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 and a principal with Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estate Services, said of the industrial market. “The ports are shutdowns and others still struggling. “In general, there’s lots of demand and very limited supply,” Ryan Endres, a principal with Lee & Associates and a principal with Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estate Services, said of the industrial market. “The ports are...”

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 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.”

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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 Baboff and his father in Los Angeles, the firm relocated to Long Beach in 1986. Baboff 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.

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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 70% of the city’s population 16 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 tenant’s 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, Garey said. "Businesses can take advantage of that." If demand remains soft, asking rents may drop as well, he added.

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."
Home prices are rocketing in California Heights

By Tim Grobaty / Columnist

Long Beach’s California Heights neighborhood, the city’s wealthiest historic district, was baptized in oil.

The area just north of Signal Hill was once the domain of a wealthy landowner named Jotham Bixby. Historians think it is likely Bixby never named Rancho Los Cerritos.

When oil was discovered on Signal Hill in 1920, 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 rich enough to come the buyer’s way. 

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 quickly. Some of the earlier structures, mostly Craftsman bungalows, were moved down Signal Hill to make room for distant oil fields from an increasingly retail-centered Downtown, while later houses were built, largely in the Spanish Colonial Revival style as the neighborhood’s construction moved out from Signal Avenue to, eventually, Gardenia Avenue, between Bixby and Woodrow avenues.

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

By the 1980s, it was perfect for people working in the space industry, with companies like Relativity, Virgin Orbit, Rocket Lab, Spad.aunch 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 $900,000 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 last week, listed by Realtor Delina Green. The beautiful three-bedroom, two-bathroom, 1,585-square foot Craftsman at 1754 Myrtle Ave.

The 1914 home was moved to Cal Heights from Signal Hill in 1920, said Fisher 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 1,900 homes, with only fewer than 10 home sales a year, with 10 or fewer days on the market, according to the Century 21 offices.

A 1914 Craftsman bungalow moved to Cal Heights from Signal Hill in 1930 is listed at $1.05 million. Listing photo.

The two-bed, two-bath house in California Heights sold for above its $930,000 asking price. Listing photo.

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challenge than expected. Low mortgage rates, similar to their effect on home buying activity, have also driven up demand for home improvements. Savings from reduced mortgage or increased equity created by home price appreciation have also driven homeowners to decanting 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,” said Keks. Contractors would inflate, quote astronomical prices or simply not call back. Meanwhile, contractors say they’re dealing with the increased cost of building materials— ranging from lumber to copper wiring—has increased cost of building materials— forcing them to hike up their prices.

In a May memo to the city bureau in charge of processing and granting permits for anything from kitchen remodels to the construction of multi-family complexes, it’s undergoing an effort to upgrade its technology, all while struggling to attract new staff.

In a May 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 or 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 out in the past.

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

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

BY TIM GROBATY / Colormatt

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 retiring 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 and now it’s vacant, as 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 west side to east was overseen by Ed Gulian, one of the city’s most respected architects.

“He’s the Colonnas are awesome,” said Gulian. “Very enjoyable to work with. Michelle had some pictures of what they were thinking of doing. Very helpful.” French Provincial is a bit out of 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. Ceres 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 palisades—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 bands,” said Gulian. He said the rebuild took about a year and a half.

The first-floor bathroom, two-bath home, listed by the Colonna’s daughter, Laurel Colonna C & Co. Realty, is set on a rare Beltmore 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 is located on floors for double story spaces. 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 run throughout the space.

A story with a cross-weathered 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.

Back out 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 open patio with views of the landscaping.

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 fire.”

“It was nice being in the Shore; it’s been a haven during those hard times,” he said. But, “I think when we come out of it, we’ll be much stronger for it.”

The Peninsula goes to market for $3.175 million. Listing photo.

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

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One of the most iconic homes in the Peninsula is one of the most iconic homes in the Peninsula is on the market for $3.175 million. The Peninsula goes to market for $3.175 million. Listing photo.

The shopping is excellent and the restaurants are some of the best around.

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Pandemic Effects

Continued from page 10

actually decreased quarter-over-quarter from 4.8% to 4.5%, while available inventory increased slightly from 5.4% to 5.7%, according to Law & 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 186,000 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 reopening, Aguirre said, and business has been spurring by Long Beach’s high vacancy rate. But further recovery hinges on a broader return of the workforce; he said. Many workers have opted not to return to jobs, particularly those paying minimum wage, due to increased unemployment benefits and other factors. The mandatory halting of in-person food and beverage operations, which has beneficial wage, due to increased unemployment benefits and other factors.

The Rock Bottom Brewery in Downtown Long Beach shut down a few months into the pandemic after government mandates forced the restaurant to move into shuttered restaurants, which has been bracing for the purchase of the latest and most efficient natural gas products. These include natural gas ovens, Energy Star® certified Natural Gas Pool Heaters, Natural Gas Fireplace Inserts, Natural Gas Pool Heaters and Energy Star® certified Natural Gas Furnaces.

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To learn more and download your rebate application, go to www.longbeach.gov/energyresources/
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. But 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, respectively, identify as male.

Virgin Orbit staff breaks down to 26% Asian, 2% Black, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 2% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. Rocket Lab, following a similar trend, has 25% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Asian and 4% Black.

The Long Beach workforce doesn’t quite mirror the country demographics, however. In LA County, 30% of the total labor force identifies as White, 46% Hispanic/Latino, 14% Asian and 8% Black.

“While Relativity does not disclose the racial and gender demographics of our employees, we believe in investing in diversity and inclusion long-term,” said Vice President of People Karen Kuo 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 the end of the year. 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 open its workforce on or about the 1,100,000-square-foot building under construction at the former Boeing C-17 site. The company is expected to have a hangar at the Boeing property. The company declined to share employee projections but stated it will remain a mid-sized company for the foreseeable future.

“While Relativity has no plans to open at least another site in the county for the foreseeable future,” Kuo said.

“Relativity is set to open its workforce on or about the 1,100,000-square-foot building under construction at the former Boeing C-17 site. The company is expected to have a hangar at the Boeing property. The company declined to share employee projections but stated it will remain a mid-sized company for the foreseeable future.”

“While Relativity has no plans to open at least another site in the county for the foreseeable future,” Kuo said. "Our focus right now is on growing our market share and signing on new users."
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 steady for most counties across the country, with the majority losing population over the past 10 years, according to a presentation from Census Bureau officials.

While one was 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 1930.

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 racial or ethnic group in the United States.

Residents of the country who identified as only Black made up 40 million residents, while 26 million residents identified as only Asian. The United States also added 22 million residents who did not identify with any race.

The release of legacy Census data will allow states to start redefining districts by state officials before data is handed over to local officials before data is handed over to local officials before data is handed over.

The one-time funding is supported by the Independent Redistricting Commission to complete their redistricting processes.

In the meantime, new City Council districts 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.

The commission will have to work in addition three weeks to allow the public to access the data before it starts the line-drawing process.

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 a 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 Blue Cohn has been in private talks with the mayor and councilmembers 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 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 security, landscaping, street cleanups, music events and walking. It’s more than great food, drinks, and walking, and so much more. 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 local businesses, events at local restaurants and various clubs for residents, 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 $200), creating a parking district and expanding its boundaries to include more businesses, particularly those along Orange Avenue from Woodrow 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 start 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 $5,000 gift and an anonymous $2,000 contribution.

In an Aug. 11 Facebook comment, former association board member and
While other cities look at indoor vaccine requirements, Long Beach says it will look to the state for direction.

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—yet—at least—planning to implement further restrictions.

Long Beach has recorded over 5,000 new cases in the past 17 days, with the state large enough for the city to implement restrictions on its own. The city’s vaccination rate is significantly lower than the county’s, which has a rate of 72.5% per 100,000 residents and a testing positivity rate of 14.7%. Long Beach hospitalizations have also climbed from nine patients on June 13 to 43 as of Aug. 13, the last day that data was updated.

Los Angeles City has a test positivity rate of 49%

Both the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the Los Angeles City Council could vote on motions this month requiring proof of vaccination to eat, drink or workout indoors in the coming weeks, but Long Beach said it’s not interested in getting there yet.

In a statement, the city said it is monitoring the numbers and would implement new restrictions and vaccine requirements “as a policy response to rising cases and hospitalizations.” 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 10,000 residents, according to county data. It trails other hot spots like Miami-Dade County in Florida and Webb (Texas), Yuma (Arizona) and Whitefield (Georgia).

Business interests’ request to look at requiring proof of vaccination is coming from the supervisors and not the city 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 Bonded Area.

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 time for businesses to navigate the constantly evolving rhythm of rules and regulations that businesses need to enforce over the next 18 months.

Harris said there’s been confusion about new laws they follow. Does the county supersede the state’s order? What if the city does something different than the county? These are questions that the Chamber has had to address to its members, explaining that state orders often apply across the board, the county and city can craft stricter rules.

“There’s frustrat[ing] 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” mandate.95% of the votes are against, but about 5% of businesses are looking to businesses to help them enforce a potential policy they’ve heard in local and national conversations that are being had.

In New York, persons or businesses violating 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 a new order late 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 city’s side of businesses could ultimately be decided on a case-by-case basis, meaning the board for all businesses, adding that there’s a potential for a “safe space” or “vaccine policy” be a statewide order to ensure fairness.

“What we’re out here doing is trying to work with our friends in Orange County going to do,” What about the other option of working with our friends in the city?”

The city is working with the coalition to look at vaccine mandates for the county. The city will also meet with the coalition later this month.

City 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 Bonded Area.

Judge objects to all 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 reviewed at a “reasonable rate,” he noted. The coalition contended it 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 process last year.

Original estimates for the recount had risen to as much as $840,000, but when the March 2020 election was the first time that the county had used its new VNSAP voter system, the county’s answer to a statewide Votera 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 or $12,000 per day to conduct all the physical ballots.

The cost to conduct the recount quickly grew to nearly $240,000, leading the coalition to call on 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 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 contest a recount, instead it was the cost that the coalition to end its lawsuit. Beckloff also noted that the state law allows for election officials to pass on the cost of a recount to the requesters and that the fee was charged. This coalition failed to draw a clear line in which the county allowed the fees to be 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.
Open Air Vintage brings high-end, exclusive sneaker shopping to Long Beach

By JAYSON RUIZ / Reporter

Surrounding the polished concrete floor are stacks and stacks of sneakers hanging from the raised ceilings inside Open Air Vintage at Long Beach Exchange is a hothouse display of nearly 200 colorful high-end Jordans, Nikes and limited edition Yeezys. The most exclusive sneakers rest on a bed of moss from the 1990s, some displaying the names of NASCAR influencers, as do shirts from vintage sports shirts from the 1990s. Exclusive sneakers rest on a bed of moss and limited edition Vans. The most overcome ceilings inside Open Air Vintage brings high-end, exclusive sneakers to the growing market of luxury sneaker collectors and influencers, as it does with robots. Open Air has hosted booths that allow buyers to purchase inventory of new sneakers in the blink of an eye, showcasing limited edition releases into fewer hands, helping to drive up the resale prices.

November 25, and Savannah Dingman, 24, opened the store in July, with the couple hoping to become the growing market of luxury sneaker The center of the store is laden with vintage sports shoes from the 1990s, sneakers that a store that catered to that could be successful. The amount of people we see here is growing, which helps to drive up the resale prices.


They spent a lot of time at the shopping center over the past year and half, walking around and getting ideas because of the shopping center's expensive outdoor eating options and the limitations on the dining establishments to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It was then that the couple noticed the very distinct styles—rare sneakers, shoes, and vintage clothing—that were worn by other customers of LBX and knew that a store that catered to that could be successful.

Martavious Holliday, 25, and Savannah Dingman, 24, opened the store in July, with the couple hoping to become the growing market of luxury sneaker collectors and influencers, as it does with robots. Open Air has hosted booths that allow buyers to purchase inventory of new sneakers in the blink of an eye, showcasing limited edition releases into fewer hands, helping to drive up the resale prices.

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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, previous reports $51 million in funds has been slow to get to tenants and landlords with the city having allocated just under $12 million so far.

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

The city said that it has helped 1,690 landlords and utility providers recoup missed payments due to the pandemic. However, there is still a pool of over 13,000 applicants left from the previous application round that ended July 11 and $77 million that have approved for aid.

The city said it would work with its vendor to reach out to those applicants 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 a 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 as soon as possible,” he added.

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 remains 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 $90,000 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 and need to meet rental assistance 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 and tenants.

The program has been slow to get to tenants with the city having maintained that the funds has been slow to get to tenants.

“By the end of the program, there will be no leftover money at the end of the program,” said Arredondo.

Supervisors said it would likely be the last extension.

The program is available to those who have been financially impacted by the pandemic and have already applied for the city’s rent assistance program, showing a good faith effort to apply for rental relief funds.

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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 tak tuk full of movie sets and events and onto the city’s streets. The coddled, Americans 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, Kade and Fernandeza 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, Kade 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,” Kade 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 nutritional 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 on June 15 took into ways to improve safety for street vendors after a series of highly publicized attacks, but did not address permitting.

On Tuesday, Kade reminded Mayor Robert Garcia that he made him a cappuccino at the grand reopening of the Long Beach Terminal Harbor last year. Garcia then impound their coffee cart, Kade and Fernandeza told him that they could face jail time.

“Kade 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 Kade’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.

Mohifar, 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. Mohifar explained that often times the requirements for a vendor vary based on what they sell, how they sell it to sell 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, Mohifar 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 popsilos they would not.

Mohifar said the health department encourages vendors to reach out to them to work out a plan to get 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-born illnesses, she said.

“When it comes to food safety, we don’t make exceptions,” Mohifar explained. “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.”

Kade 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, Kade said.

When the pandemic ends and catering jobs become more plentiful Kade said he and Fernandez intend to pivot back to serving at events rather than working on the streets. But that the light 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’ve seen a national situation with public health and the public health emergency that we’ve seen the past year or so, and we’ve worked as much as we can to keep them safe on the streets of Long Beach,” Kade said. “We’ve worked as much as we can to keep them safe on the streets of Long Beach.”

In 1912, before “carbon footprint” or “solar panels” were actual terms, Watson Land Company was founded on the words, “good stewards of the land.”

Our philosophy and roots run deep in preservation and sustainability. From the ground up, every inch of every building we design is meant to meet or surpass LEED guidelines. Because as a land company, we don’t just build on it, we respect and cherish it.