Bixby Knolls Is ‘Strong And Steady,’ But Funding Uncertainty Is Brewing

By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER

The Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association’s (BKBJA) leaders are positive about the momentum of the business improvement district they oversee, but are faced with a major challenge that has begun to crest over the long-term horizon to near-term reality: the sunsetting of the majority of the BKBJA’s funding, $200,000 annually from the city’s former redevelopment agency, in 2021. The BKBJA’s operating revenue is also largely

What’s Behind The Trade War?

Chinese Official And USC Experts Outline Arguments During Sister City Luncheon

By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER

At the annual Long Beach – Qingdao China Sister City Association luncheon on November 9, speakers from the Chinese Consulate General in Los Angeles and the University of Southern California (USC) addressed the concerns that led up to the Trump administration’s trade war with China. At the forefront of these concerns were the Made in China 2025 initiative, China’s strategy for achieving modernization of its manufacturing industries, as well as alleged Chinese practices of intellectual property (IP) theft and forced technology transfer.

Parks Study

After Demonstrating Equitable Practices, Parks Department Directed To Do More

By PIERCE NAHIGYAN

Does the Long Beach Parks, Recreation and Marine Department (PRM) provide balanced park programming to all of its city residents? Last year, 1st District Councilmember Lena Gonzalez was not certain it did.

In the summer of 2017, Gonzalez expressed dissatisfaction with what she considered an imbalance of park programming, noting that there were more “contract classes” sched-
As assistant director of the construction management division, Ramanjit Brar helps the division oversee capital improvement programs for the Port of Long Beach. Brar said his duties vary day to day, and include managing procurements, handling any new requests from other port divisions and delegating tasks to staff. A major part of the position is coordinating with other divisions and bureaus in the harbor department. The biggest challenge the division faces is keeping projects on schedule and under budget for the port’s tenants, according to Brar. A native of India, Brar moved to the United States in 1988 and became a civil engineer. He began working as a construction inspector for the port in 2000. Working at the port was appealing to Brar due to the unique aspects of civil engineering required, including green construction and the variety of infrastructure projects. One of the first projects he worked on was the terminal at Pier D. He also worked on the construction of the Joint Command and Control Center building, where multiple agencies tasked with overseeing the port are housed. Brar said that it is not only the job, but also the people who work at the port that make him glad to be on board. “It doesn’t matter what bureau you’re talking about; we at the port are just the cream of the crop,” he said. “That’s really exciting, when you come to work with people who are really intelligent and really know what they’re doing and always give their 100%.”

Article and photograph by Staff Writer Annette Semerdjian
Councilmember Al Austin

By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER, EDITOR

LBBJ: Do you feel business owners in your City Council District are happy with the direction the city is going?

Austin: I think they are happy with the direction the city is going, particularly with our investment in infrastructure and the development of business improvement districts. The businesses in those areas have benefited tremendously. No business wants to see new taxes or any sort of new regulation, but it’s a give and take. If we’re going to improve our infrastructure, if we’re going to improve the quality of our city, we have to invest in infrastructure and public safety as well. . . . I got a lot of gripes about Measure A from local business. But folks are seeing the results, and that is making people more confident about what we’ve done as a city and the direction we’re going in.

LBBJ: In your years on the city council, how have you worked to build relationships with businesses in your district?

Austin: I support most of the businesses in my district. I support them financially with my own resources. . . . I have knocked on doors to advocate for new businesses in the area. My staff will tell you I have a “getting to yes” approach to business, and particularly small business. I ask city staff and I ask my staff: instead of saying “no” or “this can’t be done,” let’s figure out how to get to yes. If we have that mentality, we’re going to be viewed as business friendly, and it’s going to make it easier for small business [owners] . . . We set up the Uptown Property And Business Improvement District. I have been very supportive of that and very supportive of our Bixby Knolls Property And Business Improvement District. I have great relationships with both Tasha [Hunter, executive director of the Uptown Business Improvement Association] and Blair [Colin, executive director of the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association], and they can count on my office for support in any way possible. When there are barriers for business, we work very hard to eliminate them.

I hold community meetings. I try to host coffees and try to have events where our businesses cater. I like to showcase my district to the best degree possible. As a city councilmember, it’s my responsibility to be an ambassador for the businesses in my district, but also citywide. I get very defensive when somebody has something disparaging to say about Long Beach or any area of the district, particularly when I know the hard work that went in and the vision that’s going in to change things. We’re really working to improve the corridors here. The 8th District is really a neighborhood-centric community . . . but we also have a lot of great businesses that complement our neighborhoods. That’s what we want to continue to build on.

LBBJ: What are businesses in your district telling you are their biggest challenges?

Austin: I support most of the businesses in my district. I support them financially with my own resources. . . . I have knocked on doors to advocate for new businesses in the area. My staff will tell you I have a “getting to yes” approach to business, and particularly small business. I ask city staff and I ask my staff: instead of saying “no” or “this can’t be done,” let’s figure out how to get to yes. If we have that mentality, we’re going to be viewed as business friendly, and it’s going to make it easier for small business [owners] . . . We set up the Uptown Property And Business Improvement District. I have been very supportive of that and very supportive of our Bixby Knolls Property And Business Improvement District. I have great relationships with both Tasha [Hunter, executive director of the Uptown Business Improvement Association] and Blair [Colin, executive director of the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association], and they can count on my office for support in any way possible. When there are barriers for business, we work very hard to eliminate them.

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LBBJ: What sorts of businesses do you feel your district has a need for, and do you have a plan to attract such businesses?

Austin: More restaurants and retail establishments [are needed] in North Long Beach — establishments that people can walk and bike to that are near their neighborhoods. That’s very important, particularly for North Long Beach. We have that model in Bixby Knolls, and it seems to be working very well. The community has embraced it. I think it will happen, particularly when we get our LAB development off the ground. We’re very excited about what they have planned with the Canvas development happening between South Street and 56th Street. That is going to be transformational. I was the very first person to meet with Shaheen Sadeghi from LAB. I walked him around the North Village. I could see his eyes opening and his vision from the first time we met. He was very interested in purchasing properties and crossing South Street into the 9th District and looking at properties there. LAB’s property holdings will have a significant impact on the future of North Long Beach, so we’re really excited about that project.

What I am interested in is promoting business, but being smart with our land use as well. It’s important that anybody who wants to invest in my district look at both housing and business. I’m a big proponent of mixed-use development. If we can encourage that in key strategic areas, we’ll have better neighborhoods throughout the district.

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

Austin: The 8th District has really transformed over the last six years in terms of business. We have a lot of new businesses that want to invest here, that are confident about the community. New housing developments are happening here as well. That’s largely because of an attitude that we have employed over the last several years: again, let’s get to yes. Let’s figure out and encourage investment, not discourage. Let’s figure out how to make it work and attract the type of businesses that are going to complement the great neighborhoods that we have throughout this district.
Long Beach Legacy Companies And Organizations

The September 25 edition of the Business Journal included a focus on local companies and organizations that have been in operation in Long Beach for nearly 50 years – since 1969. More than 200 businesses and nonprofit groups were identified, but we knew we missed some. We covered some in our recent past editions and here is one more.

Downtown Long Beach Lions Club, 1921

The Downtown Long Beach Lions Club has served the local community since 1921 when it was first chartered as a nonprofit. One of the services the club offers is providing eye exams and glasses for students and financially challenged adults. In the year ending in June 30, 2018, the club provided $45,000 in eyewear services and products. The downtown club, along with other Lions clubs, also donated $150,000 for an eye exam room at The Children’s Clinic, a local nonprofit that provides health care services to children and families. Members of the Downtown Long Beach Lions Club are pictured serving children Thanksgiving meals. Each year, the club assists in providing and serving complete five-course meals to 1,000 members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Long Beach on the weekend before Thanksgiving. “It’s work to go out there and be on your feet and do this kind of thing. But it’s rewarding work because for a number of those families this might be the only Thanksgiving meal they have,” member and past president of the Downtown Long Beach Lions Club, Gene Johnson, said. “Also, a number of the children come by themselves and their parents don’t come, so we allow them to take meals home to their families.” (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

The Long Beach/Signal Hill WorkPlace

The grand opening of The WorkPlace, a service center for job seekers operated by Pacific Gateway, took place November 13. Staff at The WorkPlace include professionals from both Pacific Gateway, which is the workforce development arm of the City of Long Beach, and California’s Employment Development Department. The WorkPlace is intended to create more job opportunities for the Long Beach community.

“Another service the club offers is job seeking,” Johnson said. “We help those who are looking for work by providing services such as resume building and interview preparation.”

Houghton Park ‘Sound Garden’ Groundbreaking

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, a nonprofit supporting community engagement, recently gave the Long Beach Community Foundation (LBCF) a $1.35 million grant to focus on community “transformation,” according to LBCF Vice President Colleen Bragalone. The boardmembers of the foundation decided to use the grant to improve the Atlantic Avenue corridor, and allocated $100,000 for an art project in North Long Beach. Members of LBCF, in partnership with nonprofit design studio City Fabrick and 9th District Councilmember Rex Richardson, developed the concept of a “sound garden” to be implemented at Houghton Park as part of its ongoing revitalization. The interactive art installation will incorporate different structures that resemble flowers and allow children to speak through one end while hearing what is said from another. It will also include drum-like pieces. The ground breaking for the project took place on November 14 and is expected to be completed over the next year. “We are excited to make this fun investment that builds on the momentum of area improvements already underway,” LBCF President and CEO Marcella Eley stated. Pictured from left at Houghton Park are: Brian Ulaszewski, executive director and principal of City Fabrick; Eley; Robert Stemler, vice chair of the board of LBCF; Jane Netherton, former board chair and project visionary of LBCF; Steve Keasal, LBCF boardmember; Jean Bixby Smith, LBCF chair emeritus; Mina Roades, landscape architect of City Fabrick; Jim Warsham, founding president and CEO of LBCF; Richardson; Annette Cash, LBCF boardmember and executive director of the Assistance League of Long Beach; Linda Drummond, board member of the Assistance League of Long Beach; Tara Sievers, LBCF office coordinator; and Meredith Reynolds, park development officer for the City of Long Beach. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson; Rendering courtesy of City Fabrick)
Please join us for Around the Table: Activating the Community on Homelessness

Presented by the Long Beach Community Foundation

This event builds upon the Around the Table event conducted last year. Residents told us that the most important issue facing Long Beach is homelessness and housing, and that they want to help, but are not sure how. So this time, conversations will focus on ways that we, as individuals and businesses can make a positive impact for those experiencing homelessness. Specifically come learn directly from nonprofit and community leaders:

1. Why are people affected by homelessness in Long Beach?
2. What is being done about it?
3. What can I as a resident or business owner do to help?

IT'S TIME WE USE OUR TALENTS, STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES TO HELP

Monday, December 3
5:00–6:30pm
Golden Sails Best Western
6285 E. Pacific Coast Highway

Tuesday, December 4
5:00–6:30
Long Beach Petroleum Club
3636 Linden Ave

Sunday December 9
2:00–3:30pm
Assistance League of Long Beach
6220 E. Spring Street

For more information please visit: www.AroundtheTableLB.com
Complimentary parking, Refreshments available
Mayor García invites you to a really bright Christmas Tree Lighting.

**Tuesday, November 27 ★ 5-8pm ★ Terrace Theater Plaza**

It’s a night for pics with Mr. & Mrs. Claus (don’t forget to bring your camera) ★ Holiday Photo Booths ★ Kid train rides ★ Local food trucks ★ Brass Band ★ DJ ★ Choirs ★ Fireworks ★ Park your sleigh for free ★ Don’t miss the tallest tree in Long Beach – magical tree lighting starts at 6:00 pm

**A Holiday Tradition Sponsored by**

Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center / SMG ★ Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau

Long Beach Terrace Theater Plaza, 300 East Ocean Boulevard ★ By attending this event you agree to be photographed for promotional purposes.
news outlets. While it provides a platform to reach greater audiences than ever before, it is also frustratingly siloed. Social media ecosystem feed users the sort of information they are most likely to click on based upon what they’ve clicked on or mentioned in the past. Content they’re already interested in, and more prone to agree with, is what they see first. Thus, social media echo chambers are born. And we each live in our own, largely through the social media apps through our phones, day by day.

Last week, as I watched the two-part Frontline documentary on Facebook, I felt a twinge of nausea when Frontline’s reporters commented, to a dizzying degree, that Facebook’s algorithms do in fact create “social media echo chambers;” and that these siloed information pools, coupled with the interference of malevolent actors, have been directly linked to (if not flat out created) massive cultural divisions and even violence, in multiple countries.

Wael Ghonim, an Egyptian who used Facebook as a tool to spur an uprising in his country in 2011, told Frontline that soon after the success of the uprising, the tool he had used to drive it backfired. According to Ghonim and detailed reporting by Frontline, Facebook engaged the rapid spread of fake news and inflammatory rhetoric in Egypt, which ultimately led to mass violence. Frontline also linked Facebook to the inflammation of cultural divisions, antagonistic rhetoric and, ultimately, violence, in Myanmar. The platform was used to spread hate speech and incite violence — violations of its terms of service — against the country’s Muslim Rohingya minority. The company was not unaware of its role in what would become human rights and refugee crisis. Frontline interviewed a tech specialist living in Myanmar who made a presentation to the company about its role in the spreading crisis in 2015.

Maria Ressa, head of the Philippine news outlet Rappler Media, told Frontline she thought she was warning Facebook that its social media platform was being used by the country’s controversial leader, Rodrigo Duterte, to spread misinformation in support of its war on drugs since 2016. The government’s fight against drugs has resulted in the deaths of thousands of Filipinos — many considered extrajudicial killings. The government, and Facebook has been criticized by Frontline as well, for their inaction.

What the Frontline report revealed about Facebook affects everyone who uses it — and, due to its reach, those who don’t use it. But because most of its users are Millennials, and because we adopted use of the app at such a formative time in our lives that it is now engrained in our daily routines, I worry the most for us, and for the younger generations to follow. Not to downplay the impact to the older generations, but the issue here is that we’re going to be around a lot longer (no offense, folks) — and we’re not likely to stop using Facebook while we’re doing it.

Of course Facebook isn’t all bad. It’s full of family and friends, and videos of cute dogs and silly babies, and fundraisers for charity, and stories of human triumph. But its capacity for facilitating cultural divisiveness to the detriment of society is proven, real, and powerful.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, are we going to continue using a platform that has proven to encourage and inflame the worst aspects of humanity — false gossip, tribalism, and, ultimately, hate speech and violence — in the same way? Or are we going to demand change, and, in the meantime, to try to make changes to our own online behaviors? Are we going to stop feeding the beast? Or are we going to put it on a leash?
The Boeing Company on November 5 listed its former C-17 Globemaster III manufacturing site for sale. Adjacent to Long Beach Airport, the property is approximately 90 acres, or more than 3.92 million square feet. The listing is being handled by commercial real estate brokerage firm Newmark Knight Frank (NKF). A price has not been set, but NKF Executive Managing Director Brad Hardy said few industrial properties have sold for up to $70 per square foot, putting a price tag on the Long Beach site as high as $274 million, as reported by The Sun. Hardy went on to say the first round of bids is due by mid-December and that a deal is expected to close by June 2019. NFK declined a request to confirm the report.

Long Beach Development Services (LBDS) is in the process of creating a land-use masterplan along Cherry Avenue between Spring and Carson streets, including the C-17 site, and along portions of Spring Street. Based on community feedback, the C-17 site has been identified as a location for a business park. Other portions of the corridor have been identified as locations for industrial, office and retail uses.

Planning Commission OKs Breakers Conversion To Hotel

The Long Beach Planning Commission voted unanimously on November 15 to approve the conversion and renovation of The Breakers, previously a senior care facility, into a 185-room hotel with food and beverage venues, banquet and meeting areas, and other amenities. While maintaining as much of the historical architecture as possible, the project will bring the building up to date on all safety and Americans with Disabilities Act regulations. The Sky Room restaurant is also being completely renovated and will reopen with the hotel. Cielo, a rooftop bar, is being expanded across the entire roof and will be rebranded with a new name. Steve Goodling, president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and other CVB staff voiced support for the project during the public comment period of the meeting, noting the benefits it would bring to the hospitality and tourism industry. Goodling said plans for the new hotel have already been attracted new conventions to the city, adding that conventions generate millions of dollars in tax revenue for the city annually. Members of hotel union Unite Here Local 11 and the Long Beach Coalition for Healthy Jobs & a Healthy Community, a branch of the pro-labor nonprofit Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), spoke in opposition of the project, citing unmitigated environmental impacts, accessibility issues and a lack of community benefits. Unite Here Local 11 has a history of protesting hospitality-related developments that do not include project labor agreements.

The $56 million renovation of American Gold Star Manor has steadily risen since the housing crisis, with three of the highest four totals occurring in the past three years. Originations for this year are on a similar upward trend. Multifamily lending jumped 6% year-over-year, rising to $28.5 billion in 2017 from $269.2 billion in 2016, despite the number of loans dropping to 44,623 from 46,575. “The multifamily lending market in 2017 benefited from improving fundamentals, rising property values and low interest rates,” noted Jamie Woodwell, the MBA’s vice president of commercial real estate research. While the improved economy has played a role in the increased lending numbers, “homebuyers and multifamily lenders adapting to the new world of tighter regulation along with easing of some of the more draconian requirements have led to a growing real estate credit market.” (Terry Ross, the broker-owner of TR Proprietary, answers any questions about today’s real estate market. E-mail questions to Realty Views at TerryRoss@cox.net or call 949/457-4922.)
part of the project. The first priority was resident safety, Geiling said, which included new elevators, fire safety systems, Americans with Disabilities Act compliant entryways, security cameras and keyless electronic doors. Conservation was another focus of the project, including 200,000 square feet of grass being replaced by drought-tolerant plants, solar panel installation, double-pane insulated windows and patio doors, and energy efficient appliances and lighting. “Every roof in this place is covered with solar panels, not only for electrical generation but also for a hot water,” Geiling said. “We’re probably about 80% self-sufficient on electricity now.” The recreation hall now doubles as a Red Cross-certified evacuation center, and has its own backup generators.

The property was first developed during World War II when the U.S. Navy constructed hundreds of temporary barracks to house the families of servicemen and shipyard personnel. Following the war, a portion of the land was deeded to the American Gold Star Mothers, a national organization of women who have lost sons and/or daughters in the service of the U.S. military. The nonprofit corporation American Gold Star Manor was founded shortly thereafter to own and manage the property. In 1975, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development granted the corporation a 40-year mortgage loan to raze the barracks and build the 348-unit complex that exists today. Of the campuses 25 acres, Geiling said there are eight acres that are likely to be developed into additional affordable housing in the future.

Building Material Supplier Signs Lease In Carson, Leaving Long Beach

Houston-based building material supplier Action Gypsum signed a more than eight-year lease for 53,699 square feet of industrial space at 1225 E. Artesia Blvd. in Carson, The Klabin Company announced.

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Please Continue To Page 10
Long Beach’s Newest Real Estate Brokerage Firm – CXI Realty

After nearly 30 years as a real estate agent working for various brokerage firms, Jon Sweeney has branched out to create CXI Realty. Sweeney, pictured outside Daugherty Skyharbor on Spring Street, began his career in 1989 with Long Beach-based INCO Commercial, having since worked for Matlow-Kennedy (which has since been acquired by Cushman & Wakefield) and most recently ADG under local broker George Medak’s license. In April, Sweeney began studying to become a licensed broker, and in late October formally created the CXI brand. “It’s a bold statement but it’s a true statement: there’s no one who has sold more or leased more than I have in Signal Hill and Long Beach,” Sweeney said. “Over the past 25 years, if you add it all up, there’s almost not a building I haven’t touched.” Though much of his activity is in Long Beach and Signal Hill, Sweeney has brokered deals as far as Reno. He continues leasing and selling office and industrial space; however, CXI has an added focus on restaurants, bars and music venues. Sweeney was born and raised in Long Beach and raised his own family in the city. “This is something I really enjoy doing for Long Beach,” Sweeney said. “The pride of being here with something that’s mine is fun and important to me.”

More Real Estate Transactions

The following is a list of transactions recently closed in Long Beach by agents at Lee & Associates and Marcus & Millichap’s Bogie Investment Group:

- 1333-1351 Orizaba Ave. Industrial Condominiums – Lee & Associates Principals Brandon Carrillo, Jeff Coburn and Garrett Massaro represented the seller, 1351 Orizaba Ave LLC, in the more than $1 million sale of unit 1333 to GLR Properties LLC. The deal for the 4,404-square-foot industrial condo closed on October 19. The tenant plans to use the space as an office and classic car collection display, according to Carrillo. Two other units totaling 7,405 square feet are in escrow. The remaining units total 39,478 square feet.
- 2789 Long Beach Blvd. – Lee & Associates Principals Jeff Coburn and Shaun McCullough represented landlord 2H Property in the 10-year, 8,947-square-foot lease to Fresenius Medical Center. Justin Cheung of Realty Advisory Group represented Fresenius.
- 429 Magnolia Ave. – Steve “Bogie” Bogoyevac and Derek Caldwell of Marcus & Millichap’s Bogie Investment Group represented the owner in this $1,225,000 sale. The five-unit asset consists of a four-bed, two-bath front house and two rear duplexes, each with one-bed, one-bath units. One of the units has been fully renovated, the duplexes have new copper plumbing and all buildings were recently painted.
- 5209 E. 2nd St. – Shoe and apparel store Proper has signed lease for the former Romance Etc. location in Belmont Shore, according to Belmont Shore Business Association Executive Director Ded Rossi. The facade of the building has been painted white, a stark contrast from the former burgundy color. The location is the brand’s second in Long Beach, with a third in Houston. The owner did not respond for comment as to when the new location would open for business.
- The Terminal at Douglas Park – With the signing of two transactions and one more on the way, The Terminal is nearing full occupancy, according to Coburn. Kollin Altomare Properties recently purchased three units on the ground floor of building four totaling 6,926 square feet. Additionally, European multinational car rental company “Sixt rent a car” signed a 10-year lease on the ground floor of the same building totaling 5,205 square feet. Coburn added that there is a buyer going under contract for the top floor of building four, which would bring the office condominium development to full occupancy. Coburn and Lee & Associates Principal Shaun McCullough represented the landlord, Douglas Park Investments LLC.

Housing Development Planned For Former North Library Site

The Long Beach City Council voted unanimously on November 13 to authorize the sale of the former North Library site, which has been closed for more than two years, 8th District Councilmember Al Austin stated following the vote. “The LBCC’s proposal is...”

(Save the Long Beach Way)

SAVE EVERY DAY IT’S THE LONG BEACH WAY

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consistent with the residential nature of this neighborhood on Orange Avenue, and it will provide much-needed affordable housing units, as Long Beach is working to address a housing crisis due to a shortage of housing supply.” The councilmember’s statement also noted that six, two-story units are anticipated for the site. As part of the agreement, LBCIC is leasing the property back to the city for 18 months at no cost for use by the Long Beach Health and Human Services Department’s Center for Families and Youth, and possibly as a winter shelter from December 1 to March 31 of next year.

New Shoe And Sports Apparel Store Opens In North Long Beach

Shoe Palace celebrated the opening of its first Long Beach location at 5365 Long Beach Blvd. on November 3, according to Store Manager Jestin Parker. The store carries nearly 100 different brands of active footwear and apparel, including its own line of merchandise. The Long Beach store is the company’s 137th nationwide. “[The company] felt like
North Long Beach needed something where it could start an ecosystem," Parker said. "The area needed [a place] where people could rejuvenate the city back to where it should be." Inside the store is a large mural of Long Beach rap icon Snoop Dogg by artist JC Ro. Parker noted that Shoe Palace has a contract with JC Ro to create murals in its stores that pay homage to their locations. In January 2017, for example, Shoe Palace took over the space of the original Apple Store in Palo Alto where JC Ro created a Steve Jobs mural. In the two weeks since opening, Parker said foot traffic is steadily increasing as more people in the community realize the store is open. Three doors down is Black Ring Coffee, which is cross-promoting with Shoe Palace to continue increasing business, Parker said.

Sandwich Chain Jimmy John’s Opens Second Long Beach Location
Long Beach’s second Jimmy John’s sandwich shop opened at 2031 E. Spring St. on the border of Signal Hill, the company announced November 6. “Our team is excited to serve fresh, fast and tasty sandwiches to a new set of customers in the area,” owner Bryant Tower stated. “We’re also excited for our customers to try our new products, including the 9-Grain Wheat Sub, Kickin’ Ranch®, sliced pickles and our 16-inch Giant sandwich.” Tower anticipates hiring around 20 employees.

CSULB Celebrates Opening Of New Energy Efficient Building
California State University, Long Beach, celebrated the grand opening of its new state-of-the-art building for the College of Continuing and Professional Education (CCPE) on November 7. The 35,000-square-foot building consists of 20 classrooms featuring furniture that is on wheels to allow for customized room configurations depending on the curriculum and the time of year, according to the school. The nearly $31.9 million project was self-funded by CCPE student enrollment fees. The development is the first net-zero energy classroom building in the California State University system and was designed to achieve a LEED Platinum rating, the highest level of international certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), Long Beach, College of Continuing and Professional Education (CCPE), is pictured with the CCPE’s new net-zero energy classroom building, the first of its kind in the CSU system. Classes began in the building in August but the school celebrated the building’s grand opening on November 7. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

CITY OF LONG BEACH
BID OPPORTUNITIES

TITLE |
Furnish & Deliver AML Overflow Water Meter Covers |
Laboratory Inventory Management System (LIMS) |
Case 950 Super N Backhoe Loader |
Rehabilitation of Water Wells Wilcox 1A & 9 Citizens 9 |
Development & Implementation of Broad-Based Employment Testing System Arts & Crafts Supplies |
Purchase & Dev. Opportunity at 7th & Alamitos Ave |
Irrigation Controller Upgrades |
Personal Radiation Monitors |
Power Distribution Boxes |
Building Reconfiguration & Optional Conf. Room Refurbishment |
Safety Footwear |
Property Insurance Brokerage & Related Services |
Casualty Insurance Brokerage & Related Services |
On-Call Property & Vacant Lot Maintenance Svc |
Trauma & Resiliency Informed Systems Consultant |
West Seaide Way Storm Drain Project |
Northside Storm Drain Phase 3 |
On-Call Public Health/Human Svc Comm. Partners |
Purchase & Dev. Opportunity at 925-945 East PCH |
Steam Pipe Irrigation Upgrade |
**Some of the listed projects have scheduled mandatory pre-bid meetings which may have already occurred due to publication lead times**

Bidders Registration
To receive notifications of bid opportunities, register with the City of Long Beach at www.longbeach.gov/finance/business-info/purchasing-division/purchasing-division/, Additional details on upcoming bids and how to register can be found on the website.

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Trade War (Continued From Page 1)

Ultimately, the speakers from USC reached the conclusion that these concerns had some legitimacy, but were to a degree rooted in misconceptions. Hayyan Liu, commercial consul for the Chinese Consulate, argued that IP theft and forced technology transfer were not perpetrated by China’s government. He painted his country as one making progress towards opening itself up to trade and a market-based economy. In contrast, he characterized the United States’ implementation of tariffs on $250 billion worth of Chinese goods as a closed-door policy to trade, and one that would not benefit either country.

There was no speaker from the U.S. government to illuminate its standing.

Setting the stage for the conversation was Bonnie Lowenthal, current vice president of the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners and former state assemblymember and Long Beach city councilmember. “Almost all of the Port of Long Beach’s container cargo trade is with Asia. And most of that is with China,” Lowenthal said. “In 2017, China accounted for 69% of container imports through Long Beach and 39% of container exports.” She added, “The tariffs enacted this year will likely slow trade between the United States and China. We’re watching developments very closely, and ultimately we look forward to a resolution.”

Peck pointed out that the United States transitioned to service-based economies after much of the Western world. While major Western countries such as the United States transitioned to service-based economies in the mid-20th century, China lagged behind, she said.

“Promoting of R&D [research and development] capabilities by reinforcing government control of setting targets and development] capabilities by reinforcing government control of setting targets and development
capeutic potentialities of Chinese R&D efforts is at the core of the Trump administration’s efforts. The administration’s concern here is that China is developing its capacity for innovation. The plan also seeks to position China’s manufacturing strength at an “intermediate level among world manufacturing powers” by 2035, Dong said. “And by 2049, China will become the leader among the world manufacturing powers and will develop advanced technology and industry systems,” she said.

According to Peck, for China, foreign direct investment provides “10% of its employment, 20% of its national tax revenue, 25% of its national total in terms of industrial output, and 50% of total export volume in the country.” These trade and economic statistics illustrate the “healthy” aspects of the trade relationship between the two countries, beyond the trade in goods deficit, he noted.

“What [Made in China 2025] is in a nutshell is an industrial policy to move China from a manufacturing-based economy to an innovation-based economy,” Peck said.

Dong gave historical context for China’s current manufacturing-based economy, explaining that China began its industrialization after much of the Western world. While major Western countries such as the United States transitioned to service-based economies in the mid-20th century, China lagged behind, she said.

To advance China’s economy and position globally, Made in China 2025 aims to “turn China into a major manufacturing power in 10 years,” Dong said. “This plan is the Chinese government’s response to the U.S. administration’s objectives. "Promoting of R&D [research and development] capabilities by reinforcing government control of setting targets or goals,” is the first concern, he said. “The U.S. sees this as a reaffirmation of China’s government’s central role in economic planning, rather than moving towards a market-based economy which of course is a concern of other global trading partners,” he explained.

“Next is the goal is supporting acquisition of technology from abroad by intensifying preferential policies and financial support,” Peck said. “Here, the U.S. government’s concern is that it is the Chinese government’s intent to leverage China’s legal and regulatory system to the advantage of domestic companies over foreign companies in the targeted sectors of the Made in China 2025 plan.”

Another concern is China’s desire to “control a segment of the global supply chain,” Peck said. “The U.S. administration feels that this is unfair competition, as the program calls for the government to provide billions of dollars in support to Made in China 2025 sectors and to acquire foreign technologies to help achieve dominance via its domestic companies.”

Peck continued, “Then the fourth objective that the U.S. is concerned about is altering and creating competitive advantage by setting global benchmarks. The U.S. concern here is that China is developing global champions to dominate both China’s domestic market and global markets in the key sectors of this program.”

Peck pointed out that the United States already has “significant competitive advantage in key areas such as talent, innovation policy and infrastructure, energy policy, physical infrastructure, legal and regulatory environment.” On the other hand, “Yes, they [the Chinese] are increasing their challenge to U.S. technology superiority, but China has a long way to go.”

Ultimately, Peck said, “It’s China’s industrial policy. Countries have a right to have their industrial policy.”

Forced Technology Transfer, IP Theft And The Trade Deficit

Also behind the Trump administration’s implementation of tariffs on Chinese imports are concerns about the country’s alleged encouragement and support for American IP theft and the practice of forcing U.S. companies to transfer their proprietary technologies in order to do business in China, according to the speakers.

Peck said that the U.S. government surveyed executives said they had been asked to transfer their technologies to Chinese entities. “But if you look at the vast majority of those that had been requested to transfer technology, it came from their potential business
partners, the private sector, rather than the central or local government,” he said. About 60% of respondents said they were “some-what concerned, rather than overly con-cerned,” about their IP rights in China.

In his remarks, Liu largely focused on the benefits of bilateral trade, and pushed back against claims of practices of IP theft and forced technology transfer on the part of the Chinese government.

Liu said that the reasons behind the trade war were “not justified.”

He first took issue with the Trump adminis-tration’s concern about the trade deficit be-tween the United States and China. He argued that the deficit exists because U.S. companies found that investing in China would give them a higher return on investment, and simi-larly, that consumers and importers “found that buying from China makes more eco-nomic sense.” He added, “That’s why, from 1990 to 2017, China’s share in the U.S. trade deficit has increased. Japan, Korea and other Eastern Asian countries, their share in the U.S. trade deficit decreased.”

He argued that this is a macroeconomic issue within the United States, rather than an issue of unfair trade policies.

“Another reason quoted by the initiators of the trade war is the so-called ‘forced transfer of technology,’” Liu said. “For this, I would say the fact is, the Chinese govern-ment does not have any laws or regulations to ask for investors to force foreign in vestors to transfer their technology to Chi-nese entities.” Instead, he said any agreements that require technology to be transferred from U.S. companies to Chi-nese businesses is a requirement made by the private sector, not the government.

In a question-and-answer session follow ing the luncheon, Peck said that the U.S. concern about forced technology transfer is “a misperception.” He said, “Those who are very hawkish in the Trump administration believe that China is basically on a mission to destroy the competitiveness of the United States – to become globally domi-nate in all the high-tech sectors critical to the 21st century. And part of that strategy is IP theft.” But overall, the vast majority of requests for technology transfer come from private sector negotiations between two potential business partners. There is no Chinese law that requires forced technol-ogy transfer to do business in China.”

Evan Braude, a former Long Beach city councilmember in attendance, pointed out that the Chinese government often backs, and to a degree controls, companies in its private sector “How do you consider it pri-vate if it looks private for the outside world, but we all know that it’s handled by the government officials who you have to get through to get all the approvals?” he asked.

Liu acknowledged that China has a “dif-ferent system” than the United States when it comes to state-owned companies. “We have more state-owned companies, but we are also reforming this kind of state-owned enterprise system,” he said. He also said that state-owned companies play by the same rules as private sector companies. Braude said he disagreed, but left it at that.

What’s At Risk

The 40-year anniversary of bilateral U.S.-China diplomatic and trade relations is coming up in 2019, Liu noted. Since then, he said, bilateral trade in goods be-tween the countries “increased by over 330 times.” The amount of U.S. goods exported to China in 2017 was “almost six times that of 2001, when China joined the World Trade Organization, and was five times faster than the U.S. global average growth of exports,” Liu pointed out.

In 2017, three million Chinese tourists visited the United States and 42,000 Chinese students studied at U.S. institutions of higher education, contributing a combined $51 bil-lion to the U.S. economy, according to Liu.

Continuing to outline the benefits of bilat-eral U.S.-China trade and relations, Liu said, “One present, bilateral trade has reached $700 billion. The two-way investment exceeds $230 billion U.S. dollars, and annual sales of U.S. funded enterprises in China is about $700 billion. According to the U.S.-China Business Council and Oxford Economics, the U.S exports to China and two-way invest-ment supported 2.6 million jobs in the United States in 2015. Trade with China saved $850 billion each year for an average U.S. family.”

But Liu believes these benefits to the U.S. economy are at risk due to the current trade war. “U.S. China trade relations have been a win-win relationship, and now we are like in a battlefield, and we’re in this kind of a cross fire,” Liu said.

He used a metaphor to illustrate his point. “This reminds me of something that recently happened on a transit bus. In this incident, a passenger on the bus was angered by miss-ing the station and attacked the bus driver, causing the bus to crash into the guard rail and fall into the river, leaving all 14 passen-gers perished. In the current U.S.-China trade war, I think we are facing the same danger as passengers on our two countries’ bus, as we are caught in the wrong war, at the wrong time, on the wrong grounds.”

President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping are expected to meet during the G20 Summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina, which begins November 30.
New Parklet Ordinance Could Cut Costs For Businesses

**By PIERCE NAHIGYAN**

The Long Beach City Council has approved a plan to streamline permits for the creation of sidewalk dining and parklets within the city's right-of-way. As defined by the Long Beach Public Works Department, a parklet “re-purposes parking space(s) or portions of a street into neighborhood gathering spaces.” A growing trend throughout the city, parklets extend pedestrian zones, often at the request of businesses, to provide space for activities such as sidewalk dining. They are also implemented as a traffic calming measure. The first parklet in Long Beach was installed at Lola’s Mexican Cuisine in 2011 on 4th Street in the Retro Row area, public works reported. This year, Groundwork Fitness opened the first fitness parklet in the United States at 333 Pine Ave. downtown.

On the recommendation of Long Beach Public Works, the city attorney has been tasked with preparing an ordinance to amend Long Beach Municipal Code Chapter 14.14, which governs the process for the creation of sidewalk dining and parklets more user-friendly and save applicants money.

In his report on the new parklet ordinance, Beck wrote that city staff worked in collaboration with Long Beach business community improvement districts (BIDs) to review and refine the current program. “The major focus was shortening the time for review and approval and ensuring projects met certain standards for safety and design,” the report stated. The changes recommended in the report define and clarify permissible uses for public property. Also included in the report was a new handbook for permit applicants that serves as a comprehensive guide on how to apply for sidewalk dining or a parklet to an existing business.

The handbook details both mandatory rules and non-mandatory guidelines that establish “a framework of design and development standards” for parklets and outdoor dining in the City of Long Beach. In the case of projects that do not meet the guidelines, applicants are encouraged to propose alternatives that meet the spirit of the design guidelines. Currently, approved parklet uses include dining, planting, bicycle parking and art. Under the proposed ordinance, additional uses and activities may be considered but will require city council approval. To minimize parking impacts, parklets will require a letter of support from its BID or community association and the number of parklets in a given area will be capped at 20%

According to the public works report, the current process for applying for a permit takes a minimum of six months and requires several steps, including both city council action and the involvement of the city manager. The new process would delegate permit approval to the director of public works, reducing both processing time and cost.

At the city council meeting, Beck said the current fee associated with parklets is approximately $4,800. He estimated that the streamlined process could cut that figure in half.

How permits are renewed would also be updated. Currently, permits are issued on an annual basis and, upon expiration, require applicants to obtain either a new permit or a renewal permit. Under the new ordinance, permits will continue to be issued on an annual basis but a full reexamination process would not be required for renewals. The new ordinance would require a site inspection as part of the approval process. Modifications to an existing permit would still require a new permit submission.

The move to approve the recommendations of Craig Beck and his department was carried by all nine councilmembers. “This was a policy many, many years in the making,” 1st District Councilmember Lena Gonzalez said at the meeting.

Public Works To Examine Possible Dangers Of Utility Wires

**By PIERCE NAHIGYAN**

The Long Beach City Council has requested an examination of utility wires in the city to determine if they pose safety and maintenance issues to the community. City Manager Patrick West has tasked the public works department to report back to the council in 60 days on the feasibility of conducting an audit of the utility wires.

The item was proposed by 3rd District Councilmember Suzie Price and cosponsored by Councilmembers Daryl Supernaw (4th District) and Al Austin (8th District).

“Drive or walk down any street in Long Beach and you’ll see utility wires running up and down, crisscrossing streets, alleys, and over residences,” Price stated in a press release. “Often, you’ll see these wires wrapped in bundles, hanging from telephone poles, or tied to other wires. Additionally, sometimes these wires are tangled among tree branches, or appear in disrepair, and have been left when a previous business or residential tenant moved.”

Price went on to request that the city “resolve some of these issues by working with our utility providers and state agencies” to reduce possible maintenance issues that could cause fires, service disruptions, improper design, safety and visual blight to the community.

Such an examination is already being carried out by individual resident groups, Price noted at the city council meeting, but their volunteer time and expertise is limited. Price took a moment to acknowledge the Belmont Heights Community Association for taking a leadership role “in bringing this issue to light.”

Price said that a more comprehensive evaluation could be conducted by the city in its major and minor corridors to assess maintenance issues. She then alluded to the Camp and Woolsey fires that are currently spreading across the state as an example of the danger that untended wires can pose to the community. “If we have ways to identify fire risks such as abandoned wires in areas that can cause fires, we should be addressing those and addressing them as a public safety and public health issue,” she said.

Electrical utilities have been faulted for recent California fires. Earlier this year, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection declared that utility lines and poles owned by Pacific Gas & Electric were to blame for several major Northern California wildfires. This month, a lawsuit also accused PG&E of being at fault for the deadly Camp Fire, though the cause remains under investigation.

Director of Public Works Craig Beck told the Business Journal that he and his staff must assess a number of factors, such as jurisdiction (some utility wires are located on private property), how the city might enforce maintenance on what-ever issues it discovers and what the effort will cost.

Beck responded that the city just completed a project along the Willow Street corridor. “It’s a major expense, a major undertaking,” he said, and not as simple as just digging a trench in the street and stowing wires underground.

As an example, Beck said that undertaking such a project in the 5th District would be difficult, as there are more utility lines located behind houses on private property. For now, Beck and his department are focused on their main goal. “We will be working diligently to pull all this data together and provide a comprehensive report back to council to help inform the next steps,” he said.

City Council To Receive Update On Community Hospital Lease Agreement

Tonight, November 20, the mayor and city council will meet in closed session with City Manager Pat West to receive an update on negotiations for the lease of Community Hospital, a city owned property, with selected hospital operator Molina, Wa, Network (MWN). Negotiations for the price and terms for the lease have been ongoing, and must be completed by January 3. MWN has already submitted its materials to the state in order to receive a license to operate the hospital. John Keisler, director of the Long Beach Economic Development Department, previously told the Business Journal. City staff will meet with MWN in a closed session of city council scheduled at 4 p.m.

Wires hang from this utility pole located across the street from Gallagher’s Pub & Grill on East Broadway. Such an examination is already being carried out by individual resident groups, Price noted at the city council meeting, but their volunteer time and expertise is limited. Price took a moment to acknowledge the Belmont Heights Community Association for taking a leadership role “in bringing this issue to light.”

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Gonzalez asked the department why College Estates Park, located in East Long Beach, hosted 50 hours of weekly contract class programming in summer 2017, while Cesar Chavez Park in Downtown Long Beach had zero hours of weekly contract class programming. At the meeting, then-PRM Director Marie Knight noted that, while her department tried to interest class instructors in underutilized parks, instructors chose which parks they preferred to contract with.

Gonzalez, sponsored by Vice Mayor Dee Andrews and Councilmembers Roberto Uranga and Rex Richardson, requested that PRM deliver a report on how hours and funds of PRM programming are divided up across the city.

In January of this year, PRM released a report that addressed each of the councilmembers’ concerns about city parks. Among them: hours and funding expended in each park location, the basis of prioritization for free and funded programming in each area, overall suggestions for more equitable programming, and suggestions on policies and processes that could be reviewed.

City council pushed their review of this report to February 20, which was Knight’s last day on the job before transitioning to director of community services for the City of Huntington Beach. According to Parks & Recreation Commissioner David Zanatta, Knight was undaunted. “She was committed, and she and the department did a thorough job,” Zanatta told the Business Journal.

PRM’s exhaustive report answered in detail each of the council’s questions, in particular Gonzalez’ request that “a fair and equitable system” be found “that guarantees every resident the same opportunities to thrive, regardless of zip code.”

PRM directly answered this request on page two of its report, pointing out that Gonzalez’ initial assessment of inequality “mainly focused on PRM’s contract class program.” This is only one aspect of the broad range of the department’s programming, the report stated, “and one that is fee-based in nature.”

To properly address the issues set forth by Gonzalez and her fellow councilmembers, PRM noted that “it is critical that all programming be examined to determine if there is an inequity in the programming offered, and whether changes are required.”

In its report, PRM articulated that it offers two kinds of programming: free programs (such as afterschool programming, movies in the park, youth sports and recreational swimming) and fee-based programs (contract classes, day camps, adult sports and some aquatics and nature center programs).

PRM explained that the department experienced significant budget cuts during the Great Recession and again from 2010 to 2012. In response, PRM prioritized free programs offered by PRM in each council district. (Image courtesy of the Parks Department)
programming to areas it determined to be most in need: the southwest, west, central and northern areas of the city. To achieve this goal, it reduced and eliminated programs in the east and southeast areas of the city. A regional approach was adopted, the report stated, that concentrated limited resources to where a “greater economy of scale existed from a staffing perspective.”

The report further elaborated on its methods, explaining that certain council districts received less of PRM’s free programming due to those districts having fewer facilities to host them in.

“I think what came out of it was an education more than anything,” Zanatta said, speaking on the scope of PRM’s report. “The report came back and said that the department was – is – doing a lot. And most of it was doing it at the direction of former city councilpeople.

Approximately 66% of PRM’s free programming was offered in the southwest, west, central and northern areas of Long Beach, according to the report, where the majority of its indoor facility space is located. There are certain council districts that received less of the free programming that was offered, “but those districts have less facilities in which to offer them,” the report continued.

Approximately 64% of contract classes were offered in the east and southeast areas of the city, the department reported, “where residents typically have a greater ability to pay for contract classes.”

PRM’s total funding for programming was reported as $6,380,463, which included more than 65 full-time and 661 part-time staff, plus supplies, marketing and program-related costs. About 64% of this investment was spent on programming in the city’s southeast, west, central and northern areas of the city.

The lengthy report concluded by addressing the council’s request for overall suggestions for more equitable citywide programming. “The data clearly demonstrates that the majority of the city’s investment for park programming, as well as capital improvement investment, is made in the areas of Long Beach that are of the greatest need,” the report stated. It further elaborated that multiple classes have been offered over the years, “particularly in the southwest and western areas of the city,” but had been cancelled due to a lack of registration. PRM continued to look for ways to focus offerings in these areas, it said. One example was by asking new contract class instructors to start their relationship with the city by offering classes in these underutilized areas.

“The majority of the funds were actually being spent on the west side,” Zanatta said. “The programs on the east side and some other places are actually programs that are funded by that council person or neighborhood or other groups.

Zanatta commended Gonzalez for initiating the review of PRM programming. “What Lena [Gonzalez] was doing, I thought, from a commissioner’s standpoint, was healthy,” he said. “It was bringing the city council table an education as to what we were doing. The department really can’t do anything other than what the council dictates for them to do. So, they were actually doing it. It wasn’t being perceived as so, but they were, and they were actually doing it in a very equitable way.”

A Second Report Is Requested

Despite PRM’s thorough analysis of its programming, Gonzalez declared a motion for the department to return to the council in four to six months with “a more profound report.” Eight councilmembers voted yes, with Andrews abstaining.

Due to budget hearings and other city council business, PRM did not meet with the city council again on this topic until October 9. In his report to the council, new PRM Director Gerardo Mouet wrote that, “Striving for park equity will be an ongoing and long-term process that has begun with the new department strategic plan.”

Prior to Mouet’s meeting with the council, this plan was approved to receive $70,000 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 budget, contingent on the availability of a surplus from the general fund. The intent of this plan, Mouet wrote, is to “offer PRM opportunities to engage with its users and stakeholders around service, programming, maintenance, and park/open space needs.”

According to Mouet, PRM has been working since February on setting new initiatives, including the addition of new classes at sites that had no classes in spring and summer 2017, offering professional development and job skills workshops and adding specialized STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics)-based classes and experiential learning trips. The city council has also approved the creation of a new Community Engagement and Partnership Bureau, he wrote, “to enhance [the] department’s capacity to more accurately assess community needs, grant success rate, park planning and partnership development.”

On October 10, Gonzalez sent out an email newsletter that stated the 26 community centers, six miles of beach and four community pools overseen by PRM “were not promoted and programmed in a way that was both fair and equitable.” She then praised the “great work” that PRM is now doing related to the park equity issue she raised in 2017, with the creation of STEPS, or “strategies toward equity in park services.”

STEPS, Gonzalez continued, “is a park system for all” that “has already seen amazing results and many more to come.” Gonzalez’s top example included a near tripling of contract classes offered on the west side.

Other results of the STEPS program for FY 19 include one-time allocations from the general fund of $100,000 for additional senior programming; $200,000 to continue Be Safe programming at new parks; and $40,000 to enhance PRM volunteer operations.

Overall, Zanatta considered the new PRM plan a good thing for the department. “We got funding from the mayor’s office and the budget oversight committee allocated funds in this year’s coming budget to actually begin the process of a new strategic plan – which we haven’t had in 15 or 16 years,” he said.

“To date, because of what Lena requested and what the department did in putting together a comprehensive report back, Parks and Rec is really working directly with the councilpeople that had issues in trying to address what’s really needed to go forward,” Zanatta continued.

“And a lot of that is until from the council offices themselves on what they think is needed and what they are looking at as far as equity programs.”
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Sun, Dec 23: 2pm

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a one-to-four ratio, but I only have two nurses, then . . . I can’t really put patients in them if I don’t have the staff.”

Hospitals that lack nurses may contract with agencies for what are known as “traveler nurses,” which cost more than regular staff because of agency fees. “The staffing company has to provide housing for the nurses and traveling expenses and other things that need to be taken into consideration,” Long Beach Medical Center’s chief nursing officer, Tony Garcia, an RN, said. Though they provide an essential service, Garcia added, temporary nurses affect a hospital’s budget “dramatically.”

But the HRSA report is not the only indicator of nursing supply and demand. Michelle Mahon, RN, national nursing practice specialist for National Nurses United (NNU), noted that reports of nursing shortages hit the news from time to time and “often cause a flurry of alarm.”

There are several factors that need to be evaluated, she said, especially in a state as large as California. “I wouldn’t leap immediately to HRSA’s conclusion that there’s necessarily a shortage,” she said.

Mahon pointed to a 2017 evaluation by the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), which projected no shortage in California. This year, UCSF put out another evaluation that looked specifically at the counties of Los Angeles, Ventura and Orange. The new evaluation, led by Dr. Joanne Spetz, the associate director for research at UCSF’s Healthforce Center, predicted that these counties would experience a surplus of RNs in the next 15 years. The report anticipated that there would be so much competition for RN positions in these areas that nursing graduates would be compelled to move elsewhere for work.

American Nurses Association/California Executive Director Markéta Houskova, an RN, attended a summit hosted by the California Board of Registered Nursing this past week, where Spetz delivered a lecture on her findings. “All of us had questions, the same questions you’re asking me,” Houskova told the Business Journal. “But we heard all these stories about this shortage.”

Spetz ran projections from 2020 to 2035 and predicted that, if California continues to graduate between 11,000 and 12,000 RNs per year – as has been the average, according to Houskova – there would be enough new RNs entering the workforce to replace retiring nurses.

Central California is expected to run an RN deficit, particularly in the San Joaquin Valley, according to UCSF’s projections. Houskova said that nursing schools in Southern California may encourage their students to seek positions in the less populated region.

How To Retain And Increase The Supply Of Long Beach RNs

Registered nurses risk both physical and mental exhaustion in their daily work, nurse recruitment and retention firm NSI Nursing Solutions reported in March, which has led to turnover rates that range from 8.8% to 37%, depending on geographic location and nursing specialty.

Nurses

(Continued From Page 1)

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Healthwise
Catching Pancreatic & Liver Cancer Early

The American Cancer Society estimates that about 55,440 people in the U.S. will be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and approximately 42,220 will be diagnosed with liver cancer in 2018. Pancreatic cancer forms in the pancreas, an organ in the digestive system located in the abdomen. Endocrine cells in the pancreas create enzymes to digest fats and proteins, and exocrine glands create insulin and hormones to help balance the amount of sugar in the blood. Cancer is more common in the exocrine cells and most tumors in this area are called adenocarcinomas. Pancreatic and liver cancers are often hard to find, which results in late detection. Often times, because it's found in a later stage, pancreatic cancer may be treated too late.

However, there are several types of liver cancer: Primary liver cancer - Cancer that begins in the tissue of the liver; Secondary liver cancer – Cancer from the colon, lung, breast or other parts of the body spreads to the liver; Non-cancerous (benign) tumors - Tumors also may form in the liver.

Risk Factors & Prevention For Pancreatic Cancer
You are at a greater risk for pancreatic cancer risk if you: Are over the age of 70; Are male; Are African-American; Smoke or are exposed to smoke; Are overweight; Have diabetes, chronic pancreatitis or cirrhosis of the liver; Have a family history of pancreatic cancer; or inherited certain mutations in genes that can increase the risk of pancreatic cancer; Are exposed to chemicals such as pesticides and dyes.

The cause of most cases of pancreatic cancer is unknown. Maintaining a healthy weight and diet, getting plenty of exercise and not smoking is recommended.

Risk Factors & Prevention For Liver Cancer
You are at a greater risk for liver cancer risk if you: Are male; Are over the age of 40; Are African-American, Asian or Polynesian; Suffer from certain types of liver diseases, such as hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV) or cirrhosis; Are exposed to aflatoxins – a mold found in food such as peanuts, corn and soybeans; Are diabetic.

In many cases, the cause of liver cancer is unknown. By avoiding hepatitis infections, moldy grains, limiting alcohol use and not smoking you can help reduce your risk for liver cancer.

Know Your Body
While other cancers affecting the digestive system, such as colorectal cancer, have a standard diagnostic screening, pancreatic and liver cancer do not. It’s important to pay attention to your body and talk to your doctor if you notice any of the following signs.

Pancreatic cancer: Pain (usually in the abdomen); Nausea or vomiting; Weight loss of 10% or more; Jaundice; (yellowing of the skin and eyes); Fever.

Liver cancer: Weight loss or loss of appetite; Feeling very full after a small meal; Loss of appetite; Jaundice; (yellowing of the skin and eyes); Swelling or fluid build-up in the abdomen; Itching; Jaundice; (yellowing of the eyes and skin).

By Ronald Wolf, M.D., a liver and pancreatic surgeon with the Complex Pancreatic & Liver Cancer Program at MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center, Long Beach, Calif.

MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center was awarded Magnet status by the American Nurses Association in 2013, the highest level of national recognition for health care organizations that demonstrate sustained excellence in nursing care and a professional work environment. “A lot of nurses seek facilities that have Magnet status because they know they’re going to be empowered,” Antonio “Tony” Garcia, RN, Long Beach Medical Center’s chief nursing officer (pictured right), told the Business Journal. He is pictured with Diane Wynn, RN, vice president of risk management services, center; and Michelle Cline, RN, director of clinical workforce development. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Annette Seredjian)

By Ronald Wolf, M.D., a liver and pancreatic surgeon with the Complex Pancreatic & Liver Cancer Program at MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center, Long Beach, Calif.

“Nursing turnover is extremely costly to hospitals,” Mahon said. A 2018 report on national health care retention and RN staffing by NSI Nursing Solutions places the cost of turnover at 1.9 RNs between $38,000 to $61,000. Moreover, each percent change in RN turnover costs the average hospital an additional $337,500, according to the report. The high turnover rate is not only due to workplace stressors but the fact that RNs are aging out of their profession, Wynn said. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimated that the majority of registered nurses in the U.S. range between 45 and 59 years-old.

Long Beach Memorial is preparing for the inevitable “retirement wave” by partnering with Cal State Long Beach (CSULB) to bring new graduates into the profession. “We have a 14-year standing partnership with Cal State Long Beach Nursing School,” Michelle Cline, director of Memorial’s clinical workforce development, said. “They have all their clinical [experience] here and our hope is . . . they become our new grads and our RNs.”

Memorial has approximately 1,900 RNs on staff and brings on about 90 to 100 new graduate RNs through its CSULB partnership program each year. “We’re anticipating that we’ll need to increase those numbers and supplement that program a little bit . . . based on our projections of retirement,” Wynn said.

To combat potential turnover, Long Beach City College (LBCC) prepares its nursing students for the rigors of their chosen profession by giving them hands on experience with counseling and psychiatric care. “When we’re in hospitals with them, we get a chance to work with them in terms of their . . . emotional intelligence, their levels of empathy, how they respond to working with challenging situations,” Sigrid Sexton, an RN and LBCC’s program director for registered nursing, said.

“There is a high turnover rate,” she said of the profession, but added that nursing students at LBCC tend to be more resilient than average. “We have students who come from the local community. They’re very diverse, they have life experiences. In that group, you tend to see less attrition.”

Making nurses feel valued and safe in the workplace may reduce turnover and incentivize incoming graduates, Mahon said, adding that it’s only by retaining existing staff and replenishing those nurses set to retire that California hospitals could offset a projected shortage.

Nursing organizations, health care facilities and schools are all working towards making California a desirable place to practice medicine, according to industry professionals. For Mahon and the NNU, California’s mandated minimum nurse-to-patient ratio is a prime example of that agenda. “There’s no limit anywhere else,” Mahon said. “This is driving a mass exodus from this profession, not just nationally but internationally. It’s a crisis.”

The ratio limit may be a factor in reducing nurse staffing vacancies and turnover rates, as one 2016 study suggests. According to the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies, RN turnover rates in California are lower than in states without nurse-to-patient ratios. A 2015 study published in the “International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health” found that the California RN staffing ratio law was associated with a 31.6% reduction in occupational injuries and illness among RNs working in hospitals in California.

“We believe staffing is important in preventing injury in the workplace, but those results were pretty astounding,” Mahon said.

California RNs enjoy some of the highest wages in the nation. According to the 2017 HRSA report, median pay for California RNs was second only to Hawaii ($48.43 per hour vs. $49.26 per hour, respectively).

However, California RNs must contend with a high cost of living. Wynn said that Long Beach Memorial has witnessed that effect firsthand. “We’re also seeing challenges with some of our younger nurses because of the cost of living in Southern California in general, and especially in this area. When we’ve looked at our data and done exit interviews, we have found that we’re seeing some of our workforce leaving California or leaving the area because of the cost of living,” she said.

But that doesn’t mean the surplus will last. Economic factors lead to fluctuations in supply, she said, and with the Affordable Care Act bringing more patients into the health care system, there will be a higher demand for clinical staff. Also, the aging Baby Boomer generation, combined with the aging RN workforce, will necessitate more nurses.

Locally, the closure of Long Beach Community Hospital has forced a reshuffling of health care professionals, Sexton said. “Nurses who worked at Community Hospital, many of them were taken on into Long Beach Memorial . . . some went to St. Mary Medical Center.” Sexton said she hopes that Community reopens, not only for the sake of LBCC nurses looking for jobs, but also for patients who live near the traffic circle.

In the meantime, LBCC continues to partner with local hospitals – Memorial, St. Mary, Lakewood Regional Medical Center and the V.A. Long Beach Health Care System – to educate the next generation of registered nurses. “These partnerships between the local schools and hospitals are key in keeping the community resilient in terms of nursing supply and demand,” Sexton said. “We highly value those partnerships and would like to keep them going.”
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A growing concern among Long Beach health care providers, law enforcement and government officials is the growing use of the synthetic opioid fentanyl. The drug, which is adding fuel to the flames of the American opioid crisis, is 80 to 100 times stronger than morphine, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Although originally developed pharmacologically to care for cancer patients, the drug is also produced illicitly, and is increasingly being added to other drugs such as heroin and cannabis, according to local drug abuse caregivers and city officials.

An academic study on synthetic opioid involvement in U.S. drug overdose deaths between 2010 and 2016 found that “heroin and synthetic opioids (primarily illicit fentanyl) are increasingly implicated in overdose,” and that “synthetic opioids are increasingly found in illicit drug supplies of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, and counterfeits pills.” The study was published in May in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Although other synthetic drugs are used with more prevalence in Long Beach, particularly the stimulant methamphetamine, local officials said they were currently most concerned by fentanyl because it is often fatal.

“California saw a 57% increase in overdose deaths related to fentanyl in 2017. Opioid abuse was a Midwest and East Coast phenomenon for several years, but it has now hit California,” City Prosecutor Doug Haubert told the Business Journal. “We should prepare to see more deaths related to fentanyl in the near future.”

Haubert added, “Simply touching fentanyl with your bare hands can kill you. It can enter your system through the skin.

Sgt. Tim Long, who leads the Long Beach Police Department’s (LBPD) drug investigations section, said that synthetic drugs are becoming more commonly used in Long Beach. “Synthetic drugs are growing in popularity because they are more potent than natural drugs; the effects on the user are enhanced, lasting longer and producing a maximum high,” he said in an e-mail to the Business Journal. However, he noted, “Long Beach has not yet experienced an elevated level of detrimental effects as [those] other communities are battling, due to the dedicated resources focused on prevention.”

The most commonly used synthetic drug in Long Beach is methamphetamine, and the “second runner up is fentanyl,” Long said. “Heroin derivatives, opioids, and depressant drugs are becoming more prevalent within local communities. Another synthetic making a small comeback in gas station convenient stores and laundromats is MDMA (Ecstasy). This synthetic is very popular with college students and youth,” he noted.

Synthetic drug use is not associated with any particular population, Long pointed out. “In the past, drug abuse may have been identified with specific populations. Today, drug abuse affects all walks of life,” he said. “There is no longer a specific population that can be absolutely identified with drug use and addiction. Any community can be affected by drugs today, as evidenced by the nationwide drug abuse epidemic.”

Haubert noted that, as a powerful depressant, fentanyl “slows the respiratory system to the point that it will actually stop, and you will die,” unlike methamphetamine, which acts a stimulant to the body.

Noah Warren, partner and business development manager of Long Beach-based addiction and mental health treatment center Roots Through Recovery, said that it is easy and cheap to obtain fentanyl illicitly. Concern to Warren is that he is seeing increasing numbers of patients who are testing positive for fentanyl, but who did not knowingly ingest the drug.

“When you’re buying something on the street, you don’t know what’s in it,” Warren said. “We’re finding that people are doing heroin that is cut with fentanyl. Or they think they are doing benzodiazepines, like Xanax, but they are buying it off the street — and when they come to us they are actually testing positive for fentanyl. The danger in that is the synthetic opioids are so much more potent than . . . what else the pharmaceutical companies are creating.”

Warren noted that fentanyl’s effects are so powerful that Narcan, a nasal spray used to revive individuals who have overdosed, sometimes does not work.

Long said the number one risk of synthetic drug abuse is overdose. “Users and addicts underestimate the potency of the drug, wanting a better high, and their body cannot adjust to the strength of the synthetic drug,” he said. “Medical synthetic drugs are designed for extreme applications such as pain management and surgical procedures. Used irresponsible and illegally, synthetic drugs can be deadly.”

Fentanyl is often used legally for in-home hospital care. “A home’s medicine cabinet is the ‘best’ and ‘number one’ source for synthetics drugs. Anyone, such as an immediate family member, house guest, neighbor or child, allowed in the home can be the vehicle for drug removal and theft,” Long said.

“Synthetic drugs are a concern regarding rising crime rates,” Long said. “They do pose a risk to responding police personnel and the public. Synthetic drugs can have abstract or unfamiliar symptoms. Synthetics can produce unfamiliar symptoms appearing to emulate a hallucinogen or various psychoactive behaviors. It greatly depends on the community it is affecting, how easily they are accessed, and the level of usage.”

Another prevalently used synthetic drug in recent years was spice, a synthetic drug meant to stimulate the same brain cell receptors as marijuana, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Typically, spice comes in the form of dried plant materials sprayed with a synthetic concoction of drugs. Before being outlawed in California in 2017, spice was commonly sold in gas station convenient stores and labeled as incense “not for human consumption,” according to Warren.

It is difficult to predict the effects of spice, because its chemical make-up varies from batch to batch, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Spice is known to cause extreme paranoia, hallucinations, anxiety, rapid heart rate, seizures and other detrimental health effects that, in some cases, many also endanger others.

According to Warren, spice has been a problem particularly among teenagers, who would smoke the same amount of the drug as they would marijuana, resulting in psychosis and seizures.

The prevalence of vaping — smoking substances through an e-cigarette — makes it more difficult to know what a person is ingesting and if it is illegal, according to Haubert.

As the city prosecutor, Haubert said, “I am concerned with how difficult it is for law enforcement to prevent the widespread distribution and use of synthetic drugs. Our streets are being flooded with synthetic drugs and there is no easy solution to stopping it.” He continued, “Without a doubt, any time you see an increase in drug use on the streets, you’re going to see an increase in crime in order to feed the habit.”
New HIV Infections Plateau In Long Beach; Other STDs On The Rise

By Samantha Mehlinger

While Long Beach’s rate of new HIV infections surpasses new infection rates for both Los Angeles County and the state, the citywide rate has plateaued in recent years, according to Kelly Colopy, director Long Beach Health & Human Services.

The health department’s annual HIV/STD (sexually transmitted diseases) Surveillance Report for 2017, released last month, revealed that there were 101 new HIV infections reported in Long Beach—the largest reported in the city in recent years. The annual report also revealed that there were 37 deaths associated with HIV reported in Long Beach. According to Belinda Prado, HIV/STD surveillance supervisor for the health department, health care providers and community organizers that diagnose HIV are required to report new cases to Los Angeles County. The city generates its annual report based upon this county data.

Health care professionals believe that advancements in HIV treatments are behind the reduction in new cases. The development of Truvada, a pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) medication given to individuals most at risk for contracting HIV, has prevented many new cases, according to HIV care professionals.

“We have much better treatments now,” Dr. Anissa Davis, health officer for the City of Long Beach, said “Because we can manage HIV as a chronic disease, not only does it help the person who has HIV, it is known to decrease transmission. If your viral load is suppressed, it is virtually impossible for you to transmit HIV to others.”

The term “viral load” refers to the quantity of the HIV virus present in an infected individual’s bloodstream.

“The other thing is PrEP, pre-exposure prophylaxis, which is a pill that you can take,” Davis continued. “If you’re HIV negative you can take a pill once a day called Truvada, and if you’re taking it consistently it can decrease your risk of contracting HIV by up to 93%.”

The CARE Center at Dignity Health - St. Mary Medical Center is the largest provider of HIV services in the South Bay, assisting about 1,900 patients annually, according to Paul Lovely, the center’s executive director. After Truvada was approved for HIV prevention by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2012, the center has seen an increase in new cases. At MemorialCare Miller Children’s & Women’s Hospital in Long Beach, no HIV-positive expectant mothers in care at the Bickerstaff Pediatric Family Center have transferred the virus to their babies in 20 years, according to Dr. Audra Deveikis, medical director of the center. Asked how this feat was accomplished, Deveikis said matter-of-factly, “By working very aggressively with the staff trying to make sure the patients are taken care of, that they’re doing the medications, coming for visits, that blood is drawn and they are followed very closely.”

Deveikis noted that the greatest challenge to overcome in treating HIV-positive patients is getting them to take their medications. “Our patients can access any medication that will work for them regardless of the price. It is just putting the pill in the mouth and swallowing is the problem,” she said. Some patients have “pill aversion,” she said, because taking medication reminds them of their illness.

However, Deveikis and her staff do everything they can to ensure their patients take their meds. This could mean calling patients’ pharmacies for them, and even taking them to pick up their prescriptions, she noted. “In the HIV field there has been tremendous advancement. We went from lethal disease 100% of the time to a chronic disease where patients can live for a long time if they take the medications,” she said.

Making sure HIV-positive mothers do not transmit their virus to their children is important not only to reduce the spread of the disease, but also because the virus is more resistant to medication when it is contracted in the womb, Deveikis explained. While the rates of perinatally-contrasted HIV are declining in the United States, Deveikis pointed out that in other countries, particularly those in Africa, they are not.

Based upon the Long Beach Health & Human Services Department’s report, Long Beach residents most at risk for contracting HIV are men who have sex with men (MSM). And, among those, “young men of color are at higher risk,” according to Davis.

The Centers for Disease Control estimate that one in six among MSM will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime. The rate is one in 11 for white MSM, one in four for Latino MSM and one in two for black MSM.

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The treatment of expectant mothers who are HIV-positive to prevent perinatal (in the womb) contraction of the virus has also reduced the number of new cases. At MemorialCare Miller Children’s & Women’s Hospital in Long Beach, no HIV-positive expectant mothers in care at the Bickerstaff Pediatric Family Center have transferred the virus to their babies in 20 years, according to Dr. Audra Deveikis, medical director of the center. Asked how this feat was accomplished, Deveikis said matter-of-factly, “By working very aggressively with the staff trying to make sure the patients are taken care of, that they’re doing the medications, coming for visits, that blood is drawn and they are followed very closely.”

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HIV care retention and viral suppression. A person diagnosed with the virus had the lowest rate of African Americans who were newly diagnosed, according to the health department. In 2016, Long Beach women are African American, accounting for 14% of all female residents in Long Beach, 36% of all HIV-infected Long Beach women are African American, according to the health department. In 2016, African Americans who were newly diagnosed with the virus had the lowest rate of HIV care retention and viral suppression.

STD’s On The Rise

As executive director of the CARE Center at Dignity Health - St. Mary Medical Center, Paul Lovely oversees the largest provider of HIV services in the South Bay. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

According to a 2017 fact sheet released by the CDC, African Americans are most at risk for HIV because they are more likely to have sexual encounters with others that are HIV positive. This is because the rate of HIV is higher in African American communities, and because “African Americans are likely to have sexual relations with other African Americans,” according to the CDC. Socioeconomic factors in some African American communities, including poverty, less access to health care and higher rates of incarceration, may also contribute to the high risk factor among this demographic, according to the CDC. Additionally, the agency noted, “Fear of disclosing risk behavior or sexual orientation may prevent African Americans from seeking testing, prevention and treatment services, and support from friends and family.”

Near-identical reasonings were cited by the CDC in respect to higher rates among Hispanics and Latinos. On a webpage dedicated to details about HIV in these communities, the CDC also notes that undocumented Hispanics and Latinos may be fearful of seeking out HIV prevention and care services due to fear of arrest or deportation.

The 90802 zip code in Downtown Long Beach represents the highest concentration of persons living with HIV, according to Davis. “That goes to the fact that Long Beach is a very gay-friendly city, and within Long Beach there are certain neighborhoods where more gay and bisexual men tend to reside. 90802 is one of those zip codes,” she explained.

Both the health department and the CARE Center offer HIV and STD testing, as well as prevention services, at low or no cost. Both also help HIV and STD-positive individuals connect their partners to services and medical treatment. “We will see you, the patient, we’ll diagnose your STD, and we’ll also give you medicine to take to your partner to treat them,” Colopy said.

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Under the watch of Dr. Audra Deveikis, no HIV-positive mothers under care at the Bickerstaff Pediatric Family Center at Miller Children’s & Women’s Hospital Long Beach have transferred the virus to their babies. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

As executive director of the CARE Center at Dignity Health - St. Mary Medical Center, Paul Lovely oversees the largest provider of HIV services in the South Bay. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

While “HIV medicines are crazy expensive,” as Lovely put it, they are typically accessible at low or no cost to individuals with low incomes. “Most HIV regimens are well over $2,000 or around $3,000 a month. The PrEP, Truvada, is about $1400 a month or take, but it is covered by most insurers, including Medi-Cal,” he said.

Gilead, the maker of Truvada, provides the drug for free to individuals with incomes that are 500% above the federal poverty line or less, Lovely said. “Some people, especially with PrEP, think, ‘I don’t have insurance, so I can’t get PrEP. Or, ‘I don’t make much money, so I can’t afford it.’ But the truth is, we’re able to get virtually everybody on PrEP regardless of any of those factors,” he explained.

Deveikis, Lovely and city health department staff all pointed out that the advent of Truvada may have led to some riskier sexual behavior. Those at risk for contracting HIV are able to prevent it with a pill — however, that pill does not prevent against other sexually transmitted diseases.

“I do concern me that if people don’t perceive themselves to be at risk of a really
dangerous STD, meaning HIV, that they may be less likely to use condoms to prevent other less serious STDs,” Lovely said.

The health department is focusing on tackling a citywide increase in STDs including syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhea that may in part be due to this concept of “condom fatigue,” according to Colopy and Davis.

From 2013 to 2017, chlamydia rates in Long Beach increased 88%, according to the health department’s HIV/STD Surveillance Report. Over the same time period, the rate of gonorrhea infections increased 267%, while syphilis rates increased 143%. Long Beach has the second highest rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea in the state, and the third highest rate of syphilis. The health department has launched an educational campaign to combat these increasing STD rates.

In addition to condom fatigue and riskier behavior brought on by the availability of PrEP, factors influencing these rates likely include a reduction in federal funding for STD education and services, as well as issues related to low socioeconomic status such as unstable housing and a lack of education, Davis noted.

“With HIV, once you have it, it’s a long-term lifetime treatment,” Colopy said. “Whereas with things like gonorrhea and syphilis are antibiotic related [treatments]. So they are things where people feel like, ‘Well, if I get it I’ll just get treated,’” she explained. The health department has launched an educational campaign to combat these increasing STD rates.

When it comes to eradicating HIV, Lovely said the tools are all at hand. “We really are at a place where it’s in our grasp to get to the end of HIV, but we’re in the most crucial time where we need the whole community to work together,” he said. “HIV negative and HIV positive [individuals] must work together, get tested, get on treatment, increase awareness, encourage other people who might be at risk to get tested – because that’s how we’re going to end the epidemic,” he said. “We have the tools to end the epidemic. We just need the will and the commitment of the community to do that. And we’re here to do that.”

This chart shows how the rate of new HIV infections decreased and then plateaued in Long Beach between 2012 to 2016. Long Beach has a higher rate of new HIV infections than Los Angeles County and the State of California. (Image courtesy of Long Beach Health and Human Services)
generated by $190,000 in assessment fees paid by property and business owners in the district. Run by a staff of two with the assistance of numerous contractors who provide key services, the BKBIA continues to focus on its core services and programming, according to Blair Cohn, executive director. Established in 1993, the Bixby Knolls Property and Business Improvement District was created to provide the business corridors on Long Beach Boulevard and Atlantic Avenue in the Bixby Knolls neighborhood of Long Beach with additional services, including marketing, security, and physical improvements.

“I always say that the district is strong and steady,” Cohn told the Business Journal in the association’s small office in the Expo Arts Center, an events venue and community center owned by the BKBIA. “The last two years have been a period of crossroads and some changes. We have some new developments [underway]. We have some business owners retiring who have been here for years. Now we’re coming out of that and getting into [determining] the next direction for us.”

Servando Orozco, president of the BKBIA’s board, operates a growing business in the district, and said he has seen many positive changes over the years. “I personally believe the district has improved a lot,” he said. “How people perceive Bixby Knolls is different that it was 15 years ago. I can feel that. I can see that.”

Cohn said that Bixby Knolls continues to attract new businesses, both at its retail street locations and in office buildings. When a vacancy opens up, “We try to be in those conversations to connect landlords, brokers and potential businesses,” he noted. Knocking on wood, Cohn said that business retention has been going “pretty well.” “If we can continue our energy of the clean and safe programs and the promotion of the district . . . it trickles down to other parts of the business community – folks who are looking to expand or to move here,” Cohn said. “We’re off the 405 [Freeway] right up a major corridor, and easy to get to. If I had a magic wand, of course we’d fill up everything. But the best we can do with our tiny staff here is to do our song and dance to make it as great as possible.”

The BKBIA operates a series of programs meant to engage residents and bring them to the business corridors, including its Literary Society (a book club) the Strollers (a walking group), the new Knights of the Round Turntable (a music group), and several others. A quarterly breakfast meeting for BKBIA members is well attended, with 90 to 100 businesses represented at each meeting, according to Cohn. Guest speakers such as City Manager Pat West and Long Beach Economic Development Director John Keisler speak at each of these meetings about topics of interest to business owners.

The BKBIA hosts regular events to spotlight businesses in the district. This summer, the association temporarily halted its involvement in First Fridays, a long-running event held in the district in which businesses offer specials, entertainment and even food samples. “The BIA took a backseat for a few months and we gave it back to the business owners,” Cohn said. He explained that the concept had originally debuted to get people into local businesses, but had transitioned into more of a street fair in recent years. “We took a look at it and said, ‘Are we off the mission now?’” After letting local business owners take the reins for the event during the summer to get it back to these roots, the BKBIA is back leading the event, he noted.

This summer, the BKBIA introduced Summer Saturdays, “where we ran a beer trolley for June July and August just to connect the neighbors on a Saturday afternoon,” Cohn said. This recurring event highlighted the BKBIA’s new marketing push for the business district, the concept of “Brewery Knolls.” Also spotlighting the beer offerings of Bixby Knolls
was the BKBIA’s new Walktober Fest, an Oktoberfest-themed brewery tour in the month of October.

“We’re going to really start promoting the Brewery Knolls concept, which is all the breweries that are here,” Cohn said. These include Liberation Brewing, Smog City Brewing, Dutch’s Brewhouse and the soon-to-open Ambitious Ales, plus beer-centric eateries and businesses such as Rasselbock German Kitchen & Beer Garden, Knolls Restaurant, Stateside Crafts and Corked. Asked why so many beer and brewing businesses have opened up shop in Bixby Knolls is recent years, Cohn said, “There were affordable, good spaces available, and it all just seemed to kind of play that way.”

In 2021, the BKBIA’s largest source of funding will run dry: an annual payment of $200,000 in former redevelopment agency dollars. The BKBIA receives these funds through a contract it won with the City of Long Beach before the state legislature dissolved redevelopment agencies throughout the state in 2011. According to Cohn, RDA funds contribute to facade improvements for businesses, the association’s security contract with local business CSI Security, streetscaping and other key services.

To prepare for the loss of this funding, the BKBIA is pursuing a number of strategies. “One, we had already raised assessments, but that was because the assessments hadn’t been raised in 20 years,” Cohn said. “We have just filed to have a 501(c)(3), so there will be a nonprofit arm of the BIA . . . [for] fundraising, grants, donations.” Cohn is also beginning to rent out the Expo Center for events more frequently to bring in additional revenue.

The BKBIA’s services were recently hired by the Long Beach Public Works Department to assist with corridor improvements in other areas of the city, and Cohn envisions future project management opportunities as a potential revenue stream.

Staff at the City of Long Beach have suggested that the BKBIA install parking meters to generate additional revenue. However, Cohn noted that parking isn’t impacted in Bixby Knolls. “I am not saying no to the idea, but it has to be smart and it has to be right. If we’re going to do a revenue split [or] if we have to pay the city back for the cost, then what is the true net [gain] of this? How much will that really help us?” he asked.

“Our challenge is to find an answer to continued funding,” Cohn said. “But if there is no way through the city to fund this, the dominos will fall. And I don’t think there is anybody in city hall, or this office, or the council office, or this neighborhood, who would want to see things grind to a halt and go back to basically an answering machine and a part-time person who says, ‘Yea we can do a member mixer.’ This is now a connected, active community that wants to see the corridors thrive.”

Business Owners Enthusiastic As Bixby Knolls Evolves Into A Destination For Residents And Visitors

Merchants Credit Positive Trends To Efforts By The Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association

By PIERCE NAHIGYAN STAFF WRITER

Though often described as Long Beach’s sleepy bedroom community, Bixby Knolls is wide awake. According to local business owners, the area has benefited greatly from the passionate efforts of the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association (BKBIA), which actively promotes and connects its professional, service and retail members.

“It’s a great community,” Dennis Cook, president and CEO of C.S.I. Patrol Service Inc., told the Business Journal. “It still has that small town feel, which is what I really like. Everybody knows each other, everybody supports each other.”

Bookended by Atlantic Avenue and Long Beach Boulevard, and running from the 405 Freeway at the south end to 46th Street to the north, the Bixby Knolls Property and Business Improvement District is one of 10 such districts in the City of Long Beach. Businesses in the district pay an additional fee to provide the area with cleaner streets and sidewalks, landscape beautification, enhanced security, capital improvement opportunities and special events and marketing.

Over the last decade, First Fridays, a monthly special event grew into a monthly block party that took place on Atlantic Avenue. With live music, art, dancing and fun for the whole family, the first Friday of each month gives locals a chance to mingle and shop.

Briana Williams, general manager at Reptiles or Nah, a local pet store, said First Fridays have been a great opportunity to show off their scaly creatures. “We bring our snakes out and we bring our lizards out,” she said. “People freak out when they see a 14-foot snake around someone’s neck and they’re just like, ‘Oh my gosh!’”

Aided by the BKBIA, and led by its Executive Director Blair Cohn, the commercial
corridor of Bixby Knolls is experiencing a resurgence in interest from locals and visitors alike. Veteran businesses that have been there for years are reporting higher revenues and younger clientele, while new businesses are excited to become part of the scene.

**Dining And Drinking**

Corrie Matthews, the general manager at EJ’s Pub, has worked out of the company’s Bixby Knolls location for the last four years. The pub itself has been in the area for nearly two decades. “In 2001, there was not a lot out here,” Matthews said. “We were lucky enough to be one of the first pubs to come into the area at the time. That was a rough year, though.”

The eatery’s prospects brightened considerably when First Fridays became a monthly event, she said, crediting the BKBIA for striving to maintain that level of excitement and renewal throughout the years. Lately, the big draw for the area has been the selection of breweries and craft beers, she noted. Excitement for the “Brewery Knolls” movement has translated to more foot traffic and higher sales for EJ’s, Matthews said. “We all feed on each other. We’re all able to draw from the same customer base.”

Though EJ’s does not brew its own beer, the pub keeps a selection of craft beers on tap and has dedicated itself to offering a varied menu. “People are exploring flavors a little bit more than they used to, so it’s fun for the kitchen to try new stuff,” Matthews said.

Staeside Crafts, an American independent craft beer shop and tasting room located just

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Stateside Crafts, an American independent craft beer shop and tasting room located just

EJ’s Pub General Manager Corrie Matthews has worked with Head Chef Pedro Deloza for 15 years. “We’ve all kind of grown up together, learned together,” she said. “He’s been amazing through changing our menu and making sure everything is quality.” EJ’s recently started catering events, such as at the Long Beach Historical Society’s Cemetery Tour. “It was really cool for us,” Matthews said. “We’ve always donated to the Cemetery Tour ... but that was really good opportunity for us to get to work with them.” (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

(Continued From Page 31)
a minute’s walk south, will celebrate its four-year anniversary next
month. In addition to its wide selection of beer, the shop offers hand-
made small batch foods, such as pickles and jerky from Proper’s
Pickles and Long Beach Jerky Company, both local to the city.

Patrick Homa, the store manager, said the burgeoning beer scene
is helping to revitalize the neighborhood. “If you look at Torrance
and you look at Long Beach and Orange County and you see how
much beer is evolving . . . there’s definitely a groundswell.”

By providing a free “beer trolley” that drives folks from one
brewery or bar to the next, the BKBIA has supported that scene
in a safe and fun way, Homa added. “They use the trolley to cart
people in between locations – SteelCraft and Willmore and Ras-
selbock – and then there’s a dropoff right in front of my store
[where] you’re able to hit my place and Dutch’s Brewhouse next
[door],” Homa said. “Once they come in and see how great these
places are . . . they really enjoy it.”

SteelCraft is an outdoor urban eatery built from repurposed ship-
ping containers. “We collaborate with BKBIA on many events,”
Kimberly Gros, founder of SteelCraft, told the Business Journal.
“The neighborhood is all about supporting small businesses and
you can really feel that in the community.”

The taproom general manager for Smog City Brewing Company,
Jason Briseno, echoed Gros’s statement. “What’s fun about ‘Brew-
ery Knolls’ is that you have this really amazing central business
district and local business owners that really care about their environment, their customers,
their neighborhood, the culture,” he said.

Smog City Brewing Company, which operates a taproom within SteelCraft, is cur-
rently gearing up to release “winter warmer” beers. “So, a lot of darker, roastier, bour-
bon-barrel aged beers that we’re going to be releasing coming up this month and
December,” Briseno said.

At 4020 Atlantic Ave., Rasselbock Kitchen & Beer Garden has finished its Oktoberfest
and is now in the midst of its “schnitzel month,” owner Bjoern Risse said.

“We are showcasing eight special schnitzel variations during the month of November . . . from different regions of Germany,” Risse said. In addition to traditional schnitzels are
some of Rasselbock’s own creations, including a schnitzel with eggs and capers on top
and one with pineapples and cheese, among others.

“We’re having a beer and food pairing coming up at the end of November called ‘Win-
ter’s Coming,’” Risse said. “We’ll be focusing on winter style beers and we’ll be pairing
those with food items for tasting.”

The new kid on the block, Liberation Brewing Company first opened its doors six
months ago. Its three founders, Dan Regan, Michael Clements and brewer Eric McLaugh-
lin, all grew up around the Long Beach area and were excited to set up shop in Bixby
Knolls. “It was like coming home,” Regan said.
(Continued From Page 33)

The former chief of staff for the seventh council district, Michael Clements said Bixby Knolls was the top neighborhood he considered for the brewery’s location. “The BKBIA was a big draw,” Clements said.

“We were looking at properties. We went to meetings with other business associations and community groups,” Regan said. “But Blair [Cohn] specifically and his group . . . they weren’t just going to support you, they’re there to kick you in the pants and be like, ‘Hey, you’re doing this thing, it’s going to be great.%”

Liberation is a five-barrel brewery, which is one-third of the size of most breweries, Regan said. “That affords us the ability to stay agile and have fun with it.”

Regan added that he was surprised by how many of their patrons have turned out to be locals rather than visiting fans of craft brews. “People who are just walking the dog are coming in for a beer,” Regan said. “And they’ll be there the next day because they’ve got to walk the dog every day.”

**Professional Services**

Professional service providers located in the business improvement district might not receive the direct exposure of a First Fridays or Small Business Saturday, but these events and the businesses they attract were overwhelmingly cited as reasons that office tenants have settled in the area.

“A good majority of our new customers are Gen X [and] Millennial individuals, families and business owners,” Kris Allen, vice president and senior branch manager at First Bank in Bixby Knolls, told the Business Journal.

Allen, who has managed the bank for two and a half years and is a boardmember of the BKBIA, said that more than 90% of his clients are local residents or business owners.

“They seem to identify with First Bank being a small, community, family-owned bank that can relate to small business growth and [is] willing to go that extra mile to help with their success.”

Renew Landscapes, a landscaping and organic maintenance service, opened in Bixby Knolls in 2016 and has experienced year-over-year growth. “We are excited to work within all of the unique neighborhoods of Long Beach and be a part of a growing and evolving business district here in Bixby Knolls,” Design Director Shelby Batalla said.

Batalla said that her company “takes a holistic approach to landscape” that complements “both architectural style and environmentally conscious solutions.”

Software firm Laserfiche relocated its firm from Torrance to Bixby Knolls in 2001. Its major clients include the City of Long Beach, Farmers & Merchants Bank, Long Beach City College and many more local organizations, as well as multiple national brands. “We are especially excited about some of the city’s digital transformation initiatives and the important role that Laserfiche software plays in them,” Chris Wacker, the company’s chief executive officer, said.

Laserfiche is planning to develop land adjacent to its headquarters and expects to break ground in 2019. “We have been working closely with Urbana Development to ensure the area is prepared from an environmental standpoint, which includes eliminating old oil tank towers that have been a neighborhood eyesore, and properly abandoning oil wells that have lain dormant for decades,” Wacker said. Urbana Development is a local commercial real estate development firm. The company is also working with Long Beach design firm Studio One Eleven and general contractor Millie and Severson “to make sure the structure is a beautiful, harmonious addition to the area,” he added.

Wacker said that being located in Bixby Knolls has been beneficial for the company’s employees, who enjoy the dining and entertainment options nearby.

Russ Beauchamp, vice president of risk assessment and security firm Amergent Techs, also credited the BKBIA for creating a better work environment. “It’s a different feeling than it was in the mid-2000s when there wasn’t a lot of stuff here,” he said.

Amergent Techs, a disabled veteran-owned business, established its headquarters in Bixby Knolls in 2006. Working both
domestically and abroad, the firm writes security plans for companies in the shipping industry. “Being just up the road from the ports of L.A. and Long Beach, and then having Long Beach Airport so close . . . it is a convenient location,” Beauchamp said.

Location has been a prime factor in the success of goFetch, a dog daycare and training service, but not the only one, according to co-owner Aaron Hovis. “We’ve got a mural on the side of the building, and we’re a high-trafficked area at the corner of Wardlow and Atlantic, but I also think a lot of our business is [driven by] word of mouth,” he said.

GoFetch has been in Bixby Knolls for six years now, and co-owner Katherine Galanty said the neighborhood is largely to thank for that. “In the beginning, the BIA was super helpful with us, with our getting the licenses and cleaning up the front and really getting us in touch with the correct people . . . to kind of get ourselves up off the ground,” she said.

“They were very welcoming to us when we got here,” Hovis agreed.

All three owners agreed that it’s nice to see new families moving into the area, though a few locals who have moved on to other cities or counties still bring their dogs to goFetch. “They don’t trust anyone else with their dogs,” Aaron Hovis laughed.

C.S.I. Patrol Service’s Cook said that being part of the community and offering help to local businesses has been an honor. “I love what we do,” he said. “This is my life.”

C.S.I. contracts with the BKBIA to patrol the neighborhood five days a week, day and night. Four of Cook’s five Bixby Knolls patrolmen are locals, and the fifth lives downtown. And if a business needs help beyond C.S.I.’s contracted hours, Cook and his team make it a point to be on hand. “If I have a business owner here or somebody here in our community that says, ‘Hey, I need help,’ I’m not going to say no. That’s not me,” he said, adding that he always makes sure that he has someone available in the neighborhood ready to help out.

Sandra Cason, the owner of Furniture Consignment & More, just celebrated seven years at her Bixby Knolls location. This year, in addition to her quality furniture, Cason has holiday gifts such as jewelry, Waterford wine glasses, brass statues and Lladró figurines. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

Retailers

Sandra Cason, the owner of Furniture Consignment & More, just celebrated seven years at her 4129 Long Beach Blvd. location. She estimated that about 60% of her customers are Long Beach residents. “I love it here,” she said. “When I first opened I prayed to meet a lot of nice people, and when it comes to that, my cup overflows.”

Cason primarily sells used furniture in her 3,000-square-foot location, with an eye for pieces that are in “like new” condition. “This year is one of my strongest years,” she said. “I’m going to attribute that to the quality of furniture I’ve been getting in.”

The Better Half Boutique, a gift store located on Atlantic, also reported a strong year for sales. “Each year we’ve hired a new employee,” Katie Barish, the store manager, said.
that are patronizing us and the other local retailers," Quimby Lobo said. "We're really definitely its own defined community."

Manager Jason Oliva said in a press release. "We look forward to welcoming our friends to our Smart & Final location, so it's fitting that we celebrate our 200th Extra! store here," Store Manager said. "We have deep roots in the community of Long Beach, where we opened our very first Smart & Final location, so it's fitting that we celebrate our 200th Extra! store here," Store Manager Jason Oliva said in a press release. "We look forward to welcoming our friends and neighbors and showing them that they'll find much more than a traditional grocery store."

Inside the Trading Post, Pardini sells ceramics and bath and body items from her company, River's End. Included among her fellow co-retailers are Sister LB, a clothing shop, and Moon Mountain Coffee, whose owners live in Long Beach and run a coffee plantation in Costa Rica. "They go multiple times a year to harvest," Pardini said. "They bring it back here, roast it here, package it here and sell it."

Headling forward, Pardini said she hopes to open up the Trading Post's kitchen to provide meals. "We have deep roots in the community of Long Beach, where we opened our very first Smart & Final location, so it's fitting that we celebrate our 200th Extra! store here," Store Manager Jason Oliva said in a press release. "We look forward to welcoming our friends and neighbors and showing them that they'll find much more than a traditional grocery store."

With booming businesses and an ever-growing selection of good food and craft drinks, Bixby Knolls is breaking free of its "sleepy" reputation.

"It's funny," Clements said. "Long Beach is big as a whole, but [Bixby Knolls] is definitely its own defined community."

"What we have been really grateful for is the loyalty and the support from the people that are patronizing us and the other local retailers," Quimby Lobo said. "We're really grateful because those people are passionate about their support for us."
“This is drawn by a strong arts and culture scene and [the] expansion of the Atlantic Corridor with the addition of more ‘urban chic’ amenities in the area over the past few years, such as Rasselbock Kitchen & Beer Garden and SteelCraft.”

Stepp noted that Bixby Knolls is still predominantly populated by homeowners, at a ratio of roughly 75% homeowners to 25% renters. Rental costs are rising in the area, he added, at a rate of about 3% over the past four quarters.

“Rental rates are expected to increase slightly by 0.7% by year-end 2018,” he said. The average cost of a one bedroom is now $1,534 per month, he noted. He placed the vacancy rate at about 4.7%.

Office And Retail

Changing demographics in Bixby Knolls are driving demand for retail and office space, Sean Liepmann, senior associate at the Long Beach office of Lee & Associates, told the Business Journal. “It’s attracting a lot more younger families in this area, and that’s had an effect on the commercial [side].”

Retail vacancies are trending around 3%, he said. “There’s low turnover and low vacancy.”

Sheva Hosseinzadeh, associate vice president with Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR WESTMAC, said that smaller retail spaces are in greater demand than larger ones. “If you have a 1,000 or maybe 1,500-square-foot space, I definitely do see activity there,” she said. Hosseinzadeh added that this is true throughout Long Beach, not just in Bixby Knolls.

“A lot of these older buildings have larger space, and many of the owners are not willing to or don’t have the funds to invest into their property,” she said. “Overall, in the retail industry, operators are downsizing to cut costs.” By outsourcing their services or operating online, retailers are cutting back on employees and “just not in need of large space,” she said.

Hosseinzadeh contrasted that to office space in Bixby Knolls, which is in much higher demand. “I’ve done recently three leases in the office market in Bixby Knolls,” she said. “A lot of the buildings there in [comparison] to the downtown area have parking, easy accessibility to the freeway, a lot of amenities and restaurants and . . . things that are within walking distance for their staff to go and grab a nice lunch.”

On the southwest corner of Atlantic Avenue and East Roosevelt Road, the spot formerly occupied by Nino’s Italian Restaurant is being rebuilt by TB Realty. Construction is slated to be completed by the end of this month, co-owner Ramin Tabibzadeh said, with spaces for four new tenants. One tenant, Medcompounds Pharmacy, is already confirmed. A variety of tenants are looking at the remaining spaces at the Atlantic and Roosevelt location, he said, which include a stand-alone 2,100-square-foot unit and a 4,900-square-foot space that can be subdivided into two.

The pharmacy was drawn to the location for its large size and accessibility to parking and busy streets, Tabibzadeh said.

Parking is a big factor for office operators, Hosseinzadeh commented. Many office spaces in Bixby Knolls have their own parking or freely available street parking. In downtown, that’s much less common, and operators must resort to off-site parking or paid parking. “When you’re looking at having 30 employees and having to pay $50 minimum per slot per employee, it just gets expensive,” she said.

Bixby’s neighborhood amenities and small mom and pop retailers are what get investors excited, Liepmann said.

Liepmann has worked with Blair Cohn, the executive director for the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association (BKBIA), to find new businesses and shops to enliven the neighborhood. The corridor now has a selection of breweries and eateries that are generating buzz.

“The area sells itself,” Liepmann said. “People are familiar with the area and what’s happening. . . . And are more interested in investing in this area or starting businesses.”

“Wardlow corridor has been experiencing a renaissance as well,” Lee & Associates Principal Noel Aguirre noted. “Blair Cohn has been a major advocate and champion of the neighborhood, and he’s been great.” Aguirre said. “We utilize his services as a resource for clients that are going to be coming in to the area . . . to get a sense of what Bixby Knolls offers that other neighborhoods don’t offer.”

Borcich also complimented the BKBIA, as led by Cohn, for revitalizing the neighborhood. “He’s unreal,” Borcich said of Cohn. “He’s got the community involved up here, brought in some very good commercial tenants.”

Andrea Testa, Realtor

“Bixby Knolls is still predominantly populated by homeowners, at a ratio of roughly 75% homeowners to 25% renters. Rental costs are rising in the area, he added, at a rate of about 3% over the past four quarters.”

More on Bixby Knolls
MKT Chiropractic

As a basketball player in high school, Dr. Morgan Turner had multiple sport injuries that were cured through chiropractic medicine. “I just thought chiropractic was amazing,” Turner said. “I would walk in with crutches and I would walk out without crutches.” She now owns her own practice, MKT Chiropractic, which opened early this year. Turner, whose patients are often from out of town, said she had her patients in mind when choosing the location of her practice. Bixby Knolls has both the welcoming feel of a small town as well as the close proximity to the airport and other cities. To her knowledge, Turner is the only chiropractor in the South Bay and Orange County areas that practices a specialized form of chiropractic medicine called Directional Non-Force Technique (DNFT), in which she performs adjustments by using her thumb. DNFT can be used on anyone from babies to elders because it does not involve the same cracking technique that most chiropractors employ. Turner sometimes finds it difficult to describe and market her niche business, which focuses on this unique technique and holistic healing. Physical pain is sometimes linked to emotional stress, which is in turn linked to what MKT Chiropractic offers. Her goal is to introduce the community in Long Beach, where she grew up, to what she does and to make a positive impact through her work. MKT Chiropractic is located at 3950 Long Beach Blvd., Suite 104. For more information, call 562/452-3969 or visit mktechiro.com.

The Merchant

One day, Mike and Andrea Gillespie stumbled upon a small property with a “for lease” sign on it while walking their dogs near their home. It seemed like the ideal place for the small country-style general store that very location in Bixby Knolls. That was May of 2017. One side of the The Merchant is a cafe and bakery, while the other is a small shop with housewares and more. “No one else is baking on the block,” Mike said. MKT Chiropractic

Sister LB

Katie Hectus, owner of clothing store Sister LB, knew she wanted to open her own business after her experience as a buyer for numerous major retail corporations. Her store features new and vintage clothing. “I always felt really significant for Hectus, a Long Beach native, because her great-grandfather owned a tuxedo shop on the same block as her store. “One of the things that I say about this town is that there are so many really great boutiques to go to and a lot of great places to shop,” Hectus said. “I am really honored to be a part of that group of women.” The name “Sister” was inspired by her sister and the sisterhood created by mentoring younger women entering the fashion industry. Hectus draws inspiration from the fashion programs at Orange Coast College and Long Beach City College to give the students real industry experience. She noted that it is important to have a unique store, pointing to the popularity of online shopping and how the focus in retail has shifted toward getting the best deal instead of shopping for pleasure, “I want to be the place where you can come in and we will be pouring mimosas, we are going to have a good conversation and you are going to try on a million things,” she said. “I sort of envision it as like a candy store for women – without all the calories.” Sister LB is located at 3803 Atlantic Ave. For more information, call 562/225-4992 or visit sisterlb.com.

Support Local Small Businesses

Small Business Dollars & Sense

Improve Customer Reach: Three Tips On Enhancing Your Small Business Digital Initiatives

By Natasha Mata

With new growth opportunities in an evolving digital world, it continues to be beneficial and essential for small businesses to ensure their leading sales and marketing methods match the preferences of consumers. For instance, 38% of all retail purchases by today’s consumers are conducted online, but Visa’s Digital Transformation of SMBs: The Future of Commerce report, based on Maru/Matchbox 2018 consumer and small business surveys, found that although 46% of small businesses sell their products and services online, only about 15% of their sales actually come from digital channels. If that disconnect sounds familiar, it may be time to examine opportunities to improve your company’s digital marketing, digital payment acceptance (which can account for anything from credit and debit cards to mobile wallet), and loyalty program strategies. But don’t wait too long – this area of expertise will only become more important, as 61% of consumers anticipate spending more online within the next five years, according to the report.

Below are three business opportunities to help you hone your digital strategy and improve customer relationships.

1. Sharpened marketing efforts – To better promote your goods and services, consider optimizing your digital tools to complement proven marketing approaches, including: targeted email marketing; results-driven social media campaigns, which emphasize consumer engagement via shares and measurement of results; and a robust strategy for reviewing your site, including regular requests for customer feedback via pop-up surveys and timely follow-ups to reviews – both good and bad.

2. Lower-cost payment processing – Cash flow is the lifeblood of your business, but manually handling, processing, and dealing with cash, checks, and money orders can be costly and time-consuming. Per the report, Visa estimates that the average SMB costs, was 57% less than non-digital payments.

3. Mutually rewarding loyalty programs – Loyalty programs have been found to strengthen bonds with existing customers and positively impact visit and sales figures. According to the report, 78% of consumers are more likely to choose a business that offers a loyalty program, and 80% of businesses say they positively impact purchase size and the number of return customers. But despite these benefits, loyalty programs remain rare among small business.

While they do require some maintenance, their advantages can make the effort worthwhile. Consider the following tips to help boost such a program’s impact:

• Keep it simple: Put few limitations on program-eligible purchases and make the path to rewards short and clearly defined – especially for the first reward.

• Make it valuable: A free item or discount reward should be worth working toward.

• Spread the word: If you create a loyalty program and forget it, your customers will, too. To keep the program strong, commit to promoting the benefits and encourage program members to do the same.

• Go digital: Ninety percent of consumers in the report prefer managing their rewards digitally and leaving punch cards in the past.

As the digital marketplace increasingly becomes the norm, it’s worth taking into account the benefits of online enhancements such as digital marketing, digital payments, and loyalty programs, and finding tangible steps for implementing these strategies.

(Natasha Mata, a 23-year veteran of Wells Fargo, is region bank president of the greater Central Los Angeles Area, which includes Long Beach and some North Orange County cities.)
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