork and worked for him doing that initially. And then I just continued to stay on after that while I was in school.”

All it took for Quintero to realize she no longer wanted to pursue medicine was seeing an open-heart surgery as part of her studies. “In that second, I decided I did not want to be a doctor,” she said. She decided to try out fashion school, but when she got the offer to become food and beverage manager at the convention center, she chose to pursue that opportunity instead.

The 1984 Olympics were Quintero’s first experience in a leadership role at the center. “It was a pretty wild experience to have the Olympics here and have the women win the gold and just be, like, that entrenched ... dealing with the attendance and the Olympic committee, and being 20 years old and dealing with all that,” she reflected. Being so involved in the event was an experience she “could never replace.”

During the ’80s, the center was host to many big names as a concert venue, from Prince to Frank Sinatra to No Doubt and Black Sabbath, Quintero recalled, reflecting on these acts as some of the high points for the facility.

After SMG took over management of the convention center in 1992, Quintero was quickly promoted to director of operations for the center. In 2000, the self-proclaimed people-person became the regional general manager for Premier Food Services, a division of SMG. In this role, she not only oversees food and beverage operations at the convention center but also the Aquarium of the Pacific and the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles – also a SMG-managed facility. She also annually plans for the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach.

“I’m very hands-on, so I’m not your typical GM by any means,” Quintero said. “I am involved from the smallest aspect of what food stand should we have open during Junior Volleyball Association’s event,” she explained. “So I am involved in those weekly meetings saying, OK, what are we going to do for them? How many people will be here? What should we open? What should we feed them?”

Quintero’s favorite part of the job is helping client’s achieve their goals. “I always like to listen to the story of what the customer is trying to achieve and understand their endgame,” she said.

Thanks to her own experience learning on the job, Quintero places an emphasis on internal promotions. For instance, when she accepted her current position as regional general manager and was searching for an executive assistant, she hired a 16-year-old convention center employee.

“I posted the job, and the cashier at the employee cafeteria applied to be the GM’s executive assistant,” Quintero said. “So I interviewed with her, and she was going to school to get her AA [degree]. She was 16 and I said, ‘OK, there is only one rule: you can’t be afraid of me. You have to be able to approach me,’” she recalled. “She has been with me 17 years. She is my true success story. I love my executive assistant, and I couldn’t do my job without her.”

When Quintero isn’t at work, she is in another major management role of sorts – this one as mother to five children, ages 7 to 29. “Until just a few years ago, all of them were at home,” she said, referring to the home she shares with her husband and family in Cypress. “So my 29-year-old is out and on his own and doing great. My 20-year-old is at USC and doing very well. And then I have seven-year-old twins at home and an eight-year-old. I have a great husband. He is in the industry as well, and we balance our schedules.”

As for the future, Quintero has no plans to leave her longtime career anytime soon. “My contract at the center is until ‘27. So I plan to be in Long Beach for quite a while,” Quintero said. She noted that her husband was born and raised in Long Beach, and they still have family in the Westside area of the city. “So really through ‘27, I plan to be right here in Long Beach at the convention center or the Aquarium doing what I do every day.”
Ditch The Car And Take To The Sea:
Long Beach’s Public Transit Water Taxi

For visitors and residents alike, modes of traversing the City of Long Beach take many forms. If the impacted parking across the city is any indicator, there is no shortage of private cars. Ride-shares, such as Lyft and Uber, and yellow taxis are a common sight. The Blue Line runs from Downtown Long Beach to Downtown Los Angeles. City officials are investing to improve walkability and bikeability. And public buses run citywide courtesy of Long Beach Transit (LBT). However, one LBT service often overlooked is its water taxis.

The AquaBus runs April through October, with the earliest departure time being 11 a.m. from the Queen Mary dock through Saturdays and Sundays he captains the AquaBus or AquaLink, and on weekdays he crosses the channel to Catalina. Originally from Italy, where he captained vessels for about seven years, Bastasin moved to the U.S. in 2009. He said he had to serve as a deckhand for three years and worked his way back up to captain.

“It’s very fun. I think it’s a great deal for the city,” Bastasin said. “I like interacting with people, and I like being on the water – it’s what I’ve always done with my life. I can’t imagine doing anything else.”

For more information on AquaBus and AquaLink, visit www.lbtransit.com/services/watertaxis.

After checking into the Queen Mary Hotel the day before their Carnival Cruise, Maurie Morgan and Katrina Masterson boarded the AquaBus and rode to the Shoreline stop for an early lunch. When asked why they opted for the water route, Morgan said, “Basically because we live in Indiana where there is no ocean, and we like to be out on the ocean. I think for a dollar it’s an excellent service.”

“Our captain has been very pleasant to talk to, and it’s more picturesque than riding a bus or walking,” Masterson added. “I got my feet up with sunshine and no fumes.”

James Busby, an AquaBus rider from Denver who was in town for a wedding aboard the Queen Mary, said the service was a great public amenity. He explained that it was slower but that ocean breezes are much more pleasant than being packed into a city bus.

The AquaBus is not the only water taxi service LBT offers. The AquaLink is a larger ship that travels between three stops: the Catalina Express terminal near the Queen Mary, dock 4 in Rainbow Harbor and Alamitos Bay Landing. Due to the longer trip, AquaLink costs riders $5 to and from Alamitos Bay Landing.

According to Capt. Mattia Bastasin, LBT acquires its captains from Catalina Express. Bastasin said Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays he captains the AquaBus or AquaLink, and on weekdays he crosses the channel to Catalina. Originally from Italy, where he captained vessels for about seven years, Bastasin moved to the U.S. in 2009. He said he had to serve as a deckhand for three years and worked his way back up to captain.

“A different view of the Queen Mary

“The resort-like Hotel Maya

Pushing off from Dock 7 at Pine Ave. Circle

Leaving Shoreline Village and heading over to the Carnival Cruise Terminal and the Queen Mary

Lots of shops and dining options at Shoreline Village

A different view of the Queen Mary

(Photographs by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)
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*Last departure is at 5:00pm from Friday – Sunday*
Long Beach’s major attractions are receiving an injection of investment and development, with the renovation of the Queen Mary, a new wing of the Aquarium and an expanded terminal for Carnival Cruise Line all underway. Meanwhile, tourism-driven businesses and corridors are reporting optimism for the summer and remainder of the year, now that the rainy season is over.

The Queen Mary is in the beginning phases of exterior refurbishments and painting, which will be followed by interior, structural work to the ship deemed necessary by the results of an assessment released earlier this year, according to General Manager Stephen Sowards. The ship’s hotel rooms, restaurants and ballrooms are also all slated for renovations and restorations.

Earlier this year, Queen Mary leaseholder Urban Commons released plans to develop the land surrounding the ship into a concept dubbed Queen Mary Island, which would include shops, an outdoor amphitheater, a new marina, a complex featuring a variety of sports activities like zip lining and rock climbing, and more. “That’s in the early stages, but we are partnered already with some groups,” Sowards said.

“With the development of Queen Mary Island, I think the next five or seven years of us developing the island and people seeing what’s going on with the ship, it’s going to become quite the entertainment hub over here,” Sowards said.

In the meantime, Evolution Hospitality, the Queen Mary’s management firm, has been growing the ship’s events schedule. An early June concert, “Rock the Queen,” attracted more than 5,000 people to see bands like Smash Mouth and Sugar Ray. The ship also recently hosted its first Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) event and already has more on the books. For more information on events at the Queen Mary, visit www.queenmary.com/events/calendar-of-events.

The long-running “Diana: Legacy of a Princess” exhibit is slated to make its exit by the end of the year, according to Sowards. Two new historical-themed exhibits related to the Queen Mary’s past include an exhibit based upon the war rooms used by Winston Churchill to shelter and strategize during World War II and an exhibit about the Titanic.

For the war rooms exhibit, the Queen Mary purchased movie sets replicating the rooms.

As Long Beach Attractions Get Injection Of Investment, Tourism Industry Professionals Are Optimistic
The debut of the exhibit, which is planned for December, should coincide with the release of a Focus Features film about Churchill and the historic war rooms, Sowards noted. The Titanic exhibit will be smaller in scale and should be open by mid-August, he said.

“I think it’s an exciting time for Long Beach,” Sowards said. “I have lived in Los Angeles for seven years and worked in Santa Monica and a few other places around town. But I really see Long Beach as the next great boom.”

Sowards noted that Carnival Cruise Line’s expansion within the dome to create a larger terminal and bring in a larger ship is also good for the Queen Mary. “They are a great complement. They bring people to the island to get on and off the ships, and that not only brings more customers to see the beautiful Queen Mary [but also] gives us the opportunity to grow our business as well, which is exciting.”

Fred Stein, vice president of revenue planning and fleet deployment for Carnival, said the expanded terminal should be complete by the end of this year. The cruise company currently operates three ships out of Long Beach, including the Carnival Inspiration and Carnival Imagination, which take short three- to four-day trips to Ensenada and Catalina Island. Stein said the next vessel is the Carnival Miracle, which offers seven-day cruises to the Mexican Riviera, 15-day Hawaii cruises and a new 14-day Alaska cruise debuting in September. That cruise is selling well, Stein noted.

When the expansion is complete, Carnival will replace the Miracle with the Carnival Splendor, which is almost double the capacity, according to Stein. “It’s going to be sailing the same rough itineraries that Miracle is,” he said.

Stein said that Carnival’s operations primarily bring in guests who have driven from the Greater Southern California region and even as far as Arizona. The longer cruises, however, draw some visitors who fly into the city, he noted. “We bring in guests who sometimes extend their stay either before or after and, therefore, have an economic impact in the local market,” he said.

Stein said Carnival is doing well in Long Beach. “We are really excited to move forward with the terminal expansion that is going to have a lot of great things to offer our guests. And we are excited about being there,” he said. For information about cruises out of Long Beach, visit www.carnival.com/cruise-from/long-beach-los-angeles.aspx.

The Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific, located on the waterfront at Rainbow Harbor, just began its own expansion to build a 300-seat interactive theater, a pre-theater entry orientation space, and an art gallery and an exhibition area. President and CEO Jerry Schubel said the 23,000-square-foot expansion will open in 2019.

“When the Aquarium expansion opens, we expect our attendance will get to more than two million a year,” Schubel said. “And most of those people will come from outside of Long Beach, so they will buy some things here, they will eat meals in the Pike and other places. I am very bullish on the tourism industry in Long Beach.”

The Aquarium set record attendance last year with 1.72 million visitors and is currently pacing 4% ahead of last year. “I think we’re going to knock it out of the park,” Schubel said of 2017. He noted that the expansion construction will result in the closure of the changing exhibit gallery in September. “That may be a deterrent to some people, but I think we’ll still have a great summer,” he said. He expects the Aquarium to bring in $36 million in revenue this year.

The Aquarium recently opened a new exhibit, “FROGS: Dazzling and Disappearing,” which features two-dozen species of frogs, toads and other amphibians. “It’s an extension of our changing exhibit called ‘Vanishing Animals’ because there is no group of animals on the planet that is more threatened than amphibians,” Schubel said.

There are a number of reasons frogs are vulnerable. They breathe through their skin and are therefore highly susceptible to contaminants, Schubel explained. “We have destroyed a lot of the habitats they depend upon: ponds, creeks, rivers and freshwater wetlands,” he said. “And then there have been some diseases that have taken a big toll on many species of amphibians.”

A new exhibit featuring archerfish – a species that spits water at insects to knock them into the water to eat – also recently debuted. “They can spit as much as five feet. So when you see these fish come to the surface and actually spit at an insect and knock it off a branch and then gobble it up when it hits the water, it really is quite an amazing experience,” Schubel said.

The Aquarium also continues to host a variety of ongoing events, including a lecture series, festivals, outdoor live music and more. For dates, visit www.aquariumofpacific.org/events.

Nearby, Shoreline Village is ready for summer with its own calendar of events. Assistant Property Manager Sergio Gonzalez said the boardwalk is hosting weekly events through the end of August. “We’re going to be running what we call the ‘5 Days of Fun’ here at Shoreline Village. … From Wednesday to Sunday throughout the summer, there is going to be some sort of activity or event going on down here,” he said.

On Wednesdays, guests to Shoreline Village will receive a free 30-minute harbor cruise with the purchase of a lunch from a participating restaurant, Gonzalez said. “The boat takes off at noon from July 12 through August 30,” he noted. On Thursdays, the boardwalk is hosting “Shoreline’s Got Talent,” a talent competition for competitors aged five and older, through August 29. Contestants and attendees get the chance to win raffle prizes, he added.

“Then Friday, Saturday and Sunday we are going to be having live music here at Shoreline.”

The shops at Shoreline Village have been doing well this year, and two new shops – a candle shop and middle Eastern decor store – are in the midst of setting up, Gonzalez said. For more information about events and shops at Shoreline Village, visit www.shorelinevillage.com.

Water transit-related companies had a bit of a dip in activity thanks to the rainy weather in the winter but are now looking forward to busy summers.

“Our first quarter of the year, we saw a pretty good downturn in Long Beach just in general with the tourists and the crowds coming around,” Dan Salas, owner of Harbor Breeze Cruises, said. Harbor Breeze offers whale watching tours daily, as well as tours of the Long Beach harbor.
“We have got more competitors coming into the market, especially the next couple of harbors down south to us,” Salas said. “And they have inundated the market with Groupon and $16, $15, $10 tickets. . . . So that has kind of taken a toll on us a bit.”

To make sure Harbor Breeze stays competitive, the company has revamped its website, www.2seewhales.com, and has invested in advertising outside of the Long Beach area. “Through everything, we have been able to maintain our numbers from last year,” Salas said. “So even though we have had some issues with weather and strong competition coming on from the South of us that are really going after the Long Beach market, we have managed to hold solid through that. But it has been very difficult.”

Salas said that Harbor Breeze Cruises has been experiencing steady business from tourists since the weather improved. “It’s like it used to be years ago when the original Pike was here,” Salas said. “When it got hot, inland people would jump on the Red Car and come to Long Beach. That was the thing to do to escape the heat. And we’re starting to see that again.” He added that he is hoping for “solid 10% to 15% growth this year.”

Greg Bombard, president of Catalina Express, said the company – which takes passengers to and from Catalina Island – is pacing about 2% behind last year’s ridership figures due to rainy weather in previous months. “Basically, as far as I’m concerned, we needed that rain. We needed the island to get green like it is. It looks fantastic,” he said.

Catalina Express offers 12 round trips per day out of Long Beach. The company continues to offer its Ride Free on Your Birthday promotion, Bombard noted. More information is available at www.catalinaexpress.com. Since the sun has been out in the past couple of months, Bombard said traffic to the island has picked up. “I think we will probably do as well or better this year than we have been in the past year or two,” he speculated.

Bombard said businesses on the island are continuing to refresh their offerings, giving returning visitors something new to experience. “There is just a lot more to do there today than there was back in ’08 or ’09 when the economy was in trouble there,” he said. “They have built right on through that period and upgraded a lot of the facilities, as well as hotels.”

The Queen Mary is undergoing an entire exterior facelift this year. After the smoke stacks are done being painted in July, the sides of the ship are next, with interior renovations to follow. Leaseholder Urban Commons plans to develop the area around the ship into a concept called Queen Mary Island – one that has local hospitality and tourism industry executives feeling optimistic about the future. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)
“No Magic Bullet” To Solve Westside Issues

(Continued From Page 1)

dilapidated streets, crime, parking and flood control are all issues Westside business owners face on a daily basis, according to Phillips.

“I don’t like a negative vent unless there is good that comes from it and positive action to take,” Phillips said. “The reality is that it is a great place to do business. Every neighborhood has its issues – industrial, commercial, residential. There’s no question about that.”

Mike Zupanovich, co-owner of Harbor Diesel & Equipment Inc. and a boardmember of the Magnolia Industrial Group (MIG), said his number one concern is the crumbling infrastructure of the Westside.

“The streets are just absolutely deplorable,” Zupanovich said. “The city is throwing good money after bad by patching streets because they’re just falling apart — they are beyond their life. They say they have them in the plans and Measure A. Well, we’ll see. Everything is ‘down the road.’”

City officials do not focus on enhancing the business climate but rather on social issues, according to Zupanovich. He noted that the city does respond to calls for service for situations such as illegal dumping in a timely manner, which he appreciates. But he explained that he gets frustrated speaking with well-meaning city officials focused on social issues when tax revenue-generating businesses are in need of their time as well.

Zupanovich said that city officials are not working and living in the Westside area, so they do not see the need on a daily basis. If they did, he said they would see that they can do a better job. If they did, they would notice the overgrown weeds and ugly-looking facades and facilities and the potholes large enough to “swallow up a Prius.”

“What thing has the city done to help businesses out recently? I can’t answer for what they’ve done for neighborhoods that are industrial,” Zupanovich said. “I couldn’t tell you one thing. Everything is social issues and bike paths and all that stuff.”

Bill Townsend, president of MIG and INCO Commercial Realty, said Westside infrastructure has been neglected for too long and the roads are crumbling. The two are pictured on 15th Street between Daisy and Oregon avenues. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

Mike Zupanovich, left, co-owner of Harbor Diesel & Equipment Inc. and a boardmember of the Magnolia Industrial Group (MIG), and Bill Townsend, president of MIG and INCO Commercial Realty, said Westside infrastructure has been neglected for too long and the roads are crumbling. The two are pictured on 15th Street between Daisy and Oregon avenues. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)
INCO Commercial Realty, agreed with Zupanovich that the decrepit streets are in serious need of attention and investment. Townsend noted that being an industrial area, the Westside sees far more tracking activity, which puts an increased stress on streets when compared to other areas of the city.

Townsend noted that being an industrial area, the Westside is in serious need of attention and investment.

For Paul Collins, owner of architecture firm PAC Design, the Port of Long Beach’s proposed Pier B on-dock rail yard is the greatest threat to Westside business owners. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

Increased homeless population is another concern, according to Collins. He explained that with the closure of Lincoln Park downtown, and due to the many development projects in the area, the homeless have been displaced, subsequently finding their way to the Westside.

“A lot of them tend to camp out at night because these businesses are closed and the streets are empty and there’s lots of little cubbyholes for them to hide and sleep,” Collins said. “And we’d like to see a better response by the police. The police don’t see it as a top priority unless someone is violent.”

Another major issue, according to Collins, is the oversized vehicles, namely motorhomes, that park on the Westside. He noted that what makes the problem so severe is that people are often living in these RVs and will stay in one spot for up to three days, as permitted by law. However, when they move, Collins said oftentimes sewage and trash is being dumped right on the streets and sidewalks, wreaking havoc on businesses.

What compounds the issue is the legality of not being able to tow these vehicles if the occupants are inside. Collins said that if police arrive to handle a vehicle that has exceeded the three-day period and the occupants do not come to the door, it causes a standoff and no action can be taken. This is a great annoyance to police and business owners alike, he said.

“Westside owners are meeting with other organizations – residential groups and business groups – that will be affected by that. We just want to at least mitigate some of the issues that they are going to be creating, which is going to be very detrimental to businesses and residents on the Westside,” Collins said.

Regarding the rail yard, Phillips added that both the port and city officials appear to be working against Westsiders, rather than with them. He said business owners are trying diligently to open lines of communications in order to come to a suitable compromise. However, if the port is heading the concerns of Westsiders, Phillips said they are not communicating that.

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“Westside generates a lot of taxes, but we sort of get the leftovers from the various departments,” Collins said. “It would be a lot better if we were paid better attention to, for sure.”

Collins acknowledges 1st District Councilmember Lena Gonzalez as an ally to Westsiders, having worked with them on various issues. But he said he thinks the area is not a top priority of city officials, most likely due to the fact that there are very few residents. He also noted that it is hit or miss as to whether the city will resolve a specific problem called in by a Westside business owner.

“My staff and I spend as much time as we can on the Westside, attending the West PAC meetings regularly. I am always available to the Westsiders when they ask me to be,” Gonzalez said. “I know that some of them feel [excluded], and I know that there’s a large corridor that divides us. But there’s also a lot to come to the Westside that we’re working on, so we are excited about that.”

Gonzalez explained that her team has been working on a Santa Fe Corridor revitalization project that she will soon present as an agenda item at a city council meeting. She said she has encouraged Westsiders to share their hopes and visions for the area, saying that this is a time to think big.

As part of the revitalization process, Gonzalez said a community-rebranding program for the entire 1st District is already underway, which includes the Westside. This rebranding will include each neighborhood giving input on area enhancements, as well as neighborhood logos to be incorporated into the Santa Fe Corridor revitalization.
To address the oversized vehicle issue, the city is working on an ordinance to ban parking such vehicles in certain areas. The city council agenda item specifically referred to residential zones; however, Gonzales said commercial and industrial zones would be included as well.

“The commercial corridors will be up to the discretion of our public works director. So it’s kind of a caveat in the ordinance,” Gonzales said. “There’s still a commercial problem with RVs in those areas – [the department of] public works is very aware of that. So they’ll be making sure that they are adding that enforcement as well to specific hot spot commercial areas, like the Westside, like MIG, and I think some other areas outside of my district that have been hot spots for RVs.”

As far as infrastructure concerns and the need for street repairs throughout MIG and the Westside, Gonzalez said Measure A funds will be utilized for such enhancements in the coming years but that streets were prioritized in the pavement management plan, and the highest needs are being seen to first. She acknowledged that much of the identified need is in residential areas. She said she is working to make alleyway improvements a priority on the Westside as well.

Regarding the concerns over the increase of the Westside homeless population, Gonzales said it is not a Westside issue but rather a citywide issue that is part of the growing pains of the city. She acknowledged how such a phenomenon can upset business but said the city will continue to work to assist with the problem. She also asked that businesses be more proactive in dealing with the situation as well, for a team effort to combat the social issue.

“I absolutely love spending time on the Westside. I’m very proud of the Westside,” Gonzalez said. “The Westside has some of the oldest and most historic businesses we have in the whole city. It’s really great that they decided to invest in Long Beach and that they are here to stay. I think we need to do even more to shed light on the Westside to make sure that people feel included in the whole city.”

Despite the issues and concerns facing the Westside in the near and long term, the business owners agreed that the area is a unique neighborhood and a great place to conduct their business. Though some business owners have admitted that they would leave if issues such as the port’s rail yard are not handled properly, those same businesses expressed a hope for compromise so they can stay.

“City management can help by taking a closer look and working with Westsiders,” Phillips said. “There’s no magic bullet. We’ve got to address all of the issues.”
Hundreds of businesses make up Westside Long Beach – between the Magnolia Industrial Group area to the east of the Los Angeles River to the countless industrial and commercial buildings to the west. And while businesses continue to thrive, some owners have concerns about the future of the area.

“There’s kind of a dark cloud hanging over our head right here on the Westside because of the expansion of the rail yard for the Port of Long Beach,” Stan Janocha, chief operating officer of Superior Electrical Advertising Inc., said. “With that hanging over our heads, businesses are relocating and looking to go elsewhere.”

Superior Electrical has about 130 employees and produces signage for companies such as McDonald’s, Starbucks, CVS and Denny’s. With the economy’s improvement and large companies remodeling or building new stores, Janocha said his business is doing well. However, he explained that if the port’s rail yard is approved, he would have no choice but to relocate – most likely outside of Long Beach due to the low vacancy rate for industrial real estate.

Janocha’s business has occupied the 100,000-square-foot building at 1700 W. Anaheim St., a former Coca-Cola bottling plant, since 1971.

“We’re staying busy, and we owe a lot of that to our great employee base. We just hope that things continue this way,” Janocha said. “The Westside is a great place to work – we love this place. But if the rail yard goes through, we probably won’t be here. It would just be too close to us. It just wouldn’t be feasible for us to stay here anymore.”

Despite some uncertainty in the area, business owners are still glad to be located on the Westside. Ed Spotsky, owner of Spot Lighting Supplies, said that his business is on fire with homeowners and businesses converting to LED lighting. He explained that his online sales are the fastest growing aspect of the business.

During the recession, Spotsky noted a decline in general contractor purchases for building and remodeling residential and commercial properties, with many companies being forced to lay off employees. However, with a recovering economy, he said these sales are back up, with will-call pickups occurring continuously every day.

“I love where we’re at right now,” Spotsky said. “I drive by a building I thought of buying way over by Joe Jost’s, and all I think about all the time is how glad I am that I bought exactly where I bought . . . just one exit off the freeway.”

SnugTop, a manufacturer of truck caps and camper shells, has been operating on the Westside since 1959. Hartmut Schroeder became president and CEO of SnugTop in 1980. In August, the company was acquired by a larger national company, which kept Schroeder on to continue running operations.

Prior to the acquisition, Schroeder said SnugTop focused primarily on the Western United States and international markets. However, he said the company now
has a reach beyond its traditional market area, with 2017 sales ahead of last year at the same time.

“We’ve been very, very happy here. We occupy a whole city block,” Schroeder said. “We always felt that we are well positioned here. Especially in the past, a big portion of our business has been international, so we were doing a lot of exporting. So the proximity to the port has always been a big advantage to us.”

Recently, Schroeder explained that the strong U.S. dollar has decreased their exports substantially. However, with increased business across the U.S. and developing specialty products for national fleets such as telecommunication and pest control businesses, Schroeder said any international business that was lost was picked up on the commercial side.

Schroeder said he understands the concerns of Westside business owners, especially when it comes to the port’s proposed rail yard, but that the company has been happy at its location for a long time. Many of the company’s roughly 200 employees are local to Long Beach and the surrounding areas, according to Schroeder, and SnugTop uses local suppliers, such as Phillips Steel (also on the Westside), as often as possible.

“We’ve been here for a long time, and I’m certainly going to plead with our new owners that we stay where we are,” Schroeder said. “I still believe it’s a good place to do business. I’ve always enjoyed doing business in the City of Long Beach. That has not changed.”

Since 1947, Santa Fe Importers has operated on the Westside. Today, the company has more than 50 employees and operates a deli that offers lunch and dinner, catering and groceries, as well as wholesale products through Marisa Foods, which produces products such as meatballs and sausages for restaurants and other businesses nationwide.

Santa Fe Importers President Vincent Passanisi said business has been very steady because, despite any outside factors, people need to eat. He explained that the first quarter was a little slow but that was typical of the entire industry, not just his business. However, business has picked up, and Passanisi said big things are happening.

“In fact, we are now making all the sausage for Angel Stadium,” Passanisi said. “That’s been a really exciting opportunity, and there are lots of those opportunities coming down the pipe, so it’s been very exciting.”

As far as being located on the Westside, Passanisi said things are changing. Aside from the uncertainty of the rail yard, he pointed to the incoming medical marijuana businesses. With the passing of Measure MM in November, which allows businesses to grow, manufacture, distribute and sell medical marijuana products in the city, the Westside has become prime real estate. The measure places a minimum distance of medical marijuana businesses from parks, schools, beaches, libraries and other such amenities, making the Westside an ideal location.

“So that’s sort of changing the climate over here,” Passanisi said. “Property values are going through the roof as people are looking for properties to put in these businesses.”

Passanisi explained that the Westside’s proximity to the ports and freeways are an appealing amenity for businesses. However, the uncertain future of the Westside, coupled with new regulations such as health care, minimum wage and tax increases and the ever-present threat of frivolous lawsuits, is casting a shadow over his normally optimistic attitude.

“I’m usually a very optimistic person, but I get a little pessimistic when I start having to deal with these challenges on a daily basis,” Passanisi said. “But there is always opportunity if you look for it, so I’m always excited for what is ahead. I think as long as there’s a climate that promotes entrepreneurs to do new things, there will always be opportunities.”

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Westside Industrial Area

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- 1542 Seabright Ave – Leased/Sold
- 1548-1550 Seabright Ave – Leased
- 2033-2043 W Gaylord St – Leased
- 2001 W 16th St – Sold
- 1737 W 16th St – Leased
- 1667 W 9th St – Leased
- 1352 W Esther St – Sold
- 514 W Pacific Coast Hwy – Sold
- 1430 Cota Ave – In Escrow
- 1425 Santa Fe Ave – In Escrow
- 1740 W Cowles St – In Escrow
- 2110 W Cowles St – In Escrow
- 1404-1420 Hayes Ave – In Escrow
- 1545-1565 Santa Fe Ave – In Escrow
- 1675 Santa Fe Ave – In Escrow
- 1690 Santa Fe Ave – In Escrow

(*Please Continue To Page 38*)
Gil Ficke, owner of Long Beach Travel Center, a Shell gas station and a Carl’s Jr. that cater to the many truckers coming in and out of the ports, said his business experienced a soft spell during the fall and winter months but that volume has bounced back. Like Passanisi, Ficke noted increased operating costs due to new regulations have offset his 1%-2% margin increase.

Though he is aware of some Westside business owner concerns, Ficke admitted to being out of the loop with most of the Westside issues. However, he noted the prospective closure of the 9th Street bridge due to the port rail yard and the disruptive effect that would have on the area’s traffic flow.

“I’m just trying to stay on top of things. The city is also increasing the sales tax. I’m concerned about that, where just over the city limit their operating costs are not on par with mine and I have to compete,” Ficke said. “I’m just trying to do a good job and be a good neighbor and make some money.”

Matthew Shook, co-owner of Hi-Standard Manufacturing, said much of his business was tied to the oil industry in years past. However, when oil prices plummeted, he was forced to think outside the box to create new products to bring revenues back up. Apart from manufacturing parts for the oil industry, the company produces parts for aerospace, defense and other commercial businesses.

Hi-Standard has been located at 1510 W. Cowles St. for more than 30 years and originally opened in 1967 around the corner on Caspian Avenue. Shook and his partner, Joe Pearson, took over the company from their fathers who partnered to form the business.

“I don’t necessarily share some of the concerns that I hear from these other guys with the rail stuff and the development,” Shook said. “I really like [the Westside] – the trucks and the traffic are unique. I like it. It feels like home. We’ve been here so long. It’s just a small, neighborly industrial park. It’s got character.”
Marijuana Is Changing The Westside Real Estate Market

By Brandon Richardson
Senior Writer

Westside Long Beach is known as a hub for industrial businesses, some of which have operated in the area for decades – or in the case of Phillips Steel Company, more than a century. Due to numerous long-term tenants, who are happy with their facilities and locations, the industrial real estate market has retained an extremely low vacancy rate.

“We’re hovering around about 1%. It fluctuates here and there with deals going off and deals coming on,” Brandon Carrillo, principal at Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estate Services, said. “Another tough thing is you’ve got some [people] just not putting properties live on the market and trying to shop the deals themselves. That is something that skews the numbers sometimes.

Carrillo said proximity to the ports is a key factor in what makes the area so desirable for businesses looking to open or expand there. During a Commercial Real Estate Development Association convention on June 8, Carrillo said an economist noted the ever-evolving dynamics of e-commerce would not change the need for warehouse space in such areas. He said Long Beach’s Westside is strategically located to house goods for resident consumption.

One of the major changes facing the Westside real estate market is the introduction of medical marijuana growers, manufacturers and distributors. In November, voters approved Measure MM, which allows medical marijuana businesses to operate in the City of Long Beach. However, the ordinance puts restrictions on how close marijuana businesses can be to schools, parks, libraries, beaches and other such areas, making the Westside an ideal location.

“The biggest challenge is trying to filter through the real deal from someone who just has no ability to perform,” Carrillo said. “If you open escrow with one of these groups that are only opening escrow to tie you up and see if they can get a permit or not through the city, well, now you are missing all these other potential deals.”

Sales and lease prices for space on the Westside are skyrocketing, according to Carrillo. He explained that marijuana companies are often willing to offer more than double an asking rent or sales price to ensure they the space.

However, when it comes to leasing, Carrillo noted that some property owners do not want to get mixed up with the business of marijuana. He cited a property at 1302 15th St. that was recently on the market, where the owner wanted to test the market to see if the mythical marijuana business offers were true. Carrillo said high offers did come in but that the owner decided he was not comfortable getting involved in the business and opted to expand Neill Aircraft Co., a current tenant, into the space.

When it comes to the sale of property, Carrillo said owners are more likely to those in the marijuana industry. “If someone can get their sale price, they don’t care what the person does. It’s just one of those things that’s market driven,” Carrillo said. “We saw this in Denver, and it’s just one of those unfortunate things where if someone didn’t do a long-term lease with lock-in rates for their business, they’re finding themselves exposed to a high watermark in the industry.”

Not all property owners will sell to a marijuana business, however. Carrillo noted the owner of a 25,000-square-foot building at 1495 Seabright Ave. who set the price based on a normal industrial user and received outlandish offers from marijuana businesses, which were promptly turned down.

The Westside has always been a resilient market. According to Carrillo, even during the peak of the recession, the Westside vacancy rate was never higher than 12%. A major issue in the market is a lack of available product. Lots of activity in the cannabis industry, however. Carrillo noted the owner of a 25,000-square-foot building at 1495 Seabright Ave. who set the price based on a normal industrial user and received outlandish offers from marijuana businesses, which were promptly turned down.

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“There’s a lack of available product. Lots of activity in the cannabis industry,” Bill Townsend, president of INCO Commercial Realty, said. “There’s still activity from the other sectors, such as manufacturing. It’s a very good, active market.”

In light of the marijuana activity, Townsend said it was important that other industries, such as manufacturing, aerospace, oil and others, are still showing great interest in the area when space is available. “If you’re doing any work for the port or refineries, it doesn’t get much closer than the Westside,” Townsend said. “You’re within minutes of the port and refineries and those activities, so it is a geographical, X-marks-the-spot location. Close to the freeways. Good access. It’s a great location.”

Neither Townsend nor Carrillo could say what the long-term effects of the marijuana industry would be on the Westside. However, Carrillo said many in the industrial real estate industry look to Denver to gauge how legalized marijuana plays out in the markets. Based on that, Carrillo said he thinks current activity patterns will slow down in Long Beach and stabilize. Regardless, Townsend and Carrillo foresee the Westside real estate market will continue to be strong.

“There is such a great mix of businesses there with long histories,” Carrillo said. “It’s just reflective of the Long Beach culture.”
Long Beach Ice Cream
In 1992, after driving his own ice cream truck for more than three years, Bahram “Bob” Bakshi opened his own ice cream wholesale store, Long Beach Ice Cream. Bakshi is an Iranian immigrant who came to Los Angeles in 1985, where he would later enter the ice cream business. After driving his ice cream truck in L.A., Bakshi saw a hole in the Long Beach ice cream market. “There was no ice cream wholesale commissary here, so I decided to come and open here,” Bakshi said. “I like it a lot because it’s a good community and I like the city.” Located at 1416 W. 15th St., the wholesaler now has two employees and does 80% of its sales to local ice cream truck drivers. The other 20% of business is with small mom and pop stores. His best-selling brand is Blue Bunny, famous for cartoon character ice cream bars with gumball eyes. “I love my job. I’m so satisfied with what I am doing. I serve the people who love ice cream – mostly it’s kids,” Bakshi said. “When I was a kid, I used to eat a lot of ice cream. So I like this business because I serve the kids mostly.” For more information, visit www.longbeachicecream.com.

RTL Woodworks & Countertops
Rodrigo and Tania Lopez got married in 2002. One year later, they purchased a woodworking business, which had operated in Long Beach for several years, and turned it into RTL Woodworks & Countertops. “I went to Cal Poly Pomona for business administration, and she went to Cal State San Bernardino for business,” Rodrigo said. “We both have backgrounds in furniture, so everything just came together and we decided to buy this business.” The pair have 11 employees working in their shop, located at 1660 Hayes Ave., and in the field. Rodrigo said the company gets jobs throughout Southern California, including Catalina Island. The company builds custom kitchen cabinets, bathroom counters and storage, built-in shelving, media centers, buffets, hutches, side tables, bars, mantels and other wood projects. After bad experiences outsourcing stone countertop work to other companies, Rodrigo decided to add a countertop division to his company, which now accounts for 30% of sales and makes RTL a one-stop shop. “We work with anything. As long as it’s wood and stone, we’ll work with it,” Rodrigo said. “The most rewarding part is the customer satisfaction. I like when customers are happy and recommend us to somebody else. That’s how our business has been growing.” For more information, visit www.rtlwoodwork.com.

Joyful Paws Pet Hotel & Daycare
June marks the five-year anniversary of the opening of Shawnté Marquez’s Joyful Paws Pet Hotel & Daycare. After spending a decade in corporate advertising, Marquez decided to pursue a career she was more passionate about. “I’ve always loved animals. As a child, I always had dogs and cats as a part of my family – naturally, I’ve always been drawn to them,” Marquez said. “In high school, I was always the person the neighbors would call to watch their pets when they were away.” Located at 1701 Fashion Ave., the 12,000-square-foot facility and its 12 employees can comfortably and safely accommodate up to 70 animals at a time, according to Marquez. Joyful Paws cares for dogs and cats, though Marquez said she has gotten requests for turtles, rabbits, birds and snakes. Indoor play areas include rubber and turf floors, as well as pools in the summer. “All of my staff goes through a 16-week course learning about dog language, body language, stress signals and also how to care for them in group play,” Marquez said. “I might be one of the only facilities that actually puts my staff through that intense course of training.” For more information, visit www.joyfulpawshotel.com.

City Foods Wholesale
Jaime Espinoza said he was born into the meat industry, with a father employed as a meat trader. In 2011, Espinoza opened City Foods Wholesale at 711 W. 16th St., which features a variety of specialty meats. “When I started, it seemed like a good idea because everybody has to eat,” Espinoza said. “There’s a lot of people who want to try it, but they don’t have a lot of time.” The store has more than 200 different types of meat products at any given time, including buffalo, kangaroo, crocodile, turtle and alligator meat, along with more common meat products. “We have everything from lower income to upper income. The main thing is the variety that we offer. You can’t get that variety at any grocery store.” The store is open to the public seven days a week. For more information, visit www.cityfoodswholesale.com.
Support Local Small Businesses

CH Topping & Co.

Now located in a 1925 brick building at 520 W. Esther St., CH Topping & Co. has operated in Long Beach since 1931. Vince Bunting, a self-described “gearhead for life,” took over the business in 1980 and continues to run the business solely focused on brakes. When asked what the most rewarding aspect of owning the business is, Bunting said, “Probably fixing problems that can’t be fixed. Most people that go elsewhere have their brakes done and have four-wheel disc and have these custom cars and spend all this money, and then they don’t work.” He said his shop works on many vintage and specialty cars but that he and his four employees also do a lot of fleet work, industrial equipment (including punch presses, laundromat and dredging equipment) and parts for stores such as O’Reilly Auto Parts and NAPA Auto Parts. He explained there is nothing brake related that his company cannot do in-shop, making his a true one-stop shop. “I’ll never be able to own an old Ferrari or a ’29 Packard or a Duesenberg, so it’s nice to drive some-thing I can never afford,” Bunting said. “It’s satisfying to drive a ‘29 Packard or a Duesenberg, so it’s nice to drive something I can never afford,” Bunting said. “It’s satisfying to drive something that nobody else can do. There’s a satisfaction in finishing the job right.” For more information, visit www.chtopping.com.

Small Business Showcase – Long Beach Westside Industrial Area

Galaxy Scooters

Four years ago, owner Kelley Bates and mechanic Tim Loungway teamed up to open Galaxy Scooters at 820 W. Esther St. “Tim has been a scooter mechanic since he was a teenager . . . and there were no scooter shops in Long Beach,” Bates said. “So he started working on scooters around here, and then we just grew the business.” Bates said the shop is a welcome relief from her work as a geriatric social worker. Though Galaxy specializes in vintage scooter repair and restoration, such as Vespa and Lambretta brands, the shop also works with modern models. Bates said scooters are ideal for Long Beach residents because they provide a way to get around town without having to worry about parking. “When you fix a scooter and the person gets on it and rides it and they have a big smile on their face, you vicariously live through that moment of when you first got your scooter and were excited about it,” Loungway said. “I’d like to see scooters become more of a staple in Long Beach, as far as travel.”

Among those participating in our survey, 47% have children and at least one living parent because of impacted parking throughout the city. Loungway said the business into a scooter dealership. “When you fix a scooter and the person gets on it and rides it and they have a big smile on their face, you vicariously live through that moment of when you first got your scooter and were excited about it,” Loungway said. “I’d like to see scooters become more of a staple in Long Beach, as far as travel.”

Pictured with Kelley and Tim is their best friend, Brooker. For more information, visit www.galaxyscooters.com.

Financial Support Of Children And Aging Parents Can Impact Saving For Retirement

T
hese days many small business owners are struggling with helping aging parents and supporting children and this makes saving for their retirement even more difficult. At Wells Fargo, we wanted to find out how balancing these realities affects the retirement nest egg. In conjunction with Gallup we asked 1,007 investors – each with total savings and investments of $10,000 – to share attitudes on a wide range of topics including investing, choosing a retirement age, developing a written financial plan, life situations that may hinder saving, and the impact of having a 401(k) plan. Our random sample included 71% of those not yet retired, with a median age of 46, and 29% retirees, with a median age of 69.

Among those participating in our survey, 47% have children and at least one living parent – putting them in what is commonly called the sandwich generation. Also, 32% said they provided financial support for adult children, living parents or both. Thirty-five percent of non-retired investors and 28% of retired investors give this kind of financial support to these family members. More than half of that group – making up 20% of all 1,000-plus investors surveyed – agreed that their financial support affects their ability to save for their own retirement years. It’s no secret that paychecks for many working Americans, as well as for retirees, have been strained in recent years as low interest rates for savings accounts persist and expenses rise. Specifically, it’s likely that wage stagnation and increased costs for shelter, energy and food contribute to this feeling of being financially stretched.

One step we advocate for, especially for those in this position, is regular conversations with those you are helping financially. Talking with children and parents about financial matters helps promote open dialogue about potential ways to help them assert more financial independence and consider different available resources to help them on their journey.

We’re glad to see in our survey that the majority is taking this step. For those with at least one living parent, 65% said they had a discussion about financial security with them. And, in order to be proactive, 70% of those with a child under age 18 said they have spoken to them about the importance of saving money.

Another action that may be useful for those providing support to an adult family member is taking inventory of spending patterns each month, and developing a budget.

At Wells Fargo, we’re focused on improving the financial health of all our customers. Our company has developed eight rules of thumb for financial health; one of those is saving for a better retirement by setting aside at least 10% of income annually to fund your retirement. One step we advocate for, especially for those in this position, is regular conversations with those you are helping financially. Talking with children and parents about financial matters helps promote open dialogue about potential ways to help them assert more financial independence and consider different available resources to help them on their journey.

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Considering these steps, one by one, can help move you down the path to a better financial future. Once you’ve taken action on several of these steps, you should begin to gain confidence and security in your current financial situation and in your long-term plans.

(Ben Alvarado, a 26-year veteran of Wells Fargo, is the president of the bank’s So. Calif. Region, which stretches from Long Beach to Orange, Imperial and San Diego counties.)
More than 800 real estate and business professionals along with city staff and elected officials attended the June 6 “Building A Better Long Beach” event, a presentation on development by Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia, pictured above. The event at The Beverly O’Neill Theater at the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center was hosted by the Long Beach Business Journal.

Assistant Editor Samantha Mehlinger introduced the event, in which Garcia outlined more than three dozen real estate developments planned and underway throughout the City of Long Beach, including more than 5,000 residential units.

The morning’s big announcement came when Garcia was joined onstage by Tony Shooshani, owner’s representative of The Streets (formerly City Place), and Jane Close Conoley, president of California State University, Long Beach, to announce a conceptual future project in the heart of Downtown Long Beach that would house CSULB students, the University Art Museum and classrooms.

Long Beach City Manager Pat West, center, with Diana Tang, the city’s manager of government affairs, and Steve Goodling, president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Ryan Guthrie, left, vice president of development for the Holland Partner Group, is pictured with John Keisler, director of the Long Beach Economic and Property Development Department.

Rich Archbold, left, is public editor of the Press-Telegram, with Long Beach City Attorney Charlie Parkin.

Long Beach City Prosecutor Doug Halbert, left, is pictured with 2nd District Councilmember Jeannine Pearce and Vice Mayor/9th District Councilmember Rex Richardson.

Pictured, from left: Stephen Soqui, vice president of investments and director, national multi housing group, for Marcus & Millichap; Felix Wong, principal of Platform Group; Steve Carter, president of Nemo Constructors, Inc.; and Phillip Ong, principal of Platform Group and managing director of Scintilla Collaborative.

Tony Shooshani, managing director of Shooshani Developers, LLC, with his guest, Danielle Alura.
From left: Airport Director Jess Romo; Director of Library Services Glenda Williams; and Assistant to the City Manager/City Council Liaison Rebecca Jimenez.

Photographs by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan

Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Randy Gordon, who is holding a copy of the Business Journal, is seated with Chamber Senior Vice President Jeremy Harris.

Kevin Lee, communications officer for the city's Long Beach Development Services department, is flanked by department employees Jonathan Garcia and R. Chelsey Finegan. Behind them are Patrick Lue, left, housing development officer, and Alem Hogas, grant administrator, both with development services.

Mario Cordero assumed his duties as executive director of the Port of Long Beach earlier this month. He most recently served as a presidential appointee to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission.

Phil Jones is broker/owner of Coldwell Banker Coastal Alliance in Long Beach, and is heavily involved with the national and state boards of realtors.

Mayor Robert Garcia is joined on stage by California State University, Long Beach President Jane Close Conoley, and Tony Shooshani, managing director of Shooshani Developers, LLC, to announce they are working together to create a CSULB Downtown Village.

Long Beach Business Journal Assistant Editor Samantha Mehlinger is joined by Kraig Kojian, left, president and CEO of the Downtown Long Beach Alliance, and Adam Carrillo, economic development manager for the organization.

Mayor Robert Garcia reviews positive numbers impacting Long Beach including: unemployment dropping to 4.7%; the creation of 9,000 new jobs the past few years; current projects under construction are valued at $2.5 billion; and 2,500 residential units have been entitled in the city.
On Track for Fun

Watch for the Port of Long Beach at family-friendly summer events around the city. You'll find us sponsoring movies at the parks and on the beach, kids' events, senior programs, concerts and more—all summer long.

Join us, have fun, and learn how we're building the Port of the Future. Learn more at polb.com/summerfun.

Port of LONG BEACH
The Green Port

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