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Trucks are loaded at the Long Beach Container Terminal, Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021. Increased activity at the Port of Long Beach has been a boon for the local industrial real estate market. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

‘WE ARE
SLAMMED’:
WHY IT’S HARD
TO FIND A
CONTRACTOR

By **ALENA MASCHKE** / Reporter

The California housing market is booming, and with it the demand for home improvement work. Soaring prices and fierce competition for single family homes have forced some homebuyers to settle for properties that need major repairs to be livable or don’t quite fit their taste, sending them looking for contractors and pulling permits to renovate and remodel.

“We are slammed,” said Angelika Meyer, office manager at upscale home build contractor Zieba Builders. Currently, the company is booked out through spring next year, Meyer said. “I haven’t seen a slowdown in the phones ringing.”

When Michael Kolana Kek and his wife Monique received a note from their landlord that their building was up for sale last year, they decided it was time to buy a home of their own. With a baby on the way, the couple began looking for a single family home and found themselves squeezed by the high demand in the residential real estate market.

With the Millennial generation entering home-buying age and mortgage rates at record lows, the market for single-family homes has boomed in recent months. It’s not uncommon for eager buyers to offer more than the asking price or make other concessions to beat out the competition, something Kek and his wife experienced first hand.

When the couple finally found a Lakewood home they could close on and afford, they began looking for contractors to make it their own—which turned out to be a bigger

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Pandemic effects on industrial, retail real estate continue

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON** / Reporter

Driven by increased e-commerce and cargo volumes through the Port of Long Beach, industrial real estate has been in high demand throughout the pandemic, pushing vacancy down and prices up.

Retail, on the other hand, has been ravaged by the pandemic, with numerous businesses shuttering after economic shutdowns and others still struggling.

“In general, there’s lots of demand and very limited supply,” Ryan Endres, a principal with Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estate Services, said of the industrial market. “The ports are processing containers at an all-time high and I don’t see that slowing down anytime soon.”

In 12 of the last 13 months, the Port of Long Beach has set new cargo volume records, pushing demand for third-party logistics and fulfillment companies, storage and warehouse space, Endres said. The U.S. as a whole needs just over 300 million square feet of new industrial space just to keep up with current demand for e-commerce related businesses, he added.

But space in Long Beach and

surrounding areas is hard to come by and there is little undeveloped land, especially near the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. And Endres said he does not expect that to change any time soon.

Industrial vacancy in the second quarter of this year was 1.1%, down from 1.7% in the first quarter and 2.4% during the second quarter of 2020, according to reports from Lee & Associates. A “healthy market” is anything under 7-8%, Endres said.

High demand has kept upward pressure on average asking rent, which increased from \$1.09 per square foot in the second quarter of 2020 to \$1.13 per square foot in the second quarter of this year. The average sales price of industrial space per square foot increased substantially quarter-over-quarter to \$286.14. The increase comes after a big decrease from \$244.75 per square foot in the second quarter of 2020 to \$180.41 per square foot in the first quarter of this year.

Thanks to a 1.1-million-square-foot lease by Relativity Space at the former Boeing C-17 site and limited new product coming online or being vacated,

the industrial market experienced a positive absorption of nearly 1.64 million square feet. Absorption in the first quarter was 186,697 square feet.

“Lots of retailers are continuing to ship for the holiday season, so that means a need for more warehouse space, distribution and storage,” Endres said, noting the increased port traffic also has spawned a need for additional shipping container storage. “That’s the immediate challenge because existing space is at capacity.”

The retail struggle

Businesses that occupy retail space—restaurants, bars, goods, services and entertainment—have been especially impacted by COVID-19, Lee & Associates Principals Noelle Aguirre and Sean Lieppman said. But the real estate market throughout the state has yet to feel the full impact thanks to the state’s commercial eviction moratorium that runs through Sept. 30.

The moratorium has kept vacancy and asking rents stable—for now. Once the moratorium expires, however, Aguirre said more businesses are likely to close.

The Downtown retail vacancy rate

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Kam Babaoff founded Ensemble Real Estate Solutions & Investments with his father in 1981 and moved the company to Long Beach in 1996. Babaoff is pictured at the firm's multifamily, mixed-use development The Crest adjacent to the Long Beach Convention Center in Downtown, Monday, Aug. 16, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Long Beach developer Ensemble celebrates 25 years in the city

By BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

Over the last five years, developer Ensemble Real Estate Solutions & Investments has been busy in Downtown Long Beach, having

already delivered two residential buildings with a third slated for completion by the end of the year and another in the pipeline.

Founded in 1981 by Kam Babaoff and his father in Los Angeles, the firm

relocated to Long Beach in 1996 and is now celebrating its 25th year in the coastal city.

"Long Beach is a much bigger and better city due to the presence of Ensemble," Mayor Robert Garcia said in a statement. "They have had an impact as a local employer, amazing developer and community leader. Every project and program Ensemble is involved with is a winner."

Since coming to Long Beach, the company has made a name for itself operating popular hotels and for its involvement with numerous office buildings in the Downtown area.

"When we relocated, our goal was to open and operate in a city that we could make an immediate impact and truly have a long lasting economic and community effect," Babaoff said in a statement. "We found that and more in the city of Long Beach and we are grateful to call it home."

Today, Ensemble owns and operates 830,000 square feet of real estate, including the Hotel Maya, a DoubleTree by Hilton, the Residence Inn Long Beach, the 444 West Ocean office tower

and multiple residential properties. The company also owns and operates the Doubletree Carson.

Ensemble also has been involved with the Hilton Long Beach, World Trade Center property and other office buildings at 110, 115 and 200 Pine Avenue.

The firm's first foray into the local multifamily market was the simultaneous construction of the 94-unit 442 Residences on Ocean Boulevard and the 112-unit Crest adjacent to the Long Beach Convention Center. Both projects are "performing well" and are near full occupancy, according to Ensemble spokesman Cameron Andrews.

At 500 W. Broadway, construction of The Magnolia is well underway. The seven-story, 142-unit project is expected to be completed in December, Andrews said. A fourth Ensemble residential building dubbed 3rd+Pacific, which includes 345 units in two eight-story towers at 131 W. Third St., has been approved by the city but construction has not begun.

Ensemble has 11 other multifamily projects in the pipeline totaling nearly 4,900 units in Northern California, Reno and Philadelphia, according to Andrews.

Each residential project is mixed-use and features ground-floor retail, including RISÜ at The Crest, a restaurant and wine bar that opens up onto the Rainbow Bridge.

"We're proud to be involved in every aspect of life here," Babaoff said, "from providing jobs for hundreds of employees to welcoming thousands of visitors to our properties each year."

In its 40-year history, Ensemble has invested in or developed more than \$2 billion in real estate across the country—\$500 million in Long Beach alone. The 58 development and redevelopment projects it has completed in that time includes office, hotels, multi-family and mixed-use for a total of 3.6 million square feet, according to Andrews.

In addition to its Long Beach headquarters, Ensemble has offices in Philadelphia, Phoenix, Las Vegas and Reno, with 750 employees, about 180 of whom are in Long Beach.

Ensemble executives in Long Beach have been active in the community, including Senior Vice President of Hotel Operations Kristi Allen, who has served on boards for the Long Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Downtown Long Beach Alliance and the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce. Allen also served as a member of the Long Beach Economic Development Commission.

"From a Downtown perspective, Ensemble continues to have a positive impact in the city but most importantly, in leadership positions within our organization," DLBA President and CEO Kraig Kojian said in a statement. "We are grateful for their expertise and contributions to the success and growth of Long Beach." ■

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A woman walks by Urban Pacific's urban town house project at 1491 Atlantic Ave., Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Long Beach's Urban Pacific bringing multigenerational housing to SoCal

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON** / Reporter

High demand continues to drive up home prices and asking rents across California, making it difficult for many to find a living situation that does not overburden their wallets. While many residents decry the continued development of luxury departments in Downtown Long Beach, local developer Urban Pacific has its eyes set on something different—multigenerational housing.

The idea is simple: build homes that have more rooms and more bathrooms to allow for multiple generations of a family to live and share expenses. Urban Pacific's projects—known as urban town houses—are three-story homes that include four or five bedrooms.

In the five years since the company innovated this product type, Urban Pacific has already delivered three projects in Long Beach totaling nine

units, according to founder Scott Choppin. In June, the company broke ground on its fourth Long beach project, a five-unit development at 1491 Atlantic Ave. in the city's District 1.

"This type of housing is so needed in our communities," First District Councilwoman Mary Zendejas said in an email. "It allows for families to live with each other more comfortably and benefit from one another."

In addition to an abundance of bedrooms, the units feature three or four bathrooms, two-car direct-access garages, central heating and air, in-unit laundry, solar panels and other energy saving technologies. Units also include quartz countertops and hardwood floors throughout.

The company has completed two other UTH projects: a 15-unit development in Montebello and seven units in Fullerton. Urban Pacific has a project in the "plan check" stage of approval with the city for six units in North Long Beach on Artesia Boulevard. Another site on Orange Avenue in District 6 has been identified as a potential multigenerational development location by the company.

Outside of Long Beach, Urban Pacific has plans for 104 units across three projects in El Monte, Lakewood and Bellflower. The company also has identified sites in Compton, Pacoima and Carson for future development.

"The reality is that demand from these middle-income, blue-collar families is giant," Choppin said, citing a Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies analysis that showed a one-million-unit shortfall in Southern California, particularly for the "missing middle." ■

Office vacancies have climbed during the pandemic—businesses could benefit

By **ALENA MASCHKE** / Reporter

The economy is rebounding and, across Long Beach, white-collar workers are trickling back into offices. The office sector of the real estate market, however, has yet to catch up.

With vacancies at 23.8% in Downtown and 22.5% in suburban Long Beach, the portion of office space left vacant has jumped nearly 10% year-over-year in the suburban market and just under 5% in Downtown, according to the most recent quarterly report by real estate firm Cushman & Wakefield.

"COVID disrupted the market—everybody thought office was dead," said Robert Garey, senior director at Cushman & Wakefield. But over the course of the pandemic, that assumption has changed, leading experts to be more optimistic about the office market's potential to bounce back from its pandemic lows.

While current vacancy rates are high, Garey said many companies are realizing that they may have overestimated the potential of remote work, while others are simply ready to have employees return to the office now that 75% of the city's population 18 and older has been vaccinated.

"We still have a ways to go until the majority of companies will feel comfortable having their employees back full time—we're not there yet," Garey said. But, "the market is starting to find its footing again."

In the meantime, businesses looking for office space right now may benefit from the cooled off market conditions. "Right now, it's a tenants' market," Garey said.

Asking rents haven't budged much, however. The lack of transactions during the pandemic gave landlords limited data on which to base any rent adjustments, but concessions and tenant improvement packages have increased, Gary said.

"Businesses can take advantage of that." If demand remains soft, asking rents may drop as well, he added.

Much of the impact of the pandemic

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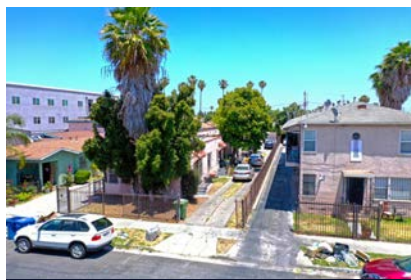
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A 1914 Craftsman bungalow moved to Cal Heights from Signal Hill in 1920 is listed at \$1.05 million. Listing photo.



This two-bed, two-bath house in California Heights sold for above its \$950,000 asking price. Listing photo.

Home prices are rocketing in California Heights

By **TIM GROBATY** / Columnist

Long Beach's California Heights neighborhood, the city's largest historical district, was baptized in oil.

The area just north of Signal Hill was once grazing land for Jotham Bixby's livestock on his family's Bixby Ranch,

later named Rancho Los Cerritos. When oil was discovered on Signal Hill in 1921, Jotham Bixby's Land Company subdivided the tract and offered individual sites for sale, strongly suggesting that you'd become a wealthy landowner once oil was struck in the lowlands, mere blocks

away from the oil-rich hill. The lots, priced from \$600 to \$800, included oil rights, and a series of full-page ads placed by the Jotham Bixby Land Co., in the local papers touted the riches sure to come the buyer's way: "If you want to be able to saturate your language with oil—if you want

the thrill of finding ten-dollar bills in your pocket where only ones used to grow..." then you are advised to pick up a lot in the California Heights tract.

For a while, the land teetered between becoming an oil field or a residential neighborhood and when the oil didn't pan out, homes began to

spring up rather rapidly.

Some of the earlier structures, mostly Craftsman bungalows, were moved down off Signal Hill to make room for derricks, and from an increasingly retail-centered Downtown, while later houses were built, largely in the Spanish Colonial Revival style as the neighborhood's construction moved east from Lime Avenue to, eventually, Gardenia Avenue, between Bixby and Wardlow roads.

Today, California Heights is quickly becoming one of the hottest neighborhoods in the city for home sales, thanks in a large part to its location close to high-paying jobs at the booming space technology industries near Long Beach Airport on land that decades ago brought solid salaries to households in Lakewood Village and East Long Beach, bringing a population explosion to those areas in the 1950s and 1960s.

Its location is a perfect draw for people working in the space industry, with companies like Relativity, Virgin Orbit, Rocket Lab, SpinLaunch and Space X rapidly increasing their workforces nearby, along with many attractive amenities in the area including LBX, SteelCraft and the Bixby Knolls shops and restaurants. Add to that the cachet of living in

a historic district with attractive homes nestled along streets lined with century-old trees, nice parks and good schools and it should be no surprise that even small homes in Cal Heights are hitting the million-dollar mark.

One example is a two-bedroom, two-bath home at 3721 Lemon Ave., which was listed by Realtor Ben Fisher at \$950,000 and is now in escrow after an offer in the million-dollar neighborhood was accepted.

"I thought \$950,000 was crazy, but we got five offers in three days, all over asking," said Fisher.

He noted that another house in the neighborhood, three blocks to the south, a five-bed, three-bath home on Myrtle Avenue, also listed by Fisher, is also in escrow at a price "significantly more" than the \$1.175 million asking price.

Another home on Myrtle hit the market late last week, listed by Realtor Debra Greco. The beautiful three-bedroom, two bathroom, 1,583-square foot Craftsman at 3754 Myrtle Ave. The 1914 home was moved to Cal Heights from Signal Hill in 1920, said Greco who expects multiple offers on the place by today. The asking price is \$1.049 million.

Inventory is low now in the district of nearly 1,500 homes, with only fewer than

a half-dozen currently on the market, all listed at close to or over \$1 million.

"It's wild," said Fisher. "The home on Lemon, selling for \$1,000 per square foot, might be a record in Cal Heights. That's Naples numbers."

Fisher puts the rapid rise to a number of factors, not least is the proximity to the space technology facilities and the number of good- to high-paying jobs. Relativity, for instance, has hired about 600 employees, with that number set to increase to nearly 1,100 by 2026 along with a projected investment of almost \$320 million over the same period. Local economists estimate that the combined space-related businesses in Long Beach account for more than 6,500 jobs.

"I'm always hearing from people about how cool it is that they can ride their bikes to work," said Fisher. "And they love places like SteelCraft and LBX," and, says Fisher, a big draw is how nice a house they can get in a good neighborhood for their money as opposed to Los Angeles, where many Long Beach homebuyers are coming. Despite the fact that a million dollars is undeniably a lot of money, what that amount can buy in Long Beach is much greater than what it can buy in LA, where the median prices in good (not great, but good) neighborhoods are

invariably over \$1 million.

(Former LA residents also make up a fair amount of those who have moved into the Cliff May Ranchos in East Long Beach, causing homes to sell at over a million dollars, though the area seems to have peaked at about \$1.3 million a copy lately.)

The home on Lemon Avenue that's now in escrow, having been appraised at \$1 million, is a cozy little Spanish Colonial Revival, as is typical of much of the neighborhood.

The recently restored floors, doors and trim are original hardwood and the kitchen has plenty of storage, upgraded appliances and recycled glass countertops. It's a breezy room, with French doors opening to the backyard patio that's surrounded by exquisite landscaping.

The home, as is the case with the historic district as a whole, has been carefully maintained and restored, just another of California Heights' selling points.

"Everyone who is coming here is excited about living in a historic district," said Fisher. "It's not like Naples, where people come in, scrape the little house and put up a monster. It's more about preservation and restoration. Everyone is excited to do that." ■

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Vacancies

Continued from page 4

in the short and medium term remains uncertain, experts say, especially when it comes to the amount of space companies will need as they make their way back to the office.

"Companies are trying to figure out how to best accommodate their workers," said Toliver Morris, owner of William Morris Commercial and former board chair of the Downtown Long Beach Alliance.

There are currently two schools of thought among real estate experts, Morris said. One assumes that companies may keep some portion of their workforce permanently remote, decreasing their need for office space. The other expects companies to decrease the density of their workspaces to allow for social distancing, maintaining or driving up their square footage needs as a result.

How quickly the market will adapt to either trend remains to be seen, especially as new variants of the coronavirus drive up infections in the city again.

"The delta variant has thrown another wild card into the hand these business owners have to play," said local economist Robert Kleinhenz.

How they will play it, will likely depend on their industry's adaptability to remote work. Some sectors, especially in the medical field, are returning to the office at a quick pace, said Kleinhenz. Others, especially in the tech, professional services,



Two women walk into an office at 3870 Kilroy Airport Way on the Aero office campus as construction crews renovate the building, Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

finance and insurance sectors—all of which lend themselves to remote work arrangements—are slower to return.

Along with the success of efforts to contain new variants of the coronavirus

worldwide, those industry-specific push-and-pull factors on the return to the office will likely be the dominant force driving developments in the office real estate market for the year to come.

"Things will be moderately active, I suspect," Garey, of Cushman & Wakefield, said. "I think that things will be much brighter 12 to 24 months from now." ■





Markus Pharr uses a crowbar while he works on an apartment above a detached garage, Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2021. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

Home Improvement

Continued from cover

challenge than expected.

Low mortgage rates, similar to their effect on home buying activity, have also driven up demand for home improvements. Savings from refinanced mortgages or increased equity created by home price appreciation have many homeowners deciding to finally go for that kitchen remodel or open up the living room.

As a result, recent buyers like the Keks face equally stiff competition in the market for contractors as they did on their hunt for a home.

“It’s been a bit of a struggle to find good and affordable work,” Kek said.

Contractors would flake, quote astronomical prices or simply not call back. Meanwhile, contractors say the increased cost of building materials—from lumber to copper wiring—has forced them to hike up their prices. Materials are in short supply as demand for construction increases and the ongoing coronavirus pandemic keeps supply chains vulnerable.

Business Insider reported in May that over 44% of home improvement plans across the country have been delayed due to supply shortages and high material costs, citing data from market research firm, Cardify.ai, which uses transactional data to generate reports on consumer spending.

In the end, the Keks “piecemealed” the work together at times using Taskrabbit—an app designed to help users with everyday tasks, like cleaning, moving or handyman work—to find workers for their renovation projects.

Workers, too, are highly sought after at the moment. Job openings in the construction industry are up 43% since the start of the pandemic, with employers looking for 339,000 workers nationwide, according to the latest data published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In Los Angeles County, 4,300 jobs were added in the same timeframe,

according to data from the state’s Employment Development Department.

Some new homeowners have opted to do at least a portion of the work themselves. Rodrigo Fosado, a 35-year-old accountant who recently bought a home in Los Altos, said he’s taught himself how to put up drywall, do electrical work and put in new doors.

“We became contractors ourselves,” Fosado said of his family of four. Most of his education came from online tutorials. “The YouTube videos definitely helped,” he said, laughing.

Catching up

Meanwhile the city bureau in charge of processing and granting permits for anything from kitchen remodels to the construction of multi-family complexes is undergoing an effort to upgrade its technology, all while struggling to attract and retain staff.

In a May 11 memo to the city manager, council and mayor, the Department of Development

Services, which houses the bureau, admitted that its processing times, customer communications and overall development review process had not met “the city’s goals nor the needs or expectations of our customers.”

In response, city councilmembers, led by Councilman Rex Richardson, approved an initiative to review the city’s hiring practices, review the bureau’s permitting software and explore the implementation of a “shot clock,” which would set a timeframe within which applications have to be processed.

Despite recent efforts to improve the department’s services, staffing and technology remain “primary challenges,” as identified by the department in a memo published on Aug. 10.

For the last three months, the department has worked to further staff up the bureau, aiming to replace temporary workers and employees pulled from other departments with full-time staff. But finding and

retaining staff has been challenging, said Building Superintendent David Khorram, in part because of competition from surrounding cities that pay higher wages.

“Other cities love to snatch our people,” Khorram said, adding that it’s not uncommon for Long Beach to identify a qualified candidate just to have them poached by another city before they’re even brought on as a staff member.

The other challenge, technology, is also still being addressed. The department recently upgraded its application portal to allow for more types of applications to be submitted digitally by a broader spectrum of applicants; previously only large-scale, “frequent flier” contractors were able to submit online.

While the industry at large has long been working with a wide range of digital tools, government entities have lagged behind, Khorram said. “We were behind that cycle and we’re paying the price now.”

In addition to the systems upgrade, the bureau has also resumed in-person appointments for express and over-the-counter permits, which cover most basic changes, like putting in new windows, reroofing or adding new plumbing fixtures.

In the second quarter of this year, which covers the months of April, May and June, the bureau processed 2,805 permits and serviced 538 applicants in person, compared to 1,886 permits processed and no in-person appointments in the previous quarter. The backlog on plan check appointments for larger projects currently stands at 3-4 weeks, according to Khorram.

The pandemic and its challenges have taught the bureau a lot and accelerated its modernization, Khorram added. “It will be painful for a while,” he said. But, “I think when we come out of it, we’ll be much stronger for it.” ■



A Park Avenue home after its transformation into a French Provincial farmhouse. Listing photo.



A view of the grounds at 109 Park Ave. The home is on the market for \$3.175 million. Listing photo.

The Colonnas list their Park Avenue French farmhouse for \$3.175 and head back to the Peninsula lifestyle

By **TIM GROBATY** / Columnist

The Colonnas are going home again.

After five years of living in the home they basically built at 109 Park Ave. in Belmont Shore, Frank Colonna and his wife Michelle have put the French Provincial home on the market for \$3.175 million and are retreating back to the home on the sand at the end of the Peninsula where the couple lived for nearly 20 years, from 1997 to 2015.

“We had leased the Peninsula house out and now it’s vacant, so we figured we’d move back,” said Colonna, a two-term Long Beach councilman representing the 3rd District from 1998 to 2006 and a member and immediate past-president of the Board of Harbor

Commissioners. “Plus,” he said. “I miss the beach.”

The Park Avenue home wasn’t always in the style of an elegant yet rustic French farmhouse. In fact, for decades, stretching back to the early 1950s, it was well known in the neighborhood for its distinctive, and uncharacteristic for the area, Chinese style.

The transition from moving the home’s style from east to west was overseen by Ed Gulian, one of the city’s most respected architects.

“The Colonnas are awesome,” said Gulian. “Very enjoyable to work with. Michelle had some pictures of what they had in mind, which were very helpful.” French Provincial is a bit astray from Gulian’s typical work,

which tends more toward Modern. He’s done several homes in Naples and the Peninsula and elsewhere.

“The original home was an icon, but it wasn’t built to last,” said Gulian. “I couldn’t believe it was still standing.”

It wasn’t for long. Crews tore the house apart down to the studs and rebuilt it in the French Provincial style with its stone facade, evocative of the French country farmhouses of the 17th century that often served as pieds-à-terre for the aristocracy.

While the home was still in its Chinese phase, “There were tons of concrete on the second floor and things were being held together by termites holding hands,” said Gulian. He said the rebuild took about a year and a half.

The four-bedroom, two-bath home, listed by the Colonna’s daughter, Laurel Lucas of Colonna & Co. Realty, is set on a rare Belmont Shore double lot, giving it a spacious and expertly landscaped old-style European backyard with lush, vine-covered shaded patios as well as a spa and fruit trees.

The first-floor living room (there are living rooms on both floors) features exposed beams in an open floor plan taking in the dining area and the well-appointed (Wolff range; SubZero refrigerator) kitchen along with the

spacious and bright living room. Light French oak floors are featured throughout the space.

A stairway with custom wrought iron railings leads to an open second floor with another large living room, two bedrooms and two bathrooms.

The large master ensuite features a bathroom with double vanity sinks, freestanding tub and walk-in closet. The bedroom also has a private balcony.

Out back by the gardens is a two-story casita—fantastic news! You can bring your mother-in-law along! Or use it for an office or studio. It has a three-quarter bath and an upstairs loft.

Colonna is happy enough going back to the home at the tip of the Peninsula—moving between the two locations is sort of the luxury equivalent of “out of the frying pan, into the kettle.”

“It was nice living in the Shore; it’s a beautiful house. I hate to give it up. But there comes a time when you’re getting older.... We want to travel, and I’ll stay busy with the harbor commission, but I’ll be scaling back a bit in some of the other things I’ve been involved with.”

To take nothing away from the Colonnas’ beautiful backyard on Park Avenue, the vista from their new/old house is arguably more spectacular, with a lot less upkeep required. ■



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Pandemic Effects

Continued from cover

actually decreased quarter-over-quarter from 5.4% to 5%, while suburban vacancy increased slightly from 5.5% to 5.7%, according to Lee & Associates reports. Over the last 12 months, average asking rents in Downtown and suburban markets decreased 1.3% and 1%, respectively, to \$2.66 and \$2.32 per square foot.

Net absorption over the last 12 months in Downtown as of the second quarter was 4,600 square feet, while the suburban market suffered negative absorption of 156,000 square feet due in large part to several big-box vacancies, including the former Best Buy at Marina Pacifica and Orchard Supply Hardware at Long Beach Exchange.

“Optically, this isn’t as challenging as it was during the Great Recession,” Aguirre said, noting that many of the businesses that shuttered were already struggling and the pandemic was simply the final nail in the coffin.

Retail activity has picked up significantly since the June 15 reopening, Aguirre said, and business has been spurred by Long Beach’s high vaccination rate. But further recovery hinges on a broader return of the workforce, he added. Many workers have opted not to return to jobs,



The Rock Bottom Brewery in Downtown Long Beach shut down a few months into the pandemic after government mandates forced the restaurant to close its doors for an undetermined length of time. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

particularly those paying minimum wage, due to increased unemployment benefits and other factors.

The mandatory halting of in-person dining for months at a time crippled food and beverage operators, which has forced several to close their doors. But

similar business types are leading the way in backfilling space, Lieppman said. New restaurant concepts are moving into shuttered restaurants, he said. Medical, educational and boutique uses also have been driving forces in backfilling vacancies,

Lieppman said. “We’re resilient,” Aguirre said. “As long as creative minds are out in the marketplace, they find a solution. But things can change quickly in this environment—a new variant or whatever can derail us. It’s fragile.” ■



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A rendering of Rocket Lab's Photon spacecraft carrying NASA's CAPSTONE cubesat to the Moon. Courtesy of Rocket Lab.

Rocket Lab announces first lunar mission as part of NASA program

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON** / Reporter

Launch service provider Rocket Lab recently announced the company’s first lunar mission, which is slated to lift off in the fourth quarter.

The Moon mission will carry NASA’s Cislunar Autonomous Positioning System Technology Operations and Navigation Experient, or CAPSTONE,

and deposit it in orbit around the Moon. The 55-pound satellite created by Colorado-based Advanced Space will be the first spacecraft to test a unique elliptical lunar orbit, according to Rocket Lab.

CAPSTONE is an early stage in NASA’s Artemis program, which includes landing the first woman and person of color on the Moon as well as

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON** / Reporter

Rocket Lab is gearing up to launch three successive missions from late August through September, the company announced Aug. 10. The missions will mark the fastest turnaround between launches for the company to date.

Dubbed “Love At First Insight,” the first mission will carry two satellites to orbit for Earth monitoring company BlackSky. These will be the eighth and ninth satellites in the company’s planned constellation.

“This cadence of rapid launches demonstrates the accelerated pace at which we are able to expand our constellation and reinforces our commitment to delivering real-time data and intelligence,” BlackSky CEO Brian O’Toole said in a statement.

Rocket Lab’s Electron rocket is slated to lift off from the company’s launch complex on New Zealand’s Mahia Peninsula.

The payload includes two high-resolution, multi-spectral satellites that will be deployed in low Earth orbit. The satellites will expand BlackSky’s network and offer real-time geospatial intelligence and monitoring services.

BlackSky combines hi-res images using a proprietary artificial intelligence software to deliver analytics and insights to industries, including transportation, infrastructure, land use, defense, supply chain management and humanitarian aid.

“Dedicated launch on Electron means a bespoke service for satellite operators who want control over their schedule and orbital parameters,” says Rocket Lab founder and CEO Peter Beck. “Rapid launch with these three back-to-back missions enables BlackSky to fast-track their plans for a constellation that meets the hunger for real-time data produced by multiple images within 24 hours, rather than one

establishing a long-term presence there.

“Our team is immensely proud to be launching one of the first pathfinding missions to support NASA’s goal of delivering a sustainable and robust presence on the Moon,” Rocket Lab CEO Peter Beck said in the announcement. “We’ve teamed up with the NASA Launch Services Program on previous Electron missions to low Earth orbit, so it’s exciting to be working with them again to go just a bit further than usual...some 380,000 km further.”

After Rocket Lab’s Electron rocket travels through the atmosphere into low Earth orbit, the company’s Photon spacecraft will detach. Propelled by its 3D-printed HyperCurie engine, the Photon will propel CAPSTONE, allowing it to break free of Earth’s gravity and set a course for the Moon.

The mission will be the first time Rocket Lab’s Photon spacecraft is used as a trans-lunar injection stage to take a satellite beyond Earth orbit.

CAPSTONE’s journey to the Moon will take three to four months, according to Rocket Lab. Upon arrival, the CubeSat will enter a highly elliptical orbit over the Moon’s poles. The six-month primary mission will test prediction models estimated propulsion requirements for maintaining this type of orbit.

The mission—which, in true Rocket Lab fashion, may get a fun and clever name closer to the launch date, according to spokeswoman Morgan Bailey—will take off from the company’s New Zealand launch complex later this year. ■

Rapid launch: Rocket Lab to fly three missions in just over one month

image at the same time each day.”

Tuesday’s announcement comes days after Rocket Lab unveiled its first lunar mission, which is an early stage in NASA’s Artemis program. The mission is slated to carry NASA’s 55-pound CAPSTONE satellite to the moon to test a unique elliptical orbit over the lunar poles.

Less than two weeks before the announcement, Rocket Lab successfully delivered a U.S. Space Force demonstration satellite to low Earth orbit. The satellite, Monolith, will demonstrate the use of large deployable sensors to determine if they disrupt the satellite’s attitude, or orientation, in space. The satellite also will serve as a platform to test future space protection capabilities.

The forthcoming BlackSky mission will mark Rocket Lab’s 22nd launch overall and its fifth launch of 2021. “Love At First Insight” will bring the company’s total satellites launched to 107. ■

Ownors Technologies wants to help creatives grow and earn more money

By **ALENA MASCHKE** / Reporter

Launching a creative mentorship platform in May of last year, James Jones Jr. and his co-founder Chris Mendez were brave enough to start a company in the middle of a global pandemic.

But as it turns out, for their particular business, a year that kept a large portion of the population confined inside their homes may have been just the right time to start.

Jones’ company, Ownors, runs an online platform for creatives that connects musicians with record label executives, artist and repertoire representatives and other industry professionals to help them improve their ability to market themselves, create revenue streams and potentially secure a contract with a record label down the line.

An accompanying app, Bump, allows artists to keep track of their existing revenue streams and social media following, and offers cash advances based on that data.

With the pandemic shuttering music venues and live performances, 2020 turned out to be the year artists could use this kind of service more than ever.

“The other ways that artists make money is through touring, [merchandise]—all those things were shut down,” Jones said. “This was what was needed for this moment.”

A member of the Long Beach Accelerator’s inaugural cohort of seven companies, Jones and his team began pursuing investors, as well as growing their user base and roster of mentors through professional networks and social media.

“It was a great springboard,” Jones said of the accelerator, which provided its members with seed funding and training on crucial tasks for startup teams, like refining their value proposition, increasing their fundraising and securing their intellectual property.

Kim Banham, a principal at Connetic Ventures, said she had been looking for an opportunity to invest in a company seeking to shake up the creative industry, when Jones reached out to her investment firm.

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A Relativity Space employee works with one of the company's Stargate 3D printers at the firm's Long Beach headquarters. Photo courtesy of Relativity Space.

Men still dominate the space sector, but companies are working to diversify their ranks in Long Beach

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON** / Reporter

As Long Beach's space economy continues to grow, city leaders continue to boast about the industry's "high-paying" jobs. After all, the sector includes many skilled positions from engineering to manufacturing to robotics to IT.

But who is holding down most of these jobs?

According to gender and racial demographic data provided by two of the city's major space companies, men make up the vast majority of employees. Virgin Orbit and Rocket Lab report that 83% and 80% of employees, respectively, identify as male.

"Women are typically under-represented in engineering and STEM sectors, but we're working to change that," Rocket Lab spokeswoman Murielle Baker said in an email. "At least half of our intake of summer interns identify as female."

In addition to sponsorships of education and STEM nonprofits, school visits and Rocket Lab's support of programs like the Brooke Owens Fellowship (paid internships and mentorships for undergraduate women and gender-minority students in aerospace), Baker said 75% of the company's scholarship recipients identify as female.

Racial demographics skew heavily White at the two companies. Virgin Orbit reports that 48% of staff are White, while Rocket Lab sits at 49%. The remaining Virgin Orbit staff breaks down to 26% Hispanic/Latinx, 16% Asian, 4% Black, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 1% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. Rocket Lab follows a similar trend with 23% Hispanic/Latinx, 16% Asian, 2% Black, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 1% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander.

Local gender demographics in the aerospace sector are in line with the

industry at large—80% male and 20% female for companies with less than 10,000 employees, according to a 2019 workforce study by Aviation Week. In LA County, however, 45% of the labor force identifies as female.

Virgin Orbit and Rocket Lab's racial demographics, meanwhile, are far more diverse than the industry standard. According to the Aviation Week study, 84% of the aerospace and defense workforce in the U.S. is White, followed by 5% Hispanic/Latinx, 6% Asian and 4% Black.

The Long Beach workforce doesn't quite match county demographics, however. In LA County, 31% of the total labor force identifies as White, 44% Hispanic/Latinx, 14% Asian and 8% Black.

The city's other two space-centric companies, Relativity Space and SpinLaunch, did not provide racial or gender breakdowns of their employees.

"While Relativity does not disclose the racial and gender demographics of

our employees, we believe in investing in diversity and inclusion long-term," Vice President of People Karin Kuo said in an email. "The value of different backgrounds, identities and perspectives will advance our mission and enable us to build the highest performing team possible."

With more than 500 employees and plans to add another 150-200 by year's end, Relativity has partnered with Pacific Gateway, the city's workforce development agency, to support the placement of diverse talent within the company, Kuo said. The company also is building partnerships with Cal State Long Beach, Long Beach City College, UC Riverside as well as local minority- and Hispanic-serving institutions, Kuo added.

Relativity is set to grow its workforce to at least 1,100 by 2026 as required by the terms of a \$30 million California Competes tax credit it was awarded earlier this year. The company announced a major expansion in the



A Relativity Space employee works with one of the company's Stargate 3D printers at the firm's Long Beach headquarters. Photo courtesy of Relativity Space.



Virgin Orbit employees gather around a cubesat at the company's Long Beach headquarters. Photo courtesy of Virgin Orbit.

city in June, having signed a 16.5-year lease for a 1.1-million-square-foot hangar at the former Boeing C-17 site.

Virgin Orbit, which was the first company to join the city as part of its aerospace renaissance, has 600 employees with plans to expand its workforce. The company declined to share employment projections but stated it will remain a mid-sized company for the foreseeable future.

Rocket Lab, meanwhile, has north of 600 employees with more than 100 job listings as the firm continues to expand into spacecraft systems and components manufacturing, and research and development for its new eight-ton lift-capacity launch vehicle, Neutron.

With thousands of people employed by space companies in Long Beach and more on the way, the question becomes how many of these jobs are "high paying?"

A "living wage" in LA County is \$40,248 for a single person with no children, according to MIT's Glasmeier,

Amy K. Living Wage Calculator. The median household income for LA County residents was \$68,000 in 2019, according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

Defining "high-paying job" as an annual salary of \$80,000 or more, the majority of employees at three of the city's space companies fall under that category. A whopping 85% of Relativity employees make \$80,000 or more per year, followed by Virgin Orbit at 64% (not including over time or differentials) and 62% at Rocket Lab.

SpinLaunch did not provide employment or salary information.

Engineers are crucial to the space sector and make up 51% of Virgin Orbit's workforce. In 2020, the median salary for aerospace engineers was \$118,610, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. About 66,400 aerospace engineers were employed in 2019, the bureau reports, with projections that the field will grow by 3%, or 1,900 jobs, by 2029. ■

Creatives

Continued from page 11

Normally, Connetic Ventures uses an artificial intelligence platform to sift through bids for funding—in an effort to eliminate bias based on gender, race or age, a rampant issue in the venture capital world. But Jones asked for a phone call prior to submitting his bid—a request Banham granted.

"I wanted to invest right then and there," she said.

In addition to the company's various revenue streams—transaction fees on cash advances, token purchases for mentoring sessions—it was the potential for artists to increase their own revenues and track data associated with their work that enticed Banham.

Bump, the company's mobile app, bundles data from streaming platforms like Spotify and Tidal, as well as artists' social media followings, allowing them to see revenues they're owed and assess their market value.

"The bigger the artist gets, the more valuable that data will become," Banham said.

In addition to funding and data through the app, Ownors' mentorship program allows users to book one-on-one mentorship sessions with industry experts.

Phoenix Red, a producer and A&R representative who has signed onto the company's platform as a mentor, said he hadn't been particularly impressed with the available options for artistic mentorship he'd come across in the past.

Sweepstakes for social media shoutouts, for-charge creative critiques—Red felt like none of the commonly available options provided up-and-coming artists with the level of direct exchange they needed to grow.

"A lot of platforms that I've come across genuinely are not created to help artists, but more so to generate revenue," he said. He sees Jones' approach as a way to encourage musicians to invest in themselves without taking advantage of them. "I thought it was a brilliant concept."

Helping artists make more money and take ownership of their career is the declared goal of Ownors, which is a mashup of "own yours."

Working as an entertainment lawyer in South Florida for a decade, Jones said he was regularly confronted with artists' financial concerns.

"A lot of artists struggle to figure out how to generate money," Jones said.

Even when they do, he found, many are worried about building generational wealth and creating lasting assets—inspiring his idea to start a company that would explore solutions on the intersection of financial technology, digital revenue streams and music.

"We wanted to figure out a way to fix that part of the industry," Jones said.

The idea of building generational wealth is also what compelled Luke Cooper to sign on as an investor in Ownors Technologies—but it wasn't necessarily artists he was concerned with.

Cooper, who is Black, found Jones and his company on a list of Black founders, who remain rare in the startup world.

Although increased attention toward racial justice in recent years appears to have galvanized investment in Black founders—venture capital funding for their companies increased four-fold between this year and last, according to Crunchbase—they still only received a mere 1.2% of overall venture capital investment.

Providing funding to founders like Jones is a way to help close the racial wealth gap and create generational wealth for Black Americans, Cooper said. "It's incredibly important," he added. "It's important for the progress of Black people."

But it wasn't just kinship and a commitment to advancing economic opportunities for Black Americans that drove Cooper to invest. A founder himself—his mobile device repair marketplace Fixt sold to insurance giant Assurant last year—Cooper said he is especially drawn to marketplace solutions, like Ownors' Bump app.

"Marketplaces are easy to stand up, but they're hard to get traction on. James already had traction," Cooper said. "He had proof that it was going to work."

Although Jones didn't share concrete numbers on the app's usership, he said the app had garnered "a few thousand" users so far, with plenty more in the onboarding process.

As for his role as a Black founder, Jones said he doesn't "run away from it," but he's not interested in being defined primarily by his race either, despite his own experiences with racial bias in the investment world.

"It certainly is a challenge and you have to figure out how to overcome it," Jones said. "I'm just going to be different—I'm just going to figure out how this game works, how to navigate it and be successful."

For now, he's focused on growing his market share and signing on new users, he said. "The more market share we capture, the more creatives we've reached out to." ■



James Jones Jr., co-founder and CEO of music-focused tech company Ownor Technologies. Photo by Jonathan Adjahoe.



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Long Beach population grew slightly, new Census data shows

By JASON RUIZ / Reporter

The city of Long Beach grew by about 4,500 residents since the 2010 Census, according to a preliminary tally released Aug. 12.

There were 462,257 people living in the city of Long Beach, according to the 2010 count; that number grew to 466,742, according to Census figures.

Population growth nationwide was largely concentrated in larger metro areas, with each of the 10 largest cities in the country seeing population growth. Phoenix replaced Philadelphia as the fifth largest city in the United States, with a population growth of 9.4%.

Los Angeles was one of 14 cities with a population gain of 100,000 residents or more and Los Angeles County remained the county with the most residents as it eclipsed the 10 million-resident mark.

However, population decline was a reality for most counties across the country, with the majority losing population over the past 10 years, according to a presentation from Census Bureau officials.

Irvine was one of the 10 fastest growing cities in the United States, joining the likes of Kent, Washington; Buckeye, Arizona; and Frisco, Texas.

The United States added about 22 million people, bringing it to a total of about 331 million residents. Census officials said the rate of growth was the slowest that the bureau has recorded since the 1930s.

While 204 million people identified as only White, there were 62 million residents of the country who identified as Latino. Latinos make up the largest share of the California population and are the second most prevalent race in nearly every state between California and Texas.

The release of legacy Census data will start a process of reformatting by state officials before data is handed over to individual cities that need the numbers to complete their redistricting processes.

However, the Long Beach Independent Redistricting Commission will likely have to wait until early October before it can start drawing lines for new City Council districts because the federal data needs to be formatted and prison populations need to be distributed to the cities that the incarcerated persons lived in.

Then, the commission will have to wait an additional three weeks to allow the public to access the data before it starts the line-drawing process. ■



A man walks out of Bixby Joe with a coffee and breakfast in Bixby Knolls, Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Mayor and council may support \$200K in funding for Bixby Knolls business association

By BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

With the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association facing an uncertain future due to its primary funding source drying up, Mayor Robert Garcia along with the City Council are proposing one-time funding for the organization as part of the 2021-2022 budget.

For the last decade, the association has received \$200,000 annually as the result of a contract with the city's former Redevelopment Agency. The 10-year contract expires this year, leaving the neighborhood's most crucial institution to seek new sustainable, long-term revenue streams.

For months, association Executive Director Blair Cohn has been in private talks with the mayor and councilmen regarding gap funding to get the organization past the financial hardships of the pandemic until regular funding sources are identified, according to Cohn and Garcia. Staring down its own financial hurdles brought on by COVID-19, funding through the city was not guaranteed, Cohn added.

But city officials said they are determined to make it happen.

"The bottom line is the city is not ever going to be in a position where we allow that organization to not exist or to fail," Garcia said in an Aug. 13 phone interview. "We're going to do whatever it takes to make sure the association has what it needs to be successful."

The association's request for \$200,000 of one-time funding is supported by the

full council, Garcia said. The funding will be brought to council in the next few weeks, he added, since the budget process must conclude in September for the start of the fiscal year on Oct. 1.

"Once it passes, we're going to have a huge sigh of relief," Cohn said.

Bixby Knolls lies within the districts of councilmen Al Austin and Roberto Uranga. With Austin and Uranga being on the Budget Oversight Committee, both declined to comment on the upcoming decision to include funding in the budget. However, both Austin and Uranga highlighted the importance of the association for the community that runs through both their districts.

"The [association] has worked tirelessly to make Bixby Knolls a prime destination for residents of the city and the region," Uranga said in an email. "Bixby Knolls offers much more than great food, drinks, and shopping. ... Bixby Knolls is a place to find community."

Austin echoed Uranga's sentiment, saying the organization is a valued city partner that supports economic growth along the neighborhood's commercial corridors, particularly through community events such as First Fridays, which creates a street fair atmosphere within the neighborhood. The association also hosts concerts, pop-up events at restaurants and various clubs for readers, music enthusiasts and walkers.

In addition to its programming, the association uses funds to pay for private security, landscaping, street cleanups,

facade improvements and more. If future funding is not identified, events and services would have to be drastically cut or eliminated, Cohn said in a recent interview, adding the association may even have to revert to its old staffing level—a part-time executive director and an answering machine.

Cohn and the association's board are considering numerous options to bring in revenue, including increasing annual fees for member businesses (currently about \$280), creating a parking district and expanding its boundaries to include more businesses, particularly those along Orange Avenue from Wardlow Road to San Antonio Drive.

In the meantime, Cohn and the association have reached out to the community for support in the form of donations.

"On one hand, we are asking for it because we need it, but at the same time I get embarrassed," Cohn said, adding that it is sometimes hard to ask for help. "But it's not for me, it's for continuing these programs."

On social media, residents were asking Cohn how they could support him and the organization. Since the state of the association's financial situation was made public earlier this month, Cohn said the organization has received at least \$7,000 in donations from the community, including a \$1,000 gift and an anonymous \$3,000 contribution.

In an Aug. 11 Facebook comment, former association board member and

Continued on page 21

While other cities look at indoor vaccine requirements, Long Beach says it will look to the state for direction



Mayor Robert Garcia announced in July that the city would move toward a vaccine mandate for city employees with unvaccinated employees being subject to regular COVID-19 testing. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

By **JASON RUIZ** / Reporter

While the city of Los Angeles and county officials weigh whether to follow San Francisco, Palm Springs, New York and others in requiring proof of COVID-19 vaccination to enter some indoor businesses, Long Beach isn't—for now at least—planning to implement further restrictions.

Long Beach has recorded over 5,000 new cases and 17 COVID-19 deaths since June 15, when the state largely reopened after months of restrictions.

Its case rate of 36.4 cases per 100,000 residents and 8% test positivity rate are significantly higher than the county, which has a case rate of 27.8 per 100,000 residents and a testing positivity rate of 4.7%. Long Beach hospitalizations have also climbed from nine patients on June 15 to 143 as of Aug. 13, the last day that city data was updated.

Los Angeles City has a text positivity rate of 9.9%.

Both the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the Los Angeles City Council could vote on motions this month to require proof of vaccination to eat, drink or workout indoors in the coming weeks, but Long Beach said it would align itself with the state.

In a statement, the city said it is monitoring local numbers and will implement new restrictions and vaccine requirements in accordance with state orders. The statement also said the city is monitoring county measures.

The state announced last week that it would require vaccinations for public and private school staff to be vaccinated or submit to regular testing, something most educational institutions in the city had earlier announced they would require.

Los Angeles County, the nation's most populous according to the most recent Census data, is also reporting the fifth most cases of any county with over 100,000 residents, according to county data. It trails other hot spots like Miami-Dade County in Florida and Webb (Texas), Yuma (Arizona) and Whitfield (Georgia).

Because the county's request to look at requiring proof of vaccination is coming from the supervisors and not the county health officer it would only apply to incorporated parts of LA County.

For Long Beach, that would only affect a small residential neighborhood known as Carson Park.

Earlier this month Palm Springs announced it would require proof of vaccination or a negative test taken within 72 hours in order to eat at an indoor restaurant or drink at a bar.

It's unclear what the LA City Council could ultimately vote on. The proposed

ordinance still needs to be drafted by the city's attorneys.

"They've gone through hell and back" Jeremy Harris, president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, said that it's been tough for businesses to navigate the constantly evolving labyrinth of rules and regulations that businesses needed to enforce over the past 16 months.

Harris said there's been confusion over which laws they need to follow. Does the county supersede the state's order? What if the city does something different than the county?

Those are questions that the Chamber has had to address to its members, explaining that state orders often apply across the board, but the county and city can craft stricter rules.

"It's frustrating to a business owner because you're not only dealing with that, but also the other parts of keeping your business open," Harris said. "They've gone through hell and back."

Harris said that the Chamber has heard a mixture of opinions when it comes to a possible "proof of vaccination" rule coming to Long Beach, but said businesses are focusing on what will prevent them from having to close down again.

What the enforcement would look like and what tools the city might provide to businesses to help them enforce a potential policy are all conversations that are being had.

In New York, persons or businesses violating its new health order could be fined \$1,000, with increased penalties for repeat offenders. Persons trying to use fake vaccine cards could also be prosecuted for fraud.

In San Francisco, which will impose its new order later this week, people 12 and older wanting to eat indoors, go to a bar or gym or even a large event will have to show proof they're fully vaccinated.

Violating the San Francisco mandate could come with a fine of up to \$1,000 or imprisonment.

Harris said that if it comes to that in Long Beach, the effect on businesses could ultimately be decided on whether it's applied across the board for all businesses, adding that there's a preference that a proof of vaccine policy be a statewide order to ensure fairness.

"What are our friends in Orange County going to do? What about the other cities in LA County?" Harris said. "There needs to be a cohesive policy."

Enforcing the health orders

While the city did not address how it might enforce a potential vaccination requirement in Long Beach, looking

Continued on page 21



A truck hauls a shipping container from China as others wait for cranes to load their freight at the Long Beach Container Terminal at the Port of Long Beach, Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Port of Long Beach may see ripple effect from China port closure

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON** / Reporter

The partial closure of a China port may cause delays at the Port of Long Beach, which already is facing a backlog of ships amid one of the busiest cargo months of the year, according to port executives.

Operations at the Meidong container terminal at the Ningbo-Zhoushan Port in China were halted Aug. 11 after a worker tested positive for the coronavirus, Bloomberg reported—though the terminal was expected to reopen soon. The terminal accounts for 25% of cargo that passes through

Ningbo, according to security consultant firm GardaWorld, which stated "the suspension could severely impact cargo handling and shipping."

Meidong is part of the Meishan Bonded Area at Ningbo. The port zone offers reduced taxation on foreign imports and exports, encouraging free

Judge rejects suit alleging county election recount fees are unconstitutionally high

By **JASON RUIZ** / Reporter

A Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge denied a petition on Aug. 13 that was filed against Los Angeles County election officials over the high costs of the Measure A recount last year, stating that the projected \$240,000 cost of the recount did not violate anyone's constitutional voting rights.

Judge Mitchell Beckloff denied the Long Beach Reform Coalition's request for the court to order county election officials to pick up the tab for collecting the roughly 100,000 ballots cast in the March 2020 election so they could be counted at a "reasonable" cost, which the coalition contended was outlined in the county's estimated recount fee schedule.

Measure A, which was originally supposed to be a 10-year sales tax increase, became permanent after voters approved it by 16 votes.

Because the county lacks an automatic trigger for recounts, and the county's top election official, Registrar-Recorder Clerk Dean Logan didn't order one, the Reform Coalition started the recount process last spring.

Original estimates for the recount had risen to as much as \$84,000, but the March 2020 election was the first time that the county had used its new VSAP voter system, the county's answer to a statewide Voters Choice Act, that allowed LA County residents to vote from anywhere in the county instead of neighborhood precincts.

The county estimated last year that it could take 16 days at \$12,000 per day to locate all the physical ballots.

The cost to conduct the recount quickly grew to nearly \$240,000, leading the coalition to call off the process and file a lawsuit against the county after trying a digital recount alternative for a handful of days.

In his ruling, Beckloff said that while some voting laws, like those that restrict access to voting, are subject to strict scrutiny, the cost of a recount is not one of those rules.

"The right to vote is separate and distinct from the right to request and obtain a recount," Beckloff wrote. "Similarly, a right to obtain a vote recount is separate and distinct from

the right to ensure one's vote is properly counted in the first instance."

Beckloff added that the county did not deny the group's statutory rights to conduct a recount, instead it was the cost that led the coalition to end its recount efforts. Beckloff said that state law allows for election officials to pass on the cost of a recount to the requesters and added that the coalition failed to draw a clear line in which the cost of a recount becomes unconstitutional.

"We disagree with the court's contention that by simply following the law that it can't be arbitrary," said Dale Larson, an attorney representing the coalition.

Continued on page 19

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Martaveous Holliday, 25, and Savannah Dingman, 24, stand in front of their honeycomb shoe wall at Open Air Vintage, Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

Open Air Vintage brings high-end, exclusive sneaker shopping to Long Beach Exchange

By JASON RUIZ / Reporter

Surrounding the polished concrete floors and plants hanging from the raised ceilings inside Open Air Vintage at Long Beach Exchange is a honeycomb display of nearly 200 colorful high-end Jordans, Nikes and limited edition Vans. The most exclusive sneakers rest on a bed of moss near the “sneaker garden.”

The center of the store is laden with vintage sports shirts from the 1990s, some displaying the names of NASCAR drivers who haven’t raced in decades. The back wall holds a display of vintage Dior and Chanel sandals that sits next to racks of new high-end streetwear.

Martaveous Holliday, 25, and Savannah Dingman, 24, opened the store in June, with the couple hoping to cater to the growing market of luxury sneaker

collectors who would normally shop in Los Angeles.

Holliday and Dingman knew they wanted to open an exclusive sneaker store somewhere in Long Beach and the pandemic helped them realize that Long Beach Exchange would suit them.

They spent a lot of time at the shopping center over the past year and a half, walking around and getting meals because of the shopping center’s expansive outdoor eating options and the limitations put on dining establishments to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It was then that the couple noticed the very distinct styles—rare sneakers and vintage clothing—that were worn by other customers of LBX and knew that a store that catered to that could be successful.

“The amount of people we’d see with Dunks, Jordans, Travis Scott shirts,

it was just crazy that these people were just naturally here to get food,” Dingman said. “We thought, what if we brought something like this to these people who are here already?”

Their store is different from other shoe resale stores, which are often stacked with shoes from floor to ceiling in an effort to maximize floorspace, Holliday said. Open Air has a full storeroom but Holliday and Dingman opted to offer a more boutique experience at LBX.

“We didn’t want it to be too overwhelming,” Dingman said.

Opening a shoe store was hardly their focus when the two first started college. Holliday played running back and immediately went on to a Division I program at the University of Nevada Las Vegas while Dingman played soccer and studied to become a journalist.

Holliday bounced back to Santa Monica College, where an enrollment error helped stoke his interest in fashion. When he failed to sign up for a college algebra class, Holliday was declared ineligible for the season because he was one credit short to qualify to play.

He’d always been interested in fashion, having launched his own clothing line in 2016, and sitting out the season allowed him to take two fashion classes, which helped him think of what his future away from the football field would be.

“When I did that the thought crossed my mind that it was something that I would want to do in this lifetime,” Holliday said.

They began seriously discussing opening a store last May. In June, after nearly a year of negotiations and selling their vision to the property owner, the

couple opened Open Air. Running the store is a full-time venture that includes staffing and keeping up with new trends. The two explained that this store is not about what they like, but what people want.

There are Bad Bunny Adidas that can retail for \$500 a pair, J Balvin Retro high-tops that can fetch upward of \$900 a pair and Supreme Nike Dunks in barkroot brown that can sell for as much as \$2,000, if you can find them.

“The shoes we sell are sold out in 10 seconds,” Holliday said.

A big part of the lightning-quick sell outs of certain styles of shoes has as much to do with collaborators, like Travis Scott, Kanye West and other influencers, as it does with robots.

Online bots have allowed individual buyers to purge inventories of new releases in the blink of an eye, consolidating limited release shoes into fewer hands, helping to drive up the resale prices.

The sneaker resale market has been estimated by many to be a billion dollar market and Holliday and Dingman hope their shop will cater to the growing niche of consumers who are willing to pay big money for a new pair of kicks.

There’s even a website that allows collectors and sellers to check the market value of a certain pair of shoes, which is often hundreds if not thousands of dollars over the retail price. The couple uses it to help determine both what they should be paying for shoes and what they should sell them for to customers.

The shoes are almost all “dead stock,” they explained, meaning they’ve never been worn, including never having been tried on. Dingman said that a dead stock shoe often means that only a few hands have touched the shoes, including their customers.

The remainder are near-dead-stock, which means they’ve been worn once. All of them are hard to find, and the store carries just a handful of sizes of each shoe, with some designs only having one size stashed away in their storeroom.

Holliday says the shop uses a rigorous process to ensure that the shoes they purchase are not fakes, a growing problem in the rare sneaker world.

Holliday pulled out a black light and scanned a \$1,400 pair of “Chunky Dunky’s”, a collaboration shoe between Ben and Jerry’s and Nike, and shows that there are no odd coverups of splatter patterns of paint on the shoe, which confirms it’s from the Nike factory.

He shined a light through the sole of a Yeezy, a shoe put out by Adidas in collaboration with Kanye West, and explained that the sole is made out of patented material and fakes often are too dense for the light to be seen when you hold one against it.

Buying limited sneakers is less about the cost and has more to with the hustle, Holliday said. How’d you get them and where you got them are part of the story behind these sneakers.

For Long Beach sneaker collectors, the answer to “where” could be at Long Beach Exchange. ■



These Belmont Shore residential streets shown in red could be reduced to a 15 mph speed limit by the City Council. Map by Dennis Dean.

Belmont Shore residential area among other Long Beach streets that could see speed reductions

By JASON RUIZ / Reporter

Several portions of Long Beach streets are slated for a slow down including the entire Belmont Shore neighborhood after traffic studies performed by the city suggested the speed limits could be lowered.

All residential streets in Belmont Shore south of The Toledo and Livingston Drive will be reduced from 25 mph to 15 mph. The changes will also include a strip of Ocean

Boulevard that stretches from Bennett Avenue to 54th Place and forms the southern boundary of the neighborhood.

The Long Beach City Council is expected to ask for an ordinance Tuesday night so it can formally vote on the changes at a future meeting. Ordinances typically go into effect 30 days after being signed into law by the mayor.

Other small speed reductions will be applied on a handful of other streets

across the city, such as a stretch of Magnolia Avenue between Willow Street and Wardlow Road, which will be reduced to 30 mph.

Between Seventh Street and Anaheim Street Magnolia will be reduced to 25 mph to match the speed limit set between Seventh Street and Ocean Boulevard.

The speed reductions are part of the city’s Safe Streets Long Beach program the City Council adopted in July 2020 to reduce traffic deaths and injuries. ■

LGB airport passenger traffic growing closer to pre-pandemic levels

By BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

Passenger volumes at Long Beach Airport continue to rise, with travel now back up to more than two-thirds of what it was pre-pandemic, according to July data released Aug. 11.

Last month, 226,857 people traveled through the municipal airport, a 461.4% increase from the same month last year during the pandemic’s summer surge. However, travel remains 29% below 2019 levels when 319,296 passengers passed through the airport.

“We’re pleased to see our commercial passenger numbers steadily increase,” Director Cynthia Guidry

said in an email. “We expect to see more people enjoying our easygoing and convenient travel experience as vaccination rates continue to rise.”

July saw nearly 30,000 more passengers use the local airport than June when 199,096 passed through, continuing the facility’s slow but steady recovery. Year to date, 987,152 passengers have traveled through Long Beach, up 25.9% from last year but still trailing 2019 figures by 51.5%.

Long Beach Airport’s travel is recovering faster than Los Angeles International Airport’s, which is still more than 39% below pre-pandemic levels. The international airport saw

travel increase from just over 1.03 million passengers in June 2020 to nearly 4.89 million in June of this year, a 373.76% increase. But over 8 million passengers traveled through the airport in 2019.

LAX has not yet released July data. “Looking to the remainder of the year,” Guidry said, “we anticipate a significant boost in the fall as our air carriers recover and increase their schedules.”

In Long Beach, 1,213 tons of air cargo arrived at the airport in July, down 6.8% from last year and 30.2% from 2019. Air cargo at LAX, meanwhile, was up 16.59% in June compared to the same month last year. ■

Election Recount

Continued from page 17

Larson alleged that the design of the county’s new voting system did not take into account a recount, and how not tracking ballots might affect the price of one. Larson said that the new design has led to prohibitively expensive recounts and limits a statutory right of voters to be able to request one.

He cited a U.S. Supreme Court case that stated a \$57,000 recount charge was “exclusionary and discriminatory” and noted that the Measure A costs were three times that. Larson said providing greater access to voting should not come with less access to recounts.

“We don’t think that providing an ability to vote anywhere is mutually exclusive with providing a recount that people can afford,” Larson said. “We think the county can do both.”

The Measure A recount, had it been seen through to the end, likely would’ve become the most expensive recount in county history, a county spokesperson said last year.

The higher projected costs were the result of a number of factors including the pandemic, which required the county to change how they counted ballots to ensure social distancing, and the new voting system that allowed ballots be cast anywhere between Long Beach and Lancaster.

This complicated finding ballots because instead of voters having casted them in predetermined precincts the ballots could have hypothetically been cast from anywhere in the county. Los Angeles County has over 5.6 million registered voters.

Measure A, originally passed by Long Beach voters in 2016, raised the city’s sales tax to 10.25% and was originally supposed to expire in January 2027. The sales tax has generated about \$60 million annually that the city has used to prop up police and fire services as well as invest in infrastructure projects like community center remodels and park projects.

The City Council put the measure back on the ballot in 2020 as it became clear that it could be replaced by another county or regional tax, reasoning that Long Beach taxpayers’ dollars should stay in the city if the city’s sales tax was to remain at the state maximum anyway.

Voters approved the measure by just 16 votes in the March 2020 election with Measure A approval taking its final lead on the last day of vote tallying coming on the last day of counting.

Patton said the ruling could spell trouble for public trust in future elections.

“If you can’t ask for the proper election officials to count the actual paper ballots then you’re entirely reliant on the software to tell you the result,” Patton said. “That’s not going to do anything for restoring confidence in our political environment.” ■



Martaveous Holliday, 25, and Savannah Dingman, 24, at Open Air Vintage shoe store at Long Beach Exchange, Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

Long Beach gets another \$13.1 million for rental assistance, but bulk of funds have gone unclaimed

By JASON RUIZ / Reporter

Long Beach is reopening its rental assistance program after it received another \$13.1 million from the state, however its previous \$51 million in funds has been slow to get to tenants and landlords with the city having allocated just over \$12 million to date.

The new funding brings the city’s total renter relief funds to just over \$64 million, which can now be used to pay up to 100% of unpaid rents incurred by tenants since April 2020.

The city said that the program has helped 1,690 landlords and utility providers recoup missed payments to date. However there is still a pool of over 13,000 applicants leftover from the previous application round that ended July 11 that have not been

approved for aid.

The city said it would work with its vendor to reach out to those with incomplete applications to submit the required forms.

“With this new funding, we strongly encourage all those who may be eligible for assistance to apply for this program,” Mayor Robert Garcia said in the release.

“We know that many of our residents who have been financially impacted by the pandemic still need help. It’s very important that we get folks the rental support they need.”

The city still has over \$52 million to spend on rental assistance, money that could be reallocated by the U.S. Treasury beginning in the fall, according to a treasury spokesperson. However, the city has maintained that there will be no leftover money at the end of the program.

July 11 was the original cutoff date for the city’s rent assistance program, which at the time had allocated or approved about \$5 million for distribution to applicants.

The program is available to residents of Long Beach making 80% of the area median income or less, with those making 50% of area median income being prioritized first. The city defined 80% as \$90,100 for a family of four or \$56,300 for those at 50% of the area median income.

Applicants need to show proof of income loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as rental agreements, proof of income and proof of housing instability, like a pending eviction notice.

The program has been criticized by groups representing landlords who say there are too many strings

attached for the process to get a meaningful amount of money out to landlords who haven’t been paid rent in over 15 months in some cases.

The groups have said that the income limits, which were set by the federal government, are likely to lead to mass evictions once existing moratoriums end.

Both state officials and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors extended eviction moratoriums for residents who are behind on their rents until the end of September.

An amendment to the county’s extension requires proof of tenants showing a good faith effort to apply for rental relief funds.

During the June meeting when they extended the moratorium, LA County Supervisors said it would likely be the last extension. ■

As delta cases rise, popular coffee-cart owners urge Long Beach to stop citing street vendors

By JASON RUIZ / Reporter

Cameron Kude and Juan Fernandez milled around their yellow tuk tuk turned mobile coffee cart this week as the last of the day’s customers trickled in to get their caffeine fix at the Junipero Beach parking lot where they’ve made a temporary home for their business, known as Cafablanca.

The couple’s cart plays jazz classics from a Bluetooth speaker that can be heard from the cafe tables they have set up on the sidewalk next to the sand. The cart is decorated with rainbow hearts and coffee mugs printed with support for groups like Black Lives Matter and the abolition of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

A new message, displayed on the cart’s letter-board, spells out the

Continued on page 22



Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero speaks during a press conference regarding the newly completed Long Beach Container Terminal at Middle Harbor, Friday, Aug. 20, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Construction of the ‘greenest terminal on the planet’ wraps at the Port of Long Beach

By BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

The third and final phase of one of the world’s greenest and most technologically advanced cargo facilities, the Long Beach Container Terminal at Middle Harbor, has been completed, Port of Long Beach officials announced Aug. 20.

“The facility is one of the wonders of the maritime industry,” port Executive Director Mario Cordero said during a press conference. “Developing this terminal has been one of the biggest and

most challenging infrastructure projects in our history.”

After years of planning, the first phase of construction on the 300-acre mega-terminal began in May 2011 and opened in spring 2016, while crews continued work on phases two and three. Phase two was completed in October 2017 and another three acres will be added in 2025 when the north gate expansion opens.

With a host of automated, electric and near-zero emission equipment, the terminal has the capacity to handle 3.3

million twenty-foot equivalent units—the standard container measurement—per year. This volume alone would rank LBCT as America’s sixth-busiest seaport, officials said.

“To give you some perspective, that is more than the entire Port of Oakland and almost as much as the combined ports of Seattle and Tacoma,” LBTC CEO Anthony Otto said during the press conference.

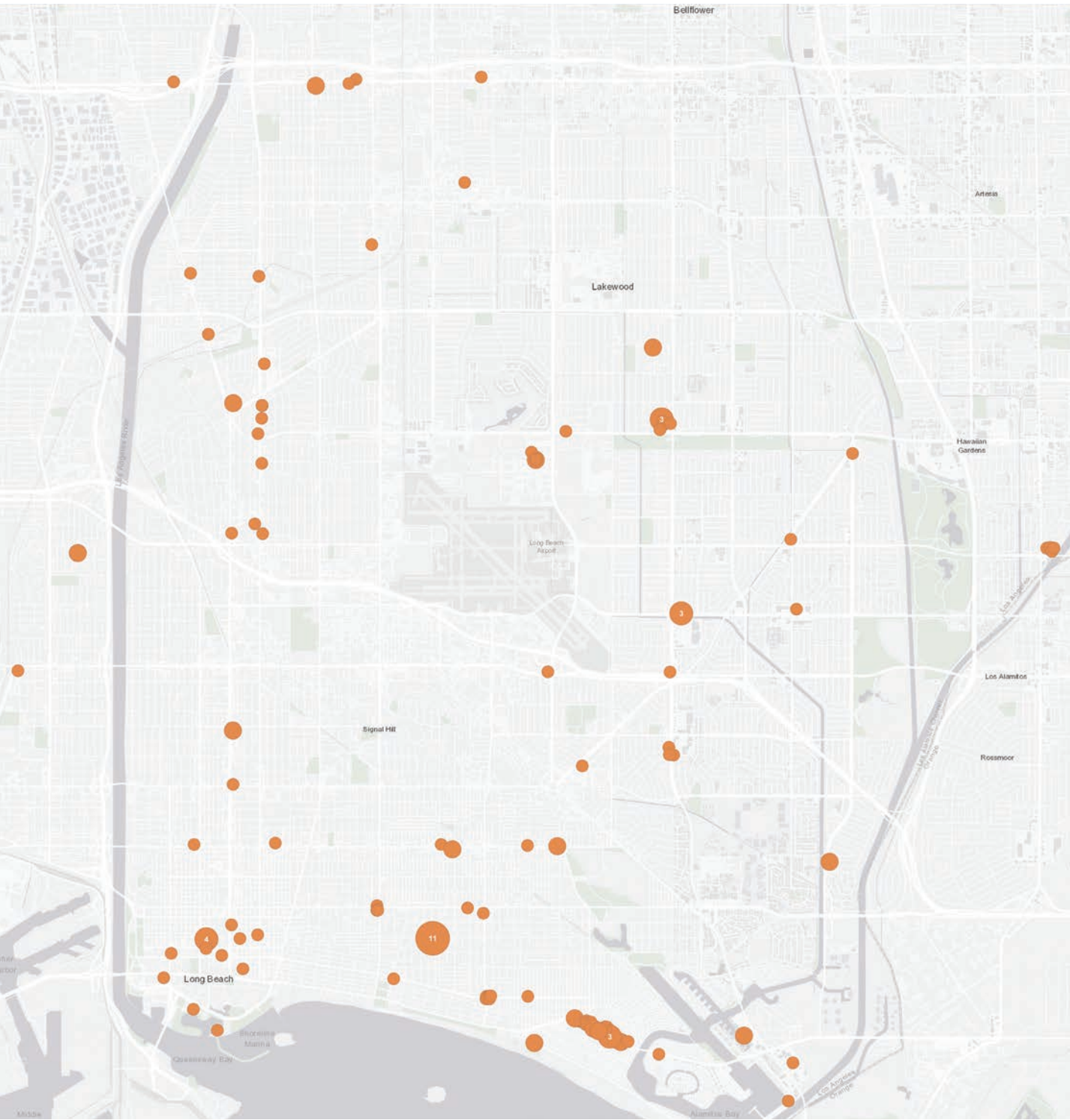
The project combined piers D and F into Pier E through the infill of 2.5 million cubic yards of dredged sediment from Newport Harbor, Marina Del Rey and Long Beach’s Colorado Lagoon and Alamitos Bay, according to port spokesman Eric Bradley. The terminal can accommodate three container ships at the same time utilizing 14 electric ship-to-shore gantry cranes along a 4,200-foot-long concrete wharf with four more on the way, port Senior Program Manager Monique Labrun told the Business Journal.

All buildings at the terminal are LEED Gold certified, meaning they meet strict environmental standards, Labrun said. All ships calling at the facility plug into shore power to tap into the port’s electrical grid to reduce emissions. LBCT also includes a large on-dock rail yard with over 70,000 linear feet of track, Labrun added, which reduces the number of truck trips and further combats emissions at the port.

“This is a civil engineering marvel,” Labrun said. “Each component is a huge project on its own.”

The final price tag for LBCT was \$1.5 billion. The project initially was planned as an expansion of the two existing terminals and was budgeted for \$750

Continued on page 22



A map of businesses that were cited by the city for violating COVID-19 health orders through May 2021. The larger dots indicate repeat offenders. Map by Dennis Dean.

Vaccine

Continued from page 16

back at how it handled previous health orders could shed light on some of the city’s limitations to ensure that businesses are following the law.

In May the city announced it had issued 124 citations for violations of the city’s health orders since the pandemic had begun, with only 11 of those being issued to persons violating the city’s mask mandate.

Data provided through a public records request showed that enforcement was restrained as the city opted to go with an educational approach, rather than a punitive one.

The city performed over 18,500 educational visits before issuing the May 25 memo on mask enforcement, but issued just 138 citations, 12 of which went to Restauration, a restaurant that defied the city’s health order for months before ultimately closing in April.

“I believe we could have cited a lot higher number but our approach was to educate our businesses because our main priority was safety,” said Angel Arredondo, a code enforcement officer with the city.

Arredondo said that the multi-department task force that the city compiled from code enforcement, the health department and even the business licensing department was originally around eight people but grew to around 30 before winding back down after the June 15 reopening date.

Restauration was not the only business cited multiple times. The records show that Gold’s Gym on Pine Avenue was cited four times, Tracy’s Bar and Grill was cited three times and a handful of businesses including a residence and a church were cited twice.

Citations were issued for a variety of reasons, including restaurants allowing outdoor dining while it was prohibited during the winter surge of COVID-19, and others for allowing indoor dining when that wasn’t

allowed. Gold’s and other gyms were cited for allowing people to workout inside, Arredondo said.

Gold’s has continued to violate the city’s health orders including the current indoor mask mandate. A representative from Gold’s said this month that the company has taken the stance that masks are optional.

Arredondo said that the city tried to connect businesses with programs that could help them pay for personal protective equipment and provide other aid. But some businesses were beyond education, Arredondo said, adding that “they already knew what they were supposed to be doing.”

This sometimes led to confrontations with business staff and the public, Arredondo said, making it harder to do follow-ups with staff.

“There was some yelling, cursing, people would start gathering up around our staff,” Arredondo said. “We want our folks to be safe, our businesses to succeed and the way to do it is for them to operate within the established health order.” ■

Bixby Knolls

Continued from page 15

Bixby Knolls resident Mark Hawkins said he was “blown away” by Cohn’s vision for the neighborhood when he took over the association about 14 years ago. Hawkins said Cohn has gone above and beyond what anyone ever expected, citing specifically the 11 parades he helped organize throughout the pandemic to keep the community connected during business closures.

“If Cohn’s template was used in every community in Long Beach,” Hawkins said, “the world would be a much happier place than it is now.” ■

Port of Long Beach sets new July cargo volume record

By BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

Consumer demand continues to drive a cargo surge through the Port of Long Beach resulting in another record-breaking month in July, officials announced Aug. 5.

Dockworkers and terminal operators moved 784,845 twenty-foot equivalent units—the standard measurement for shipping containers—last month, making it the busiest July in the port’s 110-year history. The volume marked a 4.2% increase from the same month last year, which set the record for July cargo movement.

“Ships arrived last month to move these empty containers out of the harbor and clear valuable terminal space as we handle historic amounts of trade,” Executive Director Mario Cordero said in an announcement. “These boxes are a valuable commodity in the overstressed global supply chain.”

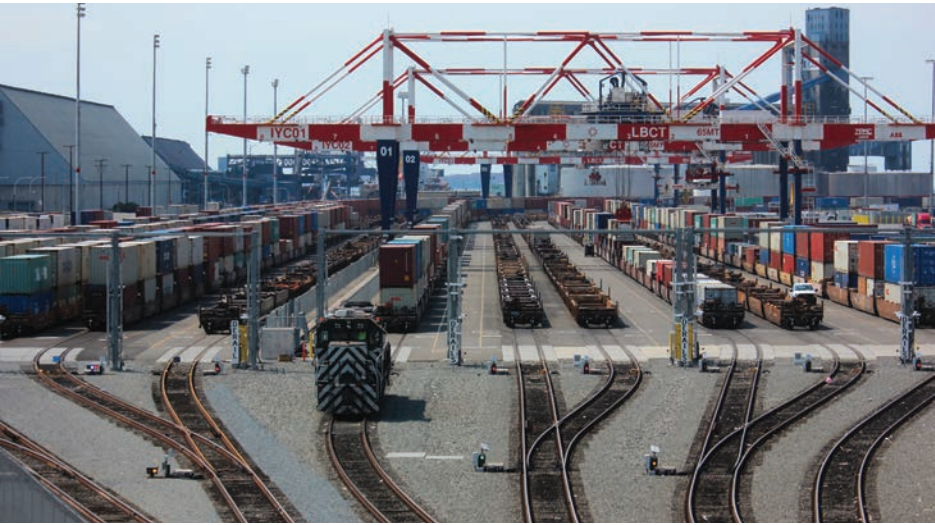
Imports were up 1.6% last month compared to July 2020, with 382,940 TEUs, while exports decreased 20.7% to 109,951. The decrease was offset, however, by a 22.8% increase to the number of empty containers moved—291,995 TEUs.

“Our loaded exports are likely to rebound this month,” Cordero said.

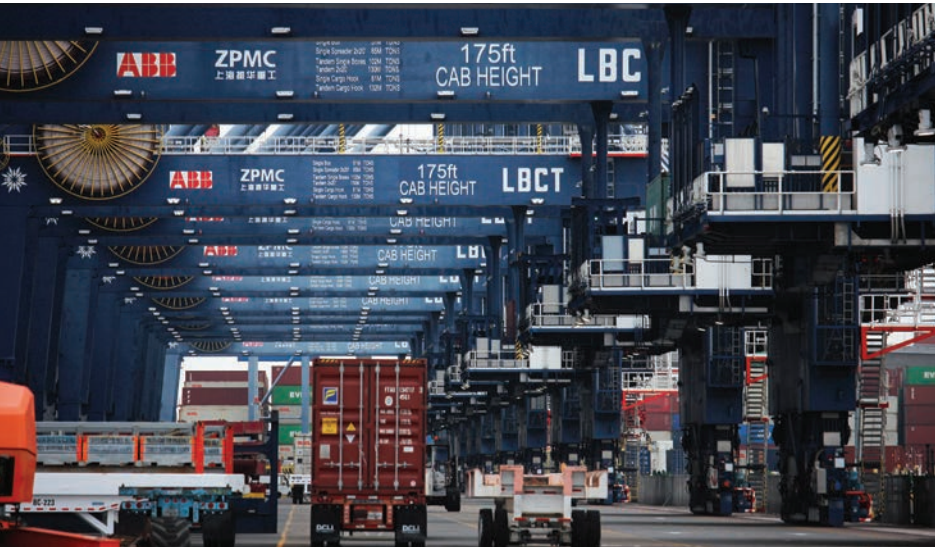
The port has broken monthly cargo records in 12 of the last 13 months. Through July, Long Beach processed 5,538,637 TEUs, a 32.3% increase from the same period last year.

“Our dockworkers and industry partners have risked their health to keep the gears of our economy turning during this pandemic,” Long Beach Harbor Commission President Steven Neal said in the announcement. “We thank them, and acknowledge their service as we continue a remarkable run of records at the Port of Long Beach.”

Along with setting records, the cargo surge has caused a backlog in the supply, including the Port of Long Beach. Ships are sitting at anchor longer, waiting to be loaded or offloaded, containers are sitting longer at ports and, in turn, retailers and customers are waiting longer for their products. ■



Containers are placed on train cars at the Long Beach Container Terminal's rail yard, Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021. The terminal boasts some 70,000 linear feet of track. Photo by Brandon Richardson.



Row after row of ship-to-shore gantry cranes at the Long Beach Container Terminal at Middle Harbor, Friday, Aug. 20, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Construction

Continued from page 20

million, Cordero told the Business Journal. However, when Hyundai relocated to the Port of Los Angeles, the project was reimagined into a single mega-terminal that utilizes state-of-the-art green technologies, which increased cost significantly, Cordero said.

For decades, the areas around the ports of Long Beach and LA have been plagued by some of the country’s worst air pollution, which has led to increased asthma for residents who live along major cargo corridors such as the 710 Freeway. The investment in creating LBCT is an indication that the port is taking action to address its environmental impact for the betterment of surrounding communities, Cordero said.

“LBCT is by far the cleanest container terminal on this planet,” Otto said. “We have proven our industry can [operate] in a more sustainable way—LBCT is operating at 90% less emissions than our competition.”

The terminal’s increased capacity has come in the nick of time, Otto said, noting the dozens of ships anchored off the coast awaiting to be offloaded. For over a year, the port has been handling a record amount of cargo due to increased e-commerce amid the pandemic. Coupled with the busy back-to-school and holiday stocking by retailers, high volumes are expected to continue.

The port generates about 51,000 jobs in the regional economy, including tens of thousands of International Longshore and Warehouse Union workers. In the past, the organization has fought automation at container terminals that would reduce the number of jobs for union members. While the technologies introduced at LBCT has impacted traditional longshore jobs, Otto said they have created newer, higher skilled jobs.

“We spent almost \$9 million in training alone before we ever opened the doors of this facility,” Otto said. “That was our commitment to the workforce—retraining them so they can best handle the new technology. We can’t do this without the ILWU, we don’t want to. They are our workforce.”

Orient Overseas Container Line, a major Hong Kong-based shipper, in 2012 signed a 40-year lease to operate the new terminal through its subsidiary LBCT. In 2018, COSCO Shipping Holdings Co., a Chinese state-owned shipping line, acquired OOCL parent-company Orient Overseas (International) Limited.

Because COSCO is one of the largest shipping companies in the world by TEU volume, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S. mandated the company divest at LBCT to avoid a monopoly. So in 2019, Australia-based asset management firm Macquarie Infrastructure and Real Assets acquired terminal operator LBCT and assumed the lease. ■

Street Vendors

Continued from page 20

couple’s current dilemma: Street vendors are not criminals.

The two started a catering business in February 2020 but the pandemic forced their yellow tuk tuk off of movie sets and events and onto the city’s streets. The cortados, Americanos and flat whites they’ve served to the Long Beach community over the past 16 months are paid for in donations, and are also illegal, according to the city’s municipal code.

They hope to change that. Following months of run-ins with city employees who have threatened to cite them for illegal food vending, or impound their coffee cart, Kude and Fernandez made the decision in March to continue to operate in defiance to raise awareness of the plight of the city’s food vendors.

They’ve popped up inside businesses, in backyards and at the beach, trying to outpace city officers and keep their small business afloat. On Tuesday, Kude called on the City Council to enact a moratorium on citations for street food vendors like the Los Angeles City Council did at the end of June.

“For us to be receiving this messaging for over a year that being indoors is risky, and minimize your time in public indoor spaces, we’re trying to do exactly that,” Kude said, adding that their business model follows the guidance of federal health officials to move business outside when possible.

“We’re trying to give people an opportunity to get a good cup of coffee that doesn’t involve walking into a petri dish of a coffee shop.”

In Long Beach, new case rates are among the highest in all of LA County, and hospitalizations are climbing, according to city data.

The Los Angeles moratorium will be in place for six months after the COVID-19 state of emergency is ended. It bans city employees from issuing fines for those operating without a license or permit and encourages city workers to do educational outreach to help walk vendors through the permitting process. It also extended a reduction in permit fees to 2022.

Prior to the LA vote, the Long Beach City Council voted on June 15 to look into ways to improve safety for street vendors after a series of highly publicized attacks, but did not address permitting.

On Tuesday, Kude reminded Mayor Robert Garcia that he made him a cappuccino at the grand reopening of Community Hospital Long Beach in May and asked why their coffee was OK to be served at a city sponsored event but not on the corner of Broadway and Hermosa Avenue, where the couple had set up shop in front of the Black LBC bar for months.

“Two weeks before that city employees threatened to impound my

coffee cart and told me that I could face jail time,” Kude said Tuesday.

Garcia and city management said Tuesday that the city is in the process of updating its municipal code and regulations for food trucks, which Kude’s cart technically falls under. However, that will require a consultant and could take some time.

In the interim, the city must follow state laws like Senate Bill 946, which put in place a number of protections for street vendors, but still allows cities to cite them for not having proper permits or maintaining sanitary work environments.

Mozhgan Mofidi, an officer with Long Beach’s environmental health bureau, said that permitting for street food vendors is not a one-sized fits all situation, but they all must have a business license and a health permit.

Mofidi explained that often times the requirements for a vendor vary based on what they sell, how they intend to sell it and their mode of transportation. For instance, some vendors who sell perishable goods need refrigeration, while others can be permitted without one.

Pre-packaged goods typically come with fewer restrictions, Mofidi said, and the type of product you sell could require you to have a three-compartment sink and/or hand washing station. If a vendor is selling cheeseburgers, they would need a sink, she explained, but if they were selling popsicles they would not.

Mofidi said the health department encourages vendors to reach out to them to work out a plan that can result in their permits being approved by the city, and their products being safe for public consumption. Their goal is maintaining public safety by preventing food-borne illness, she said.

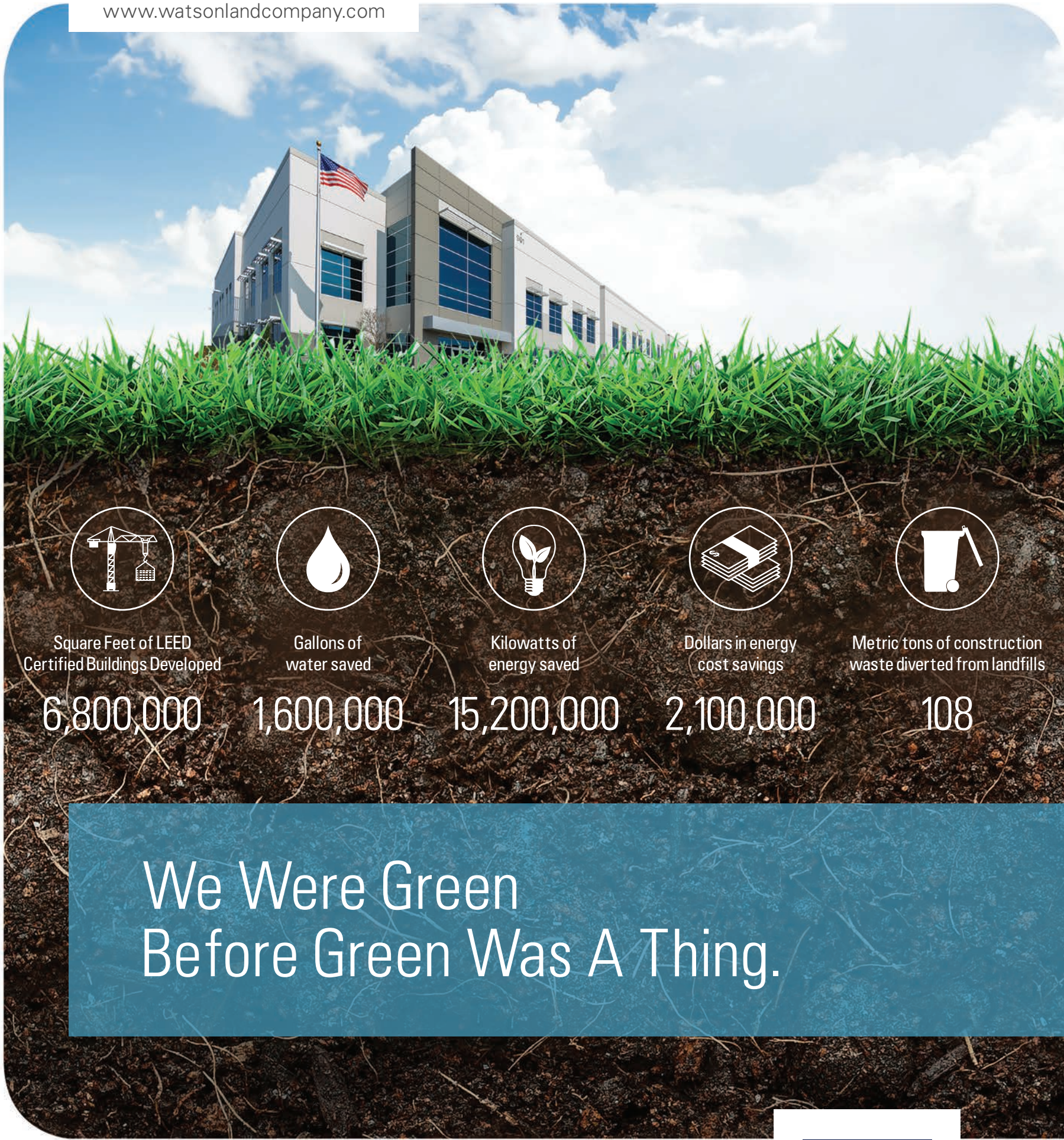
“When it comes to food safety, we don’t make exceptions,” Mofidi said. “If we find there is a danger to the public we cannot wait until someone gets sick. If we know about it we need to do something.”

Kude thinks that the regulations are too strict. Their cart uses disposable cups, which eliminates the need to wash dishes while also helping to protect customers, he said.

But in order to be permitted they would have to have a three-compartment sink, something that is unnecessary and impractical, Kude said.

When the pandemic ends and catering jobs become more plentiful Kude said he and Fernandez intend to pivot back to serving at events rather than working on the streets. But the fight they’re waging now is to protect their business, as well as others who make their living selling food on the streets of Long Beach.

“We’re in a very special situation with public health and the public health emergency that we’re in right now where street vendors should be celebrated,” Kude said. “By our very nature we are reducing community transmission of COVID-19 just by being outdoors.” ■



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