Mandate-free Grand Prix marks turning point in Long Beach’s COVID recovery

By Christian May-Suzuki

This year’s Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach will mark a turning point. The three-day race, which includes a Lifestyle Expo at the Long Beach Convention Center, will be the first major event in the city with no COVID-19 mandates in place. As of April 1, the city no longer requires organizers of indoor “mega” events to verify the vaccination status or check negative COVID-19 test results of attendees before allowing them to enter.

Finances force Grand Prix Foundation to rethink approach

By Christian May-Suzuki

The Grand Prix Foundation of Long Beach is planning for a major revamp following this weekend’s race, officials have confirmed to the Business Journal. The organization is waiting to release specific details on the changes—which will include a new partnership—until after the event, the foundation’s president Rick DuRee told the Business Journal. But he explained why a change is necessary.

COVID-19, for one, was a major hurdle.

“Over the past couple of years, we’ve been dark,” DuRee said. “We haven’t had our events as we normally would supporting the Grand Prix and supporting our local associations. So as to make it into each organization’s budget for the following year. So while association staff were wrapping up financials for last year’s race, they were able to simultaneously engage about the upcoming race with the enthusiasm following a successful weekend. In addition to the momentum coming out of the event six months ago, the Long Beach race was recently voted the second most important race on the NTT IndyCare series calendar, behind the iconic Indy 500. The ranking was the result of a global fan survey by Nielsen and the Motorsport Network, which included more than 53,000 respondents from 147 counties.

Grand Prix returns to normal series slot, network television

By Brandon Richardson

Six months after the last race weekend in Long Beach, drivers and motorsport fans are returning to Long Beach for the 47th Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach, back in its usual NTT IndyCar series slot as the third race of the season.

And for the first time in 15 years, the race will be aired on network television.

After missing a race in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, the race was postponed from April to September last year. In the event’s 48-year history, this is only the second time races have taken place six months apart, the other occurring after the very first in 1975. The quick repeat of the event has not been much of a challenge for the Grand Prix Association of Long Beach, according to President and CEO Jim Michaelian.

“We came out of the race in September with a significant amount of momentum, both in terms of how the event was conducted and the reaction from all of our clients, attendees and sponsors,” Michaelian said. “That afforded us the opportunity to dive right back in and begin the planning process for the race in April.”

September is about the time association staff would normally begin reaching out to sponsors and clients for the April race, Michaelian explained, so as to make it into each organization’s budget for the following year. So while association staff were wrapping up financials for last year’s race, they were able to simultaneously engage about the upcoming race with the enthusiasm following a successful weekend.

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Continued on page 9

Continued on page 11
Setting a Green Pace
Watch for our zero-emissions pace car during race weekend!

The Port of Long Beach is a proud sponsor of the Acura Grand Prix.
RACE WEEKEND SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, APRIL 8

7:30 AM Spectator Gates Open
7:45-8:25 AM Porsche Carrera Cup Practice #1
9:15-10:15 AM IMSA Practice #1
10:30-10:50 AM Historic IMSA GTP Challenge Practice
11:05-11:45 AM Porsche Carrera Cup Practice #1
12:40-1:00 PM Stadium Super Trucks Practice #1
1:30-3:30 PM IMSA Practice #2
3:15-4:15 PM IndyCar Practice #1
4:30-5:00 PM Porsche Carrera Cup Qualifying
4:55-5:55 PM IndyCar Autograph Session (padlock open to all spectators)
5:55-6:55 PM IMSA Qualifying
6:30-6:50 PM Super Drift Practice
7:00-8:30 PM Formula D Super Drift Challenge Competition #1

SATURDAY, APRIL 9

7:30 AM Spectator Gates Open
8:45-9:45 AM IndyCar Practice #2
9:15-10:15 AM IMSA Qualifying
10:20-10:35 AM IMSA Series Pit Set Up
10:45-11:25 AM Porsche Carrera Cup Race #1
11:00-11:30 AM IMSA Autograph Session (padlock open to all spectators)
12:05-1:20 PM IndyCar Qualifying & Firestone Fast 6
1:30-2:00 PM IMSA pre-race ceremonies begin
2:00-4:00 PM IMSA SportCar Grand Prix of Long Beach (100 min)
4:30-5:00 PM Stadium Super Trucks Race #1
5:15-5:35 PM Historic IMSA GTP Challenge Race #1
6:00 PM Concert at Terrace Plaza featuring Royal Machine w/ special guests
6:00-6:20 PM Super Drift Practice
6:15-8:00 PM Formula D Super Drift Challenge Competition #2

SUNDAY, APRIL 10

7:30 AM Spectator Gates Open
9:00-9:30 AM IndyCar Warm Up
10:45-11:09 AM Historic IMSA GTP Challenge Race #2
11:10-11:20 AM Acura NSX Hot Laps
11:25-11:40 AM Mothers Electric Car Parade
11:45 AM IndyCar pre-race ceremonies begin
12:38 PM “Drivers Start Your Engines”
12:45-2:30 PM Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach (Race #3 of the 2022 NTT IndyCar Series – 85 laps)
3:30-4:00 PM Stadium Super Trucks Race #2
4:20-5:00 PM Porsche Carrera Cup Race #2

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You can take advantage of generous rebates for energy-efficient gas appliances and other approved products for residential customers. These rebates are available for the purchase of the latest and most efficient natural gas products. These include natural gas ovens, Energy Star® Certified Natural Gas Dryers, Energy Star® Certified Natural Gas Tankless Water Heaters, Energy Star® Certified Natural Gas Storage Water Heaters, Natural Gas Fireplaces Heaters, Natural Gas Pool Heaters, Energy Star® Solar Thermal Water Heating Systems, and Energy Star® Certified Natural Gas Furnaces.

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Banc of California teaches financial literacy at Grand Prix

In the one-day program, kids will get to experience the Grand Prix on Friday, the first day of the event, while also learning about credit and career opportunities.

By Christian Miy-Suzuki

The Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach brings many things to Long Beach, but one of the most iconic aspects of the event is the Lifestyle Expo. They will also be able to head to the venue, from the track to the Lifestyle Expo. The tour is followed up by a presentation from the Banc of California, which is one of the bank's missions to annually teach the various aspects of managing one's finances.

"This year, we're going to be providing a lesson that's focused mostly on credit," Banc of California Community Reinvestment Act Program Manager Shannon Vesely said. "We are trying that back into how it can help buy a car, since it is for the Grand Prix." After a short presentation, kids will participate in a quiz with a chance to win gift cards.

"That was a really big hit last time we did it," Vesely said. Several speakers will also be present to share their life experiences. A member of the military, a racecar driver and an engineer will all talk about their career paths and what goes into their occupations. While the financial aspect of the program is important, the folks at the Banc of California hope the speakers will also impart other life lessons.

"It's not just about banking. Banking is a small portion of it. It's really about expanding the way they're looking at the world," Haugh said. "If you want to become a race car driver, why couldn't you?"

"Obviously, we're delighted that when they bring iconic events like the Grand Prix back to Long Beach," Mayor Robert Garcia said in a press release. "This year, we're going to be providing a lesson that's focused mostly on credit," Banc of California Community Reinvestment Act Program Manager Shannon Vesely said. "We are trying that back into how it can help buy a car, since it is for the Grand Prix." After a short presentation, kids will participate in a quiz with a chance to win gift cards.

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"Obviously, we're delighted that when they bring iconic events like the Grand Prix back to Long Beach, they're getting a taste of banking and learning about careers," Haugh said. "The Banc of California is happy to welcome the event back to Long Beach and its economy."

"Each time they throw this, it brings jobs into the city just for that weekend," Garcia said. "It really helps them understand the power of what this brings together in a community."

Axalta Grand Prix speaker to about 150 Long Beach Unified School District students in 2019

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The contract with IndyCar requires specific conditions for the city’s streets, and those repairs need to be made well in advance of race day.

By Jason Ruiz

Preparation for the 47th Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach is shifting into gear, with road closures starting this week. But it’s taken months of work to get to this point.

The multiagency effort has included state and federal government resources in addition to the work of several city departments, including the health and business permitting offices, as well as the Police, Fire and Public Works departments—and even the city’s Water Department. They all work in coordination with the Grand Prix Association of Long Beach to put on the three-day event that starts Friday.

Tasha Day, the city’s manager of special events and filming, said the planning for the 2022 event basically started at the end of the 2021 event to ensure that all the necessary road repairs were identified and completed in time to allow for safe racing conditions.

“There are a number of things we’re looking for,” Day said. “We’ve always talked it pre- and post race, but basically we’re looking for any damages. Are there any sprinkler damages? Do we have any potholes that need to get fixed? Because a car going 200 miles per hour and a pothole don’t mix well. Those are the other less evident considerations, like securing Blyver permits from the Federal Aviation Administration so jets can announce the main race Sunday afternoon. Manhole covers must also be welded in place so the IndyCars don’t suck them up with the incredible amount of downward force they generate when they’re driving. Grand Prix spokesperson Chris Exling said the contract started at the end of the 2021 event and is on track to host about 187,000 people over the three days.

As new and younger fans are brought in, it’s important to keep on eye on certain trends—namely, what will keep them engaged.

“When you come into the event every year, we want people to say, “Wow, that’s new, that’s something I haven’t seen before. That’s something I want to experience,” Michaelian said, adding that there is enough in the way of food, drinks, activities and racing to keep attendees entertained for three consecutive days.

Five years ago, for example, Michaelian said the organization recognized a new trend. More and more fans were forgoing assigned seats, opting instead to regularly migrate to different locations around the track. The phenomenon is largely driven by social media, he said, with people wanting to post pictures and commentary about the goings-on throughout the event, rather than stay in one place.

Since making that observation, the association has not added “party zones” and other gathering areas. This year, there will be areas—you’ll see the skyline and exposure for all the surrounding and the Super Trucks are set to be in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. The Global Time Attack event that ran in September, however, has been replaced with the Forrester Carrera Cup. The IMSA championship race will be aired on the USA Network, and the Super Trucks are set to air on the CBS Sports Network.

The September race weekend was the city’s first major event following the spread of COVID-19, and there were various pandemic-related guidelines, including requirements for vaccine or proof of a negative test and a mask mandate unless actively eating or drinking. The ongoing pandemic and restrictions, however, did not impact attendance as significantly as the association thought it would.

“Overall, attendance was down about 4%, Michaelian said. “Quite frankly, we were anticipating … as high as 10%.” With the sharp decline in new cases, state, county and local officials have lifted all vaccine and masking mandates. But health officials are still urging people to wear masks when at large indoor events, including the Lifestyle Expo that will be inside the Long Beach Convention Center during race weekend.

While just over 180,000 people attended the September event, Michaelian said the organization expects to return to normal levels and is on track to host about 187,000 people over the three days. Pandemic or no, each year the association works to revamp and reinvigorate the event, Michaelian said. Race types have been used to reinvigorate the event, Michaelian said.

And while the IndyCar race will not have quite the anticipation and buzz of the September event, which was the final race of the season during which the championship was decided, the organization is excited for the IndyCar race to air on NBC. This will be the first time the Long Beach event will be broadcast on network television since 2007.

“The future looks not only bright for the Grand Prix but it will also continue the relationship with the city and be a part of the growth and be a part of the growth,” Michaelian said, adding that there is enough in the way of food, drinks, activities and racing to keep attendees entertained for three consecutive days.

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Since making that observation, the association has not added “party zones” and other gathering areas. This year, there will be additional party zones around the track, including one sponsored by Crown Royal on the promenade along Piner Avenue.

The upcoming event is the association’s first under its new contract with the city, which now runs through 2028. The multiyear contract has allowed the race organizer to secure long-term sponsorship and client deals, Michaelian said, which gives the event more stability.

“The future looks not only bright for the Grand Prix,” Michaelian said, “but we’re delighted to continue the relationship with the city and be a part of the growth that’s taking place here.”
Super Trucks return to Long Beach for 9th year

The event has run in the city since it was created in 2013 by Robby Gordon, who says Long Beach is one of his favorite tracks.

By Brandon Richardson

The roar of the engines, the scents of octane and burning rubber in the air—the experience of a race is unlike any other for millions of fans around the world.

Motorsports, however, aren’t for everyone. But even those who aren’t drawn to a traditional race event, few can deny the appeal of a race—the experience of a race is unlike any other for millions of fans around the world.

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Who doesn’t love a doughnut? And I’m not talking about a gourmet maple bar with a garnish of bacon slapped on top or a powdered lemon-curry stuffed doughnut, although the rhetorical question still applies, and the unnecessary answer is nobody. Nobody doesn’t love that kind of doughnut.

Rather, I’m referring to those acrid-smelling tire-shredding street takeovers maneuvers that leave black circles in the middle of intersections or along stretches of highways, and the answer here is a lot of people don’t love those doughnuts. Most consider them dangerous applications of asphalt graffiti, although there is, if you can put your mind to it, a learning opportunity: for a moment, something fairly thrilling about a car whose driver works magic with the steering wheel, the gear shift, the clutch and the handbrake to spew burnt rubber and leave a circle of former tire in the road.

That said, my attorneys most that I come out hard against street takeovers and ligurative automotive pastimes.

Nobody knows the origin of doughnuts. It probably started somewhere in the Carolinas backwoods by bootleggers, who’d everything involving doing weird things with cars started. But the more righteous version of the doughnut—one not performed by a kid in a Kia on Carson Street, but by a professional racecar driver—originated here in Long Beach.

“Now, the property of this doughnut started,” Azusa Grand Prix of Long Beach CEO Jim Michaelian said during a recent interview. The bit of post-race doughnut was performed by Alex Zanardi after his Grand Prix victory in 1997. After the win, he motored his Target CART car a bit down the track and executed a somewhat less-than-perfect tire-shredding maneuver. Alex Zanardi performing a doughnut to celebrate his 1997 victory at the Long Beach Grand Prix.

Doughnut—one not performed by a kid in a Kia on Carson Street, but by a professional racecar driver—originated here in Long Beach. Rather, I’m referring to those acrid-smelling tire-shredding street takeovers maneuvers that leave black circles in the middle of intersections or along stretches of highways, and the answer here is a lot of people don’t love those doughnuts. Most consider them dangerous applications of asphalt graffiti, although there is, if you can put your mind to it, a learning opportunity: for a moment, something fairly thrilling about a car whose driver works magic with the steering wheel, the gear shift, the clutch and the handbrake to spew burnt rubber and leave a circle of former tire in the road.

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So the question still applies, and the unnecessary answer may have contributed to the current popularity of spinning smudge circles on public streets.

Zanardi, along with Bill Aubelton, will be a new inductee in the Long Beach Motorsports Walk of Fame at 11 a.m. Thursday, April 7, though Zanardi will not be present. A major crash in 2001 resulted in the amputation of his legs. He took up the sport of handcycling, a form of Paralympic cycling, and in 2020 he was involved in a serious road injury while computing and was placed in a medical coma. He was hospitalized for 18 months. He is still in the process of recovery.

To fulfill the contract, the section will be torn down starting with the April 10 finale when the track and all of its guardrails and improvements to Pine Avenue to be completed by next year’s race. To fulfill the contract, the section of Pine between Shoreline Drive and Seaside Way will have a complete grind and overlay performed on the surface to make the stretch like new. The bit of post-race doughnut was performed by Alex Zanardi after his Grand Prix victory in 1997. After the win, he motored his Target CART car a bit down the track and executed a somewhat less-than-perfect tire-shredding maneuver.

This includes using pressurized water to remove the excess rubber from concrete portions of the street, but the city didn’t use the same method on asphalt portions because it reduces the life of the asphalt. Those types of repairs would start after the April to finish when the track and all of its guardrails and bridges start to be taken down. Under a reduced timeline in the new contract, the tear-down work must be done by April 30.

The Grand Prix Association will pay $500,000 over the next five years to help the city with the cost of the Pine Avenue project. The association will also pay for other road improvements to other parts of the track, including the removal of tire marks caused by race activities.

Road Repairs

with IndyCar does have specific requirements for the city’s street conditions, and those repairs need to be made well in advance to ensure they’re ready for race day.

“You don’t want brand new pavement down because those cars will tear it up,” Esslinger said.

City and race officials are not the only ones intensely focused on the conditions of Downtown streets. IndyCar legend Helio Castroneves, who won the Long Beach race in 2011, said his team will examine the track this week before the first practice of the week. His team of engineers will take photos of every crack and imperfection of the course, and they’ll begin to compile notes for him to memorize for race day as he knows which turns may have a crack or a dent that might affect his performance and what to expect in the transition points where the track shifts from concrete to asphalt.

“It’s a tough track because it’s always changing,” Castroneves said of the Long Beach course.

Urban tracks like Long Beach are subject to weather-related issues like potholes, and the types of sealers used to fix roads can provide different levels of grip—which can make a big difference when you’re going 180 miles per hour.

“They’ve been pretty consistent in that area,” Castroneves said of the maintenance of the Long Beach track. “However, there are some holes that unfortunately you can’t do much about.”

Looking ahead, the city’s new agreement with the association—which extended the Long Beach race through 2028—requires a significant improvement to Pine Avenue to be completed before next year’s race.

To fulfill the contract, the section of Pine between Shoreline Drive and Seaside Way will have a complete grind and overlay performed on the surface to make the stretch like new for the 2023 race.

Public Works Director Eric Lopez said the department will have to wait to start work on the project until the upcoming fiscal budget is approved later this year, but work could start shortly after the start of the new fiscal year in October.

Lopez said that while the project would affect local traffic, it is a routine street maintenance project that won’t disrupt residents and businesses too much when it is completed.
In new sponsorship agreement, Long Beach City College will push technical education programs at Grand Prix

By Christian May-Suzuki

Long Beach City College is continuing its outreach on a brand new stage—the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach.

In a first-time sponsorship agreement that will cost $345,000 over three years, the college’s Career and Technical Education program has secured itself prime promotional spots in venues across the Grand Prix. The college will be featured on the pedestrian bridge just before turn in by Shoreline Drive at the race and also has a 10-foot-by-20-foot space to interact with potential students at the event’s Lifestyle Expo.

Other parts of the package include advertisements on the digital and physical programs for the event and a commercial playing three times a day on jumbotrons at the Grand Prix.

The money to pay for the sponsorship package will be taken from the CTE’s budget. Like similar offerings around the country, LBCC’s Career and Technical Education program focuses on academic and technical skills in high demand sectors.

Some of these are directly tied to the Grand Prix—like automotive technology, advanced transportation technology, welding and fabrication—but the scope of offerings range from culinary arts to assembling a vehicle to merchandising to real estate.

While this is the first time that Long Beach City College is making an appearance at the Grand Prix, it is something that has been in the works and on the minds of school officials for several years, according to Long Beach City College’s Public Affairs and Marketing Executive Director Josh Castellanos.

“Honestly, every year, I ask myself, ‘Why are we not here?’” Castellanos said by phone.

The ad, which will feature a fusion of the LBCC and CTE logos, will itself be a joint effort between the two.

“It’s specifically sponsored by the CTE,” Castellanos said, “but it’s fantastic for the college to get the benefit of all the extra exposure.”

The need for LBCC to reach more students is particularly urgent now, as schools across the nation are suffering dramatic declines in enrollment. Community colleges reported a 3.5% decline in attendance nationwide from fall 2019 to fall 2021, and in California, the drop is particularly steep at 20%, according to a report from the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office.

“The impact of the pandemic on community college enrollments nationwide continues to be profound and far-reaching,” the memo read.

LBCC is not an exception to this trend. The school reported a loss of about 10% of its enrollment from fall 2019 to fall 2022, which comes out to over 4,500 students.

But despite that overall trend, enrollment is rising for CTE programs, according to Castellanos. While numbers for the LBCC program were not immediately available, trends in California suggest an opportunity for the college to capitalize on a sudden boom in interest.

According to data from the Department of Education’s Perkins Act—which helps fund CTE programs across the country—to work to offset lower attendance numbers overall at the college, Castellanos says that LBCC is trying to take advantage of this shift by making a significant push to attract potential students to its CTE programs.

“Just in the last six months, we have had billboards all over Long Beach,” Castellanos said. “We have had 20 all throughout the community.”

LBCC has also used other strategies, like mailers and transit advertising, to market itself.

“I believe we have probably one of the strongest advertising or marketing campaigns of any program,” Castellanos said. “And the Grand Prix is just one more opportunity to attract students.”

While the ads at the event will offer more name recognition, the Lifestyle Expo will also allow the school to directly interact with potential students. Faculty and staff from the college’s CTE programs will be present to explain their offerings. The space will also include handouts and iPads for interested attendees to explore.

“The funding will equip the Long Beach City College with the company’s first 101-foot laser blanking line,” he said. “That means the capacity to cut 5.6 million parts every year, according to the company. TABC is the primary supplier for Tacoma stampings and sub-assembly components such as seats and safety systems.

Parts produced in Long Beach are sent to the company’s Baja California and Guanajuato, Mexico facilities to support Tacoma truck production.

In addition to new technology and expanded production, the investment will support employees to transition to permanent positions with Toyota, the company stated.

Founded in 1972, the Long Beach plant is Toyota’s oldest in North America and represents a $2.6 billion investment in Long Beach, according to the announcement. Toyota now has 10 U.S.-based plants with more than 22,000 employees. The 600,000-square-foot facility employs 350 people, which is not expected to change with the new investment, the company said in an email.

“Toyota’s roots in California run deep,” Chris Reynolds, executive vice president of corporate relations for TMNA said in the announcement. “This investment demonstrates our continued commitment to supporting our employees in the Golden State, investing in our operations across the United States and building where we sell.”

Toyota to invest $27M in new equipment for North Long Beach plant

Officials say the latest investment represents the company’s commitment to California.

By Brandon Richardson

For 50 years the Toyota Auto Body Company has produced car and truck parts on a 28-acre site in North Long Beach. Last month, Toyota Motor North America announced a 4.7 million investment in the facility to expand its capabilities.

The funding will equip the Long Beach facility with the company’s first coil-fed laser blanking line, which will expand blanking capability to include steel and aluminum on the same line. In the automotive industry, blanks are sheets of metal “stamped” into various parts that make up a vehicle, such as doors, roofs, fenders and other components.

“This investment reflects our team’s pledge to produce high-quality products for Toyota vehicles assembled in North America,” TABC President Jim Zehmer said in a statement. “We look forward to continuing our critical role in Toyota’s continued growth.”

With the new equipment, the Long Beach facility will have the capacity to cut 5.6 million parts every year, according to the company. TABC is the primary supplier for Tacoma stampings and sub-assembly components such as seats and safety systems.

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Toyota to invest $27M in new equipment for North Long Beach plant
**A year after approval, Long Beach Recovery Act grants are available for small businesses**

**The application period ends on May 15 at 8 p.m., but the review process will begin as early as April 15.**

By Christian Miy-Susuki

Businesses around Long Beach will finally see money from the Long Beach Recovery Act in the form of direct financial assistance, the city announced last month—exactly one year after the plan was approved by the City Council. Applications are being accepted for several grant programs targeting small businesses in the sectors most deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The application period ends on May 15 at 8 p.m., but the review process will begin as early as April 15.

Customers line up at a Long Beach restaurant.

**With funds awarded shortly after, according to the announcement.**

The four programs offer financial assistance for a variety of businesses, including $5,000 to $25,000 grants for restaurants, breweries and bars; $5,000 to $250,000 grants for nonprofits; and $2,000 to $25,000 grants for small businesses that do not qualify for the other programs.

The city’s economic recovery plan—funded by the federal government through the American Rescue Plan Act—was approved on March 16, 2021, by the council, and funding from the federal stimulus package officially became available to the city in October.

The city’s plan initially was based on about $350 million in federal funding. Following council approval, however, the city received just over $248 million, which resulted in allocations being reduced for several programs.

The city used $13 million to assist businesses and nonprofits with COVID-19 protections during some of the initial phases of the pandemic. Now, the city will use $216.6 million dedicated for direct support for Long Beach businesses.

The Restaurant, Brewery and Bar Relief and the Personal Services and Finance Relief grant programs each have $4 million allocated to distribute to businesses in those sectors. There will be $4.6 million for the Small Business Grant, and a slice of fees for businesses and nonprofits projected to total $2.8 million will also be waived sometime during the second phase.

On the nonprofit side, the Long Beach Recovery Act will allocate $4.2 million to assist with a plethora of financial issues like reducing debt, paying rent and utilities, refocusing employees and restarting businesses.

More direct grants will be released for economic recovery in the third and fourth quarters, John Keisler, director of the Economic Development Department, said during a March 8 meeting. Arts and culture businesses will be provided approximately $350,000 in grants and $40,000 will be set aside for “customer attraction grants” to reopen businesses and encourage spending.

According to the city; these grants will target nonprofit “economic development organizations,” and will assist them in developing and implementing strategies and programs that will help them connect with residents.

Also coming later this year is $200,000 in funds designated as eviction protection for commercial tenants seeking support for those landlords. This money will go toward financing a commercial tenant and property owner coordinator to work with high-end businesses and property owners to access $2 million in rental relief grants and other programs at the local, state and federal levels.

For more information on the city’s economic relief programs or to apply for grants, visit longbeach.gov/economicdevelopment/small-business-grants.

**Spirit of Downtown Awards return**

Rob Smith loads up a freezer bag full of pint-sized ice cream from Long Beach Creamery in Downtown for delivery. (Photo by Steve Hymon)

For more information on the Spirit of Downtown Awards, visit downtownlongbeach.org.

**By Christian Miy-Susuki**

After being put on hold for the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA) has once again recognized members of the community with the Spirit of Downtown Awards.

The award program started in 2012 to posthumously or recognize several individuals who were pivotal to the development of the Long Beach community. Long Beach Post founder Shaun Lumachi, community advocate Mark Bubly, former Long Beach Redevelopment Agency Chair Bill Baker and former Long Beach Press-Telegram editor Larry Allison were the initial recipients of the award. The DLBA has since made the awards a tradition to recognize local businesses, organizations and individuals who represent the same spirit as its first awardees.

This year’s ceremony, held late last month, honored Mayor Robert Garcia along with the DLBA’s board of directors and community organizations.

“It’s an honor to receive this award from the Downtown Long Beach Alliance,” Garcia, a longtime Downtown resident, said in a statement. “The work they do with the city, our residents and our visitors is at the core of what makes Long Beach the best city in the country.”

“I love how diverse, fun and community driven our community is. It’s always great to showcase for others what we’ve come in the last decade,” he added. “The new business and residential developments have brought new life to Downtown—which brings new life to the entire city. I’m excited to see what’s next for us and I will continue to do all I can with DLBA, build an awesome downtown, and stronger Long Beach.”

Here’s a glimpse at the other five winners of this year’s awards:

**Jamaica Aali, Black Everywhere**

“Jamaica Aali realized when the members of her newly formed book club met for the first time there was a catch: No one had actually done the reading,” Aali said in a statement.

“I decided, ‘Well, we didn’t come together because we needed help with reading, we came together because we wanted to connect with other people,’” Aali said.

That idea planted the seed that would become Black Everywhere, which has now grown since its 2012 founding to include more than 8,000 members in 12 cities across the U.S. Black Everywhere hosts events that range from happy hour gatherings to international trips, that range from happy hour gatherings to international trips, that range from happy hour gatherings to international trips, that range from happy hour gatherings to international trips, that range from happy hour gatherings to international trips, that range from happy hour gatherings to international trips.

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**By Christian Miy-Susuki**

**Long Beach could cut cannabis cultivation tax**

In a warehouse north of the 405 Freeway off Cherry Avenue sits a 35,000-square-foot warehouse where the chief cultivator of Fresh Baked helps oversee the harvesting of nearly 8,000 pounds of cannabis per year.

The bounty of dried cannabis flowers comes with a steep tax bill for KRD, the preferred name of the lead cultivator, and others in Long Beach, who must pay $2 for every square foot that’s dedicated to growing cannabis.

For KRD, that means hundreds of thousands in annual taxes on top of a $50,000 per month lease payment and a $150,000 per month electricity bill.

“We sell product all over the state and that tax money comes back to the city,” he said in an interview. “There’s a fine line with taxes and allowing businesses to survive. I think we’re past that fine line.”

Cannabis taxes have generated millions of dollars for the city’s general fund since medical and recreational cannabis businesses were legalized across the state in the past few years.

However, the City Council voted last month to take a closer

**By Jason Ruiz**

**Long Beach Airport could open new lobby amid passenger rebound**

**By Brandon Richardson**

During February, 202,906 passengers passed through the Long Beach Airport, a 9.3% increase from February 2021, according to airport records. And starting in May, travelers will be able to visit a new, state-of-the-art ticketing lobby.

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**Continued on page 26**

**By Christian Miy-Susuki**

**Trouble paying? Let’s figure it out.**

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Long Beach celebrates grand opening of Shoreline Gateway, city’s tallest tower

Shoreline Gateway has taken the title from One World Trade Center, which claimed the distinction when it was completed in 1989.

After almost two decades of planning, the tallest tower in Long Beach has made its official debut. Six months after the building welcomed its first tenants, a waterfront luxury apartment building Shoreline Gateway, at 777 E. Ocean Blvd., celebrated its official grand opening in a rooftop ceremony late last month.

At about 40 feet tall, the building has taken the title of tallest building in Long Beach from the 397-foot tall One World Trade Center, which claimed the distinction when it was completed in 1989.

City officials gathered alongside members of the development teams Anderson Pacific and Lidor, along with other groups that helped make the project possible, at Shoreline Gateway’s rooftop to reflect on the long journey toward completion.

Plans for the project started in 2014 on what was supposed to be a five-year timeline, according to Anderson Pacific President and CEO Jim Anderson.

“It was a real turnout that I was standing on a parking lot with some crumbling buildings and decided that this could be a great project,” Anderson said at the ceremony. “We started on the adventure. And now 18 years later,” he said, “the timetable that we started with wasn’t exactly how it ended up.”

After several delays and redesigns, the shuttering of redevelopment agencies in California in 2012 presented problems like mandatory testing and cleaning for the construction crews, which allowed progress. The costs for materials also increased due to ongoing supply chain issues. Even so, the project endured and welcomed its first tenants in September.

“A lot of work, but we’ve delivered a truly iconic tower that has been envisioned all these years,” Anderson said.

Now, the 35-story tower offers 355 ultra-luxury apartment homes together with amenities, community spaces and about 6,300 feet of commercial space.

Amenities include a residential lounge with a panoramic view on the 5th-floor and a 700-square poolside park in the main and residential leasing lobby. The second floor has an area for the tower’s pet owners that includes a dog park and pet spa.

The amenities themselves are a mix of studios, one- and two-bedroom apartments, ranging from 600 to 1,200 square feet. Rents start at $1,825 a month, up to $5,325 a month. Parking is also included in a 450-car subterranean structure.

At the ceremony, the opening of the new tallest tower in Long Beach is a sign of the city’s resilience.

“I really think this is a true success story for our city,” Councilmember Cindy Allen said. “You have changed our skyline.”

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Cannabis Cultivation

Look at how it taxes cultivators, say those who’ve been placed at a disadvantage against growers from other cities and those operating in the black market.

“We need to do our due diligence on this topic for consumers and the homeowners,” said Councilmember Al Austin, who placed the item on the March 15 council agenda.

Austin noted that the cultivation tax charge in Long Beach is the only one of its kind. The city charges $1.5 per square foot, and the state charges 40 cents per pound.

Other cities in the state charge taxes on cultivation, but they’re not consistent between jurisdictions. One grows cannabis for every $1,000 of gross receipts. Santa Ana’s tax is 60 cents per square foot.

San Francisco’s cultivation tax was between 15% and 3% depending on the volume of sales, but its elected leaders opted to suspend cannabis taxes to help the local industry compete with the black market.

Long Beach officials’ stance on the industry has evolved over the past decade, with the council now fully supporting cannabis growers after some of the alleged negative effects that some members said would follow its re-legalization did not materialize.

Earlier this year, Austin introduced a motion looking at legislation number of online storefront licenses allowed in the city past the current cap of 32.

If passed, the motion would allow businesses to apply to expand the number of online storefronts allowed in the city to 64. The council certified after June 2022 to qualify, but Austin mentioned the possibility of this legislation being quietly killed.

This move would follow its re-legalization did not materialize.

The council is expected to present the proposal to the city’s Budget Oversight Committee to determine whether the cultivation tax is feasible by mid-June.

The city currently levies a 1% excise tax on cultivation and a 4% retail/wholesale tax on cannabis for cannabis who live in an underserved area of the city and have lower net-worths.

The City Council’s vote sent the issue to the council’s committee level, where council members could decide how much to cut the tax, if at all, and reserve updated projections on what it could mean for the city’s budget.

The 9,840 million the city projected would be generated by cannabis taxes this year was earmarked to help support staffing to administer, enforce and oversee the city’s cannabis tax provisions.

It also helps pay for the quality of life offerings that interact with people experiencing homelessness and learning programs at the Mark Twain and Michelle Obama libraries.

Proponents of cutting the tax say it makes small cannabis growers in Long Beach expand and continue to hire more employees. It could also draw in more operators looking to open up cultivation sites in the city.

CDR said that if the city did not use their rent relief fund in a timely manner would not be renewed, and new cities in California could apply for those funds and use the money to pay back last year's rent that was not passed.

The city is still on track to distribute all of its initial funding through “red flag” cases to verify information that applicants provided, CDR said.

In total, the city has received over 1,750 applications for aid but has only made 83 payments for rent or utility payment assistance. CDR said the city continues to receive applications, but those people are being told they’re likely not going to receive help from the city’s current pot of money.

Orci’s comments came after the council requested an update on progress in getting funds to renters and landlords and possible ways the city could speed up the distribution of the money and possibly change eligibility for the program.

The rental assistance program requires tenants to make less than 80% of the area median income, a qualification that some council members have said have excluded thousands of renters who also lost their jobs during the pandemic and were unable to pay rent.

City Council members have worked over the past year to try and speed up the city’s process to make it easier for aid to pay for unpaid rents and an amendment to the state’s rental assistance program allows cities to look into potentially help things the tens of thousands of tenants and landlords who were left out of the original 848 million in payments.

The loan program is part of a budget act signed into law in February and would allow the city to spread the relief payments over a number of years. It could also have a $12 million fund for the city to repay the federal fund.

The U.S. Treasury has warned that cities that did not use their rents relief funding in a timely manner would not be renewed, and new cities in California could apply for those funds.

When it comes to the city’s stance, Austin noted that the cultivation tax has been quietly killed for another year.

By Jason Ruiz
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In 2022, the city’s then-development services director scooped a discounted stay in Napa, courtesy of a lobbyist working on behalf of a developer who was hoping to build a hotel in Long Beach. The city official was demoted over conflicts of interest. What turned out to be a scandal assigned to the center of that hotel scandal a lobbyist who was at the time based in Long Beach, but has also been riddled with challenges, including housing evictions, is to stand up for vulnerable populations whose voices may not otherwise be heard. This April, 2022. BUSINESS JOURNAL

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As the kids grew older and moved out, they sometimes stayed in the attic to sleep, but the family staying in the attic is stay for a while.” Casey lived there for a number of years until he moved to a house in the same neighborhood, said Kip. “I stayed there when I was going to law school in the 1950s.” The family’s next door neighbor K.Lived in the apartment with her husband and daughter in the kitchen.

Even friends of the kids would spend some time living in the house for a month or longer. Walking through the house now, there are echoes of the memories of some children growing up in the home, including many reports of the fireplace where the children would all sing together, accompanied by Casey or Kelly on guitar and Kip on drums.

“We had a little performance group we called the Brothers and the Sisters,” recalls Kip. “I think we only performed publicly once or twice, but we could sing to each other made all the girls wear the same thing. I think she would like to see that now. The house had been bought by a relative.”

In 1968, the girls once again hired to work on the platter on the walls to air-dry rather than by the use of salamanders—electric heaters, that an aunt’s house on Prospect and in 1968, just before school was set to resume, Joan could no longer face going back inland, so they bought the First Street home, where the first girls slept together in a single room.

The girls were considered selling the home to the First Street Fang garden through and that means Joan would have a stockbroker for Merrill Lynch in their Hollywood office, but the firm had recently opened an office in Downtown Long Beach’s Oceangate.

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As the kids grew older and moved out, they sometimes stayed in the attic to sleep, but the family staying in the attic is stay for a while.” Casey lived there for a number of years until he moved to a house in the same neighborhood, said Kip. “I stayed there when I was going to law school in the 1950s.” The family’s next door neighbor K.Lived in the apartment with her husband and daughter in the kitchen.

Even friends of the kids would spend some time living in the house for a month or longer. Walking through the house now, there are echoes of the memories of some children growing up in the home, including many reports of the fireplace where the children would all sing together, accompanied by Casey or Kelly on guitar and Kip on drums.

“We had a little performance group we called the Brothers and the Sisters,” recalls Kip. “I think we only performed publicly once or twice, but we could sing to each other made all the girls wear the same thing. I think she would like to see that now. The house had been bought by a relative.”

In 1968, the girls once again hired to work on the platter on the walls to air-dry rather than by the use of salamanders—electric heaters, that an aunt’s house on Prospect and in 1968, just before school was set to resume, Joan could no longer face going back inland, so they bought the First Street home, where the first girls slept together in a single room.

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Long Beach updates position on street vendors

By Crystal Niebla

Long Beach is expected to support state legislation that would create food safety regulations for sidewalk vendors, but it will stop short of issuing an outright moratorium on fines for “bad operators.”

The City Council discussed a resolution late last month that would direct its legislative advocates in Sacramento to support laws that would make it easier for street vendors to operate in the state. The city is also looking to ask its own Health Department to try to make the permitting process more understandable, and possibly less expensive.

State Sen. Lena Gonzalez, a former Long Beach council member, introduced Senate Bill 972 in February with the goal of helping California’s street food advocates in Sacramento to support laws that would make it easier for street vendors to operate in the state. The city is also looking to ask its own Health Department to try to make the permitting process more understandable, and possibly less expensive.

State Sen. Lena Gonzalez, a former Long Beach council member, introduced Senate Bill 972 in February with the goal of helping California’s street food advocates in Sacramento to support laws that would make it easier for street vendors to operate in the state. The city is also looking to ask its own Health Department to try to make the permitting process more understandable, and possibly less expensive.

Some changes to the state’s retail food code that could help street vendors include a streamlined process for food cart compliance, including pre-approved blueprints for carts, and giving local health departments more discretion in the approval process. Changes could also be made to the current requirement that food carts have sinks, power and water. A process to address non-compliance without issuing fines or criminal penalties could also be developed.

A resolution is expected to be drafted and returned to the council for a vote in the future, but what the definition of a bad operator might be is yet to be determined.

Staff writer Jason Ruiz contributed to this report.

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City denies business license for new club

The dispute could end up in court, but it’s unclear what that would mean for JP23’s operations in the interim.

By Jason Ruz

A city official denied a business license application for one of Downtown Long Beach’s newest establishments, JP23, an entertainment venue that opened on Pine Avenue and Broadway in October. The owner of the venue also operates a JP23 club in Fullerton and has landed in legal trouble with the Orange County city and gained media attention after he sued a woman for libel and slander who said he was drugged at the venue and later raped.

The owner, Jacob Pozhikala, could now wind up in a legal battle with Long Beach after the city denied its business license following nine misdemeanor citations and two notices of violations since September. Kevin Riper, Long Beach’s financial management director, said JP23 had a “history of repeated non-compliance” with the city’s codes and that the business could be considered a public nuisance, according to a letter Riper sent to the business in February.

Some of the trouble stems from a three-day Super Bowl party that the nightclub hosted in February, Long Beach officials said the club did not have an entertainment permit for the event. Reimers, a lawyer representing JP23 in its appeal against the city, argues that his client did try to follow all the city’s laws and disputes whether Riper has the legal authority to deny a business license. In a March 2 letter sent to the city, Reimers laid out a much different sequence of events that alleges the city did not produce JP23’s license and permits in a timely manner, that the business did not receive proper invoices from the city and that the city’s payment portal was defective. The letter included a $7,998 check for JP23’s business license fee. JP23’s applications for the proper permitting and license, as well as its extensive good faith efforts to work with the City, cannot be discounted,” Reimers wrote.

Reimers did not respond to a request for comment on the appeal. JP23, a bar, restaurant and lounge, opened in Long Beach in October after long delays following its initial build-out that started in 2019. The city granted a temporary business license to JP23 in November, but it says that JP23 moved forward with the planned Super Bowl event that included live music despite not having an entertainment permit.

Riper officially denied the business license application earlier this month. Now the issue is headed to the City Council.

Deputy City Attorney Art Sanchez said the council will likely hear the issue at an April 12 meeting, and it could refer it to a special hearing officer to see that through is not known.

The dispute could end up in court, Sanchez said, but he was unclear what that would mean for JP23’s operations in the interim.

The issue could return to the council for a final vote sometime in June, which could decide the fate of JP23’s business license at the city level.

“From the city standpoint, this business was given every opportunity to comply with all the rules and regulations with the city and they didn’t do it,” Sanchez said.

If JP23 has faced similar similar issues with its Fullerton location, The Los Angeles Times reported in February that the Fullerton City Council voted to restrict JP23’s live entertainment hours by requiring the venue to close by 11 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and by 10 p.m. all other days of the week.

The decision by the council was preceded by protests against the Fullerton location over allegations made by several women that they were sexually assaulted after visiting the Fullerton location. JP23 was accused of continuing with live events while the Fullerton Police Department could fully investigate the entertainment permit process.

Sanchez said if the council votes to uphold the city’s denial of the business license for JP23, it could have to close, but whether the city would have to take civil action to see that through is not known.

The dispute could end up in court, Sanchez said, but he was unclear what that would mean for JP23’s operations in the interim.

Long Beach AirPort
Continued from page 17

February’s figures, however, remain 27% below February 2020, which was the last full month of operations before the onset of the pandemic. National travel recovery shows similar trends, according to data from the U.S. Transportation Security Administration. Throughout February, 49.8 million people passed through U.S. airports, up 48.76% from the same month last year. Air travel nationwide remained 24.6% below pre-pandemic levels, when about 60.5 million people flew out of U.S. airports.

Total air cargo inbound and outbound at Long Beach Airport totaled 1.909 tons in February 12.4% compared to the 1.666 tons during the same month last year.

Cargo levels, though, remained 25.5% below February 2020.

News of the airport’s ongoing recovery, though, came as officials announced that travelers will begin using the long-awaited new ticketing lobby starting May 4.

The $25.5 million checked baggage inspection system, which was funded primarily by a grant from the Transportation and Security Administration. The 6,345-square-foot facility connects to the new ticketing lobby and will allow TSA to more efficiently screen checked bags, officials said.

The facilities were designed by Culver City-based architecture firm Gorgias and constructed by Feenan Construction Builders. Ahead of the May opening of the ticketing lobby, the city is hosting an open house for the community Saturday, April 30 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event will include family-friendly activities, refreshments, music and tours of the ticketing lobby. Parking is free.

The new facilities are the first two components of the $10 million Phase II Terminal Area Improvement Program, which has suffered some delays as a result of the pandemic. While the full multi-project program was originally slated for completion by the end of this year, a new timeline has been determined.

Work on the third component, a new baggage claim area, is already under construction just north of the historic terminal building, behind the existing baggage claim. The project, also by Gorgias and Swinerton at the contractors’ estimated $26.5 million and is expected to open before the end of the year.

Other projects include a meet-and-greet plaza with concessions and renovations to the historic terminal building that will transform it into a new cargo center and a transportation hub for buses, cabs and rideshares.
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