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Randy Gordon Marks 25 Years As Long Beach Chamber President And CEO

This edition of the Business Journal includes a 14-page section saluting Randy Gordon, who is celebrating 25 years as president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce. Gordon took the helm of the business organization on April 4, 1994, at a time the chamber was dealing with financial challenges and the city was grappling with the pending loss of the U.S. Navy. (Business Journal photograph by Matt Fukushima)
See Pages 18 to 31

'I Never Flinched' – One Councilmember's Efforts To Save A City Hospital

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

Although 4th District Councilmember Daryl Supernaw knew when he took office in 2015 that Community Hospital was located on an

earthquake fault and that plans were needed to bring it up to state seismic code, he had no idea that the hospital's operator would eventually decide to close the facility rather than commit to upgrading it. Still, he knew challenges were on

the horizon. So, almost as soon as he took office in 2015, he began preparing.

"We all knew that there was this June 2019 deadline. So when I took office in 2015, that was something that was definitely on my radar," he said. "In 2015, I started meeting with Matthew Faulkner, the president of the Community Hospital Long Beach Foundation. He and I met and discussed this deadline and what the plan was going to be," he recalled.

"From that point, early on, I knew that there were possibilities, there were configurations that would work to maintain its status as an acute care hospital," he said, noting that he had been talking to long-time hospital staff about the matter. "In

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The Spark At Midtown Aims To Ignite Change

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

The Long Beach community came together on March 20, despite the threat of rain, to celebrate the groundbreaking of The Spark at Midtown, an affordable housing development that

stands to revitalize and activate a vacant lot.

"[This project] was designed to create a spark and a light for those people who are going to live here," Rebecca Clark, president and CEO of developer LINC Housing, said during the event. "It's meant to ignite the

(Please Continue To Page 6)

Signal Hill Turning 95

Mayor Tina Hansen: 'We're A Small City, But We're A Big Player'

By **ALENA MASCHKE**
STAFF WRITER

The walls of Signal Hill City Hall are filled with black-and-white images of oil towers looming over the few homes that stuck out the oil boom of the 1920s, which impacted the city for a century to come. But in the past two decades, Signal Hill has been revitalized as a community where people live, shop and work – with a few oil wells still dotting the landscape here and there.

"The way the city looked when I got on the council and the way the city looks now is so unbelievably different," Mayor Tina Hansen remembered. "Because when I got on the council, there was no housing on the hilltop. It didn't exist. Bixby Ridge didn't exist. Signal Hill Village didn't exist. None of the parks up there, none of the trail systems existed."

(Please Continue To Page 32)

Long Beach Gives Day September 19

New 24-Hour Initiative To Raise Matching Dollars For Local Nonprofits

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

On September 19, 2019, nonprofits in Long Beach have the chance to crowdfund donations and earn matching dollars donated from philanthropic foundations and businesses via a new annual initiative: Long Beach Gives Day. Donors will have 24 hours to make a difference with double the impact, using a single online platform for numerous charities.

Gathered around an oceanfront table at the Hotel Maya overlooking the city sky-

(Please Continue To Page 16)

MILLENNIAL PULSE No, That Teenager Is Not A Millennial, You Grump

By Editor Samantha Mehlinger

It has become increasingly, aggravatingly clear to me that pretty much everyone over the age of 40 has adopted the use of the word "Millennial" in reference

to any person younger than they are – particularly those they don't agree with. Those pesky Parkland kids fighting to take away (Please Continue To Page 13)

PortSide Keeping Up With The Port Of Long Beach



Sashi Muralidharan, small business enterprise administrator for the Port of Long Beach, ensures that small, very small and disadvantaged businesses have access to and are considered for port contracts. The port's Small Business Enterprise/Very Small Business Enterprise Program was formed in 2004 at the direction of the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners to improve small businesses' odds in winning construction, consulting and procurement contracts with the port. Muralidharan has overseen the program almost since its inception, joining the port staff in 2005. Since the program got rolling, small and very small businesses have received more than \$400 million in payments as port contractors. "We want to see 27% of our contracting dollars go to small businesses," Muralidharan said. These contracts are spread among the port's divisions, which oversee their own purchasing. "I have 20 different divisions with staff coming and going. My challenge is constantly marketing, training, keeping folks aware [of the program]," he explained. To make the business community aware of contracting opportunities, Muralidharan often speaks on panels or at conferences, including the annual California Construction Expo. "The positive feedback I hear from our audience is, 'I didn't know about these opportunities. I didn't know how to navigate and now I do,'" he said. Businesses respond to the port's requests for proposals through PlanetBids, an online platform run by a small business. The platform's ease of use has helped the port grow its applicant pool. "We have definitely expanded the vendors that bid on our projects, so you get better competition, better pricing. It helps the economy," he said.

– Editor Samantha Mehlinger

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The Long Beach Business Journal is a publication of South Coast Publishing, Inc., incorporated in the State of California in July 1985. It is published every other Tuesday (except

between Christmas and mid-January) – 25 copies annually. The Business Journal premiered March 1987 as the Long Beach Airport Business Journal. **Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is strictly prohibited unless otherwise stated.** Opinions expressed by perspective writers and guest columnists are their views and not necessarily those of the Long Beach Business Journal. Send press releases to the address shown here:

Long Beach Business Journal

Vol. XXXII No. 6 • March 26-April 8, 2019

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Signal Hill, CA 90755

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www.lbbusinessjournal.com

Advertising/Editorial Deadlines

Wednesday prior to publication date. Note: Press releases should be faxed, mailed or e-mailed to: info@lbbj.com. No follow up calls,

please. For a copy of the 2019 advertising and editorial calendar, please e-mail or fax request to 562/988-1239. Include your name, company and address and a copy will be sent to you.

Regular Office Hours

Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Subscriptions:

25 issues – 1 year

Standard Bulk Rate: \$30.00

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CITY OF LONG BEACH

BID OPPORTUNITIES

TITLE	BID NUMBER	DATE
Belmont Veterans Memorial Pier Aqualink Landing Facility Repair	R-7151	03/27/2019
Chevy/GM Parts & Service	ITB FS19-087	03/28/2019
Naples Island Permanent Seawall Repair – Phase 2	R-7142	04/02/2019
Cathodic Protection Improv. of Water & Recycled Water Systems Project – Phase 4	WD-23-17	04/03/2019
Transportation Services	RFP PR19-073	04/03/2019
On-Call Environmental Pgrm. Support for LB Airport	RFQ AP19-056	04/04/2019
Specs to Furnish, Deliver & Install Modular Offices	WD-23-19	04/04/2019
Stearns Park Irrigation Upgrade	R-7061	04/04/2019
RFQ for LBWD Printing Services		04/05/2019
Fueling Facility Operator	RFP PR19-055	04/09/2019
FY17-18 Sanitary Sewer Manhole Rehab/Repl. Proj.	WD-17-17	04/11/2019
RFP for Physical Access Consultation Services		04/23/2019
Citywide User Fee and Cost Recovery Studies	RFP FM19-082	04/26/2019
Concessions & Rentals Opportunities at the Beach	RFP PW19-018	05/02/2019
Cannabis Business Tax & Compliance Auditing Svc.	RFP FM19-076	05/09/2019
Qualification and Selection of Peer Reviewers	RFQ DV17-112	Continuous

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

Bidder 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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Pacific Gateway assists businesses in the Greater Long Beach area by providing workforce training and job fair events. "We don't take over, we just amplify efforts," Pacific Gateway Business Engagement Manager Lucius Martin said. From left: Martin, Pacific Gateway Logistics and Goods Movement Lead Tisha Kennedy, Amber Resources Owner and President Matt Cullen. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

Growing Long Beach Is Presented In Partnership With The Long Beach Economic Development Department

How Pacific Gateway Connects Employers To Qualified Candidates

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
STAFF WRITER

The City of Long Beach's workforce development arm, Pacific Gateway, is a resource for both employers and job applicants in Long Beach and Signal Hill, as well as the Los Angeles harbor communities. For job applicants, the organization offers educational seminars, job fairs and skills training workshops. For employers, Pacific Gateway helps narrow the search and fill open positions with the best-qualified candidates. Lucius Martin, business engagement manager at Pacific Gateway, described his agency as the "connective tissue" between the city and its employer base.

The first step in connecting a company to new workers is discerning what the company's "pain points" are, Martin told the Business Journal. To do so, Pacific Gateway representatives meet the company management and discuss what they need to increase the productivity or quality of their workforce. The agency then invites applicants to employer information sessions and recruitment events. "We invite the employer to our offices and they provide an overview of their company culture, current opportunities, the variety of positions," Martin said. "They talk about their benefits, the pay, and just give as much information as someone would need to make a decision on whether it's a good place to apply to."

One employer to utilize this program was Dion and Sons, a longtime local business that is part of the Amber

Resources (AR) family of petroleum distribution companies. AR is headquartered on the property that includes the original Long Beach Dion and Sons offices.

"It was amazing, but Lucius is amazing," Kerry Cashman, who handles human resources for AR and Dion and Sons, said of her experience with Pacific Gateway. "He kind of handed me everything on a silver platter and said, 'We'll do most of the work for you, as far as advertising and marketing. We'll put everything together, we'll give you the space to present your company and what you're looking for, we'll give you the space to interview.'"

Matt Cullen, owner and president of Amber Resources, said his company has grown to include six locations, 250 employees and about 105 trucks since his father acquired Dion and Sons in 1985. Last year, AR made a little over \$200 million, and Cullen said there's potential for even bigger revenues. The main obstacle, he told the Business Journal, is not finding more clients, but instead finding more drivers. "If drivers weren't the issue, we could have doubled what we did last year in terms of growth," Cullen said.

"Though they're a large company, they have a small HR team," Martin explained. "It's hard for them to be everywhere and do everything. We're able to come in and provide a free set of arms to identify talent." With funding provided by state and federal sources, Pacific Gateway was able to put on a large recruitment event for Dion and Sons to identify potential drivers and administrative staff.

"Our events have been very successful with them,"

Cashman said. "The first event I did we interviewed 22 people in a day. They advertised us, we did a little presentation about who we are and what we do, and 22 people scheduled interviews with us the following week. They're very helpful in that way with getting our name out there to people that wouldn't otherwise know about us."

Through Pacific Gateway, Dion and Sons hired two drivers and two warehouse employees. The company is signed up to participate in two more job fairs over the next few months. Dion and Sons also recruited two high school interns this past summer, which was facilitated by Pacific Gateway. Martin said his agency identified the distribution company as a good match for a Long Beach Unified School District initiative, the Port of Long Beach Academy of Global Logistics at Cabrillo High School.

"The program was developed to introduce high school students to transportation businesses," Cashman explained. The interns worked in the Dion and Sons office, one in accounting in dispatch and the other in HR. "They assisted with the recruiting, so they could see the candidates who would be good for the transportation industry."

Connecting employers to educational programs like the academy is one of Pacific Gateway's many services, Martin said. It's an opportunity to engage with the next generation of workers. "The work that this company does is so instrumental with keeping the trucks fueled that we see on the highways, keeping the goods moving from the terminals to the railyards to the warehouses and beyond," Martin said. ■



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In addition to 95 affordable residential units, developer LINC Housing's The Spark at Midtown will feature a health clinic, a YMCA Youth Institute, a cafe, a community kitchen and extensive case management services at 1900 Long Beach Blvd. Pictured from left: John Given, board chair for LINC; Bonnie Lowenthal, retired California assemblymember and LINC boardmember; Bob Cabeza, vice president of community development for YMCA of Greater Long Beach; Long Beach Vice Mayor Dee Andrews; Los Angeles County 4th District Supervisor Janice Hahn; Carolyn Caldwell, president and CEO, Dignity Health – St. Mary Medical Center; John Thomas, board chair of the Long Beach Community Investment Company; Rebecca Clark, president and CEO of LINC; Suny Lay Chang, COO of LINC; and Minh Nguyen, LINC boardmember. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

(Continued From Page 1)

collective energies of a whole group of people that are committed to a larger vision.”

Located on a 0.93-acre vacant lot at 1900 Long Beach Blvd., plans for the five-story development consist of 95 apartments for low-income families and individuals who have experienced homelessness. Units range from 570 to 1,068 square feet, including 47 one-bedroom units, 24 two-bedroom units and 24 three-bedroom units. The project is expected to be completed next year.

Tenants in 53 of the apartments will pay rent at a rate of 30% of the area's median income (AMI), while tenants of the remaining 41 units will pay 60% AMI. No resident will pay more than 30% of their income on

rent. Aside from affordable units, tenants will have access to intensive case management services, a community room with computer lab, courtyards, a community garden, bikes and meeting rooms.

“Getting people off the streets isn't enough,” LINC COO Suny Lay Chang said at the event. “You have to help them get back on their feet and you have to give them a track record of proving their worth so that when they go out in the real world, they've got something to stand on.”

To further assist tenants, The Spark will house a demonstration kitchen and the Deli 456. Operated by Mental Health America Los Angeles, the social enterprise cafe will provide residents with job and culinary

skills, as well as a reference for future job applications. The ground floor of The Spark is also slated to house the YMCA Youth Institute and a four-room clinic operated by Dignity Health – St. Mary Medical Center.

Being a part of The Spark falls directly in line with St. Mary's mission statement, according to President and CEO Carolyn Caldwell. “We dedicate our resources to delivering compassionate, high-quality affordable health care services, serving and advocating for our sisters and brothers who are poor and disenfranchised, partnering with others in the community to improve the quality of life,” she said, reading the hospital's mission statement. “This will be a location for our faculty and for our residents so

that they can practice their healing ministry of providing health care . . . for those in our community that are the most vulnerable.”

“After 20 years of doing this work, we have low-income youth of color in Long Beach who are engineers, who are doctors, who are attorneys, who are social workers, and they're giving back to community,” Bob Cabeza, vice president of community development for the YMCA of Greater Long Beach, said during the event. “We need to give others a home and a place. That's what The Spark is doing. . . . That is why we're so excited to be involved in this partnership. I have seen it in this city, and we can teach other cities how to do this right, how to do this

Realty Views

New Trends In Housing Markets



By TERRY ROSS

While there is plenty of antidotal evidence and talk about residents leaving California and a shifting of housing markets, new statistical information appears to indicate that a lot of what we are hearing is true to a point. Much of

the movement in or out of this state is based on age, income – and, of course, the availability of jobs.

According to information recently released in the American Community Survey, six million people moved out of the state between 2007 and 2016, while five million new residents moved in. By now, most of us know that the lack of affordable housing, low construction starts and the high cost of

living have been the largest impediments to growing the homeownership rate in California. You hear daily about people moving to Arizona, Texas, Oregon and Nevada, where low- and middle-income housing is easier to come by. Statistically, residents making less than \$55,000 are the ones leaving the Golden State, according to the California Legislative Analyst's Office.

But surprisingly, what we are seeing now in terms of net out-flow migration from our state is historically low. Net outbound migration from 1990 to 2006 was more than twice the levels of the last decade, according to IRS data. One factor is that Baby Boomers are delaying downsizing (and many are delaying retirement) and Californians are not moving as much as they were previously. The increased cost of moving is another factor.

On the other hand, the in-flow of new residents – mainly into some of the booming metro areas – are driving up prices in those areas. United Van Lines National Movers Study shows that higher-paying jobs are attracting workers from other states and that is the key reason people are moving into these California metro areas.

According to Redfin, the top destinations in California for those coming from out of state are: Merriewood/Montclair, Oakland; Mission Terrace, San Francisco; San Rafael Hills, Pasadena; South Pasadena, Pasadena; Berkeley Hills, Berkeley and Mount Washington, Los Angeles. The price point in these neighborhoods – \$977,500 to \$1,380,000 – reflect the fact that nearly half of the new inbound residents are high-earners making \$150,000 a year or more.

In addition to income, age appears to be a primary driver of new residents to this state as the largest demographic – over 27% – of those coming into the state are in the 18 to 34 age group. But even many in that group are looking for some more economical alternatives.

According to 24/7 Wall St. US Census data, San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward; Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario; Sacramento-Roseville-Arden-Arcade; San Diego-Carlsbad and San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara were the lower-cost inland communities that experienced the most growth from migration.

Some of these areas are included in the

popular real estate website, Redfin's 2019 hottest neighborhoods list. This data also reveals that many in-state searches for fast-growing areas like Sacramento and San Diego originate from San Francisco and Los Angeles respectively, from current residents looking for more moderate pricing.

Out-of-staters are also looking at these same cities. Nearly a quarter of Redfin searches for San Diego, one of their top five metros by net inflow of users, originated from New York City, the nation's 2018 leader in population decline.

From these numbers it is apparent that California is attractive to newcomers who have good-paying job prospects and will pay the premium to live and buy a home in California – while longer-term current residents who may find themselves in employment situations not as lucrative still struggle with the increased costs and tend to look at lower-cost options out of state.

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



well, how to help our children and our families move out of poverty.”

The Spark is LINC’s second project in Long Beach, but its first completely new development. The nonprofit affordable housing developer is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year. It has been located in Long Beach for more than 25 years. The company has developed over 8,000 affordable units statewide.

During construction, The Spark is expected to create 153 jobs, generating more than \$3.4 million in business revenue, nearly \$7.6 million in wages and salaries, and \$2.1 million in taxes and fees. Once completed, estimated ongoing annual impacts include 41 jobs, nearly \$600,000 in business revenue, more than \$1.9 million in wages and salaries, and \$478,325 in taxes and fees.

With a price tag of nearly \$52.6 million, LINC received funding from several sources for The Spark, including more than \$24 million through Raymond James Tax Credit funds, a leading sponsor of the state’s low-income housing tax credit program. Additionally, both Century Housing and Los Angeles County chipped in more \$10.3 million and \$10.7 million, respectively. The Long Beach Community Investment Company provided \$3 million to the project, while the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco supplied nearly \$2 million.

“It’s no secret that homelessness and the housing crisis are the greatest challenges of our time. That’s evident by the thousands of people who have no choice but to sleep on our sidewalks, and it’s felt by the families forced to make the impossible decision between buying food and keeping a roof

over their family’s heads. And we don’t accept that,” Los Angeles County 4th District Supervisor Janice Hahn said at the event. “These are the kinds of projects that allow neighborhoods to thrive and that’s why I was so happy to help ensure that the county contributed to make The Spark at Midtown a reality.” ■

**Douglas Park For-Sale
 Office Condos Sell Out**

With the announcement of a sale to Bellflower-based Dante Valve, the Terminal at Douglas Park has sold out. Dante Valve purchased 12,500 square feet of space – an entire floor – at the creative office condominium complex. The company will maintain operations at its Bellflower facility after moving its headquarters to Long Beach.

“I’ve lived in Long Beach long enough to remember the old McDonnell Douglas plant that was at this location. The transformation that’s taken place here is exciting,” Lisa Dante Papini, president of Dante Valve, told the Business Journal. “Douglas Park is a new and modern development designed for the way people live and work today. Dante Valve’s space at the Terminal is a perfect reflection of the old and new. We’ve got the top floor of a beautiful and modern building with a great view of the old [Fly DC Jets] sign. We’re looking forward to moving our corporate offices here later this year.”

The Terminal was developed by Long Beach-based Urbana Development. Construction of the four 25,000-square-foot, two-story buildings began in October 2016. Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estate

(Please Continue To Page 8)

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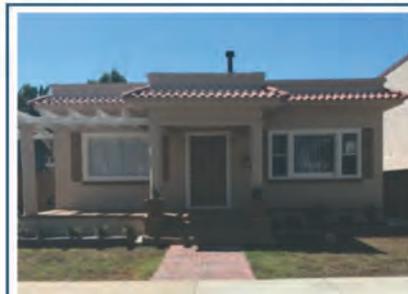
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(Continued From Page 7)

Services Principals Jeff Coburn and Shaun McCullough oversaw transactions on behalf of Urbana. The following is the complete list of companies that purchased space at the Terminal: Appraisal Pacific Inc.; CalCom Federal Credit Union; The Core Group; E-Commerce Exchange; JLM Strategic Talent Partners; Jobfilez Inc.; Kollin Altomare Properties; Merrimac Energy Group; Moffat & Nichol; Mountain-Bishop Private Wealth Management; PostCity Financial Credit Union; Second Floor; Sixt Rent A Car; The Sullivan Group of Court Reporters; and Transworld Shipping Inc.

Recent Transactions By Local Firms

The following is a list of recent transactions by the teams at INCO Commercial and William Morris Commercial (WMC):

- 600 W. 15th St. – Jay Price of INCO represented the buyer in the \$4.24 million sale of a 36,000-square-foot industrial building. The space is leased by Mag-Trol and the City of Long Beach, who are remaining on as tenants. Eric Daschbach of Cushman & Wakefield represented the seller of the property, which was recently renovated.

- 235 E. Broadway – McAlister Geo-Science and Apex As-Built leased 1,540 square feet of office space. Jen Long of WMC represented the tenant, while the team at Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR WESTMAC represented the landlord.

- 111 W. Ocean Blvd. – Uthoff Law leased 1,098 square feet of office space at Landmark Square. WMC's Toliver Morris represented the landlord, while the team at Davco



Dante Valve purchased the final 12,500 square feet of creative office space at the Terminal at Douglas Park, where it is relocating its headquarters from Bellflower. Pictured from left: Matt Dante, vice president of operations for Dante Valve; Lisa Dante Papini, president of Dante Valve; Richard Lewis, principal at Urbana Development; and Lee & Associates Principals Jeff Coburn and Shaun McCullough. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

Realty Advisors represented the tenant.

- 707 E. Ocean Blvd. – Hi-Lo Liquor leased 2,289 square feet of retail space on the ground floor of The Current. WMC's Catherine Morris represented the landlord and tenant.

New Business Openings And Announcements

- The Long Beach Planning Commission

approved a conditional use permit for the sale of alcoholic beverages for onsite consumption at 2222 E. Anaheim St. on March 7. According to Monorom Neth, executive director of the Midtown Business Improvement District, owners of The Deuce Cocktail Lounge plan to open their doors for business within the "next few months."

- Four new tenants are coming to Long Beach Exchange (LBX) at Douglas Park –

The UPS Store, Runners High, Deka Lash and the Navy Federal Credit Union. The UPS Store is expected to "open soon," with Runners High opening in May, Deka Lash debuting in July and the Navy Federal Credit Union opening its doors this summer, according to a press release. The Popbar celebrated its grand opening inside The Hangar at LBX on March 22. Poutine vendor The Kroft opened inside The Hangar on March 16. ■

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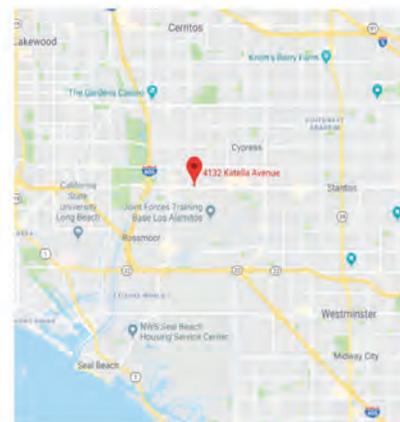
PROPERTY FEATURES:

- Professional and Clean Office Building
 - ✓ Suite 103: Approximately 563 Sq. Ft.
 - ✓ Suite 105: Approximately 728 Sq. Ft.
 - ✓ Suite 200: Approximately 1,442 Sq. Ft.
 - ✓ Suite 202: Approximately 972 Sq. Ft.
 - ✓ Suite 206: Approximately 824 Sq. Ft.
- General Office or Medical Use
- Lessee to Verify
- Easy Freeway Access
- Near Los Alamitos Hospital

LEASE RATE: \$2.20 PSF, NNN

2018 DEMOGRAPHICS:	1MILE	3MILES	5MILES
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AVG HOUSEHOLD INCOME	\$86,813	\$84,949	\$79,729

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Supernaw Effort

(Continued From Page 1)

California, in order to have an emergency room, you need to have an acute care hospital. And there are eight basic components in an acute care hospital. And those services have to be maintained," he explained, referencing state standards.

In 2016, Supernaw decided to take action. "I knew at a certain point this was going to take some money, so we cut down our operating expenses for the council office," he said. The councilmember began operating his office with just one staff person, and for a time, a paid intern.

"I knew I still had to provide all the services I was obligated to provide to the community," he said of his decision to cut back on personnel costs. "So it made us work even harder to do that to make sure we were on record for always answering calls and serving the community." He added, "My offer to the city manager's office was, whatever you need, we have money that we can donate to this cause."

In November 2017, the hospital's operator, MemorialCare Health System – which operates Long Beach Medical Center and Miller Children's & Women's Hospital – announced that it would be terminating its lease for Community Hospital within 120 days. The health system claimed that state regulators had confirmed the hospital would not be able to meet compliance with seismic standards by the June 30, 2019, deadline.

City management approached Supernaw about his offer, explaining that any funding he could provide would be best used towards a city-commissioned seismic study of the site to determine if the hospital could, in fact, be retrofitted. Supernaw gave \$150,000 from his office's operating fund to commission architecture firm Perkins + Will to conduct the study.

"What we didn't know as a byproduct of that is that OSHPD and others have a great deal of respect for Perkins + Will," Supernaw said, referring to the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, which oversees seismic ratings for hospitals. "The fact that we were using them is huge. So I feel I really got a lot of bang for the buck."

The 27-page report concluded that the hospital could indeed be saved by retrofitting the historic portion of the structure and locating acute services – albeit reduced in scope – within it. Additionally, a power plant on site would have to be moved to the same side of the fault line as the hospital.

Ray Burton, chair of the Community



Fourth District Councilmember Daryl Supernaw was frugal with his council office's operating budget in order to save up for an inevitable eventuality: the need to address the seismic issues of Community Hospital, located in his district. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

Hospital Long Beach Foundation, said that the Perkins + Will report was critical to ultimately securing a replacement operator for the hospital. The findings of the report led the foundation to offer a \$1 million grant to the city to help reopen the hospital, which closed in July 2018 when MemorialCare exited its lease agreement. The details of that grant are currently being hashed out, Burton noted.

"I feel like Daryl had the attitude of 'not on my watch,'" Burton said. "That he to the best of his ability would not allow the hospital to be closed if there was any possible way to keep it open. And, frankly, I kind of adopted that mantra as well."

Supernaw and the foundation have co-hosted several community meetings since the 2017 closure announcement, and the councilmember has kept his constituents informed with as many as 65 updates on the matter in his weekly newsletters, he said. Asked if his constituents knew what he had done behind the scenes to save Community Hospital, Supernaw said, "Well, they probably wouldn't know very much. It's just my philosophy that as an elected, they put their trust, their faith in me."

On March 12, the Long Beach City Council approved an interim lease agreement with a new hospital operator, Molina, Wu, Network LLC. The two entities are now working together to obtain state permits and meet requirements to reopen the hospital, including seeking an extension for seismic upgrades.

"I can't say enough about city staff. The job that John Keisler did was amazing," Su-

pernaw said, referring to the city's economic development director, who led negotiations with MWN. "It's astounding to me that he wasn't a hospital expert going into this thing – probably had never dealt with a hospital. Nor had I. To get up to speed and know the intricacies is just amazing to me that he has done that, and done such a great job at it," Supernaw said. He added that his colleagues on the council also all supported him in ensuring that the hospital in his district – which serves all of East Long Beach and some of West Orange County – would reopen.

Through the interim lease agreement, the city has committed to paying \$1 million annually for five years, and \$2 million annu-

ally after that, for a total of \$25 million toward the hospital. A long-term deal is currently being negotiated. Supernaw noted that the city has an annual budget of about \$3 billion, and that it would be a good candidate to receive grants to offset its costs. "Remember, we're a city with an airport and a port. We have vulnerabilities that the Feds would recognize [and] the state would recognize that we might need all the medical help we can use here. So I think we're a great candidate for grants to help defray that cost," he said.

"I think we're on the right track," Supernaw said. Then, reflecting: "I never flinched, I never gave in at all, I never was discouraged. I just kept at it." ■

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Community Hospital's Oldest Building Proves Crucial To ER's Future

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
STAFF WRITER

With its arches, large windows and center fountain, the courtyard of Community Hospital is a prime example of the Mission Revival architectural style that came to define the historic cores of many Southern California cities. When the hospital's original building was constructed in the 1920s, no one was aware of the fault line beneath that would threaten the institution's survival a century later. Yet, it's this legacy building that will likely save Community Hospital from becoming obsolete, and preserve what many have considered its most valuable aspect: the acute care unit.

Seismic compliance issues, mainly related to the complex's newer buildings and onsite power plant, require costly retrofitting — a necessity that caused the hospital's most recent operator, MemorialCare Health System, to throw in the towel. When the hospital closed in July 2018, the city's efforts to find

a new operator were already well underway, and a month before the closure, Molina, Wu, Network (MWN) LLC emerged as the chosen bidder for the project. On March 12, 2019, the city entered an interim lease agreement with MWN, enabling the company to seek out state permits and negotiate a long-term contract to operate the hospital and its emergency room.

"We've entered an interim agreement because we've got to keep the hospital license in effect. But we're not that far off from doing a full-blown lease," MWN's John Molina told the Business Journal. Molina said his experience of working with the city has been very positive. "So far, I'm ecstatic. I could not have asked for more support." Molina and his brother, Dr. Mario Molina, are partners in MWN. Both are former top executives of Long Beach-based Molina Healthcare, which was founded by their father.

Support from the city has come in a number of ways. The interim agreement that was

recently signed by both parties includes a commitment by the city to pay for half of the anticipated \$50 million necessary to bring the complex up to code with seismic safety. The city has not yet determined a funding source, but is expected to do so as the two sides solidify a long-term agreement, according to the city's director of financial management, John Gross. Should the cost of the required retrofitting surpass \$50 million, MWN would be financially responsible for the remaining costs.

This public-private partnership and the cost-share that is baked into it has sparked some criticism. "It's come up a couple of times, people say: 'Well, why is the city paying for this?'" Molina noted. But, he pointed out, four other bidders dropped out of the bidding process because they didn't think the project was financially viable. "If our group did not step in to take over and agree to fund half of the seismic and all of the startup operational cost, then the city would have no operator." In the agreement,

MWN also promised to invest \$40 million to remedy the results of deferred maintenance, purchase equipment and use as operating capital.

In addition to the financial contribution of \$25 million, which is being spread out over 20 years, city staff is working with the state to secure the permits required to reopen the hospital. The interim agreement between the city and MWN was a necessary step to acquire the state permits, Long Beach Economic Development Director John Keisler explained during a March 12 city council meeting. "It provides state regulatory and legislative agencies with a plan to reopen and rebuild the facility," Keisler said. "This will be essential as they're considering our licensing, our operating, our business and financing plan. And it will provide time for both parties to negotiate detailed terms of the agreement, while the hospital reopens to the public."

The facility's seismic retrofit is still in its

(Please Continue To Adjacent Page)

A Decades-Long Quest To Bring Gondolas To Long Beach Enters Its Next Act

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
STAFF WRITER

Paddles gliding through the water of the Queensway Bay. Gondoliers in colorful outfits, singing love ballads as they shuttle passengers back and forth between the Downtown Long Beach waterfront and Queen Mary Island. A picturesque scene. But Long Beach's plans for a cross-bay gondola are less quaint and more high-tech.

On March 12, the city council voted to initiate a feasibility study, with the goal of determining whether the city could benefit from a gondola lift connecting downtown with the Queen Mary as well as other potential stations along the way. "To some it seems like 'pie in the sky,'" 2nd District Councilmember Jeannine Pearce, one of the item's co-sponsors, said in her opening remarks. "But we know that dreaming big is really important, and we know that this is a creative idea that other cities like San Diego, L.A., are really exploring and taking seriously."

This is not the first time the idea of a new cross-bay connection, designed especially to attract tourists, has been floated around. Former Long Beach Harbor Commissioner Alex Bellehumeur has worked on several proposals over the years, including a monorail-like project across the Queensway Bay Bridge and an aerial gondola, just like the one the city council is considering now.

The initial idea of a monorail train called "The Wave" was floated in the early 2000s, but eventually dissolved, mainly because there were questions about the practicality of the project and concerns that the bridge might not be able to carry the added machinery. "That was a really exciting project as well, but not nearly as efficient as the aerial tram," Bellehumeur said. "The aerial tram will actually accommodate more people at a much lower cost."

While the original "Wave" was abandoned, its name prevailed and the team around Alex Bellehumeur continued to work on the project, despite several setbacks along the way. According to Bellehumeur, his team — which includes co-chair Clay Sandidge, a tech consultant, grant

Gondolas, a common transit option in mountainous areas, can also be used to traverse bodies of water, such as the Ha Long Bay in Vietnam, pictured here. (Photograph courtesy of the Doppelmayr/Garaventa Group)



writer Robert Ardolino of Urban Innovations and Al Moro, former chief harbor engineer at the Port of Long Beach — had already secured \$4 million in grant funding for the project between 2004 and 2005. They were forced to table it and return the funds when the Queen Mary's operator, Queen's Seaport Development, declared bankruptcy in 2005.

The turbulent history of the Queen Mary put Bellehumeur's plans on shaky ground in the past, but he didn't lose hope that the project would get off the ground one day. "I know it will. I've never had any doubt about that in my mind," he said. "Interest was never killed; it was always there. It was just a matter of timing."

With a new operator in charge of the Queen Mary, renovations underway and plans to turn the island into a full-fledged entertainment park on the books, the timing is as right as it will ever be, Bellehumeur mused. "When the aerial tram comes in, it's going to skyrocket the potential of the Queen Mary Island," he said, referring to a shipside development planned by Queen Mary leaseholder Urban Commons. "It's going to be enormous."

"Old Town," as Bellehumeur calls the district of Pine Avenue north of Ocean Boulevard in Downtown Long Beach, has also been in desperate need of support, he said. "Those businesses have been taking a beating ever since the Pike project went up and diverted much of their business," Bellehumeur explained, referencing the Pike

Outlets. "It needs a shot in the arm, has now for a very long time. What this will do is to tie Old Town directly from the Queen Mary all the way up to the Aquarium, on over to the Pike, up to the Blue Line Station."

The gondola's route and stations have not been finalized yet, and the project is still in its early stages. But an executive with Urban Commons, which took over the lease of the Queen Mary in 2016, said the company has received support and encouragement from city staff and some businesses adjacent to the planned route. Among them is the Hotel Maya, which has expressed interest in becoming one of the gondola's stops.

"We haven't really had a granular discussion of all the details that would have to be resolved if the gondola was in place," Dan Zaharoni, Urban Commons' chief development officer, told the Business Journal. "We just know in our discussions with city leaders and city staff that they're very interested in working with us."

For Urban Commons (UC), the new transit option would take some pressure off parking structures on the island, especially with the expected increase in visitors once the area has been transformed into the major tourist destination the company envisions. UC even paid for an initial feasibility study to see whether the project was possible from an engineering standpoint.

"We've always thought about a gondola from the very beginning," Zaharoni said. "It's no secret that ingress and egress off the island is a critical challenge for develop-

ment. So developing different ways to get people on and off, whether it be by air, by water or by roads, has always been a big part of our focus."

The gondola, Zaharoni said, would not only make Long Beach's skyline more recognizable; it would also serve as a standalone draw for tourists eager to experience a ride 400-feet above the city and Queensway Bay. "Even when you're on the top of the Queen, you certainly have a nice view of the skyline, but it would be nothing compared to being 400 plus feet in the air," he pointed out. "Other than the cost, I don't think that you can come up with many cons."

Funding sources have not been identified yet. Assistant City Manager Tom Modica estimated the cost of the initial feasibility study at approximately \$100,000, and some of the costs are likely to be shouldered by Urban Commons, which is the lead on the project. The city's contributions, Modica explained, could come from different funding sources, including transit and tidelands funds. Funding for the gondola may come from grants, outside agencies such as Metro and public-private partnerships, options that will be explored as part of the study.

"I'm very supportive of the feasibility study," Mayor Robert Garcia said at a recent city council meeting. "I have been supportive of this concept as it's been back and forth in different iterations over the years. But I think it's a great way of connecting the pieces of Long Beach that need greater connection and greater transit opportunities." ■

Pacific Gateway Receives National Honor, \$300,000 Grant

On March 13, Pacific Gateway, the workforce development arm of the City of Long Beach, received a \$300,000 grant from the Wells Fargo Foundation for winning first place in the 2018 CommunityWINS competition held by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the foundation.



The organization received the honor for its innovative partnership with United Kingdom-based organization Beyond Jobs, a collaboration that led to the creation of a new system to connect the on-demand workforce with employers who need them. The platform allows workers to post their qualifications and available hours, and for employers to easily sort through vetted candidates as needed. Employers interested in using the database may contact Andrew Lipka, business development specialist for Pacific Gateway Workforce Partnership, at 562/570-3747. Pictured, from left: Natasha Mata, region bank president of the greater Central Los Angeles region for Wells Fargo; Wingham Rowan, director of Beyond Jobs; Nick Schultz, executive director of Pacific Gateway; Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia; Gene Lowe, assistant executive director for the U.S. Conference of Mayors; and 5th District Councilmember Stacy Mungo. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

planning stages, but some elements of the plan have already crystallized. The legacy building, which was rated the safest in the event of an earthquake according to the California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development's standards, will likely be used to host the acute care unit, Molina said. Newer buildings – like the tower – may be used for ancillary services, such as behavioral health and addiction treatment, areas of need identified by the city's task force on homelessness.

Long Beach Fire Chief Xavier Espino said his department welcomes both the planned reopening of the only emergency room on the city's east side and additional resources for their Homeless Education and Response Team (HEART) team. "It would be very beneficial to the fire department at large to have another acute care center on the east side of town," Espino said. "It would assist us, obviously, with some decreased response times and accessibility."

Acute care units fall under stricter seismic standards than other hospital uses, and the legacy building needs retrofitting to comply with those standards. The main issue is the facility's onsite power plant, which needs to remain safely connected to the acute care unit during an earthquake. Currently, the two parts of the complex are separated by an active fault line, threatening the connection should the earth begin to tremble.

"The issue of the power plant is being resolved, because we're just going to relocate the power plant," Molina explained. "One of the other things we're going to undertake during the construction is somehow uncoupling the legacy building from the tower. I'm not exactly sure how it's done – I'm not an engineer nor a contractor – but that was the other big piece. So that's what we're working on, starting today."

Before the hospital can reopen, the city and operator MWN need to check off a number of boxes to ensure compliance with state regulations. Staff from both sides are working to initiate a General Acute Care Relicensing Survey, an inspection by the California Department of Public Health to ensure basic compliance with state requirements for acute care units. Another important step is to gain an extension of seismic compliance from OSHPD to allow the hospital to reopen while the lengthy retrofitting process takes place.

During the March 12 city council meeting, Long Beach Manager of Government Affairs

Diana Tang said those next steps should be completed within a month. "This project has been a couple of months in the making – a little over a year – but we have been working very diligently every single day and every moment has counted," Tang told the city council. "Those two are critical steps. If we don't meet those deadlines, then we've got a problem. But I am confident that we will."

Staff did not announce a projected reopening date, citing pending state approval, but according to a timeline presented by Keisler, the city and MWN are hoping to finalize a long-term agreement in April, and the re-hiring of hospital staff could start as early as May. ■



American Gold Star Manor Residents Celebrate Completion Of \$109.8M Renovation Project

Long Beach seniors and veterans gathered to celebrate the completion of the three-year long renovation of American Gold Star Manor (AGSM), a 21-acre affordable housing community. "The transformation of our campus here in Long Beach was 40 years in the making," Terry Geiling, president and CEO of AGSM, stated. "This renovation is more than just building repairs. The renovation ensures that our veterans and seniors have an affordable place where they age independently – a place, a community they can call home." Originally purchased in 1975 from the United States Navy by American Gold Star Mothers Inc., the property consists of 348 affordable homes for seniors and veterans. The \$109.8 million renovation project was completed five months early and included the replacement or partial replacement of sewer, HVAC, fire and elevator systems; the replacement of permanent and electrical fixtures; environmentally sustainable upgrades; home upgrades; new paint and landscaping; and accessibility improvements. AGSM partnered with nonprofit affordable developer Adobe Communities. The project garnered \$55 million in construction and permanent financing from City Community Capital, \$30 million in private equity from Raymond James Tax Credit Funds through the low-income housing tax credit program and \$3.12 million in annual operating subsidies from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. "It was an honor to bring our development expertise to AGSM for the renovation of this extraordinary campus," Robin Hughes, president and CEO of Abode, stated. "While the financing and subsidies play a vital role in the long-term operation of property, they [will] allow the manor to offer permanently affordable housing for decades to come." Pictured from left: Diane Jacobus, AGSM board chair; Kevin Kilbane, senior vice president of Raymond James; Becky Christmas, national president of American Gold Star Mothers Inc.; Long Beach 7th District Councilmember Roberto Uranga; Geiling; Kelly Boyer, Abode Communities boardmember; Rep. Alan Lowenthal; Lara Regus, senior vice president of Abode Communities; and Sonia Rahm, senior vice president of Citi Community Capital. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

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(Continued From Page 1)

your semi-automatic weapons? Millennials. The 16-year-old riding an electric scooter the wrong way into traffic without a helmet? Millennial. Astonishingly progressive 29-year-old senator you like to read mean-spirited tweets about? Millennial. College kids throwing a rager next door until all hours? Millennials.

I hate (no I don't) to burst your bubble, but only one of those is right.

First off, may I be so bold as to suggest that you all sound like Mr. Wilson from "Dennis the Menace," obsessing over whether that pesky neighbor kid has gone and trampled on his lawn. And if you're too aged for that reference, perhaps envision yourself as Mr. Magoo. It tracks.

Allow me to remind you, as I have previously told all five of you loyal Millennial Pulse readers, that Millennials were, by the broadest definition, born between 1981 and 1996. Any person you meet between the ages of 22 to 37 is, whether they like it or not, defined as a Millennial. (And truth be told, some of them decidedly do NOT like it. Millennial denial – a subject for another day.)

Teenagers are not Millennials. Elementary school students are not Millennials. But young (read: pre-40) adults of drinking age are Millennials. The family pushing their baby in a stroller down the block, they're not pushing a Millennial around. They're the Millennials. People younger than us are part of Generation Z, or what some people are calling "post-Millennials," which seems unfair. They should get their own name. But anyway: capeesh?

The root of the problem is that, as all older generations have done before them, Gen X-ers, Baby Boomers and even some among the Silent Generation (although my personal experience with the latter is that they've lost track of the delineations between generations because they have figured out that we're all equally messed up and promptly stopped caring) like to use the phrase "Millennials" as a catch-all descriptor for younger people who annoy them. They quickly cast all social media-obsessed selfie takers blocking the entrance to their favorite restaurants as Millennials in an attempt to make the phrase synonymous with all that they find wrong with the world, or with all that's changing that they cannot and do not wish to cope with. Instead, they resort to casting dispersions that imply society has gone to pot.

To which I say: Hi, Baby Boomers? How did your folks feel about your hippie/beatnik phases? And Gen-Xers, did your mom approve of your hair metal/mall-crazed/Madonna-reminiscent-bustier-wearing/MTV watching days? Who do you think you sound like when you're beating up on Millennials?

If you're still confused, or perhaps have a complete inability to tell the difference between an adult and a high school stu-

dent just by looking at them, I've created a handy reference guide for you.

The young person annoying you/offending you/obtruding in your otherwise blissful reality is NOT a Millennial if:

- They were not alive on 9/11.
- They don't know what a VCR is.
- They have never seen a floppy disk.
- They do not unleash a squeal of nostalgic glee upon hearing a song by one of the following '90s musical sensations: Britney Spears, The Backstreet Boys, NSYNC, Destiny's Child, the Spice Girls, Boyz II Men, Usher, etc.

- They are a fictional character on the hit TV show, "Riverdale."

- They do not understand the significance of a white Ford Bronco or a stained blue dress.

- They cannot drink alcohol legally.
- They have no idea what a Pog is, or how to use it.

- They do not immediately form a line and jump to the left upon hearing the first notes of the "Cha Cha Slide."

The young(ish) person brightening up your life is probably a Millennial if they meet three or more of the following criteria:

- They have an inexplicable love for Jeff Goldblum.

- They won't listen to your advice, but they WILL listen to Marie Kondo, the Queer Eye guys, or anyone with a lifestyle show on Netflix. Just not you – unless you get a Netflix show.

- They prefer Carson Daly over Ryan Seacrest.

- They don't have a Twitter account but they do have a Facebook account, which they frequently use to remind their friends that Facebook is infringing on our privacy and is morally bankrupt, but also to post pics of their baby and/or fur baby because that seems fine.

- They say "like" every other word.
- They play a character on the hit TV show, "Riverdale."

- They stop to look for the triangle symbol before throwing something in the recycling bin. And they rinse it out first.

- They learned how to use computers with Frogger and the Oregon Trail.

- They expect respect in the workplace/in general polite society just for being there and because they're human, instead of feeling they must earn it. They do not agree that this equates to entitlement.

- They remember when PCs were as ubiquitous as iMacs are now.

- They know about MySpace Tom, LiveJournal, and Xanga.

- They at some point in time owned, or begged you for, a Neopet, Furby or Tickle Me Elmo. They might deny this.

- They can't afford a house but have been old enough to buy one for years.

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Leadership Long Beach Celebrates 30 Years Of Civic Engagement

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
 STAFF WRITER

Leadership Long Beach (LLB), a nonprofit organization dedicated to civic engagement, is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. Since its founding in 1989, LLB has brought together members of the Long Beach community who are passionate about serving their city and fellow residents.

When asked for the definition of a leader, LLB Executive Director Jeff Williams told the Business Journal that he's fond of paraphrasing former mayor and honorary LLB boardmember Beverly O'Neill: "It's not about telling people or directing, it's about inspiring others to make positive change in the community."

LLB offers four programs that teach leadership skills and encourage problem solving in the community: The Institute, Youth Leadership, Executive Leadership Series and Leadership Foundations. The Institute is the organization's flagship program, an intensive 10-month course that takes 30 to 35 applicants a year. "We get many more applications than we can take every year," Williams said. "Sometimes people have to apply a couple years before they get in."

Once accepted into the program, participants join in a curriculum that includes meetings with local leaders, information sessions and tours about the city, and ride-alongs with the police and fire departments. Participants also work in groups to implement projects that positively influence the city. Past projects have included summits on healthy nutrition to prevent childhood onset diabetes, park restorations, the formation of a midnight basketball league and the diversity mural in city hall.

Williams said that the organization tries to select a group that reflects the community of Long Beach itself: diverse in background and geographic location. Ideally, a class would be comprised of an equal mix of individuals from the public, private and nonprofit sectors. "We're very inclusive," Ryan C. Rayburn, senior associate with local real estate company Centennial Advisors and president of the LLB board of directors, said. "We feel that if you're really going to be out there and you're discussing the true problems in our society, everyone deserves to have a seat at the table so that you can get down to the root of it."

The Youth Leadership program, now in its 20th year, was developed by Institute participants. This seven-month program teaches high school students the skills they need to positively impact their schools, communities and future careers. "It's about them being leaders now," Williams said. The latest iteration of the program has been focused on environmental sustainability and climate change, he noted. There were over 100 applicants to the youth program in 2018, Rayburn said.

The Executive Leadership Series is a six-week program for new members of the Long Beach community who serve as executives of organizations and companies. The program allows its participants to network and engage with city leaders and professionals.

The newest LLB program, Leadership Foundations, provides customized leader-

ship training for organizations and businesses. "Up to this point, the only way to be involved with Leadership Long Beach was to be part of the group," Williams explained. Rather than bringing the community to their program, LLB brings the new initiative to the community. Customized training programs have been created for Pacific Gateway, the city's workforce development agency, and the Economic and Policy Impact Center, a nonprofit advocacy group focused on minority representation.

Celebrating 30 Years

LLB does not typically put on events, Williams said, but 30 years of civic engagement is worth celebrating, not only to honor the leaders that have completed its curriculum but also the endurance of the nonprofit itself. "We're essentially a volunteer organization," he

commented. With two full-time employees and one part-time employee, LLB is sustained by volunteers, grants and donations from alumni.

Sponsored by The Streets, an anniversary celebration is to be held at the North Promenade in Downtown Long Beach on June 8. LLB has partnered with Studio One Eleven, RMD Garage, P2S Inc. and Southern California Edison (SCE) to create an art installation that tells the story of the organization. Studio One Eleven is designing a canopy of 1,500 lights representing each LLB program alumni, with SCE providing the power. The goal is to create not just an event space, but art that will last beyond the event and serve as a backdrop for a community gathering place, Williams said.

"It really is going to be a celebration," he continued. "We're not doing tables of 10 in a big room somewhere. This is different. This is about bringing together all the people that have made this happen for 30 years and really celebrating what that means to our city."

Looking to the future, Williams said the organization would like to grow its share of business alumni. The public and nonprofit sectors have been greatly represented, he explained, with many executive directors of nonprofits and over 100 current city employees having graduated from The Institute. "We have all these new businesses coming to town, to Douglas Park and downtown," he said. "Telling them the story [of LLB] and understanding why it would be beneficial for them to be involved with this is a new effort."

Rayburn said that his personal mission since joining the board has been to bring more businesses to the table. "The private sector needs advocates out there sharing their voices and concerns about what they're facing as business owners," he said. ■



Former chief of staff for 6th District Councilmember Doris Topsy-Elvord and event chair for Leadership Long Beach's (LLB) 30th anniversary, Cecilie Harris Walters is a graduate of LLB's 1999-2000 Institute program. "Once you've gone through the program, you're an alumni forever," she said. "When I mention that I'm a graduate of Leadership Long Beach, the doors just open up." From left: Walters; Ryan C. Rayburn, senior associate with Centennial Advisors and President of the LLB board of directors; and Jeff Williams, executive director of LLB. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

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(Continued From Page 1)

line, the project's steering committee shared the story behind Long Beach Gives Day, how it will unfold, and what they hope to accomplish.

The project sprung from the efforts of the Josephine S. Gumbiner Foundation (JSGF), a Long Beach nonprofit dedicated to supporting organizations that enrich the lives of local women and children. According to Boardmember Alex Norman, the board asked Executive Director Julie Meenan to conduct a feasibility study for launching a crowdfunding event in Long Beach to benefit local nonprofits similar to those held in other regions.

"I studied the existing gives model throughout the United States, including Giving Tuesday, which is probably the best-known gives day, to see what might work best here in Long Beach," Meenan said, referring to the Tuesday following Thanksgiving in which nonprofits across the nation fundraise online. "Some campaigns are six weeks long, like 'Monterey County Gives' and 'Santa Cruz Gives.' 'Amplify Austin' is 36 hours. One up in Sacramento is seven days. So just taking all the models and figuring out what would work the best here in Long Beach."

Meenan interviewed more than 30 stakeholders about what they thought would be an appropriate way to collaborate and any concerns they might have. In general, the nonprofit community was willing to participate in a crowdfunding campaign but asked that the event not coincide with holiday fundraising campaigns. "That's when we selected September as the time. September 19, 2019," she said.

Meenan also studied providers of online platforms to host an online giving day, and found that there was a company in Downtown Long Beach that specialized in ex-



Members of the steering committee for a new initiative meant to help local nonprofits bring in donations, Long Beach Gives Day, intend to instill participating nonprofit leaders with skills to carry beyond the 24-hour fundraising campaign. Pictured, from left: Griselda Suarez, executive director of the Arts Council for Long Beach; Justin Wheeler, CEO and co-founder of Funraise; Angelina Pavone, director of customer success for Funraise; Michelle Byerly, executive director of The Nonprofit Partnership; Gisele Fong, program manager for The California Endowment; Alex Norman, boardmember for the Josephine S. Gumbiner Foundation (JSGF); Christina Kreachbaum, program manager for The Nonprofit Partnership; and Julie Meenan, executive director of JSGF. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

actly that. Founded five years ago by Justin Wheeler, Funraise moved to Long Beach's WeWork office three years ago, where it employs 62 people, most of whom, Meenan noted, are Millennials.

"Funraise is a technology platform that's basically the back-office support to nonprofit organizations, from helping manage their business to raising funds and stewarding their donors," Wheeler said. JSGF is covering the costs associated with hiring Funraise and providing prep services, including workshops, to local nonprofits in anticipation of Long Beach Gives Day.

"One of the most advantageous aspects of giving days is, when an organization is looking at raising funds, giving days actu-

ally inspire donors to give again, like a second time, a third time and maybe a fourth time," Wheeler said. "It creates this really strong cycle of repetitive donations that keeps donors engaged, so that's one of the things you see as a really solid outcome of giving days."

JSGF and The California Endowment, a statewide foundation dedicated to making California a healthier place, are providing matching dollars to donations raised on Long Beach Gives Day. Three other local foundations have verbally consented to doing the same, Meenan said. "Part of the incentive to encourage people to give is to have matching dollars," she explained.

"Our particular interest is looking out for

smaller grass roots organizations within Long Beach, and really particularly serving parts of our community that are often underserved," Gisele Fong, program manager for The California Endowment, said. "When we think about the nonprofit sector within Long Beach, certainly there are the really foundational and largescale nonprofits, but we also have so many grass roots organizations and individuals who are doing such amazing work within our communities that are really serving the populations that are most in need."

Steering committee member Griselda Suarez, executive director of the Arts Council for Long Beach, said that she felt similarly about the local arts community. "It's very similar with our artists and small group organizations that are doing arts in neighborhoods and in the communities," she said of local arts nonprofits. "They do not have the infrastructure, nor the advocacy network set up yet to do this kind of fundraising. . . . In many ways, it was just a perfect match."

Suarez said that Long Beach Gives Day will benefit smaller nonprofits that don't have the built-in capacity to hold major fundraising events on their own. "This initiative provides a different model, a different way of doing giving," she said. "Many of our smaller organizations don't have the capacity to put on a lunch and a gala, a big fundraiser event for thousands of people. So this initiative is more accessible and provides some equity within the playing field of philanthropy in Long Beach that hasn't necessarily been tapped into."

Norman noted that raising funds online appeals more to the Millennial generation, the largest living generational cohort in American history. "When you look at the problems we are leaving them, they are going to have to solve a hell of a lot of problems. So, something like this gets them involved in their own future," he said.

Nonprofits will be able to create their own campaigns associated with Long Beach Gives Day, and Meenan hopes that 60 or more will participate. "There will be the picture of the organization, there will be their case statement, and you will be able to click through and make a donation," Meenan said of how the platform will look. "Over 50% of the individuals that give to



Headquartered in Lakewood, Food Finders has been dedicated to reducing food waste since 1989. The organization collects unused food from grocery stores, restaurants and other markets, and distributes it to nonprofits and social service agencies that help the underfed and the homeless. According to its website, its efforts have rescued close to 150 million pounds of food, or enough to serve 22,000 meals per day. "We are continuing outreach to business owners and vendors that have food overages, and we link the food directly to any of 400 or so different pantries, shelters, missions, recovery homes [and] missions," Executive Director Patti Larson told the Business Journal. Larson said Food Finders serves four counties in Southern California: Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino and Riverside. An estimate from the National Institutes of Health places the amount of food wasted in America – based on calories that go uneaten – at 37%. This statistic is based on a 2009 study from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, whose findings were re-confirmed by the authors in 2015. Larson said she believes the number one reason people don't donate their unused but unspoiled food is because they think there's a liability involved in donating it. "Or they're just not aware there's something convenient like Food Finders where we'll come pick up the food for them," she added. The organization is celebrating its 30th anniversary this April and hopes to raise \$30,000 to continue its food rescuing efforts. The Food Finders staff, from left: Lisa Hoffmaster, Veronica Legarreta, Patti Larson, Sokha Ny, Enrique Wong, Diana Lara, Eric Lara. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

one organization generally give to more than one,” she noted.

Those that sign up are required to assign a “team captain” to represent their organization. That captain must attend training sessions and workshops that will not only prepare them for the giving day event, but also train them in useful skills to carry beyond the event, according to Wheeler. “The training that is provided, what’s so valuable about it is it’s not just for this giving day. It’s going to exceed far past this day,” he said. “Nonprofits are not just learning ways to make this campaign successful. They are actually taking away best practices and techniques that are going to allow them to make this happen on a more regular basis.”

The Nonprofit Partnership (TNP), a steering committee member for Long Beach Gives Day, is providing some of this training. “Our role as The Nonprofit Partnership, we do capacity building for nonprofits already in the community and the region,” Michelle Byerly, TNP executive director, said. “We are putting together a series of workshops, and Funraise will also be contributing to those workshops with their expertise in the area. We’ll be supporting them along the way to get them ready to participate in the campaign in September.”

Funraise isn’t just providing the online platform for Long Beach Gives Day – the company is going to be involved throughout the ramp-up phase. “We’re providing the platform. We are also on the strategy side with branding, and also the support side – as nonprofits are signing up, providing them with best practices around how to utilize the giving day and other channels

outside of our platform to drive donors to make it successful,” Wheeler explained. “It’s not just about how to finance. But it’s like, how do you like conceptualize your story and make it appealing to donors? Because that’s a big part of raising funds.”

In the 24-hour period on Long Beach Gives Day, Meenan hopes to raise a total of \$120,000 for local nonprofits. Byerly suggested that local businesses could partner with their favorite local charities to match any funds they raise on Long Beach Gives Day.

Asked about the challenges nonprofits face in fundraising, Jeff Wilcox, president and CEO of The Third Sector Company – an organization that helps nonprofit organizations with leadership continuity – said that nonprofits are competing against many other voices trying to get their messages out to the public. Collaboration among nonprofit groups is one solution. “When many voices come together and talk about what can be done for a community as a whole, you really are going back to a very simple but well-established fact that the sum is greater than any of its parts,” he said.

Wheeler reflected, “I think a lot of times people have this perception that nonprofits are competing against each other and competing against a limited amount of funding. But when you bring nonprofits together and you create something like this giving day, it actually opens up the organization to more opportunities.”

Nonprofits interested in participating – and businesses interested in partnering with them – may visit the dedicated Funraise webpage for Long Beach Gives Day, longbeachgivesapplication.funraise.org. ■

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Nancy Becker and Randy Gordon are pictured at the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce offices at the One World Trade Center complex in Downtown Long Beach. The two met at a 1999 chamber event and have been together ever since. (Business Journal photograph by Matt Fukushima)

From A Texas Cotton Farm To The Long Beach Chamber – Randy Gordon’s Early Life And Career

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

Asked to tell his life story and to start from the beginning, Randy Gordon, 25-year president and chief executive officer of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, says with a perfectly straight face: “I was born upside down and naked in Lubbock, Texas.” This is usually how people are born, he notes, his tone twinkling with the implication of a wink, though one does not actually cross his face.

The son of a cotton farmer, “I grew up chopping cotton, planting it, hoeing the weeds, and picking it,” Gordon recalls. “And if someone said, ‘Can you describe an acre of land?’ I’d say, ‘Sure, it’s 12 rows of cotton a quarter mile long.’” Working the fields, and then later at his father’s next venture, a Phillips 66 gas station in Idalou, Texas, instilled a strong work ethic in Gordon at a young age. “I remember gas was about 19 cents a gallon. And sometimes it went down to 9 cents on a gas war.”

So how did a Texan cotton farmer end up as the head of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce? Gordon’s path wound through various sectors of the business world and varying levels of management in smaller cities and ventures before he landed in what would become his decades-long home.

Right out of high school, Gordon moved with his parents and two brothers to California. “My uncle was a bigshot with North American Rockwell, which had about 40,000 employees in Downey at the time,” he says, adding that his father took a job with McDonnell Douglas in Long Beach. “I went to work for North American Rockwell in Downey. That’s where my career started in California,” he recalls. “I was full-time. I remember making \$100 a week and bragging to my buddies back home about it. All my life my dad taught me work ethic, so I knew how to work a lot of long hours, and that didn’t bother me.”

As an electrician for North American Rockwell (NAR), Gordon was a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, a strong union. Now, known for his advocacy for the business community that often puts him at

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Before accepting the Long Beach Chamber job in 1994, Randy Gordon sought guidance from a variety of individuals.



Randy Gordon with President Gerald Ford.



From left, former Chamber Chair Dave Dedinsky of TABC, former California State University, Long Beach President Bob Maxson and attorney Alan Tebbetts at a 1995 chamber event.



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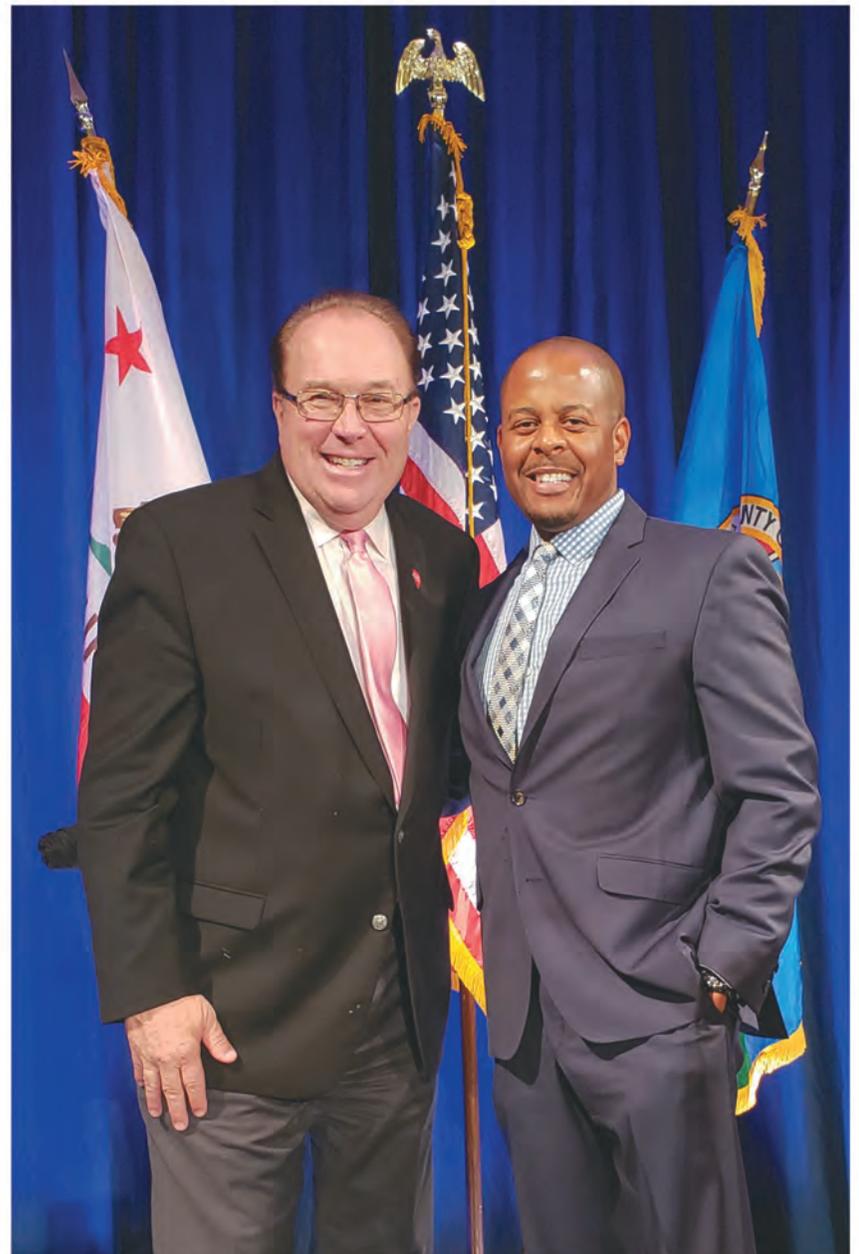
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Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce



Getting To Know All About Randy . . . Former Chamber Chairs Share Their Stories

“I’ve only met a few people in my life that could actually sell ice water in Alaska in the dead of winter, and that’s how I would describe Randy.”

— Jon Deusenberry
Chamber Chair 2016-2017

The Business Journal staff asked Long Beach Chamber Senior Vice President Jeremy Harris to reach out to former chamber board chairs to share a serious or light-hearted moment they experienced with Randy Gordon during their year as chair. The only caveat was, don’t tell Randy. Let’s surprise him. Following are their stories in their own words.

Diane Creel, 1993-1994

I hired Randy Gordon 25 years ago when I was chair, supported by the then incoming chair Robin Tole. The Chamber was basically bankrupt when I desperately needed a President. Robin introduced me to Randy and we went to have lunch with him. I told him “Randy, I desperately need you but I don’t know how I am going to pay you. I hope that you will have faith in me and together we can turn this thing around.” I told him I had some ideas and he told me he had some ideas. We exchanged our ideas and I said “Randy, come do this with me, this Chamber has the potential to be the best in the state, and together with the help of a supportive Board, we can make it happen.” He came, and the rest is history, I am forever grateful to Randy Gordon.

Mark Gray, 1998-1999

Congratulations Randy on 25 years! I had the privilege of serving as Chair and working with Randy during my 1998 through 1999 term. We all know Randy as a high energy, fast-talking person that is great at raising funds and activating others and, yes, jumping from one subject to another within the same conversation. One trait I admire about Randy is that once he makes a commitment, he goes all the way in. It doesn’t matter if he is working on a new Chamber event, participating in Dancing with the Stars, imitating Buddy Holly, or auctioneering for a local charity. During my tenure we formed The Chamber’s Political Action Committee and Randy transformed from performing one of his least favorite duties in supporting ballot propositions to leading the charge in support of candidates for office. I’m sure Randy tirelessly walked and canvassed the district more than our candidate. Under his direction, The Chamber has become the premier voice and advocate for Long Beach business. Randy is over the top in keeping his Chairs informed. Cell phones, palm pilots and emails were not enough. He kept my office fax machine constantly working. It wasn’t unusual for my secretary to inform me that Randy was faxing again. Randy’s longevity in such a high profile and dynamite position with the Chamber is truly amazing especially considering the average duration of a Chamber executive. The Long Beach Area Chamber is the gold standard and the envy of many Chambers. Our Community has been blessed to have such a dedicated leader who has been all-in for the last 25 years. Randy, congratulations for the past 25 years! I look forward to your strong finish!

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odds with labor unions, he imagines that might be difficult for some people to believe. “There were a lot of places you needed a secret clearance to go into; not just anybody can go into the astronaut’s lounge and change lightbulbs,” he notes. “I did that for a couple years. And then I ran a printing press after that in a different part of Rockwell.”

During the Vietnam War, Gordon chose to enroll in school rather than risk being drafted into the military – as he explains it, he loved his country but wasn’t ready for military service. He earned an associate’s degree and transferred to California State University (CSU), Fullerton, (though he now says it would have been better had he gone to CSU Long Beach, or ‘The Beach’) where he obtained a degree in history with the intention of becoming a history teacher. Student teaching turned Gordon off to the world of education, so when a part-time job at the Montgomery Ward department store in Norwalk led to an opportunity to further his career, he took it.

“I went and worked for Montgomery Ward for 10 years. And I moved myself up – I was the youngest operations manager in the region at 23,” Gordon recalls. He eventually became license concession manager for an 11-state region in the Western U.S., overseeing companies with operations at Montgomery Ward stores that were not directly owned by the department store chain. These were “licensed departments” such as beauty salons, key shops and optometrist offices. “My biggest claim to fame was I put Jacoby & Meyers in the first Montgomery Ward store. We put them in about 10 Ward stores,” he says, referring to a law firm known for its personal injury claim commercials.

Gordon changed paths when he took a job with a small Montgomery Ward licensee, a hearing-aid business based in Covina that he had previously worked with. He joined the board of the Covina Chamber of Commerce, a move that led ultimately to his long-time career as a chamber executive. When the CEO of that chamber retired in 1982, Gordon was asked to fill the role. He took it. “I was pretty young,” he says, noting that he was 33 years old at the time. “What happened was, a chamber that size in a small community, you know everybody. . . . The mayor is kind of the most powerful man in the city, but a chamber CEO in a small city like that really has a lot of respect,” he says.

Back then, “everybody was pro-business,” Gordon recounts. “In those days, there was no such thing as liberal left-wing Democrat councilmembers,” he adds. “And it was a good time, because Covina was growing, even though it was a small city.”

In 1993, the president/CEO of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce retired, and the board began looking for a replacement. Gordon applied for the job, with encouragement from a few local boardmembers.

“That’s when I met Diane Creel, who is probably the

strongest woman leader I have ever known in my life,” Gordon says. “Incredibly strong lady. Keep in mind, she was the only lady to head up an engineering company in America at the time, Earth Tech,” he explains. “She was probably the most respected woman leader of that era.”

Creel interviewed Gordon for about three hours, after which she suggested they continue their conversation at L’Opera Ristorante on Pine Avenue. “I spent about half a day with her. And I remember getting on my very big mobile cell phone in 1994, calling my wife, and saying . . . ‘I want to work for this woman. This is an unbelievable lady. I want to work for her.’ I was so jazzed. And then she hired me,” he remembers. “She was the first woman I had really worked for. Because in those old days, the chair of the board were men.”

Gordon, who was two months shy of his 45th birthday, began his historic tenure at the Long Beach Chamber on April 4, 1994. He has held the position longer than any previous president/CEO. ■

Business, Politics And Money – Gordon Reflects On 25 Years As Top Gun Of The Long Beach Area Chamber Of Commerce

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

As president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, Randy Gordon oversees a small but nimble staff of seven, works with a 51-person board of directors and five affiliated committees and councils, and devotes the majority of his time to one key task: selling.

“Most of the chamber thing is selling,” Gordon says. “We’re always selling sponsorships. You’re selling memberships. You’re trying to save memberships. You’re trying to sell big events. The number one asset to being a successful chamber is, you know, you’ve got to be able to sell people on events or sponsorships or membership – and people buy from people they like.” Gordon’s background is in sales, he notes, and even his biggest hobby/second career – auctioneering – is focused on selling. “One of the reasons I am an auctioneer today is I

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Randy Gordon with former Long Beach Mayor Beverly O’Neill, center, and Long Beach Ice Dogs hockey team President Joann Klonowski, 1995



Randy Gordon with former chamber chairs Don Wylie and Diane Creel, 1996.



A heartfelt salute to you.

Thank you, Randy Gordon, for 25 years of service to the Long Beach community.

Dignity Health – St. Mary Medical Center joins the community in a salute to Randy Gordon's 25 years as the president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for your dedication to Long Beach and your meaningful contributions to our community.

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(Continued From Page 20)

Mike Walter, 1999-2000

I became Chairman of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce at the 107th Inaugural Celebration in June of 1999. The 107th year of the Chamber's operation was indeed memorable in many ways. The highlight of the year, however, was the trip to Japan where we attended the International Chamber event. Mayor Beverly O'Neil was also invited to the event. Randy was one of the keynote speakers at the conference. He was one of the best speakers and represented the United States and Long Beach very well. His major message was that International Business presents an economic opportunity to every country. His presentation was well received and drew a lot of questions which he answered very well. Although I did not speak at the conference, I felt honored to attend with Randy and to support his strong points of view.

Our trip included a visit to our sister city, Yokaichi, which we reached by travelling on a very fast train. Our hosts were most gracious and gifts were exchanged. We also had an opportunity to eat a traditional meal in a Japanese home with a Japanese family.

A fourth reason the trip was so memorable was that we experienced strong turbulence for much of the trip over; Mayor O'Neil said she had travelled to Japan several times and this was her most uncomfortable trip. Yet some of our fellow travelers slept through all the discomfort!

Mike Murray, 2000-2001

It's an honor for me, as a former Chairman of The Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, to share some lighthearted moments about my dear friend who I share the same graduating university, Cal State Fullerton, and major, history. In that we both are Titans, lighthearted is the mode of the day. There's not much discussion of molecular biology or Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative. In fact, it's mostly Trout (Baseball) and seats remaining at a function near you. I took a business road-trip with Randy to Santa Barbara, and some might wonder how many words I said on the 200-mile round trip: six, three each way – "I gotta pee." It was a lighthearted blast as it always goes with my pal.

Blake Christian, 2008-2009

The year before I was Chamber Chairman, Randy asked if my wife, Vicki, and I could come to his room for a drink during the Chamber Board Retreat in Rancho Mirage. He and Nancy were even more friendly than usual, so I was on my guard – I assumed he wanted an additional contribution. . . . After a few minutes of small talk he surprised me by asking if I would be the next Chamber Chair. Without hesitation I replied – "No thank you. I really don't have time." Vicki quickly chimed in and said, "You need to think about this – don't say no so quickly." I asked for a week to think about it . . . and Randy only brought up the opportunity a dozen times during that period. As usual, Randy's "charm" got to me (along with Vicki pointing out the long-term benefits). Serving as Chamber Chair was certainly a major highlight of my career and I met some incredible people and built long-term relationships as a result of accepting that role. Randy has been a great supporter and friend since I first came to Long Beach in 1985.

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love doing that. That's what I am going to do full time when I retire. And as a chamber CEO, I am raising money almost every single day."

About 40% of the chamber's revenue is sourced from membership dues. The majority of membership revenue comes from large companies, although about 80% of the chamber's members are small businesses, Gordon explains. The rest of the nonprofit organization's annual \$1.6 million budget is fundraised, primarily through its seven annual events, including the State of the County.

The board meets seven times per year. "As I went from 12 to 7 board meetings over the years, no one, not one person has ever said to me, 'Gordon, we need to meet more often.' You've got busy volunteers," Gordon says. "If you want a John Bishop, for example, on your board, he's running a billion-dollar health care organization. You've got to be really careful of his time," he explains, referring to the incoming chair of the chamber, who serves as president and CEO of MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center and Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach.

**From Then To Now:
 Trials, Tribulations, Growth And Success**

When Gordon came on as president and CEO in '94, he knew little about the city – a point that came up during his interview with the board committee that hired him.

"They had this one person say to me, 'Now wait a minute, if we hire you, you don't really know anything about our city, do you?'" he recalls. "I said, 'Look, I know how to run a chamber. For 12 years, I have run a successful chamber. I can run this chamber. Now, you can teach me Long Beach. But if you hire somebody from within Long Beach, who is going to teach them how to run a chamber?'"

Gordon remained a resident of Covina during his early years leading the chamber in order to let his sons finish their studies at Covina High School, where Long Beach's future mayor, Robert Garcia, also happened to be a student, he notes. "I have known Robert longer than most people here. And Rex Richardson graduated Covina later," he says, referring to Long Beach's current 9th District councilmember. The commute was tough, but Gordon, his wife and kids stuck it out for three and a half years before moving to Long Beach, he recalled.

Making the move from the Covina Chamber of Commerce, which represents a much smaller city, to Long Beach was quite the change. "One day you're pitching on a little league mound and the next day you're pitching on a major league mound. It's a big jump," Gordon says of the move.

"I turned down a few chambers in between . . . I knew in my heart, my gut, everything that this was the right one," he says. "I just threw myself into it and I worked an ungodly amount of hours. I would drive home late at night to avoid traffic. . . . My first wife probably didn't appreciate it and that might have had something to do with us being divorced after 27 years. But I was absolutely obsessed with the job."

Because of that work ethic, former Mayor Tom Clark had a saying about Gordon. "Tom used to say, 'You know, when

Randy Gordon got here, it was like if three people had a meeting, he would be there.' So I went to everything [and] just immersed my soul into this community. I was like a sponge trying to soak it all up," he remembers.

In the mid-90s, Long Beach looked different than it does today. "They had a few more tattoo parlors and they had a few high rises. Long Beach was still trying to find itself," Gordon says. "Long Beach had been an oil town, historically. And then it was no longer an oil town. And when I came on board, it was an aerospace town, but it was starting to come down."

Right away, Gordon was met with trying times for the city, its businesses and residents with the departure of the United States Navy, an eventuality he and former Mayor Beverly O'Neill fought to prevent. "We fought like heck to try to save it. That was a billion-dollar economic impact we lost," he says. Perhaps ironically, he notes, once the Navy left Long Beach, they again "fought like heck" – but this time, to tear down the naval base. "We won that battle, we tore that down, and that expanded the port. So, in reality, it actually was a blessing in disguise. It just took a few years to recover."

O'Neill was Gordon's favorite Long Beach mayor, he says. "In my first 10 years here, Beverly served eight [in office], and then she won a historic write-in [election] that's never been done in America. 25,000 people wrote her in," he recounts, referring to her election to a third time. "She will always be my favorite mayor."

Although Gordon says the chamber has retained a healthy relationship with city staff over the years, his tenure has not been without political tension. After O'Neill left office, Bob Foster, a former Southern California Edison executive, became mayor in 2006 – and things weren't as copacetic with him. "I had some challenging years under Foster's tenure because we didn't particularly get along with him," Gordon says. "He took away our State of the City [event], and that was a big fundraiser for us." When O'Neill was mayor, each year she gave a State of the City address at a fundraiser held by the chamber. But Foster put a kibosh on the practice, Gordon explains.

Quoting an expression used by O'Neill when the Navy left town, Gordon says, "But we 'took those lemons and turned them into lemonade.' We went to our friend [then-Los Angeles County Supervisor] Don Knabe, and then we created a State of the County. That lasted for 10 years with him. Now it has lasted for two years with our new supervisor, Janice Hahn."

Foster's term wasn't just difficult because the chamber was at odds with him – it also coincided with the Great Recession. "We lost a few members during the Recession. It hit some of our larger companies hard and it affected our events," Gordon recalls. "We had to cut back our own expenses because our revenue went down a little bit."

During the same period, the chamber was engaged in a long-fought court battle with Long Beach City Attorney Bob Shannon that had significant political implications. But the legal drama ended up being one of the chamber's biggest successes, in Gordon's estimation.

Gordon recalls, "At the time, there was a maximum you could give the city council [candidates], which was \$300, and a max you could give the

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Randy Gordon with former Governor George Deukmejian, left photograph, and former Congressman and California Attorney General Dan Lungren.



Nancy Becker and Randy Gordon with legendary UCLA Basketball Coach John Wooden.

Thank you, Randy Gordon,

for your **25 years of service and leadership**
at the Long Beach Chamber.



It has been a pleasure working with you throughout the years and I appreciate the support you've given to our hospitals and the greater Long Beach community.

– **John Bishop, Chief Executive Officer**
MemorialCare's Long Beach Medical Center and
Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach



Long Beach Medical Center

Miller **Children's & Women's**
Hospital Long Beach



Shine Your Light

A heartfelt congratulations to Randy Gordon for 25 years of outstanding service. Thank you for your extraordinary leadership and for lighting the way to a stronger, more compassionate community.



(Continued From Page 22)

Lori Lofstrom, 2009-2010

Anyone involved in any community, political or business activity in Long Beach during the past 25 years has undoubtedly encountered the Force that is Randy Gordon. I have known Randy for over 13 years, but in 2009 I witnessed the Force that is Randy up close as Chairman of the Long Beach Chamber's Board of Directors. As with all the Chamber Chairs, rarely did a day pass without attending at least one meeting, event, dinner, lunch or breakfast, alongside Randy. At every such encounter, Randy led the charge to advocate, with every fiber of his being, for the City, its businesses and the community. During several pivotal years, Mayor O'Neill, Randy and other key players called the shots in this City and did so to its vast betterment. It is truly what he was put on this Earth to do! Congratulations on 25 remarkable years!

Jim Eaton, 2010-2011

Many congrats to my dear friend, Randy Gordon, on his outstanding leadership of the Long Beach Area Chamber for the past 25 years and countless contributions to our beautiful city. I was honored to serve as Randy's Chair of the Chamber in the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

A neve to be forgotten, lighthearted moment was certainly my inaugural gala in June of 2010, wherein Randy and I both wore white tunics and headscarves to the stage reminiscent of our amazing U.S. Chamber trip to Dubai, UAE, just prior to my tenure as Chair. I doubt there will ever be an inauguration quite like this one, especially when Randy surprisingly put up a picture from Dubai of me enjoying an after-dinner belly dancer performance from which he then introduced a real belly dancer on stage to dance with me!! I guess I should have expected some type of "payback" after taking all his money playing heads up poker during our flights to and from the UAE!!!

Jerry Miller, 2012-2013

First, it's important to note that I first met Randy Gordon when he took the Chamber job in Long Beach 25 years ago. I was working for the City then and was managing economic development. I had an opportunity to meet Randy soon after he arrived, and he was very enthusiastic about the projects the City was working on. The two of us hit it off pretty well. As time went on, Randy and I worked together on several successful economic development efforts.

Skipping forward, I retired from the City in 2007 and later that year established IMC Municipal Consulting in partnership with INCO Commercial. Not long after this, Randy asked me to consider joining the Chamber Board, which I did (because how do you say "no" to Randy)? Some three years later I agreed to serve as Incoming Chamber Chair in preparation for serving as Chair of the Board for the 2012-13 year. (What was I thinking?)

Of course, the secret that every past Chamber Chair knows is that serving as Chair is really a three-year commitment as Randy carefully grooms you (Year 1), and then eases you into the "starring role" (Year 2) which Randy has created for his Chairs. Then, in his wisdom, Randy has created the Past Chair role (Year 3) which also comes with Board responsibilities. This three-year period requires one to attend virtually all Chamber meetings (large and small), retreats, events, candidate interviews, special promotions, planning sessions and breakfasts at Old Ranch. There are Sacramento trips, Angels' games, non-profit galas, meetings with elected officials (even some Democrats), performance reviews, contract negotiations, etc. It's pretty exhausting, ac-

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mayor, which was \$500. We were fine with the maximums. But the city attorney, Bob Shannon at the time, he said those limits have to apply to your independent expenditure PAC. We said, that's not right, that's unconstitutional. You're telling us that we can't bring in somebody with a bigger check than \$500?"

According to Gordon, Shannon told him, "If you want to play in the mayor's race, no check shall be over \$500 in that account – or I'll sue." Instead, the chamber sued the city. "We knew that was wrong. We had a boardmember who funded our first monies, and we hired who we thought was the best attorney in California, a guy named Chuck Bell. And we sued the city and got an immediate temporary restraining order, which allowed us to raise unlimited money," Gordon remembers. Ultimately, after the case advanced through higher courts, the chamber won the case, he says.

"Now it's not something I'm incredibly proud of, to sue the city," Gordon says. "But it was the right thing to do because we had a city attorney that was trying to stifle our constitutional right to find, recruit and elect pro-business candidates. And we couldn't compete with the unions because of the limit."

Endorsements made by the chamber and its political action committee (PAC) – a separate legal entity formed in 1995 – have at times added to political discord between the chamber and local elected officials. But Gordon is emphatic about the PAC's importance, as well as the chamber's role in promoting pro-business policy makers. "You show me a chamber on the West Coast our size, they almost all have PACs. A lot of smaller chambers today have PACs. It's pretty common today, especially on the West Coast," he says.

"There are two myths that go on about us. One, that we only endorse Republicans. The fact is, we've endorsed twice as many Democrats as Republicans," Gordon says, noting that this is because not too many Republicans run for local office anymore. "The other myth is that we don't win enough races. We've won twice as many as we've lost." When the chamber has lost, he notes, it has often been first in line to donate money towards the winning candidate's debt reduction.

"The most challenging by far has been the politics – the politics of getting on the wrong side of a strong mayor is not easy," he says, alluding to the chamber's endorsement of Damon Dunn, a Republican who ran against then-Councilmember Robert Garcia in 2014 and lost. "If I had to do it again, I'd do it again. 25,000 people voted for Damon Dunn. Beverly O'Neill endorsed Damon Dunn. The fire union endorsed Damon Dunn. [Former Councilmember] Gary DeLong endorsed Damon Dunn."

He continues, "A lot of people jumped on the Damon Dunn bandwagon, and so did we. But the aftermath of that hurt for several years. But we were never anti-Robert. We were positive on our campaign; we didn't do any hit pieces at all. The transition to working with Robert was really easy

because I have known him for so long. . . . Bob Foster was the opposite. You got on the wrong side of Bob and he'd make your life miserable. So, my life was miserable for a few years because he made it that way."

Often, challenges the chamber faces are tied to the shifting balance of political power towards the left – one that has resulted in a number of policies that impact businesses. Gordon doesn't mince words on the matter: "It's because the union has got a bigger hold on the councilmembers. You've got councilmembers who have sold their soul, collectively lock stock and barrel, to particular unions." He adds, "When I started, we had I think three or four Republicans on the council. Now the good lord gives us one every decade."

The biggest issues facing the business community during Gordon's tenure have cropped up within the past five years, he says. Chief among them is that the state's minimum wage is increasing in a series of steps to \$15 by 2022. "The minimum wage is going to really hurt small business . . . Just think, small restaurants are now paying \$12 per hour. And some of them have closed already on 2nd Street. You're going to see more closures," Gordon says. "Then coupled with that, just the Styrofoam changes," he says, referring to a local ban on polystyrene products. "One restaurant guy told me it's going to cost him \$500 more a month because he has so much takeout, because the replacement for Styrofoam to keep the food hot and decent is expensive. And of course, you're going to have straws [banned] now. It's just one thing after the other that is piled on that small business owner, especially in the restaurant business."

Still, it could have been harder on local businesses – local elected officials at one point considered advancing to a \$15 minimum wage at a faster rate than the state, Gordon points out. "We fought the city and were successful to get them to match the state minimum wage. . . . We were all over it. We were so aggressively involved in that," he says. "We think of ourselves as a six-figure lobbyist, and it comes with the price of your membership."

In recent years, the chamber was also successful in fighting against a proposed ordinance to impose workload restrictions and create safety provisions at hotels with 100 or more rooms in Long Beach. The city council ultimately voted down the proposal 5-4 in 2017, but a similar proposal was then taken to the voters via a ballot measure that passed late last year. Gordon maintains that the backing union, Unite Here Local 11, deceived voters by alleging that hotels did not provide panic buttons to their employees, although many did, as well as by glossing over proposed workload changes that would be costly to hotels. "Those are the kind of things that just drive me crazy. Those are the kind of issues that are going to cost the city, the business owners, more and more," he says.

Despite some policies creating impediments to business, Long Beach is undergoing a period of growth unlike any Gordon has ever seen. "There has never been commercial development like there is today. These

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Randy Gordon and Chamber Chair Dr. Mike Walters join California U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein at the National Leaders Luncheon in 2000.



Randy Gordon with former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani



Randy Gordon with former Chamber Chair Lou Anne Bynum and former Long Beach City Manager Jim Hankla

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Randy Gordon

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tually, and not without one's contributions of "talent and treasure" as Randy likes to say. (Truth be told, the Angles games were cool, particularly during Mike Trout's early seasons.)

The other secret that every past Chamber Chair knows is that Randy is a little complicated. What most people see is an aggressive, strong-willed, ready-for-battle Chamber executive prepared to take on anti-business forces wherever they may exist. What few people see, and Chamber Chairs are among them, is that beneath that aggressive persona is someone who cares deeply about his family, friends, faith and causes which help others, including support for the health and viability of the non-profit community.

Randy's 25 years of service have passed quickly. It should be no secret that Long Beach would be well-served were Randy to continue to find helpful ways of serving the Long Beach community.

Kristi Allen, 2014-2016

As I was one of the few if not the only chair to serve two years, thus my relationship with Randy as chair was a long one. One of my fondest memories of Randy was our catch up breakfast meetings we tried to hold regularly to review current issues and concerns. These meetings often started on issues but more often than not moved over to discussions on baseball, kids and grand-kids. Though Randy can put on a tough shell when he needs to, he turns into a softie when he starts sharing photos and stories of all of his grand kids. He would go one by one listing off a very long list of sports or activities they did. I saw videos of dancing babies to baseball hits and Friday night light football highlights. I don't know how Randy and Nancy attended so many personal and chamber events all at the same time, but their calendars were full and so was Randy's heart with love and pride of his family.

Jon Deussenberry, 2016-2017

Being a past chair and looking back on my year as chairman you just don't realize how fast the time goes by. I always looked forward to what seemed like my daily phone call from Randy. When Randy calls you might think he's really looking for your input on important decisions, but after time you realize he's made the decision and just does a fantastic job of making you feel like you actually had some input. I've only met a few people in my life that could actually sell ice water in Alaska in the dead of winter, and that's how I would describe Randy. He's an absolute champion for the business community, supports volunteerism and non-profits and has always kept one eye on the future. His legacy will be unmatched and no one will ever equal his passion and love for Long Beach! ■

(Continued From Page 24)

are real exciting times," he says. "I came in 25 years ago with some challenging times, trying to save the Navy and not having a lot of retail. And I am leaving probably some of the best economic times. So, I guess I'm leaving on a good note in 16 months." In mid 2020, Gordon is retiring and handing over the reigns to Jeremy Harris, who currently serves as senior vice president.

Gordon reflects, "The most rewarding part of my job is helping small businesses become successful and seeing them grow . . . because 90% of small businesses don't make it to the third year in America, a stat from the U.S. Chamber." Gordon is thankful for a remarkable career. "I really felt like God put me on this earth to fight for business, and to raise money for small businesses and to raise money for nonprofits," he says. ■

Giving With Heart: Community Involvement

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
 EDITOR

While Randy Gordon is well known for his business advocacy and, as he puts it, his "hard side," those who have known him for many years are quick to point out his flip side – what he calls his "soft side," and what others simply refer to as "his big heart."

"He's got a huge heart," Lou Anne Bynum, a past chair of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, says. "He does a lot of the auctions for nonprofits, and he donates his time to do that. He has helped raise literally thousands and thousands of dollars for nonprofits in Long Beach."

Jerry Miller, another past chamber chair and former city manager for Long Beach, points out that many might not know how much Gordon gives back to the community, both in terms of volunteering his personal time and making financial contributions to nonprofits. "I saw firsthand working with Randy. The guy has a heart," he says.

Gordon has served on the boards of many local nonprofits, including the YMCA, the California Conference for Equality and Justice, the Long Beach Opera, the Grand Prix Foundation of Long Beach and others. He has lent his auctioneering skills to more than 30 local organizations' fundraisers, as well.

Two of Gordon's most beloved local charities are the Long

Beach Ronald McDonald House (RMH) and Precious Lamb, both of which are devoted to helping children and their families. "I especially love volunteering for nonprofits that have something to do with children, because my grandchildren are so blessed and a lot of kids are not blessed," Gordon says.

Gordon was a founding boardmember of the Ronald McDonald House, and took part in the nonprofit's capital campaign to open its doors across the street from MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital. The nonprofit runs a facility that provides temporary housing, support and care for families whose children are patients at the hospital. "The capital campaign was a group of individuals . . . who helped to spread the word that the Long Beach Ronald McDonald House was coming to the community. They helped raise \$6.2 million back when the economy was rather suppressed," Cheri Bazley, executive director of Long Beach RMH, explains. "The campaign was so successful that it was completed in 18 months, and we opened our doors in December 2011."

Gordon and his partner, Nancy Becker, also personally contributed to ensure that the house would be able to open its doors. Their names grace the entrance to one of the house's rooms. Gordon stayed on as a boardmember for Long Beach RMH until he termed out last year. "Even though he is not currently an active boardmember because he served his max term limit, he still serves on our advisory committee and actively supports us. . . . He is probably one of our greatest advocates," Bazley says. "I just can't say enough about the various ways in which he has helped the mission and the families we've served."

In addition to donating time and money to Long Beach RMH's cause, Gordon has also helped the nonprofit create connections with other organizations and businesses in the Long Beach area, according to Bazley. For all his efforts, the organization honored him at its annual A Few Good Men gala and fundraiser last year. "We look throughout the community and the immediate surrounding communities for gentlemen who are doing good work, giving back in the community and are philanthropically minded; hence the title, A Few Good Men. And in Randy's case, he most definitely fits the profile," Bazley says.

In the past few years, Gordon has also become involved with Precious Lamb Preschool, a Long Beach nonprofit that provides free preschool education to children facing homelessness. He is currently serving on the board. "Honestly, Randy's heart and involvement has only increased since he started. He has really been such a gift to Precious Lamb," Lailanie Jones, the organization's executive director, says. "His commitment has been invaluable to us."

Jones added that Gordon has helped introduce Precious Lamb to others in the business community. She reflects, "I believe Randy's involvement and role as a boardmember has taken us to a different level." ■

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Randy Gordon with Tony Blair, former prime minister of the United Kingdom



Randy Gordon with former United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice



Randy Gordon with former Long Beach Area Chamber Vice President of Government Affairs Shaun Lumachi at Lumachi's wedding. Lumachi died tragically in an automobile accident at 33 years old in 2011.



Randy Gordon with former Long Beach Memorial CEO and former Chamber Chair Byron Schweigert at the 2009 Long Beach Chamber Inaugural Gala



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Would like to congratulate
Randy Gordon
on 25 years of service to the
Long Beach Community!
Keep up the good work!



Randy Gordon is pictured with 15 former chairs of the board of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce at the 2018 Inaugural Gala. This year's gala is June 19 at the Westin.

Leadership Beyond Long Beach

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

Randy Gordon's leadership in the business community extends well beyond Long Beach proper. The longtime chamber executive has served on the boards and committees of a number of state and national organizations, including the United States Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), the Western Association of Chamber Executives (WACE), the

California Chamber of Commerce (CalChamber) and other organizations. He is an accredited chamber executive through the U.S. Chamber.

Dave Kilby, executive vice president of corporate affairs for CalChamber and president/CEO of WACE, has known Gordon since his days at the Covina Chamber of Commerce. "I have been around longer than he has. . . . We're of similar vintage," he says with a chuckle. "He served as chair of the board of the directors of our association, the Western Association of Chamber Executives. He has done just about everything and won just about every award there is to win in the organization," Kilby notes. "He is kind of a mentor to many in our business, and he does a great job of outreach to his peers that are new in the area – in Southern California, in particular."

Gordon served as chair of WACE's board in 2002 – a position that is granted to those who are well-respected among their peers, Kilby notes. "Like with most leaders, it's his integrity and his point-blank honesty – that's one of the things that carries over when he's with his peers. He is not going to sugar coat things, but you can always trust him. And he's always a resource that people can turn to," Kilby says.

Former ACCE President Mick Fleming says Gordon was one of the first people to welcome him when he started with ACCE in 2001. "He was pretty active. He was on the board a couple of different times," he says. "In the past few years he went on our trust board, which is a group of people who work on the employee benefits program that we offer to chambers. That's a really responsible job to be a member of that group, because you're kind of making decisions with other people's money."

Gordon also served on ACCE's Major Cities Council. "He brought the West Coast perspective, but also a really strong pro-business conservative message to the group to keep them honest," Fleming recalls. "Lots of times, that group would get carried away with ideas and things they were doing in their towns, especially college towns where things get kind of not just progressive, but a little wacky sometimes. And Randy would bring people back to sanity."

Fleming says that despite the length of Gordon's tenure as president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, he has remained relevant and fresh in the role. "He has adapted and flexed at different times," he says, noting that this applies particularly when it comes to politics. "His strong stance on politics, he is really well known for that."

Below is a list of Gordon's state and national honors.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

- Institute for Organization Management, West, 1988
- Graduate, Academy at Notre Dame, 1993
- Member, Committee of 100

Association of

Chamber of Commerce Executives

- Certified Chamber Executive (Designation)
- Chairman, Metro Cities Council
- Chairman, Fringe Benefits Inc.

Western Association of Chamber Executives

- Executive of the Year, 1995: For Exemplary Performance & Leadership as a Chamber Professional
- Russell E. Pettit Memorial, 2001: Excellence in Leadership Award
- Chairman of the Board, 2002-2003
- Chairman's Distinguished Service Award, 1998
- William E. Hammond, 1984-1985: Scholarship Award
- Four-time Accredited Executive Designation

California Chamber of Commerce

- Chairman, Chamber Advisory Board, 2002

Southern California Association Chamber of Commerce Executives

- President, 1991 ■

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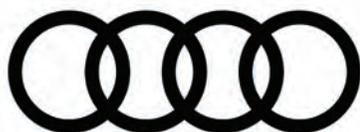
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‘The Paths Of Life’: Role Models, Mentors And Family

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

Randy Gordon has amassed a fair number of role models and mentors over the years, but perhaps the earliest was Buddy Holly.

“Buddy Holly was my idol. I was 10 years old when he died. We listened to his music in Lubbock, Texas – my mom and dad were country fans,” Gordon says, referring to his hometown. “But the reason they liked Buddy was because Buddy Holly was the first person to ever be on ‘The Ed Sullivan Show’ from Lubbock, Texas, and my dad thought that was really something.” When Gordon met his partner and soon-to-be-wife, Nancy Becker, nearly 20 years ago, he often sang Buddy Holly songs to her.

“I met her at an International Business Association Christmas luncheon,” Gordon says, referring to Becker, who served on the organization’s board. “And it was almost like cupid shot my butt with an arrow.” Gordon notes that Becker was his first and only date after divorcing his previous wife of 27 years. “Nancy will tell you, I buy everything I see first. . . . Eyes locked and we started dating and I never dated anybody else.” Their first date was December 18, 1999. The two are marrying this May in a small family ceremony at the Hotel Maya.

Other role models – people Gordon never met but has admired – over the years have included author and motivational speaker Zig Ziglar and Grant Teaff, former football coach for Baylor University. Quoting Teaff, he says, “‘Success is in the way you walk the paths of life each day. It’s in the little things you do and the things you say.’ And it goes on, but there’s a line in there at the end, ‘Success is in the family that you love and what they learn from you.’” Gordon reflects, “I have six grandkids, and right now they’re 12, 11, 10, 9, 8 and 7. . . . I have four grandsons and two granddaughters. They are the love of my life and they are God’s gift. Every weekend I am at ball games or plays.”

Asked who he considers to be personal mentors, Gordon mentioned a number of past chairs of the chamber, as well as his high school biology teacher, Robert Moore. Gordon notes that Moore, who is in his eighties, attended his mother’s funeral last year.

Mike Murray, a past chair of the chamber and retired director of government and external affairs for Verizon, has known Gordon as long as he’s been in Long Beach. Verizon’s predecessor company, GTE, rented an office from the chamber, putting the two in close proximity. “It was a time of growth,” Murray recalls, referring to the 1990s. “And I think Randy took the chamber from a representative chamber for the City of Long Beach to one of the most respected and powerful chambers in the state for sure, maybe even the country.”

Murray says that Gordon is an innovator and initiated several new events for the chamber. He also makes it a point to play to his chairs’ strengths, he notes. “What kind of amazed me and still does about Randy is he’s had so many chairs, and I don’t know a chair that hasn’t had a good year with Randy,” he says. “Some of the years were challenging for sure, for political or whatever the reasons might be, but somehow Randy tailors the year so that the chairman is going to be as helpful as they can for business.”

As Murray sees it, Gordon’s strongest leadership qualities are his “loyalty, his commitment and his ability to take chances.” He adds, “Randy has been a boon to me, and he is a really good friend.”

Jerry Miller worked with Gordon both as the former city manager for Long Beach and later, after he moved on from the city and opened a consulting firm, as a member and chair of the chamber’s board of directors. “I first met Randy when he came to Long Beach 25 years ago because I was managing economic development for the city,” Miller says. Gordon was “very supportive and cooperative” and “really interested in promoting business development and growth,” he notes.

Miller says Gordon is focused on supporting business. “He is a very strong advocate for business. He has taken on many issues that people don’t find popular. He has been willing to do that because, in the end, protecting the business community and the private sector is his job,” Miller says. Miller tends to be moderate in his views, while Gordon is often more conservative, he notes. “I think that probably he began to see that a moderate Democrat can be very pro-business, too. I think that was one thing that I and probably others influenced him on.” Miller adds that Gordon “has a big heart,” and is a good person.

Gordon and Lou Anne Bynum, who currently sits on the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners and is the retired executive vice of college advancement and economic development for Long Beach City College, also go way back. She first met him through her work at LBCC in the late ’90s. Gordon asked her to join the chamber board, and she eventually also served as chair. “It was a wonderful experience overall. I appreciated the opportunity to be able to chair the chamber,” she says. “Randy is a great proactive president and CEO. . . . one of the things I think Randy did that was really important for the chamber was that he gave a voice to the business community and a platform for visibility for business in the city.”

Bynum says she worked with Gordon to ensure that the chamber’s political action committee (PAC) was a wholly separate entity. “We had to make sure we were legal and following all the right kinds of processes that every PAC has to follow. And it still exists I think to this day. So, it turned out to be a really good thing,” she says.

Asked about any advice she ever gave Gordon, Bynum says she had discussions with him about his passion for politics, and how not everyone involved in the chamber agreed with his positions. She told him, “Just be careful, don’t get too far out ahead and don’t be surprised if you get some blowback for it.” To his credit, she says he became more thoughtful about including differing voices in decision making around legislative activity.

In conclusion, Bynum says of Gordon, “I would just like to say that I think Randy has done a remarkable job at the chamber for the last 25 years. He has been a great leader for the chamber. He actually put the chamber on the national map. . . . He is a good man. He is a loyal person. He has got a big heart. And I just want to congratulate him for everything he has done because I think he has done a lot more than people give him credit for in the community.” ■



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Signal Hill City Manager Charlie Honeycutt is pictured in front of the city's new library adjacent to city hall. The library is scheduled to open this summer. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

(Continued From Page 1)

Signal Hill – which was incorporated 95 years ago on April 26 – has come a long way since then. Its housing stock and retail offerings have grown, and the city's parks – especially Hilltop Park with its sweeping view of the South Bay, Los Angeles and the mountain ridges to the east – have drawn in visitors, businesses and new residents. "Our city's a regional draw for tourists and visitors," Hansen said.

To accommodate the needs of a growing population, the city is working on several projects to create more public spaces and deepen community engagement. The most prominent endeavor, the city's new library next to city hall, is finally nearing completion after a long and tumultuous history. It's expected to open its doors in May or June of this year, according to City Manager Charlie Honeycutt. "The library is the jewel of all our projects right now," Honeycutt said. "That's a project that was a long time coming. It's been a vision of the current council and past council."

A majority of funds for construction came from a redevelopment bond, which

was temporarily frozen by the state after voters approved the abolition of local redevelopment agencies in 2010. Hansen said efforts to regain the funds took years, and city staff had to search for additional funding sources when bids came in higher than initially projected. "I'm proud that the city kept moving forward, even when it didn't seem like it would ever happen," she said.

Hansen said she's been particularly passionate about the project because of her own lived experience. "I grew up in a library, I was a really shy child," Hansen said. "Some people say: 'Why do we need libraries?' I think that's a crazy notion, really," she added. "No matter your age, you need to have a place where you feel like you can go and go anywhere you want, through your imagination or through research, through reading. Nothing will ever take the place of that."

At the new facility, the city is planning to host educational and cultural programming for residents of all ages. Hansen said partnerships with local organizations like the Long Beach Islamic Center, a mosque located on 27th Street in Signal Hill, could help bring in representatives from the city's

diverse community. "I just want to take advantage of the diversity we have in the city and make sure that people feel like their culture is welcomed and other people can learn about it," she explained.

In an effort to showcase the diversity of businesses Signal Hill has to offer, the city council is inviting small businesses to present at city council meetings. "I revived the small business spotlight during council meetings," Hansen said. "I think we have a great relationship, and that's why businesses stay here or they want to expand here."

Another reason why business owners feel confident investing in Signal Hill is the city's police department, Signal Hill Police Chief Chris Nunley said. "Businesses oftentimes tell us that they come here specifically because of the Signal Hill Police Department," Nunley said. "We work hard every day, and the women and men who work here are exemplary police officers that have dedicated their lives to providing as safe [of] an environment as they possibly can to our residents, visitors and business owners here in town."

Crime has been down across the board, except for an increase in aggravated as-

saults that's consistent with a larger trend in the region. "A lot of that [improvement], specifically with shoplifting, has been through partnerships with our retail partners," Nunley said. Police regularly share suggestions with retailers in the area to help them combat shoplifting in their stores, he explained.

The city depends heavily on sales tax revenues created by the retail industry, a reliance Hansen sees as a challenge. "There are constant threats in Sacramento to change where sales tax is collected. You always have the possibility of another economic downturn looming," she said. Still, she added, "we don't really have the ability to diversify that much."

The Town Center East shopping center on Cherry Avenue has seen the departure of Batteries and Bulbs, a national specialty retail chain and according to Honeycutt, others might follow. "Retailers are contracting, is what we've heard. When their leases come up, they'd rather have less floor space than more floor space," Honeycutt explained. But, he added, the city is already seeing interest from other businesses to take over those properties, and staff are working to accommodate them. "We're hearing that there might be food uses, some types of unique restaurants to come in, but they might need our help relaxing the parking requirements," Honeycutt said.

The city manager said Signal Hill is in good financial shape. "Our revenues and expenses are expected to come in as we had estimated at the beginning of the fiscal year," Honeycutt said. With enough reserves to cover 60% of its operating costs for a year, he said the city would be able to withstand a recession some experts are predicting. "We're in a good position to handle that if our revenues start dropping some, we've set money aside to get through any rough patches."

In the meantime, the city continues to invest in infrastructure, from roads to stormwater management. The Los Cerritos Channel Stormwater Capture project at the Long Beach Airport, which Signal Hill is tackling in partnership with the City of Long Beach, is one of this year's major undertakings. "It's an underground reservoir, where water can be diverted out of Los Cerritos Channel, be captured, and it'll percolate in the ground and get naturally cleansed



Signal Hill Mayor Tina Hansen is pictured in front of the Signal Hill City Hall. In a March 5 election, voters approved Measure N, moving the city's municipal elections to November and thereby shortening the terms of all current councilmembers by four months. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)



Signal Hill Police Chief Chris Nunley told the Business Journal, "Our community really wants a genuine partnership with their police department, so we work really hard to make sure and try to accommodate that," Nunley said. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

by the earth and replenish the groundwater aquifer," Honeycutt explained.

It's projects like this that have fostered a positive working relationship between staff in Signal Hill and the City of Long Beach, Hansen said. "We are well respected in the region for our leadership role on stormwater especially," she noted. "We're a small city, but we're a big player."

Former City Councilmember Larry Forester, a driving force behind the city's

efforts on stormwater treatment, recently departed from the city council after 20 years of service. Due to health issues, Forester decided not to run again in the city's municipal election on March 5, 2019. Voters re-elected Hansen and entrusted former City Clerk Keir Jones with the remaining seat on the dais. Signal Hill's mayor is selected on a rotational basis, and current Councilmember Lori Woods is expected to be sworn in as mayor

tonight, March 26. The other members of the five-member city council are Edward Wilson and Robert Copeland.

Hansen said the city has no plans to switch to district elections or a directly-elected mayor. "Each person that's up there, they truly have been chosen by the citizens to represent them," she said. "They like us having the chance to represent the city as the mayor."

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The 3.2-acre Hilltop Park in Signal Hill pays homage to the city's roots in the oil industry and offers panoramic views of Long Beach, the South Bay and Los Angeles. Hilltop Park includes barbecue areas, picnic tables and restrooms. The site can be rented out for weddings and other special events. Visit the city's website for more information: www.cityofsignalhill.org. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

Signal Hill Welcomes New Business

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
STAFF WRITER

Though Signal Hill remains a thriving oil town, its business portfolio has diversified since the oil boom of the 1920s to include the automotive and health care industries, major retail and service chains, and multi-generational mom and pop stores.

Some of the city's most high-profile businesses are Costco, Home Depot, Office Depot, Best Buy, Kaiser Permanente, Mother's Market, EDCO and Encore Welding, as well as automotive dealerships representing most major carmakers. The 2.25-square-mile Signal Hill also boasts three public schools and its own police department.

Signal Hill tax policy provides significant incentives for incoming business owners, according to Frank McIlquham, vice president of the Signal Hill Chamber of

95th Year – Key Dates In Signal Hill's History

In 1541, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo sails into what is now San Pedro Bay and names it *Bahia a Las Fumos*, or Bay of Smokes. The smoke came from campfires of antive Indian tribes, who also sent smoke signals from atop a 365-foot hill. The area was first occupied by the Hogan Indian tribe, the the Gabrielinos, and later by Spaniards, who also used the Hill to send smoke signals. Gabrielines were the first to discover a sticky goo they called *capapote* and used it to waterproof canoes, baskets and robes. The Spaniards called the same substance *brea*. Little did they know that *capapote*, otherwise known as crude oil, would become such a valuable commodity, central to the history of Signal Hill.

The Spanish regional occupation began in the late 1760s. Two early California ranchos – Los Alamitos (meaning the “little Cottonwoods”) and Los Cerritos (meaning “the little hills”) were then established. What is now Signal Hill overlapped those two ranchos, which remained in Spanish hands until the early 1840s, when American pioneers Abel Stearns and Jonathan Temple purchased them for \$6,000 and \$3,025 in 1842 and 1843, respectively.

In 1889, a U.S. Coast Survey team supervised by John Rockwell gave Signal Hill its official name based on the Native American name, which means, “the hill for signaling.”

June 23, 1921 – After three months of drilling at what is now Temple Avenue and Hill Street, Royal Dutch Shell Oil Company's well called Alamitos No. 1 hits paydirt.

Early 1924 – With oil riggers transforming the landscape, the local political climate changes as well. A battle is brewing between residents, landowners and oil companies of Signal Hill, and Long Beach government.

Long Beach announces a barrel tax to be levied on all crude oil and petroleum products produced within its



Alamitos No. 1
Temple Avenue and Hill Street

city limits, which at that time included Signal Hill.

April 26, 1924 – Signal Hill oil companies begin a countermovement which results in the incorporation of Signal Hill on this date. Residents elect Jessie Elwin Nelson as president of the Signal Hill Board of Trustees (the equivalent of today's city council). This made Signal Hill the first city in California to elect a female mayor.

1927 – The Signal Hill City Council votes to sell \$250,000 in bonds to build the city's water reservoir.

1934 – Signal Hill City Hall is built at Hill Street and Cherry Avenue.

1936 – Signal Hill Elementary opens at Walnut Avenue and 23rd Street.

1941 – Both the Signal Hill Chamber of Commerce and Signal Hill Historical Society are founded.

World War II – Signal Hill fields produce up to 15% of the 1 billion barrels of oil California contributes to the Allied war effort.

1946 – After efforts to turn Signal Hill into a “little Las Vegas,” the city council passes an anti-gambling ordi-

nance that “prohibited wagering with cards, dice or other ‘devices’ for money, checks, chips, credit, pennants, cigars, candy, merchandise or other.”

1949 – John Burroughs Elementary opens at 1260 E. 33rd Street.

1954 – An F-86 Sabrejet crashes along 19th Street on January 12, destroying four homes and killing five people.

1958 – The Hancock Oil refinery fire is the most devastating in the city's history. It rages on for 52 hours and involves 600 firefighters.

1968 – The Signal Hill Lions Club erects the first phase building of the Signal Hill Community Center.

1972 – The “secondary recovery” of crude oil resources begins through a process of injecting water into wells to free previously untapped reserves.

1974 – The city council empowers a redevelopment agency and creates a redevelopment plan to encourage more rapid and uniform conversion from an oil-based to a commercial driven economy. The project area includes 840 acres, or about 60 percent of the city.

1978 – The original Signal Hill Fire Station's conversion to the Signal Hill Public Library is completed on December 15.

1981 – The second phase of the redevelopment plan targets retail and services and creates a business-friendly development policy.

1983 – Signal Hill is the fastest growing city, per capital, in county. Population increases by about 25% since 1970 to more than 7,300 people.

1984 – Redevelopment agency efforts to assemble property for development purposes keeps the city's largest employer and sales tax generator, Eastman Company, from leaving.

1984 – Shell Oil sells its Signal Hill holdings – a number of oil wells and prime, undeveloped, hilltop land – to Orange County real estate developers Bryan Tarnutzer and Jerrel C. Barto.

1986 – In August, Eastman's 450,000-square-foot headquarters is completed. Less than three months later, Price Club (now Costco) opens

at Town Center East development.

1987 – Office Club (now Office Depot) opens across the street from Price Club.

1989 – Bryan Tarnutzer sells his share of Signal Hill holdings to Irvine-based Southwest Diversified, which plans to build a 1,200-unit hilltop home community.

1989 – Southwest Diversified files a lawsuit against the city after city officials delay the project to reconsider the number of allowable units.

1990 – In December, Long Beach BMW becomes the first dealership to open in the new Signal Hill Auto Center.

1992 – Home Depot opens its 122,000-square-foot store in Town Center East on Cherry Avenue.

1992 – Kaufman & Broad creates the California Crown housing tract with 92 single-family homes along Temple Avenue.

1993 – In September, Office Depot merges with Eastman.

1995 – The Lee Group develops Signal Hill Village, 52 affordable homes, along Pacific Coast Highway.

1998 – The Signal Hill Preservation Society is formed by citizens concerned about the preservation of the city's rich, local, cultural heritage.

1999 – Bixby Ridge residential development and Town Center West are under construction. Town Center North opens

2000 – First phase of Bixby Ridge residential development is completed. Hilltop residential development (Promontory) breaks ground. Hilltop Park is completed

2001 – Town Center West opens. City approves the construction of the Las Brisas Phase 1 Affordable Housing development

2002 – Signal Hill gets its own Zip Code – 90755. City establishes the Crescent Heights Historic District. Rossmoor Pastries relocates to Signal Hill. Unity Monument is dedicated.

2003 – Mercedes Benz of Long Beach and Long Beach Mini join the Signal Hill Auto Center. City opens the Panorama Promenade Trail and Discovery Well Park. Los Angeles

County Fire Department returns to Signal Hill

2004 – First phase of Las Brisas Affordable Housing development is completed. City approves construction of the Las Brisas Phase 2 Affordable Housing development. City completes the widening of Spring Street to create economic development opportunities along the Spring Street Corridor (Gateway Shopping Center).

2005 – Home Depot breaks ground at Gateway Shopping Center. City opens Calbrisas Park. City completes construction of Temple Reservoir Water system improvements.

2006 – Best Buy opens Signal Hill store. City dedicates Tribute to the Roughnecks statue.

2007 – Las Brisas Phase 2 Affordable Housing development opens. Long Beach Islamic Center receives City approval.

2009 – Petco opens in Gateway Shopping Center. Great Recession strikes.

2011 – In N Out opens in Gateway Shopping Center. City's first Tattoo Studio is approved.

2012 – Boulevard Automotive Group celebrates its 50th Anniversary. Black Bear Diner opens in Town Center West. EDCO Transfer Station opens. Jessie Nelson Academy Middle School opens. Signal Hill resident, Scot Chamberlain, leads the 2012 LB Pony All-Stars to World Championship.

2013 – City opens its new Police Station. Applebee's opens in Gateway Shopping Center. Signal Hill Speed Run movie is released

2014 – City opens its Community Garden.

2015 – BMW opens new dealership. The long awaited widening of Cherry Avenue at Pacific Coast Highway is completed.

2018 – Zinnia workforce housing development opens providing affordable housing to working families. City opens its new Dog Park. Mother's Market opens. 10 Mile Brewery opens.

2019 – City opens its new public library in the summer. ■

Signal Hill A 'Fertile Ground' For Both Small Business And National Franchises

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
STAFF WRITER

Signal Hill is home to a variety of retailers, and a majority of the city's budget is dependent on sales tax revenue. From big box stores like Costco and Home Depot (of which there are two in the city), to small family-owned stores and regional chains, Signal Hill retailers sell everything from ammunition to zebrafish.

In fact, exotic pets are one of the best-selling categories at the Signal Hill Petco location on California Avenue, according to Guest Services Leader Eddie Lopez. Conures – colorful, medium-sized parrots – sell “like hot cakes,” especially during the past holiday season, he noted. “That’s a \$500 bird, and while other locations can hold one for months at a time, we go through them pretty quickly.” Reptiles and snakes, which are often equally pricey, have also been popular at the Signal Hill store, Lopez noted.

Increasing product prices due to changes in the cost of manufacturing and shipping sometimes result in disgruntled customers, but Lopez said there’s little the company

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Nader's Furniture Vice President Paul Nader and Store Operations Manager Yesenia Morado are pictured inside the company's Signal Hill store. Nader co-owns the family business with his brothers Chuck, George and Fred Nader. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

Commerce and executive director of non-profit The Rock Club Music Is The Remedy. The city has a lower sales tax rate than neighboring Long Beach – 9.5% versus Long Beach's 10.25% – and no utility user tax. “The City of Signal Hill works hard for every new business applicant,” McIlquham said. “Then, once you become a member of the Signal Hill Chamber of Commerce, you are invited to meet likeminded business owners in our community to grow and be nurtured.”

The only major impediment to bringing in more businesses is the lack of available storefronts because the current tenants are thriving, McIlquham said. Two planned

projects could open up space for new leases. Oil and real estate company Signal Hill Petroleum has proposed turning its undeveloped lot near Mother's Market into a mixed-use building for retail, restaurants and residential units. The other project is an 8.7-acre light industrial park located at 2020 Walnut Ave. An environmental review for the intended park was approved by the Signal Hill City Council last month, McIlquham said.

In its 75-year history, the Signal Hill Chamber of Commerce has worked hand in hand with the city to encourage new commercial development, McIlquham remarked. Its goal for 2019 is to maintain its

new members and bring on still more. “The City of Signal Hill welcomes new businesses to come and open up shop,” he said.

The Business Journal spoke with owners and managers from the city's various industry sectors to get a feel for the state of business in Signal Hill. A competitive real estate market, convenient location and a strong sense community were all cited as beneficial to the commercial success of the area. “It’s a business-friendly city with low business license fees,” John Eddy, executive vice president at Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR WESTMAC, said. “There’s been a lot going on in Signal Hill with retail and residential.”

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(Continued From Previous Page)

can do. “It comes directly from the manufacturers. They bump the price, the price goes up,” he said. Instead, Petco is counting on customer service to attract shoppers to their brick-and-mortar stores. “The company is really pushing all store partners to stay engaged with the guests,” Lopez said.

The new year has brought increased interest in the store’s on-site services, he noted. “Right after the new year, people tend to get puppies and our salon business has increased a great deal,” Lopez said.

Services are a main focus area for Jonathan Guthman, assistant store manager at Home Depot’s Spring Street location, and he is hoping to create greater customer awareness of the professional support available at the store. Home Depot continues to benefit from the do-it-yourself trend, he noted, and from a steady pace of home renovations in the area. “[There are] a lot of renovations going on in houses when it comes to flooring. Vinyl’s a big trend right now that’s taking off in the area.”

This spring, Guthman is expecting seasonal goods like patio furniture and live plants to pick up again. “We’re a big seasonality store, so it comes down to what’s in season right now,” he said. “Everyone’s going to start sprucing up their house.”

While many retailers have seen the trend towards a more digitally-focused lifestyle as a threat to their physical stores, Guthman said Home Depot has not seen a negative

impact yet. Devices with online connectivity, such as air conditioning units and lamps that can be controlled from a mobile phone, are selling well, and the hardware store chain has adapted to consumers’ changed shopping habits to allow for more e-commerce. The company is offering in-store pick-up and lockboxes for deliveries from its online store.

“Instead of having to come to the customer service desk, if the order is small enough, it can go into a locker. We send them a code via e-mail, they can walk straight up to the locker and pick it up,” he explained. “As much as our brick-and-mortar stores are our backbone, e-commerce is interconnected and it’s still a booming business for us overall.”

For those planning to spruce up their home with a new couch or coffee table, Nader’s Furniture offers home goods in a variety of styles at three locations in the South Bay, including a storefront in Signal Hill. The company added its Signal Hill location in 2010, and Vice President Paul Nader said it has been his favorite store ever since. “We were excited about getting that store,” Nader said, noting that the location on Pacific Coast Highway was a big selling point. “We were astonished by how quickly it became profitable,” he added.

The company already had a customer base in the Signal Hill and Long Beach area, Nader noted. “We had a Long Beach and Signal Hill client base that used to

come to our Carson location quite a bit, so we moved to the area,” he said. “We’re building a loyal base, which is nice.” Now, the company is planning to bring more lights and fixtures to their Signal Hill location, which once housed a lamp store.

Nader said the family-owned company keeps prices low by maintaining positive relationships with manufacturers and relying on low-cost marketing techniques. “We’re not on TV and radio, so we don’t burn up a lot of cash there,” he explained. “We build up our clientele mostly by word-of-mouth, our local fliers and our Internet [presence].”

Aside from competitive prices, it’s the friendly atmosphere and local connection that has customers coming back, Nader noted. “It’s been that way since 1956, when my father started this company and my brothers and I grew up in the business,” he said. “We’re a local family serving local families.”

Local roots and independent ownership have been a main selling point for another local legacy, The Wine Country, owner Randy Kemner said. “Especially younger people are really responding to the fact that we’re a local, independent store,” Kemner said. “There’s a great movement towards craft spirits, craft beers, small wineries. Those are things that we’ve always specialized in.”

In addition to a steady stream of new locally-brewed beers, The Wine Country

has expanded its offerings by doubling the store’s gourmet section over the past three years. The store also offers storage for wine enthusiasts who don’t have the space to adequately store their bottles at home, and the wine lockers are currently at full capacity.

Kemner attributes the store’s continued success to his specialized product selection, a convenient location near the 405 Freeway and a reinvigorated support for small businesses in the area. “Everywhere in Long Beach and Signal Hill we’re seeing small businesses pop up, and it makes for a very interesting, fertile business environment,” Kemner said. “I feel more positive about our business and the business environment than I ever have. And it’s all because the community embraces us, the City of Signal Hill embraces us.”

According to James Sturdy, General Manager at the Applebee’s Neighborhood Bar + Grill on Spring Street, the national franchise’s Signal Hill location has also been doing well. Sturdy, who has been with the company for 10 years and joined the Signal Hill restaurant six months ago, said deals like the chain’s three for ten dinner special – which includes a salad, an appetizer and an entrée for \$11.99 – are a main draw for cost-conscious diners.

“We’re always looking to increase value for our customers,” Sturdy said. Sales have been up, he noted. “There’s no rest for the wicked over here, I can tell you that.”

Jimmy E’s Bar And Grill – A New Dining and Craft Beer Spot On Spring Street Opens Soon

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
 STAFF WRITER

Today, the oil pump jacks bobbing up and down in the parking lots of some Signal Hill shopping centers seem out-of-place, like fossils of a bygone era. But local restaurateur Jimmy Eleopoulos still remembers a time when the city was known for its oil fields, not its sweeping views, car dealerships and big box retailers.

“Back then, there were no houses, [It was] pretty empty. I remember driving to work, back when I opened the first store in ’86. In October and November you would have to avoid the tumbleweeds going across Temple Street,” Eleopoulos recounted. Today, he owns Big E Pizza on Pacific Coast Highway in Signal Hill and is getting ready to open his newest venture, Jimmy E’s Bar and Grill on Cherry Avenue, slated to open its doors in May.

In addition to his business dealings in the city, Eleopoulos has been deeply involved with the communities of Signal Hill and Long Beach, whether it’s as a boardmember of the Signal Hill Police Association or as the president of the Greek church in Long Beach. “I’ve surrounded myself with good people and good things happened to me,” he said. “So, I believe the same thing is going to happen here.” This sense of commitment to the community has prevailed in his restaurants as well, Eleopoulos noted. “I’m a firm believer in respecting your employees,” he said. “In my original store, I have grandkids of the original employees working there in the summer.”

Eleopoulos got his first job in Signal Hill as a teenager, working in construction. Later, he worked as a roustabout in the oil fields, he said. “From there [on], I’ve always been here.” When the property that formerly housed Delius



Jimmy Eleopoulos is pictured inside the future dining room of his newest venture, Jimmy E’s Bar and Grill on Cherry Avenue. Eleopoulos said he’s expecting foot traffic from Signal Hill’s many offices and car dealerships. “We’re centrally located in a prime area right here,” he said. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

Restaurant came on the market, Eleopoulos saw his chance to further expand his offerings in the city. “When I saw this opportunity come around for this restaurant – I’ve always had my eye on this place for years – I said: this is perfect,” he said. “I know exactly what this city needs.”

If you ask Eleopoulos, what the city needs is an old-school, “Chicago-style” restaurant and bar, with comfy leather booths, 16 TVs and 20 beers on tap. “This is going to be a very family-oriented restaurant,” he said. The menu hasn’t been finalized yet, but based on popular dishes at his other restaurants, Eleopoulos said it will feature a variety of soups based on his father’s recipes, as well as salads, steak, seafood, gourmet burgers, pizza and pasta.

providers, such as Doordash and Grubhub, for the first time. “It helps my business,” he noted.

Overall, Eleopoulos is optimistic that the business climate is ripe for his newest venture. “I’m very bullish on our economy, so I don’t see any problems or any major dips in the near future,” he said. The location of Jimmy’s Bar and Grill at 2951 Cherry Ave, right on the corner of Cherry and Spring, has added to his confidence. “We’re centrally located in a prime area right here,” Eleopoulos said. “Signal Hill is great, especially with all the car dealerships and the offices,” he added. “It’s the best little city around.” ■

The building is undergoing significant remodeling ahead of the anticipated soft opening in mid-May, including the demolition of the front and side walls to make room for a glass facade and side patio. A dining room next to the kitchen is being converted into a tap room to host kegs filled with 20 specialty beers, many of them local craft brews, connected directly to the full bar in the front of the restaurant.

Eleopoulos has already hired a chef as well as a general manager, and said he’s planning to start vetting applicants for general staff positions soon. While other restaurateurs in California have expressed concerns over rising employment costs due to an annual minimum wage increase, Eleopoulos said he’s not worried. “Ultimately, it will be passed on to the consumer,” he said. “If you give good food and good service, you’re always going to survive.”

Delivery services have also caused disruption in the restaurant industry. Eleopoulos said rather than feel threatened by it, he’s embraced the change. At Jimmy’s Bar and Grill, he will rely entirely on drivers from outside



Pete's Plumbing President Patty Hillis took over the leadership of the company after her husband, Paul "Pete" Hillis, passed away in 2014. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

Strong Economy, Local Development Boost Supply And Services Industry In Signal Hill

By **ALENA MASCHKE**
STAFF WRITER

Plumbing, printing, payroll processing: Signal Hill businesses offer a variety of services and supplies to other companies and individual customers. Plenty of com-

mercial real estate, built atop former oil wells, has provided a fertile ground for many small and medium-sized companies to grow and serve the diverse industries in the South Bay.

"Typically, our clients are middle- to large-sized businesses," Mercedes Sepko, owner and principal of Marketink XL, said. Her own business, Sepko noted, has been growing steadily, albeit a little bit slower than in previous years. "As we mature as a business, we're being more selective of the type of clients that we work with," she explained. "We do believe in [it] being a good match both ways."

Marketink XL focuses on large-scale graphics, such as banners, canopies, step-and-repeat backdrops for events and fence



Encore Welding Supply President Ben Anderson is pictured inside the company's warehouse on Temple Avenue. "Signal Hill is just such an easy place to do business," Anderson said in an interview with the Business Journal. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

graphics. A boom in construction around Signal Hill and Long Beach, both spurred by private investors and Long Beach's Measure A infrastructure improvements, has kept Marketink busy, as the company produces graphics that cover fencing and provide information on the project.

Because of the company's focus on large-scale graphics, Sepko said their Signal Hill location – right next to the 405 and 710 freeways and the businesses along those corridors – has been an asset. "Printing, nowadays, has become a commodity, with a lot of companies just buying online and they ship it to you: brochures, business cards, fliers, whatever you need. But when it comes to large graphics, that's a

different story," Sepko said. Shipping costs for large and bulky print products allow local suppliers to offer more competitive pricing than their online counterparts. "Companies tend to buy local and want to buy local," Sepko noted.

Sepko also pointed to the business-friendly climate of Signal Hill as a benefit to her company: "It's a perfect combination, because Signal Hill is a great city to do business with because there's no red tape – it's super easy."

A new member of the Signal Hill Chamber of Commerce's board of directors, Sepko is hoping to help other businesses succeed in the city and introduce the next

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generation of professionals to the local industries. “It’s our responsibility to help our next business generation learn the things that they cannot learn at school,” Sepko said. To foster the professional development of young people in the area, Marketink XL is working with student interns, and Sepko is encouraging other companies to do the same.

Patty Hillis, president of Pete’s Plumbing, agrees with Sepko on the need for more training opportunities for future employees and entrepreneurs in the community. “I really hope that some of these schools go back to the trades,” Hillis said, noting that her company often has to train new employees on the job due to a lack of practical training in schools. “Not all men – or women – want an office job. Some people still like to work with their hands,” she pointed out.

Founded by her husband, Paul “Pete” Hillis on Lakewood’s Pacific Avenue in 1972, Pete’s Plumbing moved first to Long Beach and later to Signal Hill in search of a more spacious, yet central location. “It’s been a really good fit,” Hillis said. Her company’s main source of revenue comes from multi-family homes in need of “repeat services,” such as regular repairs and appliance installations. “That’s the way my husband started the business. He wanted to do that little service call and get our name there, and build a relationship with the customers,” Hillis said. Then, “hopefully, they’ll remember that, and they’ll call us for those larger projects if they come down the pipe.”

Hillis said Pete’s Plumbing continues to focus on providing local service with a quick turnaround, and Signal Hill has been an ideal location because of its proximity to several freeways and easy access to other densely populated markets like Lakewood and Long Beach. “That way we can offer same-day service and 24-hour service, and that’s really the key component to the repeat business that we generate,” she explained.

The real estate boom in Long Beach and a strong economy have helped the company, Hillis noted. “We’ve seen a big rebound in business this year and last year,” she said. “It seems as if there’s more disposable income, so people are looking at bigger repairs or remodels to their homes.” Many who are remodeling are also looking for more energy and water-efficient plumbing systems, another area of business for the company. “We get called in a lot for those things,” Hillis said.

A trend towards more sustainable technologies has also been driving business for Sean Blake’s D&N Signs, a Signal Hill company specialized in the design, production, installation, and service of signs. “Everybody’s converting to LED,” Blake said. “Because they’re low-voltage, they use less electricity and they also require less maintenance.”

Blake said a strong economy has spurred an uptick in business for his company. “It really started picking up towards the end of the year, and it’s been moving at a pretty brisk pace,” he said. “The economic numbers have been good, and people with money are confidently looking to spend it.” Larger clients, such as chain stores with plenty of signs to produce and maintain, have been driving demand for his company’s services, he said. “We are seeing



Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Signal Hill Petroleum (SHP) David Slater stands in front of a pumpjack near 1798 E. Willow St. Slater said that SHP oil operations are unique in that they are located throughout the commercial and residential areas of the city. “We have earned what I’d describe as a social license with the community, but we have to work hard to re-earn that social license every day by delivering on our commitments, by being environmentally friendly and neighbor friendly,” he said. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

some of our chain clients and stores with multiple locations that are aggressively looking to expand and upgrade.”

One local company planning to expand is Encore Welding Supply, a distributor of gases and equipment necessary for welding projects. “We’re looking to expand to other locations, different cities, with brick-and-mortar, more retail-friendly facilities,” Ben Anderson, the company’s president, told the Business Journal. According to Anderson, the company is considering new locations in Riverside County, Orange County and East Los Angeles. “We’re investing in the company still, so we’re spending a substantial amount of money to grow our offerings and our capability,” he said.

In the past year, the company experienced a 35% growth that “exceeded expectations,” without making any acquisitions, Anderson noted. “It was all hard work and economy-driven.” Some of the company’s biggest projects include the construction of the Los Angeles Rams stadium in Inglewood and the widening of the 405 Freeway in Orange County. “The commodity we sell is always being used,” Anderson said. “We’re not worried about the economy when it comes to expansion.”

Signal Hill Offers ‘Extensive Network Of Health Care’

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
 STAFF WRITER

With MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center located right outside the borders of Signal Hill, just across Atlantic Avenue, the city boasts a well-established network of health care providers. From pediatric to palliative care, small businesses to national insurance companies, Signal Hill residents have access to a variety of health services.

The city’s largest individual health care office, Kaiser Permanente’s 20,000-square-foot Signal Hill medical office, opened its doors in 2016. “[We’re] very excited to be part of that community. It’s a community

that is very close in proximity to our Long Beach medical building,” Sandy Miller, vice president of operations at Kaiser Permanente’s South Bay Medical Center, told the Business Journal. “However, it’s an area that is very dense and there’s a lot of population there that we needed to continue to serve.”

The center’s offerings include adult primary care, pediatrics, behavioral health, OBGYN, dermatology, allergy, nurse clinic, pharmacy and lab services. “A myriad of different needs are met there,” Miller noted.

Kaiser Permanente decided to expand its services to Signal Hill as a result of a continued growth in membership in the area, Miller explained. “When we place and build buildings, we look at what the community needs,” she said. “What we are trying to do as an organization is [find out]: how do we make that care much more convenient, much more timely for people, so they can go on with their day and live their lives.”

At the medical center, Kaiser Permanente relies on technology to improve the patient experience and make visits more convenient. “Signal Hill is an example where we have offered a lot of services to really augment the timeliness of care,” Miller said. Patients are able to check in ahead of time, a service aimed to reduce wait times. Once at the center, patients are able to monitor their expected wait time on screens in the waiting room. Still, Miller said, patients are greeted by staff in the lobby and picked up in the waiting room for appointments, in an effort to provide a warm, personal environment. “We want them to feel welcomed.”

For patients whose illness prevents them from visiting a practice or medical center to receive services, Haven Health provides “skilled health care in the home of the patient,” CEO Philip Sorley said. The company, which is focused on palliative and hospice care, serves patients in both Los Angeles and Orange counties. “Our office here sits directly in the middle of those two, allowing us to go out to the homes of these people in both directions,” Sorley pointed out.

Sorley said an outdated understanding of palliative and hospice care, two terms

that were once synonymous, presents a challenge for his business. “Over the past 10 years, palliative care has become a separate entity, meaning it is those patients who are not dying, but they’re so chronically ill that they are unlikely to ever improve,” he explained. “The treatment for those types of patients is scattered, there’s no set [insurance] benefit for them to get that care, yet that is one of the largest groups that are in need.”

While this makes it difficult for certain patients to access the care they need, Sorley said that overall Signal Hill hosts a robust health care industry capable of assisting patients with a variety of needs. “Signal Hill, like Southern California, has a very extensive network of health care,” Sorley said. “Most everyone has some sort of health care coverage they can access and most everyone has access to physicians to help them.”

Oil Still Pumping Strong In Signal Hill

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
 STAFF WRITER

While Signal Hill is no longer dominated by the petroleum industry, oil extraction remains a significant economic driver in the city. “There are oil derricks scattered all around the city, and they are not there for static art displays. They are still producing oil, and lots of it,” vice president of the Signal Hill Chamber of Commerce, Frank McIlquham, told the Business Journal.

For the city’s Fiscal Year 2017-2018, which ended on June 30, 2018, oil production taxes totaled about \$580,000, according to Signal Hill Administrative Services Officer and Finance Director Scott Williams. This was less than 3% of the city’s \$21.8 million in General Fund revenue in 2018, Williams said. Still, the importance of the industry, both historically and presently, is “beyond question,” he noted.

In past fiscal years, oil tax revenue has exceeded \$1 million, a figure that varies

City Of Signal Hill

depending on the price of crude oil and the volume extracted. "There are still hundreds of active and inactive wells within the city," Williams went on. This has implications for future land use, he said, and the wells' value may increase or decrease depending on unpredictable market shocks or global events.

David Slater, executive vice president and chief operating officer at Signal Hill Petroleum (SHP), said the oil field beneath the city has at least 50 years of production life remaining. "I have a very credible study by the USGS [United States Geological Survey] that estimates those reserves at 200 million barrels remaining in the Long Beach/Signal Hill oil field," he said. "Stabler oil prices in 2019 have spurred increased activity for SHP, which currently employs about 105 people. The company controls about 95% of the producing oil field in Signal Hill, Slater said, and oversees approximately 450 wells in the area. The company's operating paradigm is unique in that its wells are scattered throughout the community, he explained. "We are in industrial areas, we are in parking lots and commercial retail centers, we're in residential neighborhoods," he said. "We have worked hard to adapt to this environment and to be a good neighbor, which means we're environmentally friendly . . . we're not irritating with noise and truck traffic and odors."

In Signal Hill, oil is a family business. SHP has been run by the Barto family since 1984, and oil servicing companies H&H Casing Service Incorporated and Ausburn Oilwell Cementing are both multi-generational enterprises. H&H Casing, which

provides casing and tubing in new and old wells, is owned by Richard Harr, whose father founded the company in 1965. The biggest change in the industry since that time has been the focus on safety, Harr said. "Safety is the number one priority now, where it used to be, 'Get it done at any cost.' It was not a good thing back then."

Now in its 98th year, Ausburn Oilwell Cementing is a fifth-generation business. "The company has gone through many decades of growth and shrinking, struggling years and very productive years," owner and President Steve Hodge said. Ausburn cements wells and pumps pipelines throughout the Los Angeles Basin. "Anywhere there's a developed oil field in Southern California, we service," Hodge said.

The industry's largest challenge over the past 40 years has been California's tightening environmental regulations, Hodge said. He cited a California Air Resources Board policy requiring all diesel trucks in the state to be upgraded or replaced to comply with new emissions standards. This puts a burden on smaller operators like Ausburn, which currently employs less than 10 people, Hodge said. "We have to replace a couple of trucks this year," he went on.

Despite the hardship, Hodge was sanguine on the industry and his company's future. "In the oil fields, it's feast or famine," he said. "The main reason we're still here is we've just been perseverant as the rest of the service industry has left Signal Hill and Long Beach. But we do good work, we know what we're doing. . . . If we were doing something wrong they wouldn't be calling us still."

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PROUDLY HEADQUARTERED IN SIGNAL HILL, CA

Signal Hill Is A Haven For Automotive Dealers & Service

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
 STAFF WRITER

On a clear day, visitors to Signal Hill can see the sun gleaming on the hoods of hundreds of cars along East Spring Street and Cherry Avenue. That wasn't always the case. Until the 1990s, the land currently occupied by the city's auto dealers was bereft of a single dealership. Today, sales from car dealerships make up 20% of the tax revenues that go into Signal Hill's general fund, City Manager Charlie Honeycutt told the Business Journal. "It's one of our major economic drivers that helps us pay for a lot of the vital services that we're able to provide to the community," he said.

Signal Hill is historically known for being an oil town, Honeycutt continued, but its automotive culture is strong and continues to grow. In his office is a sign promoting the Model T hill climb on Hill Street, an annual event that was held by Signal Hill and its chamber of commerce from 1957 into the '70s. Now, in addition to six dealerships, Signal Hill is also home to a number of automotive repair, restoration and maintenance services.

"There is a lot of competition, quite a few body shops. Just within our vicinity there's at least half a dozen," Sean Swanson, general manager at the Caliber Collision on 2370 Walnut Ave., said. "There's a lot of choices a customer can go to."



Partners Brian Yu, left, and Sal Lombardi own LB Walker Automotive. Since establishing their auto shop in Signal Hill four years ago, Lombardi said business has been "rock and rolling." The location at the border of Signal Hill and Long Beach offers a great flow of customers, he said. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

years later, several automotive dealerships made a transition of their own – from their native Long Beach to the smaller community of Signal Hill.

Lemon gave a concise explanation why the dealers made the switch: "Long Beach was going down the tubes."

Why The Auto Dealers Chose Signal Hill

After a decade of negotiating with city staff to build a new auto mall, the car deal-

ers located on Long Beach Boulevard were short of both patience and customers. By the late 1980s, their sales were impacted by harsh economic conditions and the construction of the Metro Blue Line, which blocked access to their lots and offices.

And, of course, people don't get on the Blue Line to buy a car."

Brad Willingham is the owner and chief financial officer at Boulevard Buick/GMC at 2800 Cherry Ave. in Signal Hill. His father, Jim Willingham, became a partner at Campbell Buick in 1961, which eventually became Boulevard Buick after American Avenue was rechristened Long Beach Boulevard. The area was a booming automotive row in the 1950s, the younger Willingham said. "At one point the Buick store that became Boulevard Buick had the largest service department west of the Mississippi. American Avenue was up there in like the top five in the country," he said. "That's how you did it back in those days: there's one street in the city and that's where all the car dealers were."

By the 1980s, Long Beach Boulevard had entered a period of economic stagnation, according to Willingham. "It just killed my dad that the city continued to let that part of town go south," he said. When a popular bowling alley next door to Boulevard Buick shut down, it was replaced by a welfare office. "When I was a kid and coming to work, there would be a huge line of people outside of the welfare office," Willingham said. "The line would get so long that it would cross over our service line early in the morning for people trying to get into the service tunnel."

People in the line could be disruptive to the work environment, Willingham went on. "It had gotten pretty rough down there. When I say they were stealing our coffee, I don't mean they were coming in and drinking it. I mean they would come in and grab a trash can and fill it up with all the creamers, all the coffee packets, and try to sell it to the restaurant next door to us. It was crazy down there at that time. Then the [Los Angeles] riots came slightly after."

During the same period, the Cerritos Auto Square began courting dealers from

other cities by asking relatively low prices for land leases. It would eventually become a major financial success for the city. This past year, the square generated \$4 million in sales tax, according to the Cerritos Spring 2018 Economic Profile. The dealers in Long Beach wanted something similar and in a less blighted location near a freeway, Willingham said.

Long Beach staff proposed several areas for potential auto malls, but were unable to find an acre price or location that satisfied the dealerships. That's when Signal Hill offered its own deal, Gray said. But complications with contaminated soil on the land that Signal Hill intended for the dealerships caused backpedaling by the dealers, followed by another attempt at a deal from Long Beach's new city manager, Jim Hankla. Brad Willingham called Hankla "a dear friend" and said that he tried his best to reach an equitable solution with the car dealers. "He was working his butt off and that's why we kept thinking that Long Beach would come through with something, but it just never materialized," he said.

Willingham said that Boulevard Buick was one of the last dealers to make the move to Signal Hill because his father didn't want to relocate. "He didn't want to leave Long Beach. All of his roots were there; he had served on every board for every charitable group and everything," Willingham said.

Eventually, Signal Hill was able to remediate the contaminated land and offer more attractive land prices than its larger neighbor. "Our redevelopment agency was very active at the time," City Manager Honeycutt said. "We were able to clean up some blighted properties along Cherry Avenue and Spring Street that created the opportunity for the dealerships to relocate."

Mazda and BMW dealer Bob Autrey was the first to break ranks with the Long Beach auto row. The others followed soon after, Willingham said. During the 1992 riots, Willingham watched Autrey's shut-



Chad Charron is the general manager at the Boulevard Buick/GMC dealership in Signal Hill. "A majority of our sales at the Cadillac store are mid-size SUVs," he said. The most popular models, the Cadillac XT4 and XT5, along with the Escalade, account for about 75% of the dealership's volume. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

Some auto shops in the area, such as Caliber Collision, were established after the arrival of the auto dealers. Others, such as Mazdatrix on 2730 Gundry Ave., have been in business for decades. "I was one of the oldest ones around and served everything for everybody," owner David Lemon said. Originally founded on the other side of the street as Import Auto Cobbler in 1977, the repair shop transitioned from servicing British cars to Mazda rotary vehicles in 1988. Just a few

ers located on Long Beach Boulevard were short of both patience and customers. By the late 1980s, their sales were impacted by harsh economic conditions and the construction of the Metro Blue Line, which blocked access to their lots and offices.

"When they ran the light rail system down Long Beach Boulevard, it just devastated the dealers," Jim Gray, director at First Choice Bank and former owner of Jim Gray Volvo in Long Beach, explained. "It made their foot traffic drop dramatically.

BOULEVARD

tered Mazda dealership on Long Beach Boulevard burn down.

After relocating to Signal Hill, the difference in attitude was “night and day,” Willingham went on. Signal Hill police regularly checked in at Boulevard’s office to make sure they were okay, and the city’s smaller municipal administration meant less bureaucracy to wade through. “When you’re dealing with the City of Signal Hill, you’re dealing with a maximum of 20 people. And most of the time it’s the same four guys that you dealt with right from the beginning. That was everything from the planning to doing all the building and business licenses and the city manager. It was terrific,” Willingham said.

Willingham also gave credit to Signal Hill for being business focused. “Signal Hill had much more interest in anything retail, and that’s how you wake up one day and [say], ‘Oh my God, here’s a Costco and a Home Depot and these beautiful dealerships and all this retail activity up on the hill.’ And Long Beach can’t even put a mall together,” Willingham said.

An Auto-Friendly City

After relocating to Signal Hill, Boulevard Buick joined the GMC and Cadillac dealerships to form what is today an eight-acre campus at 2850 Cherry Ave. It also includes a collision center for repairs. “We have a lot of good employees that have been here for a long time. Now we can utilize them between the three groups: the collision center, the GMC store and the Cadillac store,” Boulevard Buick/GMC General Manager Chad Charron said.

The campus is conveniently located off the 405 Freeway, he went on, and sales for the Cadillac dealership have placed it 50th in over 900 Cadillac dealers in the nation. Charron said putting the customer first has been their winning strategy. “We’re here to serve the community, to serve our clients. They have options, many options, and why choose Boulevard? Because we care.”

John Davis, general manager at Glenn E. Thomas Dodge Chrysler Jeep, said the City of Signal Hill has been “a great partner to work with” since the dealership relocated from Long Beach Boulevard to 2100 E. Spring St. “They definitely do a good job for businesses here,” Davis said. He agreed that the smaller size of Signal Hill makes it easier to communicate with city officials.

Glenn E. Thomas Dodge Chrysler Jeep currently employs about 125 full-time and part-time employees, which Davis said is more than any recent time period. He estimated that his dealership sells around 2,000 vehicles, new and used, and continues to see strong sales for its Jeep Grand Cherokee and Dodge Wrangler models.

Charlie Honeycutt said that Signal Hill is negotiating an exclusive agreement with Mercedes-Benz to turn its Signal Hill operation into a flagship dealership for executives to tour when they’re visiting from out of town. The western region headquarters of Mercedes-Benz USA is located nearby at Douglas Park. “Mercedes needs to expand their dealership, so we’re working with them,” Honeycutt said. “We’ve got some former redevelopment agency properties on Cherry Avenue, about three acres that they’re very interested in converting.”

On the service side of the auto industry, owner of EF1 Motorsports Fabrizio Aldrette is celebrating 20 years in business at

2675 Dawson Ave. Aldrette’s shop services German and Italian cars, handling everything from engines to suspension. “We are basically centralized between [Los Angeles] and Orange County, so we have customers from both areas,” he said. Like most business owners who spoke to the Business Journal, Aldrette added that being located off the freeway is a big plus for his company. Cars are a family business for the Aldrettes. Fabrizio’s family owns Jim’s Auto Repair in Long Beach, which has been operating there since 1968.

Sal Lombardi, owner of LB Walker Automotive, also has oil in his blood. He and his father ran a 76 gas station at the intersection of Atlantic Avenue and Carson Street for 27 years. “My father was the god of automotive,” Lombardi said. “He really taught me the right way, and customer service is always number one.”

LB Walker has been at its current location on the border of Signal Hill and Long Beach for four years. Recently, Lombardi said he’s been doing a lot of restoration work on older models of cars. He was pleasantly surprised to discover that local body shop owners were directing their customers his way. “There’s a lot of folks around here who say, ‘Go see Sal.’ I don’t even know them, and they’re sending me all kinds of work,” he said.

As Honeycutt mentioned, automobile service and retail continue to be one of Signal Hill’s best performing business sectors. “The auto center was a great decision by previous council and management here at Signal Hill,” he said.

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Signal Hill Real Estate: Demand Is Up, Vacancy Is Down

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
 STAFF WRITER

Demand is high for every real estate sector of Signal Hill, realtors that spoke to the Business Journal attested. “It just remains as strong a market as there is in this area, and certainly in the South Bay,” John Eddy, executive vice president at Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR WESTMAC, said. “With the small residential base and a large tax base, Signal Hill provides many services at a lower rate and more promptly than any other city around.”

Brandon Carrillo, a principal at Lee & Associates, said that his clients, especially those in West Long Beach, regularly ask if there are available industrial properties in Signal Hill. “Signal Hill industrial property is always in strong demand, even during downturns,” Carrillo said. For properties measuring 10,000 square feet and larger, he estimated that vacancy is below 1%. Many of the smaller, multi-tenant industrial properties that Lee & Associates manages are 100% occupied, he added.

The relatively small inventory in the 2.25-square-mile city, combined with a responsive police force and lower business taxes than Long Beach, have created a “tremendous” commercial market, Patrick O’Healy, president of O’Healy Commercial Real Estate Services, said. Overall, the vacancy rate at the Signal Hill Business Park, a mixed office and industrial property that O’Healy manages, is at about 4.5%. The second-floor offices have been converted into open-planned creative space, which has been a major selling point. “They’ve just gone down like dominoes,” O’Healy said. These of-



Atop Signal Hill, “The views are magnificent,” Coldwell Banker Coastal Alliance realtor Ian Hand told the Business Journal. From Hand’s home office in Signal Hill, he can see clear down to the Queen Mary. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

fices have been selling for as much as \$1.85 per square foot.

Jordan Mannisto, a senior associate at Lee & Associates, said that Signal Hill offers a larger inventory of mixed office and warehouse space than Long Beach, which puts those types of properties at a premium. The retail market is also extremely tight, Lee & Associates’ Sean Lieppman reported. The vacancy rate is currently 1.5%, with asking rents averaging \$21 per square foot.

Median home prices in Signal Hill are higher than the surrounding City of Long Beach, Coldwell Banker Coastal Alliance (CBCA) realtor Ian Hand said. While home sales dipped 14.5% in February compared to the same month in 2018, the median sale price rose 5.1% to \$780,000. By comparison, the median price for a detached single-family home in Long Beach was \$605,000 in January, according to Phil Jones, broker and owner of CBCA.

Hand, who has been a Signal Hill resident for 28 years, said that the city’s residential market has a couple of positive factors influencing its value. A large portion of the single-family homes available are new, having been built on redeveloped oil land in the last 20 years or so, and many are located on the titular hilltop of Signal Hill, which stands about 110 feet above Long Beach, Hand said. “In some of the older parts of Signal Hill, prices are around \$400,000 to \$500,000, and then on top of the hill you’re getting a million and over,” Hand explained. “That’s why you’ve got a pretty high median price point.” Time on market for single-family homes decreased from 44 days in February 2018 to 32 days in February 2019.

Condominium sales are up 24%, from 120 to 149 over the same time period, according to Hand. Condo values have appreciated 6.6% year over year, he noted. There are fewer multi-family units avail-

able in Signal Hill compared to Long Beach, and very little in the newer residential areas, he added.

“It’s small, it’s very personal, it’s very friendly,” Hand said of Signal Hill. “People like to be here, it’s a small community, you get to know the people here and they get to know you.”

Signal Hill Development List

Completed

1500 E. Hill St.:

Zinnia is a fully leased multi-family rental residential development consisting of 72 workforce housing units. The units were developed by Meta Housing.

Northwest corner of Walnut Avenue and Crescent Heights Street:

Crescent Square features 25 detached,



Heritage Square, located west of Cherry Avenue and north of Burnett Street, is a mixed-use development proposed by Signal Hill Petroleum. (Rendering courtesy of Signal Hill Petroleum)

three-story single-family for-sale homes built by Far West Industries. There are two units remaining to be sold. Prices start at \$979,000.

Underway

2951 Cherry Ave.:

Big E Pizza owner, Jimmy Eleopoulos, is making tenant improvements to convert former Delius restaurant to Jimmy E's Sports Bar and Grill. Eleopoulos is adding an outdoor dining area. (See story in this issue.)

1600-1680 E. Hill St.:

American University of Health Sciences is making tenant improvements for its School of Pharmacy.

999 Willow St.:

Tenant improvements are underway for medical offices. The developer is 2H Construction LLC.

3225 E. Pacific Coast Hwy.:

Tenant improvements are underway for Naga Café which will feature Vietnamese food.



2020 Walnut Ave. is a 150,000-plus-square-foot industrial complex by Xebec Realty. (Rendering courtesy of the Xebec)

Conceptual Plans

West side of Cherry Avenue north of Burnett:

The Heritage Square proposal by developer Signal Hill Petroleum is a mixed-use development on 7.72 acres consisting of retail, restaurant, single- and multi-family homes, and community space adjacent Mother's Market. The buildings on the site were demolished.

700 E. Spring St.:

A mixed-use development on a 16-acre site on Spring Street between Atlantic Avenue and California Avenue to 29th

Street. The proposed project includes retail, hotels, multifamily residential and open space. The developer is Vestar, LLC.

2650 Cherry Ave.:

The Successor Agency is working with Signal Hill Properties LLC, also known as the Shelly Group, to develop the Cherry Avenue Corridor property for a new pre-owned automobile dealership facility and accessory uses. Two buildings on the site were demolished in anticipation of development.

2599 Pacific Coast Hwy.:

Seven single-family homes; 3 detached

and 4 attached. The developer is Mike Afiony.

1365-1387 E. 23rd St.:

Sixteen single-family homes – 1,650 square feet each with three bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms. The developer is Matt Hamilton, who is represents Verve LLC.

2020 Walnut Ave.:

Xebec Realty, as the authorized agent for Signal Hill XC LLC, is finalizing plans for a 151,065-square-foot industrial development including nine buildings featuring up to 21 units. The property previously housed the ChemOil refinery, and consists of a six-

acre parcel on the west side of Walnut Avenue and a two-acre parcel on the east side of Walnut Avenue.

Public Investment

Southwest Corner of Burnett Street and Cherry Avenue:

Designs for a View Park is nearly complete. The park will include a new digital sign and reader board, as well as benches, a walking trail, and views of Long Beach and the Pacific Ocean.

1770 E. Hill St.:

The development of a new 12,000-square-foot public library is underway. ■

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