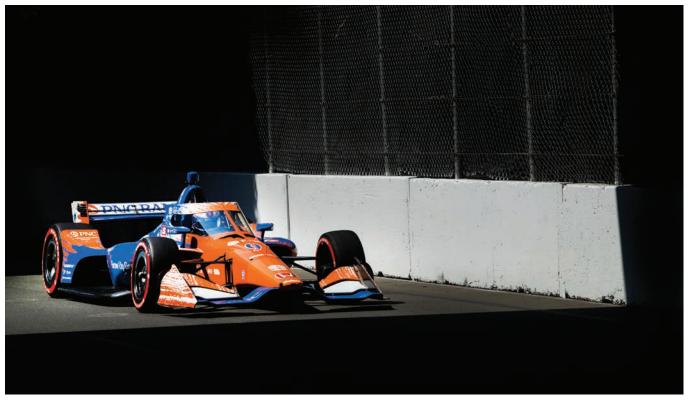
BUSINESS JOURNAL

AN EDITION OF THE LONG BEACH POST



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Scott Dixon drives down a straight-away during the IndyCar qualifying for the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach In Long Beach

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.

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.

Continued on page 9

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.

Continued on page 7

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

Continued on page 11

LONG BEACH
BUSINESS JOURNAL

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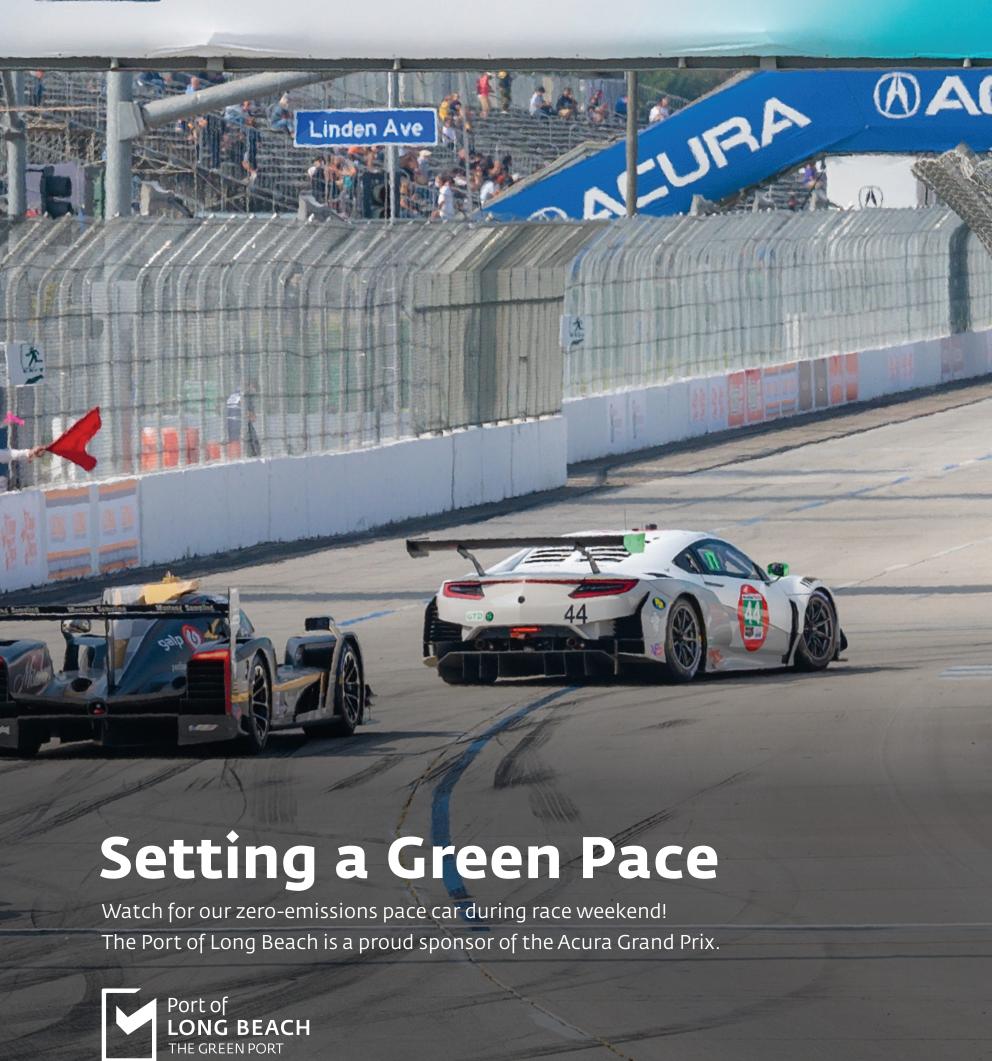
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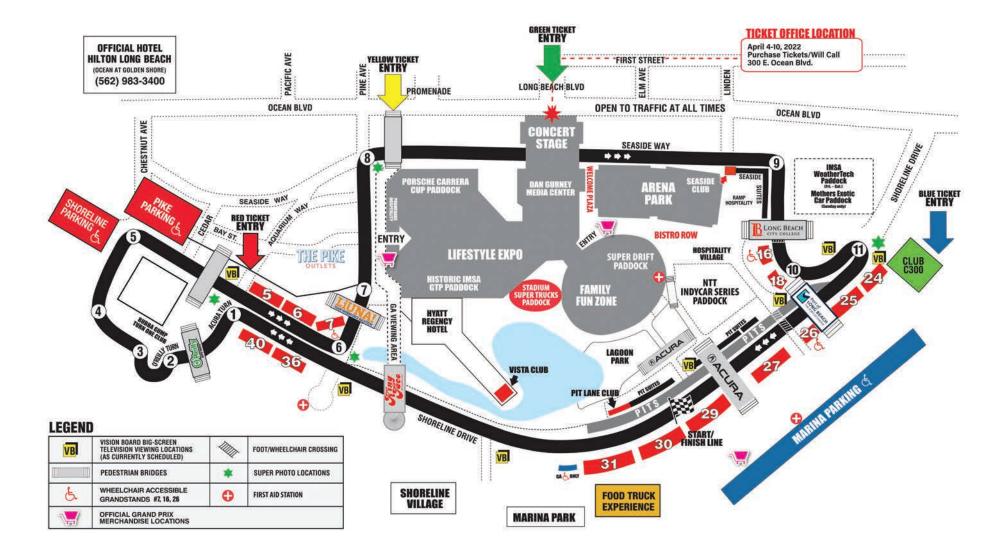




Port of LONG BEACH THE PORT OF CHOICE



MACURA **GRAND PRIX OF LONG BEACH CIRCUIT MAP**



RACE WEEKEND SCHEDULE Time schedule subject to change without notice

7:30 AM

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 #1

11:05-11:35 AM Porsche Carrera Cup Practice #2

12:40-1:00 PM Stadium Super Trucks Practice #1

1:15-3:00 PM IMSA Practice #2 3:15-4:15 PM IndyCar Practice #1

4:30-5:00 PM

4:55-5:55 PM IndyCar Autograph Session (paddock open to all spectators)

Porsche Carrera Cup Qualifying

5:10-5:55 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

Spectator Gates Open 8:45-9:45 AM IndyCar Practice #2 IMSA Qualifying 9:55-10:15 AM 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 (paddock open to all spectators) 12:05-1:20 PM IndyCar Qualifying & Firestone Fast 6 IMSA pre-race ceremonies begin 1:30-2:00 PM 2:00-4:00 PM **IMSA SportsCar Grand Prix of** Long Beach (100 min) 4:30-5:00 PM **Stadium Super Trucks Race #1 Historic IMSA GTP Challenge Race #1** 5:15-5:35 PM 6:00 PM

Concert at Terrace Plaza featuring Royal Machine w/ special guests 6:00-6:20 PM **Super Drift Practice** 6:30-8:00 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
10:45-11:05 AM	Historic IMSA GTP Challenge Race #2
11:10-11:20 AM	Acura NSX Hot Laps
11:25-11:40 AM	Mothers Exotic Car Parade
11:45 AM	IndyCar pre-race ceremonies begin
12:38 PM	"Drivers Start Your Engines"
12:45-3:00 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

DRIVERS (R) – Denotes Rookie of the Year candidate

Car	Driver	Hometown	Car Name	Team
2	Josef Newgarden	Nashville, Tennessee	Hitachi	Team Penske
3	Scott McLaughlin	Christchurch, New Zealand	Snap-on	Team Penske
4	Dalton Kellett	Stouffville, Canada	K-LINE	AJ Foyt Enterprises
5	Pato O'Ward	Monterrey, Mexico	Arrow McLaren SP	Arrow McLaren SP
6	Helio Castroneves	Sao Paulo, Brazil	AutoNation/SiriusXM	Meyer Shank Racing
7	Felix Rosenqvist	Värnamo, Sweden	Vuse Arrow McLaren SP	Arrow McLaren SP
8	Marcus Ericsson	Kumla, Sweden	Huski Chocolate	Chip Ganassi Racing
9	Scott Dixon	Auckland, New Zealand	PNC Bank	Chip Ganassi Racing
10	Alex Palou	Barcelona, Spain	NTT Data	Chip Ganassi Racing
11	Tatiana Calderon (R)	Bogota, Colombia	ROKiT	AJ Foyt Enterprises
12	Will Power	Toowoomba, Australia	Verizon	Team Penske
14	Kyle Kirkwood (R)	Jupiter, Florida	ROKiT	AJ Foyt Enterprises
15	Graham Rahal	New Albany, Ohio	Quartz Engine Oil	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing
18	David Malukas (R)	Chicago, Illinois	HMD	Dale Coyne Racing with HMD
20	Conor Daly	Noblesville, Indiana	BitNile	Ed Carpenter Racing
21	Rinus VeeKay	Hoofddorp, Netherlands	Sonax	Ed Carpenter Racing
26	Colton Herta	Valencia, California	Gainbridge	Andretti Autosport w/ Curb-Agajanian
27	Alexander Rossi	Nevada City, California	NAPA Auto Parts / AutoNation	Andretti Autosport
28	Romain Grosjean	Geneva, Switzerland	DHL	Andretti Autosport
29	Devlin DeFrancesco (R)	Toronto, Canada	PowerTap	Andretti Steinbrenner Autosport
30	Christian Lundgaard (R)	Hedensted, Denmark	Shield Cleansers	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing
45	Jack Harvey	Bassingham, England	Hy-Vee	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing
48	Jimmie Johnson	El Cajon, California	Carvana	Chip Ganassi Racing
51	Takuma Sato	Tokyo, Japan	Nurtec ODT	Dale Coyne Racing with RWR
60	Simon Pagenaud	Montmorillon, France	AutoNation/SiriusXMMeyer	Shank Racing
77	Callum llott (R)	Cambridge, England	Juncos Hollinger Racing	Juncos Hollinger Racing





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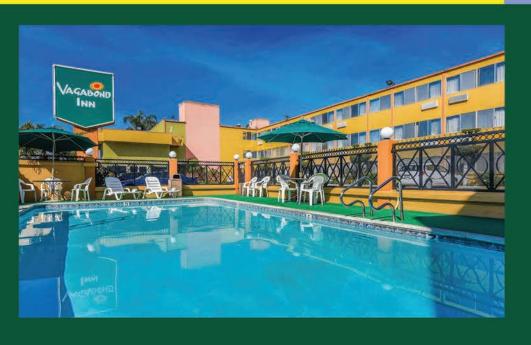
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BUSINESS JOURNAL April 5, 2022



An IndvCar driver speaks to about 150 Lona Beach Unified School District students in 2019

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 May-Suzuki

The Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach brings many things to mind: racecars, burnt rubber, rowdy spectators. For most people, financial literacy isn't high on that list—but Banc of California is set to connect the two, at least for a group of lucky high school students.

Banc of California this year will continue a partnership with the Grand Prix Association of Long Beach that started in 2018 in which the financial institution invites students at schools around the Long Beach Unified School District to the Grand Prix to participate in a special program focused on teaching financial literacy and life skills.

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.

When it first started, the program initially welcomed 25 to 35 students,

but it has since grown to allow 150 LBUSD juniors and seniors, particularly those in math and science programs, to participate this year.

Participants are treated to a full day at the Grand Prix, arriving early in the morning to take a tour of the venue, from the track to the Lifestyle Expo. They will also be able to head into the paddock to talk with the drivers and their teams as they are preparing for the race.

They "get to see firsthand... what it takes to manage a team like this," Banc of California Marketing Director Jeff Pace said.

The tour is followed up by a presentation from the Banc of California, which is one of many the bank puts on annually to 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 tying 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 racecar driver, why couldn't you?"

GRAND PRIX

After hearing from the speakers and a quick lunch provided by the bank, the students get to sit in the stands and watch practice laps for the IndyCar race.

"They get a taste of everything," Pace said. "They get the full experience as they're out there and interacting with the various groups that help put this event together."

This type of community education is nothing new for Banc of California's team. According to Vice President of the Community Reinvestment Act program Chris Garcia, the Banc holds as many as 150 "educational and empowerment seminars" in a single year focused on financial literacy.

"Our community reinvestment effort is really around financial literacy and providing those stepping stones and those tools for either youth or young adults to make sound financial decisions as they get older," Garcia said. "For these school districts, these nonprofits, usually the No. 1 thing that they're asking you for is financial education and empowerment seminars."

While many of the bank's partners for these programs are school districts and organizations specifically focused on business and financial education, working with the Grand Prix is important for the Banc of California, officials said, because of the crucial role it plays in Long Beach Beach and its economy.

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

Mandate-Free

Continued from cover

"Obviously, we're delighted that we can conduct this event this year without any of the mandates and regulations that we had imposed when we ran the race back in September," Grand Prix Association of Long Beach CEO Jim Michaelian told the Business Journal.

Under the previous regulations, Michaelian and the Grand Prix faced logistical challenges in setting up the event. With rules shifting—and standards differing based on whether the venue was inside or outside questions on how to actually execute the event while adhering to COVID regulations emerged.

Before the most recent change in the city's health order, Long Beach's requirements would have impacted the Lifestyle Expo because it's held indoors but not the rest of the Grand

"The question was: Where do we examine individuals in terms of

their proof of vaccination, or their negative COVID test?" Michaelian said. "Do you do it outside the Convention Center itself, which is very difficult because of the amount of people and movement and the lack of queuing areas?"

While the most recent Grand Prix—which was postponed to September because of the pandemic—followed those requirements, Michaelian said he's glad the event is free of that burden.

"It's going to be similar to what it was in the past," he said.

"We're delighted that when they come here." Michaelian said of this year's attendees, "they will not be required to observe any of the mandates which have been in place during these last months and years.

Long Beach city officials, meanwhile, are also more than happy to welcome the event back with no COVID-19 mandates.

"In 2020, the Grand Prix was one of the first major events in Long Beach that unfortunately had to be canceled due to the pandemic," Mayor Robert Garcia said in a



during the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach race weekend Saturday, Sept. 25, 2021

statement. "Having it return last year and now to its original schedule is a huge testament to our continuing recovery from COVID-19."

"It's been an incredibly difficult

two years," he added, "but thanks to the success of our vaccination program, we're excited to safely bring iconic events like the Grand Prix back to Long Beach." ■

GRAND PRIX

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GRAND PRIX

Road repairs are a top priority for city and Grand Prix officials ahead of race weekend

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 worth 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 walked it pre- and post-race, but basically we're looking for any damages. Are there any sprinklers 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."

Then there are other less evident considerations, like securing flyover



Brandon Richardson / Business Jo

The stretch of Pine Avenue between Shoreline Drive and Seaside Way is covered in slurry seals and cracks, the result of wear and tear from Grand Prix activities.

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

Grand Prix spokesperson
Chris Esslinger said the contract

Continued on page 13



Grand Prix Returns Continued from cover

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.

"It will be a postcard of what Long Beach has to offer," Michaelian said. "Covering the race, you cannot avoid providing exposure for all the surrounding areas—you'll see the skyline and how much it's grown, the marina ... attractions. We're delighted that we're going to be able to convey that to literally millions of viewers."

In addition to the televised IndyCar race, the upcoming event from April 8-10 will see the return of Grand Prix staples, including Stadium Super Trucks, Formula Drift, the Historic IMSA GTP Challenge and the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. The Global Time Attack event that ran in September, however, has been replaced with the Porsche 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, Michaelian said.

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%," Michealian 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.

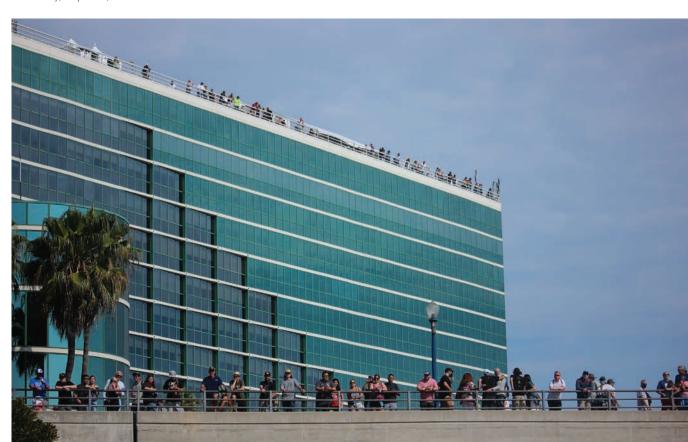
While just over 180,000 people attended the September event, Michaelian said the organization expects to return to normal levels and is on track to host about 187,000 people over the three days.

Pandemic or no, each year the association works to revamp and reinvigorate the event, Michaelian said. Race types have been used to reach new demographics, such as the addition of drifting, which is highly popular among Asians and Latinos.



andon Richardson / Business Journal

Formula Drift drivers Justin Pawla, left, and Forrest Wang go head-to-head on Day Two of the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach Saturday, Sept. 25, 2021.



Brandon Richardson / Business Jou

Spectators watch the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship race in Downtown Long Beach from atop the Hyatt Regency and a pedestrian bridge Saturday, Sept. 25, 2021.

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 seating to the grandstand areas, opting instead to expand its use of "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 Pine Avenue.

The upcoming event is the association's first under its new contract with the city, which now runs through 2028. The multi-year 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 among those who aren't drawn to a traditional race event, few can deny the appeal of a certain offshoot that's been hosted at the Grand Prix of Long Beach for nearly a decade: colorful trucks taking high-speed turns on three wheels before launching off a ramp and soaring through the air.

Since 2013, Robby Gordon's Stadium Super Trucks have flown through Long Beach during Grand Prix weekend. The high-flying racers are set to return to the city for the ninth time during the 47th Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach April 8-10, six months after their last bout in the city.

"The adrenaline rush, the excitement, the infatuation with cars and style and design and, obviously, competition—those are the things that grabbed me and brought me in," Gordon said, talking about his passion for racing.

Gordon, 53, was born and raised in the Lakewood-Cerritos area. His grandfather, Huntley Gordon, was a racecar driver, making six American Championship Car Racing starts in 1914 and 1915. Robert Gordon Sr. was an off-road desert racing legend, who earned the moniker Baja Bob.

The youngest Gordon started



Brandon Richardson / Business Jou

Stadium Super Trucks fly off a ramp in succession during their first challenge over the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach race weekend. Saturday. Sept. 25, 2021.

down a similar path as a child, taking up BMX racing when he was 9 or 10, he said. At that time, his dad was racing and working out of Parnelli lones' shop in Torrance.

"As a young kid, I was able to be around a facility like that where they had Indy Cars, drag cars, Baja trucks and other things," Gordon said. "It allowed me to get hooked on motorsports, and that was a cool thing."

Gordon graduated from BMX to motocross before getting behind the wheel of a truck for off-road racing like his dad. He won five consecutive SCORE International off-road class championships from 1986 to 1990.

Dissatisfied with the lack of spectators during desert races, SCORE founder Mickey Thompson decided to take the dirt and the trucks to the people, culminating in his

stadium series, which ran from 1983 to 1992. Gordon won the stadium series championship in 1989.

From trucks, Gordon transitioned to cars, running in hundreds of races in Trans-Am, IMSA GTO, Champ, NASCAR and IndyCar. But Gordon wanted to get back to his roots and in 2013—more than two decades after Thompson's stadium truck series ended—he established the Stadium Super Trucks.

"It taught me a lot as a young racer—car control, handling, competition—that's what Mickey Thompson racing was all about," Gordon said. "It's just fun. The stadium truck is probably the most fun vehicle you could ever race."

The small trucks are purposebuilt race vehicles with racing transmissions, engines, shocks and chassis, Gordon said. The bodies are fiberglass, and the trucks weigh in at about 2,800 pounds, and max out around 150 miles per hour.

While an IndyCar can cost upward of \$1 million, the Super Trucks run about \$300,000, Gordon said. And they get put through the ringer.

"They can bang off each other, bang off the wall, hit the jumps and keep going. These things are really strong," Gordon said, adding that each truck is manufactured at the same facility to the same specifications, so there are no advantages.

Gordon said the truck series is a good stepping stone for up-and-coming drivers. Back in the Thompson days, Jimmie Johnson and Casey Mears came up through the series like Gordon and went on to long careers in IndyCar and NASCAR.

Now, Gordon's series is launching $\,$

careers of young talent, including 2020 NASCAR truck series champion Sheldon Creed and Australian-American Indy Lights driver Matthew Brabham.

"It teaches racecar drivers to be good drivers because you have to literally manhandle this vehicle." Gordon said.

Not only is the Super Truck series an in for young drivers, Gordon said, but it is also a great marketing tool to attract a broader and younger audience. One video on the series's Facebook page has accumulated over 131 million views, which Gordon says is more than any other motorsport video, including Formula 1, Indy Car and NASCAR.

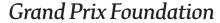
Keeping up with a younger crowd meant acknowledging its shorter attention span, Gordon said. To keep fans excited and engaged, Super Truck races run about 20 minutes.

"At about 20 minutes, they're bored, they're ready for something different," Gordon said. "We can keep the attention of a young adult engaged for that amount of time. And I love it. It's just a lot of fun."

As the name suggests, the Stadium Super Trucks still race in stadiums, as they did under Thompson in the 1980s and '90s, but Gordon said he thinks the drivers put on just as good a show—if not better—on street tracks like the ones in Long Beach.

Gordon, who now lives in Orange County, drove in Long Beach during his Trans-Am and Indy Car years and said he plans to keep his Super Trucks racing in the city as long as the Grand Prix allows them.

"I love the atmosphere, the history, the tradition—it's one of my favorite tracks," Gordon said. "The King of the Beach is always fun. It's an iconic event."



Continued from cover

charities, based on the fact that we just couldn't do it."

But while the pandemic was the latest blow, the foundation's struggles really began in 2016. That was the year Toyota, the Grand Prix's previous sponsor, moved its main headquarters from nearby Torrance to Plano, Texas.

The move was the catalyst for Toyota's two-year withdrawal from the Grand Prix, which became official when the car manufacturer ended its sponsorship in 2018. But the foundation felt the impact almost immediately. When Toyota left in 2016, it also ended the Pro/Celebrity Race—an event that provided the bulk of the foundation's annual revenue.

Each year, the foundation was able to bring in at least \$100,000 by auctioning off an opportunity to participate in the race, which pitted celebrities against a wide variety of racers. The money played a major role in ensuring that the foundation could provide the donations it promises to organizations each year.

"Even in years when our attendance at events was diminishing, we still had the ability to sell that seat in that Pro/Celebrity race, and knew we were going to make around \$100,000 off it," DuRee said.

For the entirety of the lifespan of the foundation, it followed the same formula: hold an event around the Grand Prix, count up the funds, and distribute those funds to local charities. Without the money from the race, its operation model was no longer sustainable.

"These are all small, locally based, Long Beach-based charities that a few thousand dollars makes a huge difference in their budget," DuRee said. "People like March of Dimes and the Heart Association...don't need that small contribution that the foundation might be able to provide."



Courtesy of the Grand Prix Association of Long Beau

Runners take off during the 2019 Grand Prix 5K.

Despite giving to multiple organizations every year, having a pool of funds was never a problem because of the floor the \$100,000 seat at the Pro/Celebrity race provided.

As part of efforts to recoup the losses, the foundation started the Grand Prix 5K in 2018, which gives people the opportunity to run on the race track. But while the run is popular, DuRee said it doesn't replace the revenue that was lost from Toyota's pullout.

"It doesn't raise a whole lot of money because we don't charge a lot for it," DuRee said. "But it's a fun event, and it ties directly into the Grand Prix."

Still, the organization managed to stay afloat—until the pandemic completely halted events in 2020.

COVID solidified that the foundation's operational strategy was no longer sustainable. Without the ability to host events at the Grand Prix during the lockdowns, there was nothing for the foundation to do in its current form.

"We had a board of directors that essentially didn't have anything to

Honoring Marlene Temple and the Don Temple Family Charitable Foundation

do," DuRee said.

The foundation acted to address the issue in September, when it brought on Commune Communications to work with the Board of Directors. The group "spent half a day locked up" in a strategy meeting, DuRee said, looking for the best way to move forward.

"We began to look at what we've been doing," DuRee said. "There were three elements: where we came from, where we are right now, and where we want to be."

Part of the solution that the foundation came up with was to diversify its events. Instead of just having one central event at the Grand Prix, the foundation is planning to host several marquee events throughout the year as part of its fundraising efforts.

By doing this, DuRee hopes that the foundation's events can attract a wider audience. The repetition of the single event, he said, can become stale.

"One thing that really challenges all foundations and all charities is that by holding the same type of events over and over again, it becomes stagnant," DuRee said. "The people that you're reaching out to to be participants have that, 'I've been there and done that' attitude, and you begin to see a reduction in the number of participants."

the number of participants."

Another part of the strategy to revamp the foundation's approach is to select a single charity or entity to receive the funds raised, as opposed to disbursing them to a larger group.

This move was made to not only increase the impact the funds can have on a single entity, but also to attach a name to the donation that people are making. DuRee said he believes this will help attract potential donors.

"People say, 'When you're holding an event, who does that event benefit?'," he said, "and we would have to say, 'Well, we are not sure, but it might be somebody like...' And that usually suffices. But occasionally people will wish it was a specific charity that they supported."

There's one thing, though, that will not change for the foundation: the Robert E. Leslie scholarship program it offers. Through the program, seven students—one from every Long Beach area high school—receive \$1,500 each to use as they please.

"It's not allocated for tuition, or books or anything else. It's for them to use to further their education," DuRee said. "If that means going out and buying a pair of Air Jordans, I don't care."

The scholarship program is funded through donors. While the foundation is able to use the money however it wants, the funds are mainly used for the scholarship program, DuRee said, and that is not expected to change.

"We will maintain the scholarship program, as long as we're able to financially. It is extremely popular with the high schools," DuRee said.

While officials are still tightlipped about what other changes are in store, DuRee said he expects they'll be well received.

"It's going to be very exciting for both our foundation and for the people that will benefit," DuRee said. "And I think it'll generate a lot of support."



Brandon Richardson / Business Journ
Sparks fly and people cheer as Robby Gordon continues to race despite riding a rim
after losing a tire during a 2019 race in Downtown Long Beach.





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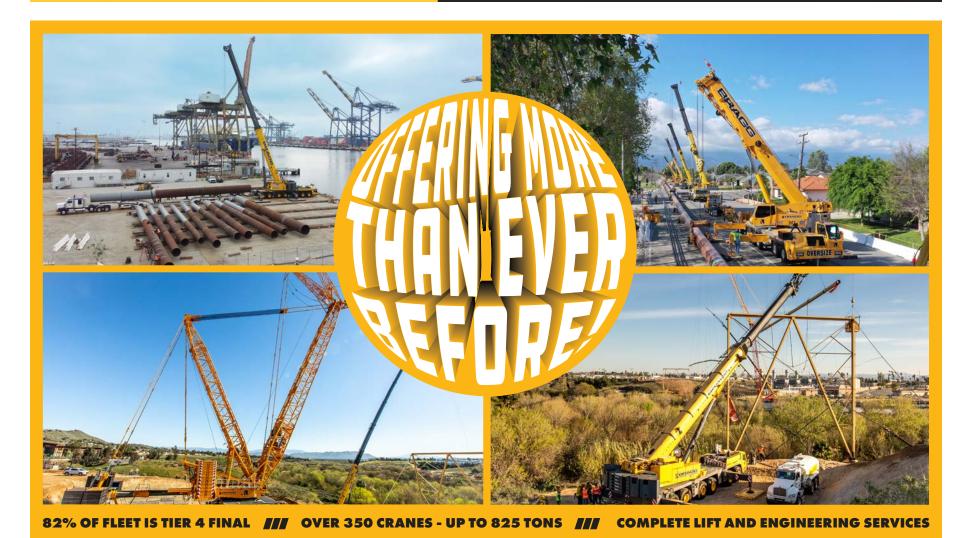
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COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

How Long Beach became home of the tire-shredding victory doughnut

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 lemoncurry-stuffed doughnut, although the rhetorical question still applies, and the unnecessary answer is nobody. Nobody doesn't love that kind

Rather, I'm referring to those acrid-smelling tire-shredding street-takeover 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. Many consider them dangerous applications of asphalt graffiti, although there is, if you can put your get-off-my-lawn feelings aside 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 insist that I come

out hard against street takeovers and figurative automotive pastries.

Nobody knows the origin of doughnuts. It probably started somewhere in the Carolina backwoods by bootleggers, the way 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.

"It's where the victory doughnut started," Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach CEO Jim Michaelian said during a recent interview. The bit of post-race hot-doggery 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 tireburning circle to the delight and surprise of the fans lining that stretch of road.

CART, however, was not amused and hinted at

fines for further doughnuts. Zanardi refrained for his next couple of wins, but finally succumbed to the fun and fans' applause and began putting the circular maneuver into his victories, as did other drivers in motorsports such as NASCAR, to the point where it's almost mandatory—and if you're of a mind to think so, Zanardi's antics may have contributed to the current popularity of spinning smudge circles on public streets.

Zanardi, along with Bill Auberlen, 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 June 2020 he was involved in a serious road injury while competing and was placed in a medical coma. He was hospitalized for 18 months. He is still in the process of recovery. ■



Two-time CART champion Alex Zanardi is one of the 2022 inductees in the Long Beach Motorsports Walk of Fame



Alex Zanardi performs a doughnut to celebrate his 1997 victory at the Long Beach

Road Repairs

Continued from page 8

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 these cars will tear it up," Esslinger said.

City and race officials are not the only ones intently focused on the conditions of Downtown streets. IndyCar legend Helio Castroneves, who won the Long Beach race in 2001, 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 so he knows which turns may have a crack or a divot 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 sealer 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.

The Grand Prix Association will pay \$150,000 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.

That includes using pressurized water to remove the excess rubber from concrete portions of the street, but the city doesn't use the same method on asphalt portions because it reduces the life of the asphalt.

Those types of repairs will start after the April 10 finale when the track and all of its guardrails and bridges start to be taken down. Under the reduced timeline in the new contract, the tear-down work must be done by April 30. ■

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 school'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 10 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 in 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 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 Joshua Castellanos.

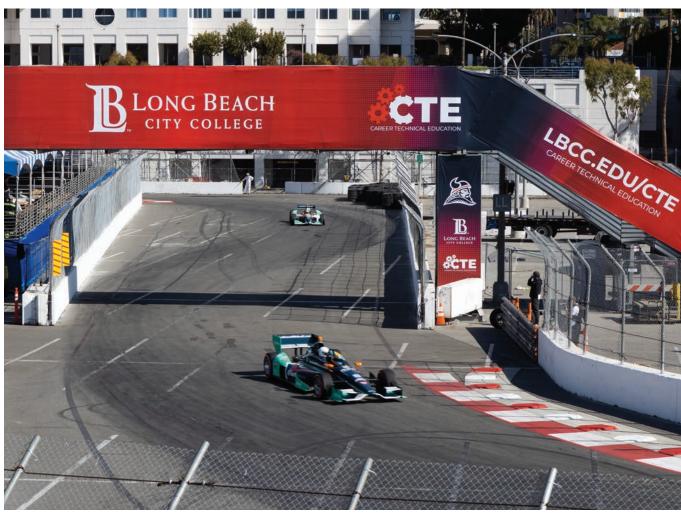
"Honestly, every year, I ask myself, 'Why are we not here?'" Castellanos said by phone.

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 15% decline in attendance nationwide from fall 2019 to fall 2021, and in California, the drop is particularly steep at 20%, according to a March memo from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

"The impact of the pandemic on community college enrollments



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Two-seater IndyCars drive under the new Long Beach City College bridge, which spans the east side of the Grand Prix circuit, during media day for the 2022 Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach.

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 2021, which comes out to over 2,500 students.

But despite that overall trend, enrollment is rising for CTE programs, according to Castallanos. While numbers

CTE enrollment began shifting from high school programs to postsecondary schools in the 2017-'18 school year.

Just 210,916 students were enrolled in CTE programs at colleges and community colleges in California that year, but by the 2019-'20 year—which is the most recent data publicly available—that number more than quadrupled, to over 928,000 students enrolled.

"This college is a gem, and we need to do anything possible so that people know what we have available."

- Joshua Castellanos, LBCC Executive Director of Public Affairs and Marketing

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 bus advertising, to market itself.

"I believe we have probably one of the strongest advertising or marketing campaigns for our 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.

"Having that Expo one-on-one that face-to-face with people is going to be huge," Castellanos said.

The fact that the CTE has automotive based programs—a direct tie to the Grand Prix—makes the opportunity all the more fitting, Castellanos said.

"This is just another opportunity for us to share all those programs," he said.

"This college is a gem," he added, "and we need to do anything possible so that people know what we have available."



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Semi-trucks and a Tundra pull into the Toyota Auto Body Company in North Long Beach.

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. And last month, Toyota Motor North America announced a \$27 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 auto industry, blanks are the 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 blanks every year, according to the company. TABC is the primary parts 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 allow 25 variable 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 \$485 million investment in Long Beach, according to the announcement. Toyota now has 10 U.S.-based plants with more than 27,000 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 resources for TMNA said in the announcement. "This investment demonstrates our continued commitment to doing business in the Golden State, investing in our operations across the United States and building where we sell."





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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 May-Suzuki

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 leave House of Hayden in Long Beach's East Village Arts District Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022

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

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\$25,000 grants for personal service and fitness establishments; \$5,000 to \$25,000 grants for nonprofits; and \$2,500 to \$10,000 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 \$250 million in federal funding. Following council approval, however, the city received just over \$226 million, which resulted in allocations being reduced for many programs.

The city used \$13 million to assist businesses and nonprofits with COVID-19 protections during some of the worst of the pandemic. Now, the city will use \$20.6 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. The city reserved \$1.6 million for the Small Business Grant, and a slew 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 has an allocation of \$2.4 million to assist with a plethora of financial issues like reducing debt, paying rent and utilities, rehiring 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 \$900,000 in grants and \$450,000 will be set aside for "customer activation 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 \$250,000 in funds designated as eviction protection for commercial tenants and support for their landlords. This money will go toward financing a commercial tenant and property owner coordinator to work with high-need businesses and property owners to access \$28 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 business-grants.

Spirit of Downtown Awards return



Robb Smith loads up a freezer bag full of pint-sized ice cream from Long Beach Creamery in Downtown for delivery Friday, Dec. 3, 2021.

By Christian May-Suzuki

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

The award program started in 2012 to posthumously recognize several individuals who were pivotal to the development of the Long Beach community. Long Beach Post founder Shaun Lumachi, community advocate Mark Bixby, 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 alongside local business owners and community organizers.

"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 downtown businesses, our residents and our visitors is at the core of what makes Long Beach the best beach city in the country."

"I love how diverse, fun and

community driven our community is. It's also great to see how far we've come in the last decade," he added. "The new business and residential developments have brought new life to Downtown which bring 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 to build a stronger downtown and stronger Long Beach."

Here's a glimpse at the other five winners of this year's awards.

Jamaica Aali, Black Everywhere

There are many reasons to come to a book club meeting, but most of them have nothing to do with books.

That's what 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.

"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 told the Business Journal.

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 11 cities across the U.S.

Black Everywhere hosts events that range from happy hour gatherings to international trips, which serve as a way for Black people to foster a community together. Currently, a trip to Italy is scheduled for May 2023.

And yet, Black Everywhere is a lean organization. It doesn't charge for memberships or events. Instead,

Long Beach could cut cannabis cultivation tax

By Jason Ruiz

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 6,000 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 \$12 for every square foot that's dedicated to growing cannabis.

For KRD, that means hundreds of thousands in annual taxes on top of a \$180,000 per month lease payment and a \$50,000 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

Long Beach Airport to open new lobby amid passenger rebound

By Brandon Richardson

Passenger volumes at Long Beach Airport remain well below prepandemic levels, but officials said late last month they are already seeing a boost during the springand starting in May, travelers departing from the airport will begin their journey inside the facility's new, state-of-the-art ticketing lobby.

During February, 202,906 people traveled through the small municipal airport, nearly quadruple the same month last year, when only 51,305 passed through the facility.

"We are already experiencing a boost in spring travel," said Long Beach Airport Director Cynthia Guidry, "and look forward to an even more solid report for March."



Construction continues on the new ticketing lobby at Long Beach Airport, which is set to open May 4.

to apply for grants, visit longbeach. gov/economicdevelopment/small-

BUSINESS JOURNAL BUSINESS JOURNAL 18 Newswatch Newswatch 19 April 5, 2022 April 5, 2022

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.

By Christian May-Suzuki

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, the 35-story luxury apartment building Shoreline Gateway, at 777 E. Ocean Blvd., celebrated its official grand opening in a rooftop ceremony late last month.

At about 400 feet tall, the building has taken the title of tallest building in Long Beach from the 397-foottall One World Trade Center, which claimed the distinction when it was completed in 1989.

City officials gathered alongside members of development teams Anderson Pacific and Ledcor, 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 2004 on what was initially supposed to be a five-year timeline, according to Anderson Pacific President and CEO Jim Anderson.

"It was that summer that I was standing on a parking lot with some crumbling buildings and decided that this could be a great project,"

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A woman walks in from the balcony of the penthouse during the Shoreline Gateway ribbon-cutting ceremony in Long Beach

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 dealt it a major blow. The site was in a redevelopment zone, so state officials told the team to cancel development entirely.

"We were told by the state to essentially break old deals that we had made, just put the property on the open market in a fire sale and see what we would get," City Manager Tom Modica said.

Through legislative action, the city was able to keep the project, and Ledcor joined the team in 2011 and helped fill the hole the RDA left. Construction for the project finally started in 2014, and another project directly attached to Shoreline Gateway—The Current—was completed by Ledcor in 2016.

Even after The Current—a 17-story mixed-use tower with 223 luxury units that is connected to Shoreline Gateway by a joint plaza—was built, the construction of the new tower still faced challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented problems like mandatory testing and cleaning for the construction crew, which slowed 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.

"At long last, we have delivered a truly iconic tower that has been envisioned all these years," Anderson said.

Now, the 35-story tower offers 315 "ultra-luxury residential apartment homes" together with amenities, community spaces and about 6,500feet of commercial space.

Amenities include a residential lounge with a panoramic view on the 34th floor and a 700-gallon jellyfish tank in the main residential and leasing lobby. The second floor has an area for the tower's pet owners that includes a dog park and pet spa.

The units themselves are a mix of studios, one- and two-bedroom apartments, ranging from 616 to 1,700 square feet. Rents start at \$2,960 and go up to \$15,795. Parking is also included in a 470-car subterranean structure.

For city officials, 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 in our city," Councilmember Cindy Allen said. "You have changed our skyline."

Cannabis Cultivation

Continued from page 17

look at how it taxes cultivators, who say they're being 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 business community," said Councilman Al Austin, who placed the item on the March 15 council agenda. Austin noted that the cultivation

tax charged to cannabis producers is the only one of its kind. The city charges \$12 per square foot, and the state also charges \$161 per pound.

Other cities in the state charge

those with previous convictions tied to 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 committee level, where council members could help decide how much to cut the tax, if at all, and receive updated projections on what it could mean for the city's budget.

The \$9.2 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 operations.

It also helps pay for the quality of life officers who interact with people experiencing homelessness and learning programs at the Mark

"There's a fine line with taxes and allowing businesses to survive. I think we're past that fine line."

- KRD, Chief Cultivator of Fresh Baked

taxes on cultivation, but they're not consistent between jurisdictions. Los Angeles charges \$20 for every \$1,000 of gross receipts. Santa Ana's tax is \$10 per square foot.

San Francisco's cultivation tax was between 1% and 1.5% depending on the volume of sales, but its elected leaders opted to suspend cannabis taxes entirely to help the legal 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 owners 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 to look at expanding the number of retail storefront licenses allowed in the Twain and Michelle Obama libraries. Proponents of cutting the tax say

that it will help existing 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. KRD said that if the city were to

meet them in the middle, the tax implications could be huge. If the tax was zero, he estimated he could hire 100 more employees, none of whom make minimum wage, he said. If nothing's done, he said a lot of cultivators in Long Beach could go out of business by year's end. "If you went to Starbucks and

said we're going to triple your taxes, Starbucks would probably say they're not going to open in your city," he said of the current tax structure for cannabis. "It just

to present findings to the city's Budget Oversight Committee on whether cutting the tax is feasible by mid-June. ■

Long Beach rental aid funds are running out, but more money could be on the way

By Jason Ruiz

Most of Long Beach's \$64 million in rental assistance funding has been committed, according to city officials, but there is hope that the city could access additional aid to help landlords and tenants clear back-rents.

Long Beach Director of Development Services Oscar Orci told the City Council at its March 22 meeting that the city had about \$9 million left of the initial \$64 million that it received during the pandemic to help landlords and tenants pay their bills.

There is hope that pending state legislation could provide additional grants to help cover unpaid rents, and an amendment to the state's rental assistance program allows cities to take out loans to potentially help the thousands of tenants and landlords who were left out of the original \$64 million in payments.

The loan program is part of a budget act signed into law in February and would allow the city to take out a cash flow loan that could be repaid with future federal funding. The U.S. Treasury has warned that cities that did not use their rent relief funding in a timely manner would have it reallocated, and now cities in California could apply for those funds and use the money to pay back loans issued by the state.

While the city is still on track to distribute all of its initial funding by next month, officials are working through "red flag" cases to verify information that applicants provided, Orci said.

In total, the city has received over 33,500 applications for aid but has made 8,913 payments for rent or utility payment assistance. Orci 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 wealthier 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 off unpaid rents and allow property owners to pay their mortgages.

"What we don't want is a lot of small housing providers to have to default and get taken over by larger conglomerates that don't have as big of a footprint or interest in the city," said Councilwoman Suzie Price, one of the supporters of the request.

A countywide eviction moratorium was extended in lanuary with a phased-out approach that could see the Los Angeles County's poorest residents, those making less than 80% of the area median income, protected from eviction through June 2023.

Those tenants would have to selfcertify after June 2022 to qualify, but the extended protections would protect them from eviction for another year. A family of four with a household income of \$90,100 or less would meet the upper threshold to qualify.

Tenants are required to have at least applied for rental assistance aid to be eligible for the extended protections from the county's moratorium.

An update on the city's rental assistance program is expected to be presented to the council next month.



Workers at the cannabis cultivation company Freshly Baked de-leaf marijuana plants inside a Long Beach compound Tuesday, March 15, 2022.



A still of an interactive graph that shows disclosed connections between lobbying firms, their clients, lobbyists and city officials.

Ethics Commission looks to give city's lobbying requirements deeper scrutiny

By Jason Ruiz

In 2009, the city's thendevelopment services director received a discounted stay in Napa, courtesy of a lobbyist working on behalf of a developer who was hoping to build a hotel in Downtown Long Beach.

The city official was demoted over what then-City Manager Pat West called a "public trust issue," and in the months that followed, elected leaders swiftly passed the city's first ordinance setting rules for lobbying, defined as the attempt to influence city policies and decisions.

But now, with a new Ethics Commission empowered by a recent charter amendment, those rules may soon be strengthened—and among the biggest proponents of these changes is the lobbyist who was at the center of that hotel scandal a dozen years ago.

"At the end of the day, it should be a level playing field," said Mike Murchison, one of a few dozen registered lobbyists in Long Beach who says everyone does not play by the same rules. "It should be 100% transparency, and here in Long Beach, it is not a level playing field."

Critics including Murchison say it

is not fair that the law passed in 2010 does not require city employee labor groups or nonprofits to register with the city and make their interactions with decision-makers public.

Angela Turner, a managing attorney at Legal Aid Foundation, said her organization's role is to stand up for vulnerable populations whose voices may

"At the end of the day, it should be a level playing field. It should be 100% transparency, and here in Long Beach, it is not a level playing field."

- Mike Murchison, Registered Lobbyist

He singled out some nonprofits like Legal Aid Foundation Los Angeles, which is often on opposing sides of rental policy disputes. Some of Murchison's clients are landlords, while the foundation represents people who are fighting evictions, placing them at odds for the past few years while the council debated how best to keep people housed during the pandemic

not be heard, and to try and show policymakers the effects of the legislation they vote on.

"It's critical for our advocates to be able to amplify the stories and the things that we're seeing on the ground as the front-line law firm representing low-income communities for LA County," Turner said

Los Angeles has a requirement

that nonprofits report their efforts under its lobbying law—and the Internal Revenue Service requires nonprofits to identify expenditures related to lobbying on tax filings.

Turner said that Legal Aid has not eclipsed a 30-hour per quarter threshold that would require them to register in LA. If the rule were changed in Long Beach, the nonprofit would be concerned, but would comply despite impacts to its already heavy workload, Turner said.

"It could present some challenges," she said of the staffing that might be required to file lobbying reports. "Our staff does an incredible job but there is more work than there are advocates."

Many agree the difference between "advocacy" and "lobbying" is a very gray area, and that the rules need more clarification and enforcement teeth.

Is the law being enforced?

In the 12 years since Long Beach adopted its local law, no one has been charged with violating it, possibly due to the city's dependence on self-reporting and omissions drawn into the law.

Lobbyists, whether they're hired to represent specific firms or lobby on behalf of a corporation in the city, are required to file semiannual reports with the City Clerk to disclose who they represented, which city officials they talked to and what they talked about.

The lobby firm with the most business in Long Beach is Englander Knabe & Allen, which represents the interests of companies including BNSF, Gulfstream, Clear Channel communications and the 2nd \pm PCH shopping center. From July to December alone, city filings show the firm represented more than 50 clients, lobbying city staff, members of the City Council, the mayor and members of various commissions.

Matt Knabe, a lobbvist with the firm, said he would follow whatever rules the city put in place because that's part of his job, but noted that some people exempted from the current law, like union presidents, are very powerful and do lobby city decision-makers.

However, Knabe pointed to LA, which has a stronger ordinance than Long Beach but has also been riddled with allegations that lobbyists are buying influence inside City Hall.

"If someone is going to go out of their way to give someone a bag of money, they're going to do it," Knabe said.

There are different thresholds for lobbyists that trigger when they must report their activity to the city. A "contract lobbyist" has to report their activities if they're paid at least \$3,200 during a quarter to lobby in the city. A business owner or their employees or officers must report if they lobby for more than 50 hours during a quarter.

An "expenditure lobbyist," someone who conducts public relations or advertising campaigns

Continued on page 23

Spirit of Downtown Continued from page 17

Black Everywhere organizers rely on the generosity of the community to host their events.

One of Aali's goals is to put more money into the organization, but that's easier said than done. She has enlisted the help of a business mentor from the nonprofit SCORE—one of the largest networks of volunteer business mentors in the country—and is looking into options to generate revenue.

"That's really been the focus now into the next year," Aali said. "How do we make this something that's financially responsible, but still stays true to the fact that we want to build a happier, healthier Black community?"

Sheila Gibbons and Alan Giomi, Willmore Baking Company

Whenever a student walks through the doors at Willmore Baking Company to participate in the company's eight-week baking program, Sheila Gibbons knows to never ask for their address

"Many times, [they] don't have addresses," Gibbons said.

The program is geared toward adults with low or no incomes, many of whom are homeless. The goal is to teach baking skills and, ideally, land students a job after they graduate.

It started in 2018 when Gibbons was volunteering at a nearby soup kitchen. While she was happy with the food being served, she remembers the desserts being not quite up to par. She enlisted her husband, Alan Giomi, who's a retired baker, to bring in better offerings.

Soon, Gibbons and Giomi were teaching the patrons at the soup kitchen how to make their own desserts, an undertaking that Gibbons considers the first trial run of Willmore Baking Company.

"We had eight graduates. And out of that eight graduates, five of them got jobs right away. So we were inspired.'

In the years since, Willmore Baking Company has been intentional in how it serves students.

"We buy them clothing that they can wear to go to interviews," Gibbons said. "We teach them interviewing skills. We have people sign a contract that they will complete the classes. It's a system that really works."

Joaquin Nunez, Downtown Runners

Downtown Runners, formerly known as Dog Haus Runners, is not a running club that will help you train for a marathon. What you'll find instead is a social club where people come together and run—and then drink.

"It's just hanging out with great people on Wednesday night," club head Joaquin Nunez said. It's a "good excuse to get out and have a beer. And I don't feel guilty about it, because I just ran 3 miles."

As its previous name suggests, the club originally ran out of the

Dog Haus Biergarten in Downtown. But members have since decided to branch out to other restaurants.

"We started reaching out to a lot of the local restaurants and everybody was really open to the idea," Nunez said.

Some bars and restaurants will even extend their happy hour and other discounts for the runners, Nunez said, as a way to not only incentivize them to stay, but to thank them for their patronage.

But Downtown Runners isn't just about running and drinking; members of the club also give back. Runners have participated in a wide assortment of community service projects, from collecting toiletries for the Long Beach Rescue Mission to helping Habitat for Humanity build a home in Long Beach.

"I do want to focus on the philanthropy side a little bit more and gain a little bit more recognition from the community," Nunez said. "I guess getting our name out there and being able to see what else we can do to give back...that's the one thing that I hope we can do better."

John Tully, Evan Kelly, and Graham Baden, Pedal Movement

Pedal Movement was born in 2009 when John Tully and a few of his friends came together to offer bicycle programming of all kinds: valets, rodeos and classes.

"It was very much oriented around empowering our local community," Tully said, "and providing various programming to make that decision to ride a bicycle to an event or to work easier."

But a decision to offer bike valets at the Long Beach Farmers Market—and learning that customers were willing to pay for the service—would set the organization on a new path.

"Slowly, but surely, we started creating a professionalized workforce around various bicycle transportation programming," Tully said.

The group's biggest milestone came in 2016, when Pedal Movement took over operations at a bike center that would later become Long Beach's GoActive Hub

"At that point in time, [we] were like, 'Wow, we can probably really turn this into a business," Tully said.

Today, Pedal Movement employs a staff of about 40 people. In addition to overseeing the GoActive Hub, the company also helps manage bike fleets for companies like British Airways, which has a 15-bike fleet.

Education still plays an important role as well, with free classes held monthly at the Hub. Pedal Movement is still very much involved in creating community programming, from roller skating on the beach to educational seminars.

"It's a mixture of creating community" with free programming, Tully said, "and empowering the community with various educational seminars."

Robb Smith, Alley Cat Deliveries

When Robb Smith started Allev Cat Deliveries in 2018, he faced a

question: How would he differentiate himself from other delivery services?

The answer, it turned out, was simple. Smith didn't charge the high commissions that the major services did. Instead, he set on a simple flat fee for all of his deliveries.

"That's what set me apart," Smith said. "And that's why people loved it, because it was honest.'

But when the pandemic hit, Smith lost a great deal of business as many of his customers temporarily closed their doors. Smith, though, was undeterred.

Rather than shutting down, he expanded his delivery offerings. "We're much more than [just food

delivery] now," Smith said. "We do prescriptions, we do alcohol, we do weed. We do food, we do airport runs to LAX and Long Beach and John Wayne. I really expanded it to just more than just food delivery."

Even outside of his work with Alley Cat Deliveries, Smith puts in the extra time and effort to help his community. When businesses he worked with were affected by the riots that followed the George Floyd protests, for example, Smith worked to help get them back on track.

"I really do care about my community," Smith said. "That's what makes us different." \blacksquare



Members of Black Everywhere pose during one of the group's organized hikes



Pedal Movement works with the city of Long Beach, businesses and residents to make biking easier and convenient for all





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COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

Bluff Park home hits the market for \$3M

The architect Clarence "C.J." Smale is best known for his work in Los Angeles, where he designed movie theaters and other larger buildings as well as some stately residences during the 1920s. Among his more notable works are the homes he built for Buster Keaton and Natalie Talmadge at 543 S. Muirfield Road in 1923, his own home at 625 S. Rimpau Blvd., in Hancock Park in 1923, and the much-admired Smith House, which he designed in the style of Zig-Zag Moderne at 191 S. Hudson Ave., also in Hancock Park.

In the midst of his popularity and flurry of construction, he made time to do this large and stately home in Long Beach in 1925, which is soon to hit the market for the first time in its 97-year history, at 1300 E. First St. in the historic Bluff Park district.

Listed by Realtor Costanza Genoese-Zerbi of Redfin at \$2,988,888, the two-story, 4,056-square-foot, six-bedroom, four-bath home sits on the terminally quiet stretch of First Street at Paloma Avenue—it's as emblematic of Bluff Park as you can get, with little noise from traffic—in fact most of the traffic on First Street is the constant parade of neighbors walking their dogs. It feels miles away from the stretch of mansions and various eclectic homes lining Ocean Boulevard just a short block to the south.

The home has had two owners in just shy of a century. It was built for Dr. Dean E. Godwin and his wife Myrtle, with Myrtle pretty much riding herd on the construction, showing up every day to see that things were being done to her exacting specifications. She wanted the framing done with two-by-sixes rather than two-by-fours, giving the walls a bonus 2 inches of thickness; she wanted the plaster on the walls to be air-dried rather than by the use of salamanders—electric heaters, that can result in the plaster cracking over time.

In the 1950s, the Godwins once again hired Smale to rework rooms on the Paloma Avenue side of the home to better accommodate the space for an attached apartment that could be, depending on what doors would be sealed off, either a studio, one-room, or two-room apartment, or simply adding to the home's total square-footage.

The Godwins kept the house for years after Dean died and until Myrtle moved out due to deteriorating health, and the couple's two sons wanted to sell the house while their mother was still alive to sign the necessary papers for the sale and avoid whatever complications that could arise from probate and inheritance.

Meanwhile, not too far away, the large family of Willard and Joan Walls was cramped in a small three-bedroom home on St. Joseph. The family's main house was in Granada Hills, but Joan could no longer bear the heat of the San Fernando Valley. The family of two boys and five girls had been allowed to use for a few summertimes 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 St. Joseph home, where the five girls slept together in a small bedroom that, later, their brother Kip described as wall-to-wall beds.

Still, the small size of the home, in addition to the fact that the family still owned a house in Granada Hills (a home that was dead to Joan), was untenable for any length of time, so the couple put both houses up for sale and sold them within days of each other, and the Walls went rapidly from owning two homes, to owning none.

Through a friend, Willard heard that the Godwin sons were considering selling the home on First Street. In 1968, Willard made them an offer of \$55,000 and Joan helped to rush the paperwork through and the escrow closed in just 30 days, in an era where it usually took 60 to 90 days, and the home was sold without ever being listed. The sale was ideal for Willard, who was a stockbroker for Merrill Lynch in their Hollywood office, but the firm had recently opened an office in Downtown Long Beach's Oceangate.

Even though the First Street home had six bedrooms, the girls still shared one room, though it was considerably larger, the primary one in the residence.

April 5, 2022

"I was 10 when we moved in," recalls Kip, who now lives and works in Oregon. Casey, the eldest of the children, was a teenager. "He staked out the basement and put a waterbed down there," said Kip. "There has been a darkroom in the house and my oldest sister later moved in there and put up a loft bed."

As the kids grew older and moved out, they sometimes came back to the house for a place to stay for a while. "Casey lived there for a number of years after finishing law school at Notre Dame," said Kip. "I stayed there when I was going to USC and working at the Queen Mary, my sister KT lived in the apartment with her husband and daughter for a while."

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 a large family growing up in the home, including many evenings by 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 all sang all the time. My mother made all the girls wear the same thing. I think she wanted them to be like the Lennon Sisters from 'Lawrence Welk.'"

The home isn't an opulent mansion and has a strong family feel about it. Unfurnished now, there are rooms at every turn, all with the original hardwood floors and their sturdy plaster walls. There's a dining room and an eating area in the cozy kitchen with a little fireplace that Joan had installed to replace an incinerator that was there.

"She loved the beach and the cool breeze, but she hated being cold," said Kip of his mother, who died last Thanksgiving. "So she loved having that fireplace in the kitchen to keep her warm, and we often had a roaring fire going in the living room."

The kitchen is currently being lightly redone, with new appliances, countertops and backsplash, but they want to maintain the old-time look to it. Throughout the house you'll find little drawers and cabinets of indeterminate utility—although one thing is explainable: a small door in the wall in the upstairs nursery that opens out above the stairwell so the parents downstairs can hear if the baby is squalling. It's a low-tech baby monitor.

The home, even when it hits the market, is not turnkey. Much is being left for the new owners to deal with as they see fit, including refinishing the myriad wood-trimmed windows and doors and cabinets throughout the house and installing new tile on the bathroom floors and of course deciding on whether to make the apartment into a studio or one- or two-bedroom units or just expand the house, which to this day remains beautiful with numerous balconies and windows and an inviting courtyard with a fountain (that also needs repair) and a bit of Long Beach history: a serpentine crack running along the patio that was caused by the 1933 earthquake.

"People who are looking for homes in Long Beach often are worried about earthquakes," said Realtor Genoese-Zerbi. "I tell them a house like this one was standing before the 1933 quake and it was standing afterward. It's going to be fine."



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with the intent of directing others to contact City Council members to influence legislation, must register after they've spent \$5,000 in a year.

While violating the ordinance is punishable as a misdemeanor that could lead to a six-month jail sentence, monetary fines, and a temporary ban from working in the city as a lobbyist, the city relies solely on self-reporting from lobbyists and does not collect data from city officials' calendars to see if all lobbying activity is being reported.

Powerful city employee unions, neighborhood associations, representatives of business improvement districts and nonprofits do not have to file their activities.

Violations are hard to prove

Long Beach City Prosecutor Doug Haubert, who took office the same year the lobbyist ordinance was approved, said that a violation of its rules is something that would have been brought to his attention and he can't recall a single case.

While having a criminal conviction tied to lobbying might make it hard to retain or attract future clients—they'd be barred from practice in the city for one year—proving that someone has violated the law is difficult.

Haubert said it's easy to allege that someone broke the rules, but proof is hard to come by.

"You'd have to prove the amount of money, the amount of time, and that the act of lobbying was happening," Haubert said.
"It would be pretty hard to prove a violation."

There is no enforcement mechanism on the City Clerk's end, which is the office that receives and publishes the reports, but a 2020 audit of the city's ethics program included some suggestions that could bolster the policy.

The audit said the Ethics Commission should recommend creating a local fine structure for city officials who fail to file their legally required forms that show if they've received gifts from lobbyists and others who work with the city.

It also suggested that city officials' calendars, which visitors typically sign when meeting with them, be declared public documents. Those calendars could then be reviewed to verify whether lobbying activity is being accurately reported.

There is broad support for the recommendations in the audit from city officials and the Ethics Commission, but the implementation could be determined by the number of city resources that are made available, said Susan Wise, chair of the Ethics Commission.

City Attorney Charlie Parkin agreed that the ordinance has never

really had the teeth it needed to allow the public to see "how the sausage is made," but questioned whether making officials' calendars public would really solve anything.

"I think you're going to see people change how they calendar," Parkin said, explaining that people could easily leave certain meetings off of their calendar.

Parkin and others said they think most people are trying to follow the rules, and making it more strict could end up making it more difficult for the people who are not breaking the law.

Is a stricter ordinance the answer?

John Edmond, a former chief of staff for Councilman Dee Andrews who now runs his own lobbying firm, said that some of the cities with the most restrictive lobbying rules are the ones that have the biggest issues.

Edmond referenced Los Angeles and the one council member serving a prison sentence and another under investigation for alleged pay-to-play schemes that unfolded at LA City Hall.

Edmond is unique in both having been lobbied as a city employee and working as a lobbyist. He also represents clients like the Apartment Association California Southern Cities, which does not have to register its activities because it's a nonprofit and therefore exempt.

He acknowledged that some groups may have more access to decision-makers through private meetings, and making it more transparent by including all groups in lobbying reports could be a start.

However, the public needs to be able to participate more in policy, meaning that important issues would be sent to council committees before being presented to the City Council for approval on a given Tuesday night.

"If you had more opportunities to be part of the process, whether you're a paid advocate or not, that is where I would see people having a little bit more faith in how the government is working," Edmond said. "Then you know the decision hasn't already been made."

The Ethics Commission is just getting started with possible changes to the city's lobbying law, but could only recommend changes to the City Council about who should and shouldn't have to register their activity.

Wise said there is no set timeline for when it could make a recommendation, but it expects to get monthly updates from a subcommittee working on the issue. She said the commission in general is committed to making a difference in how things in the city get done.

"I think the whole city will be a lot better in terms of what the product it produces, provided if everyone starts looking at what they're doing and thinking through an ethical lens," Wise said.

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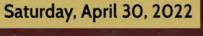
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24 Newswatch **BUSINESS JOURNAL** April 5, 2022

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 support California's street food vendors by removing barriers to accessing food vending permits.

Her bill aims to modernize the California Retail Food Code to address the "complex permit challenges faced by sidewalk food vendors," the state senator's office said when the bill was introduced.

Some changes to the state's retail food code that could help street



coffee cart, Cafablanca, in Long Beach Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2020.

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.

that he would like the city to still have the ability to enforce state health laws where there are real concerns of public health.

health jurisdiction to enforce state health law," Modica said. "We do still need to go out and make sure people are safe." Cameron Kude, owner of coffee

"We still have a requirement as a

these problematic businesses.

City Manager Tom Modica said

cart pop-up Cafablanca, said that in the past, he's had authorities threaten to have his cart impounded over regulations that are too strict.

Kude said in order to be permitted, his cart would have to have a threecompartment sink, which he deemed as unnecessary and impractical as he used disposable cups instead of washing dishes.

Kude, who has pressed the council to take action on the issue since August, said that the decision from the meeting made him feel frustrated because street vendors are waiting to be decriminalized.

"It's just a little disappointing that it wasn't thought out," Kude said about the legislation.

Gonzalez did not respond to a request for comment.

Beyond being criminalized, some street vendors have been victimized in Long Beach, and their unpermitted status has left some conflicted on reporting their attacks.

In July 2020, elotero Viliulfo "Bililfo" Fernández was punched and pistol-whipped during a robbery where his money and phone were stolen while working in the Washington neighborhood. He made contact with police that day after he was knocked unconscious, but has been reluctant in the past.

When street vendors like him are robbed of money or products and call for help, some have found that police end up giving them tickets.

That happened in a separate incident involving a street vendor being harassed in August. The Long Beach Police Department said the ticket was voided and it was against department policy to issue citations for street vendors lacking permits.

Since the violent robbery, Fernández has returned to selling his corn in the Washington neighborhood, where he lives. Eliminating more obstacles with the senator's bill, such as receiving permits more easily, could be a step in the right direction to support him and his fellow street vendors.

"Because with a permit, it feels happier, and any day, even a small thing, [a vendor] would call the police," Fernández said.

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. ■



Councilmember Mary Zendejas, who proposed the resolution, said that there should be a carve-out for

Discussion of a citywide

vendors through the end of the

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COVID-19 pandemic quickly fizzled

in the March 22 meeting. Council

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BUSINESS JOURNAL 26 Newswatch April 5, 2022

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 Ruiz

A city official denied a business license application for one of Downtown Long Beach's newest establishments, IP23, 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 she was drugged at the venue and later raped.

The owner, Jacob Poozhikala, 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 sports bar JP23 on Broadway and Pine Avenue in Downtown Long Beach.

the event.

Ethan Reimers, a lawyer representing IP23 in its appeal against the city, argues that his client did try to follow all the city's laws and disputed whether Riper has the legal authority to deny a business license.

In a March 23 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 \$1,398 check for JP23's business license fee.

"JP23's applications for the proper permitting and licensure, 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 conditional 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 its April 12 meeting, and it could refer it to a special hearing where a hearing officer would issue findings to the council.

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.

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 IP23'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 also accused of continuing with live events before the Fullerton Police Department could fully investigate the entertainment permit request.

In the months leading up to JP23's opening in Long Beach, Poozhikala sued one of the alleged rape victims for libel and slander, along with the city of Fullerton and its Police Department over alleged due process violations.

Sanchez said if the council votes to uphold the city's denial of the business license for IP23, 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 the JP23's operations in the interim.

Long Beach Airport

February's figure, however, remains 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, 48.5 million people passed through U.S. airports, up 48.76% from the same month last year. Air travel nationwide remains 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 1,097 tons in February, up 17.2% compared to the 936 tons during the same month last year. Cargo levels, though, remain 25.4% 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 \$26 million, 16,700-squarefoot building will feature about 30 ticketing kiosks for passengers to check in for their flights. The machines are touchless, a feature particularly poignant as the coronavirus continues to linger after its appearance over two years ago

The building also will include 21 ticketing counters, which may be utilized by any airline based on demand. This differs from the current ticketing lobby inside the historic terminal building, which are assigned to airlines regardless of demand.

The project is expected to receive Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification, a designation awarded by the U.S. Green Building Council to projects that address

carbon emissions, energy and water efficiency and other environmental and health issues.

Opening in conjunction with the ticketing lobby is a \$25.5 million checked baggage inspection system, which was funded primarily by a grant from the Transportation and Security Administration. The 6,545-squarefoot 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 Corgan and constructed by Swinerton 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 \$110 million Phase II Terminal Area Improvement Program, which has suffered some delays as a result of the pandemic. While the full multiproject program was originally slated for completion by the end of this year, a new timeline has not 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 area. The project, also by Corgan and Swinerton as the contractor, is budgeted at \$15 million and is expected to open before the end of the year.

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





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