

LONG BEACH

BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Stevie Merino, founder of the Birth Workers of Color Collective in Long Beach, leads a class for adults and their children in which she teaches them to make elderberry syrup, which boosts the immune system during cold and flu season.

# Access to doulas is needed to support parents of color

By Tess Kazenoff

Stevie Merino didn’t always know what a doula was, but going into her pregnancy, she knew the importance of having an advocate by her side. Merino, who grew up in Long Beach on Medi-Cal insurance, had experienced firsthand the difficulties in accessing adequate health care that come with poverty—but with a background in activism and an anthropology degree, along with being married, Merino thought things would be different by the time she was pregnant, she said. “There were all these correlating things I thought would protect me

from the experiences I had read and heard about as a woman of color birthing in the United States,” Merino said. But when it came to finding an advocate to help her through her birthing process, she was shocked by the scarcity of culturally relevant doulas available, she said. Throughout her birth experience, Merino became the target of numerous microaggressions. “I ended up having to kick a nurse out while I was pushing my baby out because she was being rude,” Merino said. “I really had to self-advocate in such an intimate and vulnerable time in my life.” And Merino was far from alone in

her experience. Black people in particular face the largest health disparities and experienced maternal mortality rates three or four times higher than all other racial and ethnic groups in California from 2011 to 2019, according to the California Department of Public Health. While many factors can contribute to the stark variability in risk of death, some are particularly prevalent, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including access to care, quality of care, structural racism and implicit biases. Based on what she went through, Merino became determined to be a small part of a bigger solution. A few months after she gave birth, Merino was on her way to Oakland for a doula-of-color training, with her 3-month-old in tow. And a couple of years after that, Merino gathered with other birth workers to create the Birthworkers of Color Collective, an initiative that, while rooted in Long Beach, has trained about 200 people across the country and even internationally, and is currently in its 10th cohort. Still, for people of color, access

## Memorial campus restructures leadership team

By Brandon Richardson

As the search continues for a new CEO, the leadership team at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center and Miller Children’s & Women’s Hospital is being restructured “to align with ... future strategic plans,” MemorialCare, the operator of the two-hospital campus, announced last week. The restructuring will create new positions across the campus, including a chief nursing executive, a chief strategy officer and a chief executive specifically for Miller Children’s. Memorial will not have a similar dedicated chief executive; officials noted the position is needed for Miller Children’s because of the unique role it plays in regional pediatric care. All of the new positions will report to the yet-to-be-named campus CEO. The changes come in the wake of current CEO John Bishop’s unexpected announcement in July

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## Barriers to mental health care mount as need increases

By Tess Kazenoff

About a year and a half ago, Long Beach resident Dawne Iannaci began the process of searching for a therapist. “I really needed help, and I was not doing well at all,” Iannaci, 55, said. “I have some chronic illnesses that I deal with, and my thoughts weren’t OK.” After securing a referral from her primary care doctor, Iannaci—a nurse who was on disability due to a recent hip surgery and has Medi-Cal insurance, the state’s health coverage program for low-income Californians—was told that she just had to submit a financial form and she would be contacted within a week. Instead, Iannaci received no response. When she was eventually able to secure an introductory appointment, the therapist didn’t contact her again for over a month. Iannaci tried restarting the process, but her luck didn’t improve. After contacting at least seven local

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Stevie Merino, founder of the Birth Workers of Color Collective in Long Beach, laughs as she stops Bowie Ferguson, 1, from reaching for burning incense during a class for adults and their children  
Brandon Richardson / Business Journal..... Cover

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Courtesy of AbilityFirst

AbilityFirst board members, capital campaign committee members, staff and participants join in the ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the grand reopening of AbilityFirst's Long Beach Center.

# AbilityFirst reopens Long Beach center after 18-month renovation, \$6M campaign

*The organization's efforts to raise \$6 million for its Long Beach and Pasadena centers began in 2019, and the Long Beach center finally broke ground in April 2021.*

By Tess Kazenoff

AbilityFirst, which has provided programs and services to children and adults with disabilities in Long Beach since 1966, celebrated the grand reopening of its Long Beach center on Sept. 28, the culmination of an 18-month construction process and \$6 million capital campaign that also supported its Pasadena location's renovation.

The Long Beach center was in need of many updates, including improving accessibility and the breadth of services offered, said April Stover, senior director of programs at AbilityFirst's Long Beach center.

AbilityFirst's efforts to raise \$6 million for its Long Beach and Pasadena centers began in 2019, and the Long Beach center finally broke ground in April 2021, Stover said.

Throughout the process, the Long Beach center worked to keep its doors open, temporarily closing

sections of the building in order to keep operating, Stover said.

The updates and enhancements to the center are expansive, all aimed at improving the experience of its over 90 participants.

Among the Long Beach location's vast improvements are a new and safer driveway, a flattened greenbelt area allowing for more usability and an enhanced gardening program, a renovated kitchen area for developing culinary skills, a more accessible ceramics room, updates to its warm-water pool used for therapeutic and recreational services, and new locker rooms including a unisex changing area.

AbilityFirst also now has a brand new sign along with updated landscaping, which Stover hopes will provide more visibility to the nonprofit.

"I don't want to be the best-kept secret in Long Beach," Stover said. "I want people to know we're here and the services that we provide and what we do to give back to the community."

Perhaps the most significant of the updates include enhancements to the center's programming areas, which allow AbilityFirst to bring its College to Career and Supported Employment programs to the Long Beach center.

The programs were previously offered within the AbilityFirst agency, meaning they were available to clients, but not necessarily at the Long Beach location. Bringing them directly to the Long Beach site, Stover said, will improve access and opportunity for

individuals in AbilityFirst's after-school and adult programs.

"That really encompasses our mission," Stover said. "We really are going to give our individuals that choice throughout their lives."

The employment program connects individuals with job coaches and employment specialists, who can assist with each stage of the job process, from creating a resume, to interviewing, to learning the necessary job skills, with the goal of individuals eventually working independently, in a job they are interested in, Stover said.

The College to Career program is a newer addition to the nonprofit, which originated in AbilityFirst's Pasadena center, and truly took off after the start of the pandemic and the shift to online services, Stover said.

The program connects individuals enrolled in college with an education specialist, who provides support as needed, which can vary from help with setting up a routine and developing time management skills, to interacting with other college students, to taking the bus to class, Stover said.

"It's different for every individual based on what their level of need is to help them succeed in college," Stover said. "The ultimate goal there is that they will graduate and then be able to have a career that they want."

The addition of the employment and college support programs affords adult participants with more choices apart from AbilityFirst's adult day program, which is focused on recreation, socializing and volunteering, Stover said.

"If you don't have a variety of pathways to choose from, then you're kind of landlocked," Stover said. "This way we're actually giving that true choice and opportunity."

Over the years, AbilityFirst has adapted to the changing needs of its participants; in the earlier days of the organization, polio was prevalent, and therapies for people with disabilities were not typically offered in schools, Stover said.

As needs shifted and therapies in schools became more common, there was no need for AbilityFirst to duplicate those services, Stover said.

"We found that where the true need was in independent living and that social skill aspect, and so that's what we really focused on," Stover said. "Our adult programs and our after-school programs are giving that independence, giving that choice, and learning those new skills."

The center's renovations and improvements are an extension of this philosophy—its improvements are all aimed at bettering the experiences of its participants, Stover said.

"I think the big thing that really is

*Continued on page 8*



Courtesy of AbilityFirst

Renovations included an updated teaching demonstration kitchen, where participants learn about safety, cleaning, inventory and prepping, among other independent living skills.

Doulas

Continued from cover

to doulas remains limited due to a lack of awareness, a lack of cultural competency and a lack of affordability, even as they can help both to prevent bad outcomes and to ease what’s often an understandable distrust in the health care system.

“Hospitals and medical professionals need to do real community work to improve their relationships and their legacies in certain communities,” Merino said. “That’s criminal that someone can be more at risk because of racism.”

“I can’t tell you how many clients I’ve supported where they’ve been asked the most outlandish, disrespectful things, where in comparison, my White clients, they get so much more leeway, are treated with so much more respect,” she added. “I’ve been to so many births and so many hospital visits and doctor visits, the distinction is not left up to the imagination.”

Need for culturally relevant care

Even as Black people may disproportionately benefit from doulas, studies have shown that the doula community is predominantly White, and primarily serves White middle-class women.

It’s a problem that helped push Toi Nichols to found the Long Beach nonprofit M.O.R.E. Mothers, which provides resources and supplies to people who are pregnant or have children. Part of achieving that mission is ensuring people of color are aware of the service and support that a doula can provide, especially in an experience as vulnerable and overwhelming as childbirth, Nichols said.

“You don’t feel so much like a number,” she said. “We try not to make it a thing of the statistics and just harping on the negative aspects that women of color face when they go into the hospital,” Nichols said. “We try to make sure, ‘OK, we know what this is, but let’s work on tools.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Sitting in his mother’s lap, Cub Iverson, 3, plucks an elderberry from the outstretched hand of Steve Merino, a Long Beach-based doula who is teaching a class on making elderberry syrup, which boosts health during cold and flu season.

Let’s have that close support system of a doula or midwife that you feel comfortable with.”

Educating mothers about doulas is personal to Nichols; when she gave birth to her first child in 2018, she experienced a traumatic nerve injury—an injury that was preventable, she said.

“I didn’t know how to advocate for myself,” she said. “I’m a strong believer that the support that a doula brings really changes outcomes for women of color and their maternal experience in hospitals.”

Nichols used a doula during her second pregnancy.

“We are the ones dying greater than our counterparts, we want someone who can understand what that means and can tap into . . . that fear that’s brought on because of the facts of the matter,” she said. “Personally, I wanted someone of color, someone that understands the history, can understand my cultural needs and wants and desires.”

For people with language limitations, a doula can be particularly crucial, said Lidia Medrano, a doula and childbirth educator who has worked in the community since around 2007.

“My mom had seven children. She didn’t speak English. She had to sign things she didn’t know she was signing,” said Medrano, who also offers services in Spanish.

Medical professionals should be receiving more training regarding cultural sensitivity, said Medrano.

“I would love for everybody to step back and see the person and family for them and not categorize them. Everybody has different needs,” she said. “We want everybody to have a birth experience that they feel good about.”

While more community awareness surrounding doulas is certainly needed, medical professionals also need to become more aware of the role doulas can play, Medrano said.

“Sometimes doctors (think) we’re just trying to take away clients, but hopefully in the future, (with) more education, more services, more clarity for doctors, it will change

their perspective of how we can walk hand-in-hand to support their clients,” Medrano said.

Challenges with accessibility

Still, awareness only goes so far. Apart from limited doulas of color available and a lack of awareness, cost is one of the largest barriers preventing marginalized groups from accessing doula services, Merino said.

Medical insurance typically doesn’t cover home births or birthing services, so while interest has increased since the pandemic, people’s accessibility and resources haven’t changed.

Some clients have been able to successfully advocate for themselves with their insurance, but not everyone has the same tools to self-advocate, Merino said.

Recently, a few programs have opened up to help fill in the gaps.

In 2021, for example, the Birthworkers of Color Collective became a nonprofit, and with the help of grants, the organization can now provide fully funded doula services to those in need, Merino said.

But offering affordable services can still be a challenge. While doulas such as Merino and Medrano provide sliding scale services when possible, it is not always sustainable, and birth workers deserve a living wage, Merino said.

“While many of us come into this work because we’re passionate, and we want to be a part of eradicating and minimizing birth disparities, it’s my full-time job, how I pay my rent, upkeep the lifestyle my 7-year-old loves,” Merino said. “It’s not just this hobby.”

Other programs, though, are also available.

Within Long Beach, Black residents can connect to the Health Department’s Black Infant Health program. Organizations such as The Victoria Project and the LA County Department of Public Health’s African American Infant and Maternal Mortality initiative also work to provide free services.

And in January, the state Department of Health Care Services



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

With a chocolate-covered face, Bowie Ferguson, 1, tries to pull up an elderberry plant while her mom reaches in to stop her.

plans to add doula services to the list of preventive services covered under the Medi-Cal program—demonstrating an increase in awareness and recognition of importance, Merino said.

Another way forward

With doula services becoming more accessible, success stories like that of Malinda McWilliams may become more common.

McWilliams, 36, is from the Los Angeles area but was living in Virginia without any family nearby throughout her pregnancy and birth experience. She used a doula to help provide that much-needed sense of community.

Her doula washed clothes, coordinated a maternity photoshoot, helped her mentally prepare for her birth through journaling prompts and even facilitated a birthing ceremony for McWilliams to reclaim her birth experience, she said.

Since losing her mother in 2017, McWilliams had always tried to avoid hospitals, and she had planned on a home birth, until complications arose during labor and she ended up in the hospital, she said.

“You hear a lot about women of color who go into hospital and not coming out,” McWilliams said. “We don’t feel protected . . . A lot of times Black women—we are viewed as having really high pain tolerance. If we’re really in pain, it’s kind of like it’s ignored, so just having somebody that’ll be there and advocating for you, it makes all the difference.”

Having a doula and midwife by her side helped to reassure her that she was supported, she said.

“You have this village you have for a lifetime. Because of that experience, we’re family now. It all came together like anything that’s meant to be,” McWilliams said.

For Merino, experiences like McWilliams’ should be the rule, rather than the exception—though she recognizes that doulas should not be the only way to achieve better birth outcomes.

“A lot of health disparities are really rooted in systems, and systems need to change,” Merino said. “There’s so much institutional racism, sexism, there’s so many resource allocation issues and so many other things that need to be addressed that were highlighted during this pandemic.”

Although doulas play a role in tackling health inequities, they are only a piece of the solution, Merino said.

While everyone who wants a doula deserves to have access, it is also a shaky space, where doulas are being propped up as the answer to maternal health, Merino said.

“We’re not supposed to do this on our own,” Merino said.

“We truly need community in order to have an optimal experience,” Merino said. “Can we do it alone? Sure, many of us have been. There’s this ‘Supermom’ trope, but we lose a lot from it . . . hopefully having doulas and having support can truly shift that narrative.” ■

On-campus clinic coming to CSULB through MemorialCare partnership



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Peterson Hall 1 and one other building at Cal State Long Beach will be demolished to make way for a new Health and Human Services building, which will include a first-of-its-kind clinic in partnership with Long Beach Memorial Medical Center.

By Brandon Richardson

Long Beach Memorial Medical Center will open a clinic on the Cal State Long Beach campus as part of a new partnership to combine education with practice and increase the number of health workers entering the workforce.

The 15,000-square-foot clinic will be located on the ground floor of a new College of Health and Human Services building, with construction slated to begin in the summer of 2024, according to University President Jane Close Conoley. The facility is expected to open in the spring of 2026.

Memorial will operate the clinic—which will have free parking for patients—and offer a variety of services, including primary care, geriatric assessment, back pain and sports medicine, Stephen Cesca, chief strategy officer for Memorial, told the Business Journal.

“This is innovative and the first of its kind in the state,” Cesca said of the clinic, adding that the public-private partnership could become a model nationwide that brings education and health care together, rather than operating in silos.

“This is a great example of MemorialCare reinvesting in our workforce and our community to ensure there’s an adequate supply of health care professionals to meet the upcoming needs,” Yair Katz, chief executive at Miller Children’s & Women’s Hospital, added.

Exacerbated through the pandemic, there is a nationwide shortage of nurses and other health care professionals. Cal State Long Beach’s nursing program, often ranked as one of the top in the state, is highly impacted, and competing

for placement for clinical rotations can delay graduation.

When students need their clinical rotations, they are sent all over the region to different locations, Cesca said, and the university just hopes they are getting a good experience.

“Now the university can actually assure that they’re getting good experiences, which helps get them through more efficiently,” Cesca said, adding that some of the faculty are clinicians who will provide care as they teach, creating a more steady continuum of education.

“It’s a much more controlled teaching environment,” he said.

The clinic also will make it more convenient for teachers who need to keep up their clinical competencies, Cesca said, noting that juggling clinical work and teaching can be a challenge when commuting is involved.

For Memorial, the clinic also will serve in furthering its mission to serve the community by bringing services closer to more residents’ homes through an expanded footprint, Cesca said.

The new clinic is not specifically for students, though they can receive care at the facility with insurance, but rather the community at large, Cesca said. Within the Greater Long Beach area, there are over 1 million residents, he said, about 13% of whom are seniors, half of which have multiple chronic conditions.

The campus’s Student Health Services will continue treating students.

The rest of the 125,000-square-foot HHS building, meanwhile, will cater to various clinical practices such as dietary evaluation, nutrition counseling, exercise prescription, mental and

behavioral health, and speech and language therapies.

One idea being considered for the facility is a special cafeteria for the university’s athletes, Conoley said. The meals would be scientifically crafted in the hopes of improving performance, she said. The school is working to get a pilot program off the ground with the men’s and women’s basketball teams, Conoley added.

The university also is looking to create a public health school within the College of Health and Human Services, according to Conoley.

“The need for public health [professionals], especially those who come from different backgrounds, was certainly made clear during the pandemic,” Conoley said.

The new structure will replace two existing buildings on East Campus Drive—Peterson Hall 1, which was built in 1965 and is one of the university’s oldest buildings, and Faculty Office 5, which was a temporary building,

according to Conoley.

Peterson Hall 1 currently houses various student groups, including the Black Student Union and other cultural affinity groups, according to Conoley.

“They will be the first to tell you that the building is not good anymore—there are no elevators, no air conditioning,” Conoley said. “We’re currently looking for a better space for them.”

In addition to being substandard for student and staff use, Conoley said the old buildings use up large amounts of energy. So tearing them down and replacing them with modern facilities will actually save the university operational money in the long term, she said.

The total project is expected to cost \$171 million, with most of the funding coming from a capital allocation from the CSU system, according to university spokesperson Gregory Woods. To date, however, \$10 million in philanthropic funds have already been raised. ■

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# Cambodia Town medical clinic celebrates grand reopening

By Brandon Richardson

For more than a decade, Southern California Medical Center has identified underserved communities and brought low-cost health care to residents throughout the region. Amid the pandemic, the nonprofit opened its fourth and fifth clinics, including one in Long Beach's Cambodia Town.

Founded by Chief Medical Officer Mohammad Rasekhi and CEO Sheila Busheri in 2009, the organization has locations in El Monte, Pico Rivera, Pomona and Van Nuys. The Long Beach clinic first opened its doors in late 2020, well into the coronavirus crisis, which added challenges.

"Getting new patients was so hard," Sara Sharafi, community development manager for SCMC, told the Business Journal. "And there's always a [staffing] issue, but COVID made it worse."

Sharafi said in the early days the clinic was short-staffed, and employees had to work extra hours to keep up with COVID testing demand around the holidays.

"We had sick employees," she said. "Our providers were burnt out. But we were able to do it because teamwork makes the dream work."

The clinic is now fully staffed with 20 medical personnel, including nurses, physicians and two dentists. To better serve the area's diverse residents, the staff speaks almost half a dozen languages in addition to English, including Spanish, Khmer, Farsi, Armenian and Arabic, Sharafi said.

The clinic can request translation services from various insurance plans or through government programs if needed, Sharafi added.

The services offered by SCMC clinics are comprehensive: general medical and primary care, physicals, immunizations, lab services, prenatal care, STD and HIV testing, dental, behavioral health and more. The Long Beach location, though, is still awaiting state approval for several services, Sharafi said, noting that patients should call ahead to ensure the clinic can provide the care they need.

The organization also has specialists who travel between the five clinics providing care such as physical therapy, orthopedic care and even chiropractic care.

"We have an onsite laboratory, which makes it very convenient for our patients," Sharafi said, noting that the clinic is a one-stop shop for medical and dental services, which can be handled in a single visit.

The facility recently underwent an extensive renovation, adding a second dental room, a dedicated behavioral health room for added privacy and a kids room for them to play while they wait. All spaces also were fitted with new cabinetry and paint.

In the wake of that work's completion, the nonprofit hosted a

grand reopening event on Oct. 22, which featured a taco vendor, tours of the facility and numerous speakers.

The organization and its clinics are federally qualified health centers, meaning they are funded through the federal government's Public Health Services Act and enhanced Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement.

The designation allows SCMC to offer a sliding fee scale that ensures no patient, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay traditional health care costs, is turned away.

"There are families in our communities that have to pick and choose between their health and paying for food or having shelter," Sharafi said. "This is a place where people do not have to be worried about feeding their family while thinking about having a healthy family."

Being a qualified health center also requires SCMC to directly cater to an underserved area, have an ongoing quality assurance program, have a governing board and provide comprehensive services.

For patients who do not have insurance or are ineligible for Medicare, Sharafi said they can apply for temporary Medicare, which covers them for two months and can be applied for each year. The temporary coverage includes unlimited medical and dental visits, she said, along with most medications.

If patients also are not eligible for temporary Medicare, they can sign up for the clinic's sliding fee plan. After \$171 for the initial visit, the clinic looks at family size and income to determine the

*Continued on page 9*



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## Memorial

*Continued from cover*

that he would resign, along with chief operating officer Ike Mmeje.

MemorialCare expects to announce a new CEO early next year. Bishop will continue in his position until a replacement is installed.

Helen Macfie, who was named acting chief operating officer for both hospitals after Mmeje's resignation, will continue in the role for the "foreseeable future," hospital spokesperson Wendy Dow told the Business Journal.

In the meantime, several of the new leadership changes have already taken effect at the campus. Yair Katz, who has served as chief financial officer for both hospitals for the past seven years, was promoted to the new chief executive position at Miller Children's. Katz will be "number two" at Miller Children's under the campus CEO, Dow said.

Miller Children's is one of only eight freestanding children's hospitals in the state, so Katz's goal is to regionalize the facility and expand access to its pediatric and specialty care services, he told the Business Journal.

"Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach is one of MemorialCare's most unique assets," MemorialCare President and CEO

Barry Arbuckle said in a statement. "To enable the highest possible level of strategic focus, it became very clear that we would be well-served to have an additional senior executive whose primary focus is Miller Children's & Women's Hospital, and our team recognized that Yair was an exceptional choice for this role."

Until a replacement has been selected, Katz will continue his duties as CFO despite having already assumed his new role. Katz also has been named senior vice president of pediatrics for MemorialCare, spanning Long Beach and Orange County.

Registered nurse Susan Herman has been appointed as the new campus-wide chief nursing executive and will offer senior oversight of all patient care areas on the campus. Herman previously served as chief nursing officer for Miller Children's.

In her new role, Herman will "ensure a shared vision for nursing excellence, continuity in professional practice across both [hospitals], focusing on both strategy and operational excellence for patient care," the hospital stated.

Herman has 25 years of nursing leadership experience, including stints at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford, Kaiser and several acute care community hospitals, in addition to her seven years at Miller Children's. Herman will be supported



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Yair Katz was recently promoted to the newly created position of chief executive of Miller Children's & Women's Hospital as part of a leadership restructuring following the unexpected resignation of two executives. Katz also was named senior vice president of pediatrics for MemorialCare, spanning Long Beach and Orange County.

by two assistant nurse executives, according to the announcement.

Steve Cesca, meanwhile, has been promoted from vice president of strategy and business development for both hospitals, a position he has held since 2018, to chief strategy officer for the campus, also among the newly created positions.

Cesca, who previously led strategic strategies at UCI Health, will work with Katz and Herman, according to the announcement, to ensure capital plans and delivery of care models

align with the company's overall strategy and program growth.

"My core task is how do I help grow and ensure this organization is connected with its community," Cesca told the Business Journal last month, noting that the recently announced partnership with Cal State Long Beach to open a clinic on campus is a prime example of that connection. "Bringing partnerships, bringing new locations and addressing the needs of the community." ■



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Mental Health Care

Continued from cover

therapists’ offices, who all told her they didn’t accept Medi-Cal, Iannaci was ready to give up, she said.

With out-of-pocket costs ranging from \$175 to \$200 an hour, the process made her feel like a “loser,” Iannaci said.

“There’s nowhere to go,” Iannaci said. “I don’t think (therapy) should be free, but I think more therapists could perhaps work on a sliding scale.”

A spike in need

There is no doubt that the pandemic has exacerbated the need for mental health services, particularly impacting marginalized communities who already have less access to care, said local therapist Junie Abito.

After reopening her practice, Rose Junie Therapy, located in Long Beach and Los Angeles, after the first three months of the pandemic, Abito was inundated with calls, she said.

Since then, the need has only continued to climb; in 2022, Abito’s practice has already received nearly double the amount of referrals in 2021, and she has seen a significant increase in children and couples seeking services, she said.

“We lived in social isolation for so long, and we were living in a state of uncertainty and trauma response,” Abito said. “This anxiety is still looming over people’s lives . . . because we’re still trying to keep our head over water—the trauma, the grief and uncertainty are still lingering.”

Many people using private insurance to connect to services are seeing waits of three months, and many therapists, including



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Junie Abito, a relationship and trauma expert, sits in one of her Long Beach therapy offices.

those at Abito’s practice, do not accept insurance, as insurance companies typically only pay therapists a small portion of their hourly rates, Abito said.

“The journey to get therapy should be affirming. It should be inspiring. It should be as easy as making a dental appointment, but it isn’t—it’s stress-inducing. It’s costly. It’s confusing to navigate,” Abito said. “If you tie that into a person of color, who comes from a different socioeconomic background, who may or may not have insurance, who already has traumas and troubles, it’s going to be really difficult for them to obtain services.”

According to city data, in 2020, 8.81% of people in Long Beach were uninsured, an increase from 8.5% in 2019. In the same year, 26.6% of people with insurance had Medi-Cal

insurance, and 7.7% had Medicare, which covers older adults and people with certain disabilities.

For those on Medi-Cal like Iannaci, who are typically directed by the LA County Department of Mental Health to local nonprofits for mental health services, “those spaces are essentially full right now,” said Long Beach Health Department Director Kelly Colopy.

But the need across populations is widespread, and a stark increase in mental health needs among youth and among the city’s unhoused populations is particularly troubling, Colopy said.

While statistics around mental health vary, according to the National Alliance for Mental Health, in February 2021, 46.1% of adults in California reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, and of those

adults, 21.9% were unable to get needed counseling or therapy. Of the 1.56 million adults in California who did not receive needed mental health care, 35.3% did not because of cost.

Cost is a primary prohibitive factor particularly for marginalized communities, who also disproportionately experience barriers such as cultural stigma, language, transportation access and competing responsibilities and stressors.

“Managing mental illnesses is not easy—it is possible, but you need the right levels of service and the right levels of care and support systems,” Colopy said. “We really want to be working toward that, but at this point, there’s not sufficient capacity within Long Beach to be able to meet the needs, nor in the surrounding jurisdictions.”

While the city does not have data regarding the number of mental health care workers, between a rise in need and burnout causing some therapists to leave the field, there’s certainly a shortage of those workers in Long Beach, said Colopy.

‘A marathon,’ not ‘a sprint’

Many practices including Rose Junie Therapy currently have a waitlist, and many therapists like Abito have made extensive efforts to expand their services through providing telehealth and increasing sliding scale and pro bono offerings, Abito said.

“We were providing services and preparing for this sprint,” she said. “We needed to prepare for a marathon.”

Meeting the increased need while juggling challenges with insurance and affordability have led many therapists to experience constant feelings of fatigue and burnout, Abito said.

“I felt responsible for meeting the needs of my clients and my

community,” Abito said. “Especially as a woman of color, when I’d get referrals in regards to a Filipino family, I felt a lot of guilt in not being able to take on a new client.”

Lack of culturally relevant care

At Abito’s practice, which has expanded from only Abito to a team of six since the pandemic, every therapist is a bilingual woman of color who identifies with a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, Abito said.

“A lot of our clients seek out our services because of the different languages we speak,” Abito said.

Access is even more complicated for people of color who want a culturally relevant therapist, as the majority of therapists are White. In 2015, according to the American Psychology Association, 86% of psychologists in the U.S. workforce were White.

For Abito, who moved to the United States from the Philippines when she was around 8 years old and offers services in Tagalog, it took her 10 months to find a Filipina therapist for herself.

“It’s feeling accepted and feeling like that person across from me is understanding my experiences and trauma, without overexplaining myself,” she said. “A lot of clients who come and seek our services is because we look like them . . . it allows our clients to feel safe and allows them to be vulnerable and allows them to open up a space of healing.”

For Abito, asking herself what she can do to address systemic barriers is a constant question on her mind.

“It boils down to what I am in control of, and that’s how I manage my team, the clinicians I hire, their cultural background, how they can bring that forward in their work—that’s how I’ve

addressed it,” Abito said.

Addressing the workforce need

While the number of licensed behavioral health providers in the state increased by 20% between 2016 and 2020, this was no match for the recent increase in need for mental health support, Dr. Mark Ghaly, secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, told CalMatters.

As for statewide efforts, Gov. Gavin Newsom hopes to emphasize mental health workforce development in his recent master plan for kids’ mental health, with plans to bring in 40,000 new mental health workers.

While Long Beach is looking toward efforts to build up its mental health workforce, particularly of people of color, it will take time, said Colopy.

“It’s not like by next year, we’re going to have a whole new round of workforce,” she said. “We have to continue to build that workforce over time.”

At Cal State Long Beach, internal discussions are focusing on adding seats to the university’s psychology programs, which have seen an increase in interest since the pandemic, said Bita Ghafoori, chair in the Department of Advanced Studies in Education and Counseling.

“We’ve always had a lot of interest, but since the pandemic, it’s nearly tripled,” Ghafoori said of the master’s degree in counseling psychology program, one of three graduate counseling/psychology programs currently available.

Workforce demand for mental health services is a contributing factor to the rise in interest, and most students in CSULB’s counseling psychology, school psychology or school counseling

programs easily gain employment after graduation, Ghafoori said.

The counseling psychology master’s program typically accepts 25 to 30 students a year due to Board of Behavioral Sciences standards, which require a certain level of supervision and faculty available per student, Ghafoori explained.

Apart from potentially increasing faculty numbers, the department is examining the possibility of adding a doctoral program, which is also of high need in California, Ghafoori said.

“We are looking at a variety of different things,” Ghafoori said. “There’s just so many different things to consider.”

Local efforts to meet increased need

Within the city, the Health Department has been working on efforts to expand and streamline access to services, both for people with private insurance, and people on Medicaid, Colopy said.

“COVID really really exacerbated trauma and mental health for people, and the systems just haven’t been designed to manage it yet,” Colopy said. “We are really working on it. We’re paying a whole lot of attention to it for the city of Long Beach.”

Efforts included the formation of a mental health advisory board this year, engaging about 30 people from across higher education institutions, the Long Beach Unified School District, the LA County Department of Mental Health and local nonprofit organizations and hospital systems, Colopy said.

The group plans to have its initial report by the first quarter of 2023, she said.

Of the \$3 million in health equity grants from the city as part of the Long Beach Recovery Act, the largest focus of those grants were around mental health, Colopy said.

Among the city’s efforts to meet the increased need include the compilation of a mental health resource guide and the establishment of a bench of Black mental health providers to specifically address the need within the city’s Black population, Colopy said.

The city is also currently in the process of hiring for its community crisis response team, an alternative to police responding to mental health crises, an effort that will be launching as a pilot program early next year, Colopy said.

As local and state officials continue to determine the best course of action, in the meantime, many Long Beach residents like Iannaci are still being left behind.

In July of this year, Iannaci resumed her search to find a therapist—but once again, it was to no avail, and she ultimately decided to stop pursuing therapy at the time.

While she will eventually attempt again to find a therapist, it won’t be while she is still on Medi-Cal insurance, she said.

“It really impacted me, not being able to talk with my feelings, it kept me stuck,” Iannaci said. “The rat-race of calling when you’re so depressed—it’s so hard to keep up with the calls and everything.”

Abito encourages anyone who is able to utilize an out-of-network session to do so, and to ask therapists about offering sliding scale or pro bono services or groups, she said.

“For minorities, it feels like there’s this debt of gratitude, but my advice for them is if you do this: Imagine what you’re showing your partner, your kids,” Abito said. “You just have to be courageous enough to send that email . . . there are providers who really do care about the community and who really want to help as much as we can.” ■



Courtesy of AbilityFirst

AbilityFirst’s warm-water pool at its Long Beach center was renovated to be in an enclosed area with an added roof and HVAC system.

Ability First

Continued from page 3

going to make a huge impact in our participants’ lives is the fact that we’re able to do more, we’re able to serve more individuals,” Stover said. “It’s really going to broaden the scope of what they may want to do with their futures, and give our families a lot more choice and opportunity to learn more about what AbilityFirst does.”

Through AbilityFirst’s capital campaign and subsequent fundraising efforts, the organization was given the opportunity to connect even more to the community and establish awareness, Stover said.

Critical to the fundraising process were community groups like AbilityFirst’s Long Beach Guild who have supported the organization since 1978, Stover said.

Other funders of the campaign

included The Ahmanson Foundation, Alpert & Alpert Foundation, the Raymond and Barbara Alpert Foundation, and Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger.

“It put a smile on my face,” Stover said of the community’s support of the capital campaign and center’s reopening. “I am so grateful to our donors, to our families, to our staff, to the committee, and to the community for opening up their hearts, and honestly their wallets, and allowing us to complete this renovation that is going to allow us to have more individuals meet their goals and have an amazing quality of life, and have that true choice and independence that we all want out of life.”

The nonprofit is currently gearing up for its upcoming “Stroll and Roll” fundraiser on Sunday, Nov. 12 at 9:30 a.m. at Santa Anita Park in Arcadia. Find more information at p2p.onecause.com/22strollandroll. To tour AbilityFirst’s new facility, contact April Stover at astover@abilityfirst.org. ■

Cambodia Town

Continued from page 6

cost of each subsequent visit for the next year. Patients pay anywhere from \$25 to \$100 per visit and receive discounts on lab work as well as dental and behavioral health care, according to Sharafi.

Patients can sign up for a payment plan as well if they are unable to pay the full amount, Sharafi said. If there is a change in the family size or income, the sliding fee is adjusted up or down, she added.

The Long Beach clinic has overcome the challenges of opening amid a global pandemic and now sees about 50 patients per day, which is still the lowest average of the five clinics, Sharafi said.

In addition to providing health care to the community, SCMC also works to embed itself within the communities it serves, Sharafi said. Each year the nonprofit organizes two

main events: a backpack giveaway ahead of the new school year and a toy giveaway during the holidays.

In August, the company distributed about 5,000 backpacks to kids ages 4 to 12, Sharafi said, noting that in Long Beach they distributed around 700. Last holiday season, the organization gifted about 12,000 toys. Any leftover toy donations are left in the clinics, which kids are then allowed to take.

The next step is to bring the organization’s mobile clinic to Long Beach in order to serve other underserved areas, Sharafi said. In other cities, SCMC has partnered with school districts to allow the mobile unit on campuses to provide students, their families and the surrounding neighborhoods various types of care, including general check ups and dental services.

As soon as SCMC identifies partners and locations in Long Beach, Sharafi said the mobile clinic will begin serving the city. One



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

The Southern California Medical Center Community Clinic opened at 1627 E. Anaheim St. two years ago amid the coronavirus pandemic. The space recently underwent a full renovation and celebrated its grand reopening.

option she is looking into is the city’s various farmers markets.

If a patient uses the mobile clinic and it turns out they need more

intensive care quickly, SCMC offers free transport, Sharafi added.

“Our mission,” she said, “is to serve the underserved.” ■

# City to restart business license tax, fee collection

By Brandon Richardson

When health orders were put in place to slow the spread of COVID-19 in 2020, many business owners feared drowning in expenses while they were forced to shutter. In an attempt to stave off closures, though, the city suspended the collection of business license tax and fees, which typically generates tens of millions of dollars in revenue annually.

Collection of the tax and fees is now expected to resume early next year, with businesses facing penalties if they do not pay in full or set up a “flexible” payment plan, according to city staff.

“The city is working hard to provide relief and other supportive programs for the business community to assist with factors impacting the ability for businesses to thrive,” Tara Mortensen, business services bureau manager in the city’s Department of Financial Management, said in an email. “Business License taxes and fees should be of low impact to a business.”

The city is targeting sometime during the first quarter for the resumption of collection, Mortensen said.

Each year, every one of the city’s thousands of businesses pays business license fees and taxes, which total upward of \$24 million in annual revenue for Long Beach’s general fund, according to a city memo.

As of mid-October, there were 36,825 business licenses and permits, according to Mortensen, who noted many businesses have more than one license and/or permit.

Business owners are required to renew their license each year to legally



Residents walk past a row of businesses on Fifth Street near Long Beach Boulevard in Downtown.

operate in the city. Taxes and fees vary based on business type, with a base rate of \$252.84 for home-based businesses and independent contractors, and \$412.26 for most other operations located in commercial space.

Additional fees are then added to the base rate, such as a fee ranging from \$10.69 to \$32.08 per employee depending on business type.

Other miscellaneous business types forego the normal base fee and instead pay a tax more specific to their operation. For example, a bowling alley (which Long Beach does not currently have) or pool hall would pay \$152.68 per lane or table, respectively.

All business license applications also are subject to a \$4 state-mandated ADA fee.

Other regulatory fees for certain

businesses as well as business improvement district fees also are collected with the business license taxes and fees, Mortensen noted.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, many businesses were able to keep their accounts with the city up-to-date, Mortensen said, with only about 12% of business license accounts being past due for more than one year. The city does not have an exact total for the amount that is outstanding, she added.

Late fees and penalties, which also have been deferred since March 2020, also will return early next year, Mortensen said. After an amount is 30 days past due, there is a 25% penalty of the total amount, with an additional 10% of the principal for each subsequent month until it reaches twice the original amount.

Outreach to delinquent businesses, however, is already underway, with account statements being mailed to owners, Mortensen said. Owners will have the option to pay the amount in full or sign up for an interest-free payment plan.

“As long as businesses remain current with their payment plan, no penalties will be assessed,” Mortensen said.

For businesses that permanently closed amid the pandemic, Mortensen said there is a collections process to address delinquent accounts. The city is actively working to collect closure data and will adjust accounts according to when the business actually closed, so as not to charge for time they were not operating, she said.

Other than deferring payments and penalties throughout the pandemic, the city also has offered businesses financial assistance in the form of grants. The first round used an application process to reimburse business license, health permit and fire permit account fees for 119 businesses in 2020 totaling \$279,690, according to a memo.

Another estimated \$2.2 million in grants is expected to be distributed to delinquent accounts using a criteria formula to identify businesses, the memo states.

“The city’s intention,” Mortensen said, “is to continue providing support and assistance to businesses in need to aid recovery from the pandemic.”

For business license account information, email [LBBiz@longbeach.gov](mailto:LBBiz@longbeach.gov) or call 562-570-6211. For business technical assistance, email [4biz@longbeach.gov](mailto:4biz@longbeach.gov) or call 562-570-4249. More information can be found on the city’s website. ■

# LBUSD test scores fall, erasing gains that had it ahead of state average

By Mike Guardabascio

Standardized test results released by the California Department of Education last week show scores for Long Beach Unified students dropped more sharply than the statewide average, with an especially large drop for Black and Hispanic students who had been making steady gains prior to the pandemic.

Across California, the share of students meeting or exceeding English standards dropped 3.81 percentage points from 2019 to 2022, falling to 47.06%. In math, those numbers were worse: falling 6.35 percentage points to just 33.38%.

The LBUSD’s decrease was nearly double the state average. Students meeting or exceeding English standards fell 6.05 percentage points to 47.05%, and in math, the number fell 12.66 percentage points to just 32.99%.

Pre-COVID, Long Beach had been ahead of the statewide average, with 53.92% of students meeting or exceeding English standards and 45.65% meeting or exceeding math standards in 2019. That was compared to the statewide average of 50.87% in English and 39.73% in Math.

Last week’s test results flipped that equation, with the LBUSD either comparable to or slightly behind the statewide average.

This year’s results from the state’s Smarter Balanced Assessment System are a major milestone to measure learning loss during the pandemic because the test, which measures students’ ability to meet California’s Common Core standards, was canceled in 2020 and optional in 2021.

The results were originally scheduled to be released in December or January but arrived in full last week thanks in part to pressure from EdSource, a nonprofit news outlet that reports on education in California.

“The data generally reflect a trend that we’ve seen elsewhere in California and nationally,” said LBUSD spokesperson Chris Eftychiou, “with many students adversely affected by the circumstances of the pandemic, the distance learning that occurred during school closures, and the challenges of returning to in-person learning. We’ve been aware of these challenges, and our resource

just 17.7% in 2022.

Hispanic students meeting or exceeding English standards fell from 47.83% in 2019 to 41.62% in 2022. In math, that figure fell from 39.63% in 2019 to 25.98% in 2022.

Scores for White students dropped less sharply, from 76.99% to 72.51% in English and 68.87% to 58.97% in math.

“Our equity gaps were actually magnified,” Boardmember Juan Benitez said during an LBUSD school board meeting last month. “We had gaps pre-pandemic, and we were working to diminish and eliminate them. And our post-pandemic data shows that we actually have an exacerbation of

of challenge, a story that also corroborates what we know about the struggle of our families.”

Baker said the data proves what the district has known for some time about how the pandemic affected the district’s Black and Hispanic Students.

“There was a heavier aspect on our BIPOC students,” Baker said. “And you’ll see that in the results of what they experienced in the pandemic.”

The district has discussed at several board meetings over the last year its plan to make up for the learning loss, using its Learning Acceleration and Support Plan.

The district spent \$65.7 million on

“We had gaps pre-pandemic, and we were working to diminish and eliminate them. And our post-pandemic data shows that we actually have an exacerbation of our equity gaps, particularly for our Black students.”

- Juan Benitez, LBUSD Boardmember

allocations are prioritized to make the greatest impact in the areas of greatest need.”

LBUSD students of color were hit especially hard. Black and Hispanic students had been making steady gains prior to the pandemic, but much of that progress was erased between 2019 and 2022.

The percentage of Black students meeting or exceeding English standards fell from 39.58% in 2019 to 33.1% in 2022. In math, that number fell from 28.14% in 2019 to

our equity gaps, particularly for our Black students.”

During a discussion of the data at that meeting, Superintendent Jill Baker illustrated the situation with an animated graphic that showed where the different racial groups were over the years from 2016 to 2022, with steady progress being wiped out after the pandemic.

“This is what five years of loss looks like,” she said. “It tells a story—a story of loss, a story

academic acceleration and support last year as part of the LASP. That plan is being updated with the new data and will be presented with updates soon.

At the board meeting last month, LBUSD Board President Megan Kerr said she appreciated the blunt assessment of erased progress.

“I think it’s really telling that we’re not hiding from the data and I’m appreciative that we’re being so clear with where we need to go from here,” she said. ■

# City celebrates opening of 142-unit Magnolia

By Tess Kazenoff

A new Downtown mixed-use project, The Magnolia, celebrated its opening reception with about 100 tenants and city officials last month.

The 142-unit building, located at 500 W. Broadway, contains studios, one- and two-bedroom apartments, along with new businesses that have leased the first-floor space: Sugar Taco, a plant-based Mexican eatery out of West Hollywood that will also be opening an accompanying vegan butchery next door, and Pawspace, a dog daycare, boarding, grooming and adoption center.



City and Ensemble Real Estate Investments officials celebrate as Brian Babaooff, middle, cuts the ribbon during The Magnolia’s opening reception.



With the sudden increase in homelessness by 62% we continue to provide services for up to 1,000 neighbors in need every day. This Holiday Season Christian Outreach in Action is providing:

Thanksgiving Baskets with turkey & trimmings for 400-500 people  
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300 families will receive Christmas toys

YOU can help - your donation provides -

\$25 - 4 bags of groceries to a family of four  
\$50 - 2 packs of diapers for a struggling mother & infant  
\$100 Clothes a homeless or low-income individual  
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\$500 - 167 prepared meals for the needy  
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Brandon Richardson / Business Journal  
Construction workers chat on what is currently the top level of a 189-unit development on The Promenade in Downtown.

# Long Beach unemployment falls back below pre-pandemic levels

*LA County’s unemployment rate as a whole followed the same trend as Long Beach.*

By Brandon Richardson

Unemployment in Long Beach fell back to a pre-pandemic low of 4.6% in September after small increases in recent months, new data from the California Employment Development Department shows. After falling for 10 consecutive months, the city’s unemployment rate hit 4.6% in May, which was just below the pre-pandemic low of 4.8% in February 2020. In June, however, the rate jumped back up to 5.3% and remained at 5.2% in July and August. The decline comes amid minor changes to the city’s overall labor force and number of employed residents. In September, the city’s labor force was 228,900, down only 400 from the month before. The number of employed residents, meanwhile, increased by 900 to 218,300. The number of unemployed people dropped from 11,800 in August to 10,600 last month, data shows. Six LA County cities—El Segundo, Los Angeles,

Montebello, Paramount, Pomona and South Gate—have the same unemployment rate as Long Beach. LA County’s unemployment rate as a whole followed the same trend as Long Beach: In May, it reached 4.5%, surpassing a pre-pandemic low of 4.7%. In June, July and August, the rate increased slightly, but fell back to 4.5% in September. The county labor force decreased by 3,600 people to 4,942,300 from August to September, according to state data, while the number of employed residents jumped by 18,800 to 4,721,500. The number of unemployed residents countywide decreased by 22,300 month-over-month to 220,900. Long Beach’s unemployment rate remains higher than nearly 68% of Los Angeles County cities and census areas, according to state data. About 27% of areas have a higher unemployment rate. Countywide, educational services added 8,400 jobs, the most of any sector month-over-month, with students returning to the classroom for the fall semester, according to the EDD. Those gains were led by colleges, universities and professional schools. Government saw its largest job growth of the year, adding 6,800 jobs, the EDD stated. Local government accounted for 74% of the increase within the sector. Professional and business services, other services, leisure and

hospitality, and financial activities also saw job growth. Trade, transportation and utilities saw the largest month-over-month decline, losing 2,800 jobs, according to state data. The manufacturing, construction and information industries also saw declines. Compared to September 2021, nonfarm employment increased by 186,100 jobs, or 4.3%, according to the EDD. California’s seasonally adjusted unemployment, meanwhile, dropped to 3.9% in September, according to data from Beacon Economics, and remains above the national rate of 3.5%. “September was a weaker month than what we’ve come to expect this year, with a surprising drop in the state’s labor force,” Taner Osman, research manager at Beacon and the Center for Economic Forecasting, said in a statement. “This suggests that employers will continue to struggle to find workers this year.” The driving force behind the state’s slower recovery is the chronic labor market shortage, according to Beacon. Since February 2020, the state’s labor force has shrunk by 246,000 people, a 1.3% decline. The state’s economy has yet to recover all the jobs lost early in the pandemic, the firm stated. There are still 24,700 fewer people employed statewide compared to early 2020. ■

## Port of Long Beach cargo volumes dropped in September

By Brandon Richardson

Continued inflation and aggressive rate hikes by the Federal Reserve have caused consumers to grow cautious, resulting in tempered cargo volumes at the Port of Long Beach, officials said last month. Dockworkers and terminal operators moved 741,823 20-foot equivalent units (the standard measure of a shipping container) in September, a nearly 1% decrease from the same month last year, which was the port’s second-busiest September in its 111-year history. “Consumers and retailers are concerned about inflation, leading to warehouses filled with inventory and fewer product orders from Asia,” Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement. “The respite is leading to increased capacity on the docks and fewer ships waiting off the coast to enter the Port.”

Imports into Long Beach decreased 7.4% to 342,671 TEUs, while exports increased 1.9% to 112,940 TEUs. The number of empty containers moving through the port jumped 7% to 286,212 TEUs. Amid the pandemic, increased e-commerce and equipment shortages—among other issues—caused a severe bottleneck at the San Pedro Bay ports that resulted in a backlog of ships that reached 106 in January of this year. The backlog was seven as of mid-October and was below 10 for most of the prior month, according to the Marine Exchange of Southern California. The congestion caused pollution out of the twin ports to increase, despite years of efforts by both agencies to decrease emissions. The port has moved 7,342,383 TEUs from January through September, up 3.5% from the same period last year—2021 was a record year. During the third quarter, however, container volumes were down 0.3% compared to the same quarter last year. “We appreciate our longshore labor, marine terminal operators, truckers and all of our other industry partners who continue to move cargo quickly, reliably and sustainably,” Long Beach Harbor Commission President Sharon Weissman said in a statement. “We’re hoping to close the year on a positive note that focuses on our efforts to improve cargo flow while dramatically enhancing air quality.” ■

## Commission approves 69-unit Downtown complex intended to serve large families

By Jason Ruiz

A new apartment complex meant for larger families in Downtown was approved by the Long Beach Planning Commission last month. The project could deliver 69 new units to the area with over half having four or five bedrooms. The “Queen Beach” project would replace the old Queen Beach Printers located on the southwest corner of 10th Street and Pine Avenue. The project is being proposed by Beach City Capital, which is based in Hermosa Beach and lists a second 24-unit Long Beach project at Seventh Street and Pine as being in pre-development. The eight-story, 16,000-square-foot building will be built across three parcels that include the printer building and its parking lot and includes two levels of parking for residents with 123 spaces, according to project plans on the city’s website. It will include a mix of studios (10), three-bedroom

(24), four-bedroom (12) and five-bedroom apartments (23). Space for ground-floor retail will be included on the Pine Avenue side of the building, with the building’s leasing office, lobby and bicycle storage along the 10th Street frontage. The building will also include a courtyard on the third floor and a rooftop deck. While the project is within the Downtown Plan, which had maxed out the 5,000 residential units approved in 2012, an addendum adopted last year allows for over 3,200 additional units that will take the place of undeveloped office space, hotel and commercial uses. Because the application for the project was filed with the city prior to its inclusionary housing ordinance taking effect, it won’t be required to include any affordable units. If it had been submitted after March 6, 2021, it would have had to set aside 11% of its units as affordable housing for 55 years or pay into a fund so the city could build those units offsite.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal  
Beach City Capital has proposed an eight-story, 69-unit multi-generational housing development at the former Queen Beach Printers site at 937-957 Pine Ave.

Long Beach was given a regional goal of 26,502 for housing unit production over the next eight years by the Southern California Association of Governments. Of those units, the largest portion (11,156) was for households making over 120% of the area median income. The median income in Los Angeles County is \$91,100 for a family of four, according to the state. ■



CSULB

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*(CSU Study by ICF, 2021)*

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COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

# Your choice in Wrigley: a \$615K burned up house or a \$1.1M turnkey bungalow

All right, before you tell me to kick rocks, just hear me out.

Don't think of this home at 2959 Chestnut Ave. as an ultra-fixer that's been pretty well totaled by fire damage. Think of it as a rich opportunity to build the home of your dreams, that is if your dreams are of owning a home in the North Wrigley section of Long Beach.

Has this home seen better days? Yes, most of its previous days have been better days, but where else in this neighborhood that's constantly been on the brink of a breakthrough can you buy a house for just \$615,000, nearly \$130,000 below the median price for a home in the 90806 ZIP code? Nowhere. This is as low as you can go in terms of price.

If bringing a home up from the ashes seems like an enjoyable project for you, there are helpful guides to rebuilding after a fire online. I got tired and discouraged just reading one of them. And, yes, of course, you can throw money at the problem of making this burned-out case into your ideal home. On the semi-bright side, the paperwork is already done, which'll save you a little money and a lot of headaches. Plans to rebuild the house from its current size of a two-bedroom, one-bath home in a 1,100-square-footer to a four-bedroom, three-bath, 1,499-square-foot house have already been approved and permits are ready to issue, so you can start construction as soon as you get the keys. Or throw out the plans and design your own and go through the approval and permitting process. It's your life. It's your money.

Now, let's pretend you don't want the headache of grappling with the obvious and extensive hassles of rehabbing a ruined house after paying \$615K just for starters, but the idea of living in the relatively affordable Wrigley neighborhood is appealing to you with its sort of quasi-Bixby Knolls charm brought about by mostly Spanish-style architecture and streets lined with old(ish) growth trees.

You can forget the burned-up house that's just

south of Spring Street and hop across Willow Street in South Wrigley and purchase a totally un-burned, turnkey house for \$1.1 million, about \$500,000 more than the ruined home to the north (though without that vaulted rich opportunity for reimagination).

The million-dollar version is on the same street, at 2525 Chestnut Ave., and it's also a two-bedroom, one-bath home, but it's a really nice one in a quiet neighborhood. Named Blanco Bungalow, it's fairly famous in its own right, having its own website in which the owners detail the home's renovation and its decor and other charms.

At 1,263 square feet, it's fairly large for a two-plus-one and it's been thoroughly brought up to date with ductless HVAC, upgraded electrical and plumbing, and a nice kitchen featuring alder wood shelving, though, curiously, no drawers so everything's on display. If you like to stash your pots and pans in a cupboard because they might not always be looking in showroom condition, this place might not be for you.

The bedrooms and living room have stained redwood floors, and outdoors there are pleasant patios and plants and enough maintenance-free turf for a pup to get its zoomies in.

The Spanish bungalow, listed by Realtor Taya Dicarlo of Compass, while pleasant enough in its appearance and its outdoor gathering spots, has a big job meeting the glowing listing verbiage: The walls are white, but not really "cloud-like." The property includes a driveway, which is just a driveway, not exclusively a place where "adventure-ready vehicles can fit comfortably." It notes that "the space is perfectly outfitted for mindful morning moments, artfulness & afternoon chill." It's Wrigley, not Carmel-By-the-Sea.

Hyperbole aside, it's nevertheless a nice example of Spanish Revival architecture with its terra cotta roof and arched doorways in a diverse neighborhood that's continuing to improve and attract buyers looking for something a bit more unique than the slightly pricier tract homes in the eastern part of the city. ■



Courtesy of Redfin

Pay \$615,000 and start work rebuilding on the site of this fire-damaged home in the Wrigley neighborhood.



Courtesy of Redfin

It's seen better days.



Courtesy of Redfin

This Spanish Revival bungalow in South Wrigley is for sale at \$1.111 million.



Courtesy of Nick Souza for the Port of Long Beach

One of nine newly converted electric cranes moves a shipping container at the SSA Marine terminal on Pier J at the Port of Long Beach.

## Port of Long Beach cranes converted away from fossil fuels in demonstration project

*The conversion of the cranes on Pier J was funded in large part by a \$9.7 million California Energy Commission grant.*

By Brandon Richardson

Nine cranes used to move and stack shipping containers at the SSA Marine terminal at the Port of Long Beach are no longer powered by fossil fuels following a grant-funded electrification retrofit.

As part of the port's Zero-Emissions Terminal Equipment Transition project, the conversion of the cranes on Pier J was funded in large part by a \$9.7 million California Energy Commission grant, port officials announced last week.

SSA did not respond to a request for comment, and the total cost of the conversion project was not immediately available.

In partnership with the CEC and Southern California Edison, the port has put 21 human-operated, zero- or near-zero-emissions vehicles in daily operation at three marine terminals, and trucking company Total Transportation Services will "test their performance in a real-world setting," according to the announcement.

As part of the project, SSA recently completed the final retrofit of the "majority" of its rubber-tired gantry crane fleet. It is unclear how many cranes operate at the terminal.

The ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles have set a goal of operating a fully zero-emission cargo handling fleet by 2030 as part of the joint Clean Air Action Plan, which was first implemented in 2007 and updated in 2017.

"In the decades since we created the Green Port Policy, our ambitions have grown from cleaning the air for our community to showing the world it's possible to do that everywhere," Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement. The Green Port Policy was adopted in January 2005.

"These demonstrations are designed to commercialize heavy-duty zero emissions equipment and vehicles to combat pollution but also to fight climate change, the effects of which we are seeing in the news almost every day," Cordero said.

Two other demonstrations included in the Zero-Emissions Terminal Equipment Transition project are underway or have concluded, Heather Tomley, managing director of planning and environmental affairs for the port, said in an email. International Transportation Service at Pier G and the Long Beach Container Terminal at Pier E demonstrated a combined eight BYD battery-electric yard tractors.

The tractor demonstration, which originally was meant to include 12 vehicles, has concluded, Tomley said. Four tractors could not be delivered on time to take part in the demonstration.

To meet the demands of the demonstrations, Tomley said terminals also must upgrade their electrical infrastructure.

### Magnolia

Continued from page 10

The project is an addition to Ensemble Real Estate Solutions & Investments' portfolio, which has been headquartered in Long Beach since 1996. As of 2021, the firm has invested \$500 million in Long Beach real estate development.

The Magnolia opened on May 9, and on June 1, the first tenant moved in. As of now, the building is 76% leased, with 71% of units occupied, according to an Ensemble spokesperson. There are still 33 available units.

"We've made Long Beach our home and we're very proud to be part of the community and part of the city and watch all of these developments happen over the last 46 years," Kam Babao, founder and chairman at Ensemble, said during the event.

Before developing into the seven-story building, the lot was previously a leftover parking lot from when Ensemble owned the World Trade Center, Babao said.

"To create something of this magnitude out of a leftover lot feels very satisfying to me," Babao said.

Among the building's numerous amenities are a rooftop with a pool, an outdoor shower and a TV fireplace. Tenants can also enjoy

complimentary WiFi throughout the building, a fitness center, a co-working space, a fully equipped gourmet kitchen, outdoor barbecue grills, a lounge and bar seating.

Residence features include open floor plans, smart home technology, energy-efficient features and more.

"The city has really come a long way. We're very proud of this project," Babao said. "This is, I think, one of the nicest buildings in Long Beach. It's unique."

Over the last nearly 40 years, Ensemble has successfully invested, developed and managed over \$2 billion in real estate across the United States. Apart from multi-family and mixed-use properties, the company also develops hospitality and commercial buildings.

The firm recently developed two other residential properties in the Downtown area: a 94-unit property at 442 Ocean Blvd. and a 112-unit property at 207 Seaside Way, situated across from the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, both of which opened in 2019.

"This is one of the projects that I first remember seeing when I came on board with the city, and watching it literally out our window come from the ground up and turn into this wonderful space has been absolutely exciting," said Christian Kerr, a legislative aid in Mayor Robert Garcia's office. ■



Tess Kazenoff / Business Journal

The Magnolia's rooftop offers views of Downtown Long Beach, along with amenities including a pool, an outdoor shower, a TV fireplace, a fully equipped kitchen and more.



Several people sit on the ground outside the Billie Jean King Main Library in Downtown.

# Downtown residents overwhelmed with rising crime and homelessness

By Kelly Puente

Modica's Deli has been a staple in the East Village Arts District for more than 26 years, but for the first time, owner Orsa Modica said she's considering closing up shop.

She's not alone.

Residents and business owners throughout Downtown Long Beach say the area is in a crisis of crime and homelessness, with spikes in petty theft and vandalism, open drug use and people relieving themselves on sidewalks. Growing numbers of individuals on the streets are in desperate need of mental health care.

The concerns come as Long Beach has seen a 62% surge in homelessness since 2020, while overall property crime in the Downtown area has jumped more than 23% this year. The situation has become so dire that the city last month temporarily closed its new \$48 million Billie Jean King Library out of security concerns for staff.

The problem grew worse in the pandemic and has "exploded" in recent months, said Rosemary Palermo, who has lived in the Cooper Arms building for more than a decade.

"We all carry pepper spray," Palermo said. "We will not even walk out to the garbage without pepper spray on our key chains. It's never been this bad."

Officials, for their part, said the city is ramping up police patrols and homeless services while working to address a nuanced problem with no easy solutions.

Business owners and city officials emphasize that homelessness and crime is not new to Downtown. But they say the numbers of severely mentally ill people on the streets today has increased, exacerbating

crime and quality-of-life problems that took hold in cities across the U.S. during the pandemic.

Officials note that homeless individuals themselves have been victimized, and it's not clear if the rise in property crime is connected to homelessness.

Given the scale of the issue and the universal consensus that the current crisis is unsustainable, the Post sought interviews with the mayor, the police chief, the councilmember representing Downtown and other officials to get a better understanding of the city's plan to address homelessness and crime in the area. Their availability to discuss these concerns varied, and the officials who did agree to interviews offered few specifics on how the Downtown area could immediately be helped.

Mayor Robert Garcia, who is expected to win a bid for a Congress this month, gave an eight-minute interview from Japan, where he was on a trade mission with the Port of Long Beach.

While he said he is concerned about the situation in Downtown, Garcia expects things to improve as the city moves past the pandemic.

Garcia, who was a longtime Downtown resident, noted that crime is still significantly lower compared to previous decades. Nonetheless, Long Beach this year added 20 more bicycle and foot patrol officer positions throughout the city to ramp up patrols, the mayor said.

He urged residents and businesses to hold tight as "we will pull out of this."

"The crisis around the unhoused and mentally ill and the kinds of crimes that are happening in Downtown are very disturbing, but it's not something we can solve

overnight," he said. "We're doing our part, but it has been tough. No question about it."

Nancy Downs, who owns more than a dozen buildings with retail shops in Downtown, said she needs more answers from city leaders. Downs said some of her tenants have talked about leaving, and she's concerned about more vacant storefronts.

"The message from the mayor is way off because we can't sit tight while businesses are closing and revenue is down and we are going to end up where we were 25 years ago, when the buildings were empty Downtown," she said. "They're not going to be able to rent all these new residential towers they're building if they don't do something about the increase in crime."

The Long Beach Police Department said its Chief Wally Hebeish was unavailable for an interview, but the department granted a 10-minute interview with Deputy Chief Gerardo Prieto.

Prieto said officers have been working with hotels and business owners to add lighting and security cameras.

"What we've done in that area is that we've maintained open lines of communications with business partners and resident groups to identify issues and hear concerns," he said, adding that the department's South Division commander meets routinely with neighborhood groups.

While the department still has the same amount of budgeted patrol officer positions, he said, the LBPD has used overtime funding to hire additional officers to increase patrol in the Downtown area since last year.

He said the department added

four bicycle patrol officers for Downtown that use crime stats and information from businesses and residents to target specific hotspots. The officers are fitted with new bicycles purchased with federal pandemic relief aid.

The department is also planning to add foot patrol in the next few weeks, with more details to come, he said. Prieto said more boots on the ground can help deter crime and provide extra resources.

"They're approachable and more visible," he said.

But while the city is working to increase police presence, residents said they've received few answers as to what is being done to help mentally ill people in the streets.

"The police rarely come, and when they do come they don't take reports, so it doesn't appear in their statistics, so their perceptions of what's going on is really skewed by lack of information," Palermo said.

Modica, whose deli at the corner of Linden Avenue and Ocean Boulevard has long been a popular lunch spot for LBPD officers, said she's seen a significant increase in people who are severely mentally ill.

In an incident this summer, she said, a man naked from the waist down walked up to her patio as customers were having lunch and grabbed a little girl's lemonade. He then ran inside the deli carrying a sharp stick as the chef scrambled to hide the kitchen knives.

The man eventually wandered off, but for Modica, it was the last straw in a string of frightening encounters.

"I don't feel safe in this city," she said. "I'm out policing my corner every day. I'm exhausted. I understand homeless people can be victims of crime too, but the people that have been coming here

Continued on page 22

# Judge says proposed storage facility along LA River is subject to environmental review

By Jason Ruiz

A group challenging the development of an old oil waste facility in Long Beach along the Los Angeles River from becoming a storage facility scored a win last month when a judge ordered that an environmental impact report must be completed before the project can move forward.

An Oct. 19 ruling from Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Mitchell Beckloff called on the city to set aside any approvals for the project until the city complies with the California Environmental Quality Act, which would require a lengthy environmental impact report.

The 32-page order cited the city's failure to provide an adequate analysis of the project's effects on air quality, land use or policies and whether it could negatively affect special status species and biological resources and create transportation safety issues.

"This week's ruling is a solid win for the LA River and for all of Los Angeles," Bruce Reznik, Executive Director of LA Waterkeeper, said in a statement. "Instead of adding more concrete along the LA River, we need to be adding green spaces, especially in park poor neighborhoods such as western Long Beach."

The Riverpark Coalition and LA Waterkeeper, a nonprofit environmental watchdog for inland and coastal waterways, filed a lawsuit against the city in May 2021 claiming that the city approved the project without an accounting of the environmental effects of the project.

Members of the coalition had sought to block construction of the storage facility on the parcel of land along the river just north of the 405 Freeway. Members claimed the city had been promised this parcel to West Long Beach residents as a future nature preserve and park.

The site, located at 3701 Pacific Place, was formerly used for oil production wastewater where oil-brine would be evaporated in pools where toxic sludge would accumulate. Oil operations ceased at the site sometime in the 1950s and the city had said the levels of contamination of the site had limited the viable options for future development.

"Now that they're going to have to do an EIR, which is going to open a big can of worms for them," said Ian Patton, a board member of the Riverpark Coalition, who is also running for the City Council's 5th District seat.

Patton said having to complete an environmental report doesn't necessarily guarantee the project won't go forward, but it could present problems for it, specifically by adding to the timeline while the developers complete the report.

"It's a big hurdle for them now," Patton said. "They wanted to avoid that hurdle."

When reached late last month, City Attorney Charlie Parkin said his office had not yet reviewed the order so he couldn't comment on what the city might choose to do, including if it would challenge the ruling.

In September, the Planning Commission approved a 226-unit housing development directly south of the freeway from the proposed storage site. Coalition members objected to that project as well, but the developers of the housing project completed an environmental impact report as part of its proposal, which the City Council still needs to approve.

The city released a report ahead of the City Council's April 2021 vote to approve the storage facility that showed potential parcels of land



The development of a storage facility at 3701 Pacific Place has been put on hold after a judge ordered an environmental impact report be completed following a challenge by the Riverpark Coalition, a community group that has advocated for a park to be developed at the site instead.

along the riverbed that the city could potentially acquire to turn into parkland or open space.

It identified an 11-acre parcel of land near the proposed storage center as a leading candidate but developing the site could cost \$27 million, not including the cost of purchasing it from Los Angeles County.

Park equity has been a focus for city officials in recent years as they try to balance the different levels of access to open space between East Long Beach and the rest of the city, which has a fraction of the amount of green space. ■

"Now I have a really strong support system. Mental Health America of Los Angeles gave me a community."



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# City Council approves new 3-year contract for Long Beach firefighters, lifeguards

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach firefighters officially have a new contract after the City Council voted unanimously last month to approve the three-year deal that will raise salaries for the roughly 400 sworn members of the department.

The contract includes three annual pay raises of 5%, 4% and 3.5% starting this fiscal year. It also increases skill pay for paramedics and more experienced firefighters, something the city hopes will help retain and attract firefighters as the department has struggled to meet staffing levels in recent years.

“It’s a very competitive market and I look forward to Long Beach

recruiting the best and the brightest,” said Long Beach Firefighters Association President Rex Pritchard.

Over the course of the three-year contract, the pay increases are expected to cost the city an additional \$14.4 million. The additional pay, and the anticipated new agreement with the Long Beach Police Officers Association later this year, are expected to drive up the city’s projected budget deficit to about \$40 million.

The Long Beach Fire Department and Long Beach Police Department took up about \$327 million (71%) of the \$460 million general fund in the most recently adopted budget.

The council also approved a new three-year contract with the union



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

A Long Beach firefighter is doused in foam as crews work to knock down a fire that started in the shuttered Jergins Tunnel in Downtown.

representing the city’s lifeguards, but those annual increases will have a smaller effect on the budget. The new lifeguard contract will cost the city about \$1 million over the next three years, but the increase will be paid out of the city’s Tidelands Fund, which is tied to oil production and is required to be spent in coastal areas.

Because the Long Beach Firefighters Association, the union representing the firefighters, already approved the contract, it took effect last month. ■

# Long Beach could use incentives to more quickly eliminate leaded aviation fuel at airport



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

A single-engine plane flies in for a landing at Long Beach Airport.

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach could look at incentives to help speed up a transition to unleaded fuels for smaller aircraft operating out of its airport as federal regulators take steps to phase out its use completely.

Leaded fuel is used in smaller piston-engine planes like Cessnas and Pipers and its exhaust has been tied to children living near airports having elevated levels of lead in their blood, which can cause a variety

of health issues including brain or nervous system damage and developmental issues.

The use of leaded fuel was prohibited in vehicles in the early 1990s but is still allowed in small aircraft because it helps prevent in-flight issues like sudden engine failure and knocking. Larger commercial planes do not use leaded fuel.

While there is a public-private push to end its use by 2030, some cities have turned to incentives to get pilots to switch to unleaded fuels in advance of it being phased out.

Councilmember Rex Richardson last month asked for the city to look into options that could help pilots flying out of Long Beach make the switch.

“I love our airport. It’s a good airport, but that’s something we need to be proactive about addressing,” Richardson said of the use of leaded fuel.

A 2014 settlement with 30 fuel providers, including two at Long Beach Airport, required them to begin to transition over to safer alternatives for aviation fuel. Long Beach was identified as one of the country’s

top polluters in the state by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The airport sits in the middle of multiple neighborhoods in East Long Beach, Lakewood, Signal Hill and California Heights, and the potentially affected areas include multiple schools.

Lori Shepler, who has two children who attend Carver Elementary School, said it’s “almost criminal” that leaded fuel has been allowed to be used for so long.

“I think it should be outright banned,” Shepler said.

Long Beach could look to other cities for ideas on how to speed up the transition locally.

Earlier this year, the Van Nuys Airport announced it would discount unleaded fuel by 11 cents per gallon by foregoing fees.

But incentives are only part of the issue. Switching from leaded to unleaded fuel might also require new storage tanks and other infrastructure at the airport. Some planes might have to be modified so they can use unleaded fuel. Producing unleaded aviation fuel at scale and having it certified by federal agencies is also an obstacle.

Because Long Beach lacks the authority to regulate what kind of fuel is used at the airport, it can only offer incentives to switch as it waits for federal regulators to act. The EPA and the Federal Aviation Administration have signaled that they could issue a determination on the future of leaded aviation fuel at some point next year. ■

November 1, 2022



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

The North Los Altos Shopping Center on Bellflower Boulevard is the type of commercial zone that could be redeveloped under new laws recently signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

# California rewrote commercial zoning to boost housing supply. How will that affect Long Beach?

By Laura Anaya-Morga

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed two major bills into law in late September that aim to tackle what he called the “original sin” of the state: the housing and affordability crisis. The laws will allow developers to turn underutilized and empty commercial buildings, those zoned for big-box stores, retail and office spaces, into housing.

The two laws, Assembly Bill 2011 and Senate Bill 6, mark a sea change in housing rules by essentially overruling local zoning to allow residential construction in office and commercial areas as long as developers meet certain affordability, environmental and labor requirements.

In Long Beach, commercial property owners are largely in favor of the laws, which could encourage more building at a time when it’s increasingly difficult to turn a profit on a retail or commercial project, according to Juan Huizar, vice president of the Long Beach Commercial Real Estate Council.

“The best use of these old, dilapidated buildings is no longer a new commercial building. It’s just not and we have a lot of them. ... There’s literally not enough housing,” he said. “I like the thought of providing new housing to low-income people. ... I think that’s something that doesn’t exist, it’s very few and far between and we need more of it.”

Both laws will take effect on July 1, 2023, but whether they have much impact on housing locally remains to be seen.

“This law may well have dramatic impacts in communities across California. However, the impact in Long Beach is expected to be

limited,” said Development Services spokesperson Richard de la Torre.

A map detailing where the city currently allows commercial developments but not mixed-use developments with housing includes some parts of North and East Long Beach, but the city does not anticipate AB 2011 and SB 6 will be used on these sites even when they become available.

AB 2011 and SB 6 both set labor and affordability benchmarks that developers must meet if they want to take advantage of the new zoning rules, and, “We would expect mid- to high-rise projects to be those most likely to support these wage and affordability provisions,” de la Torre said. “However the City already allows mixed-use in Downtown and the Long Beach Boulevard corridor where taller projects are allowed.”

Market conditions will ultimately determine whether builders take advantage of the new rules locally, de la Torre said, but a law that includes a similar process, SB 35, has only been used twice in Long Beach since it was enacted in 2017—both for 100% affordable projects.

**What exactly do the laws do?**

Labor unions and affordable housing advocates struck a deal to pass SB 6 and AB 2011. Both measures seek to incentivize and increase housing density in commercial zones located near transit hubs and daily services to help meet the state’s environmental goals and avoid sprawl.

Developers will now have the choice between meeting strict labor requirements and criteria for workers or additional affordability requirements for their projects if they want to build housing in commercial zones.

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1901 OBISPO AVE	9,420 SF	OFFICE   LEASE	DANIEL ROLAND (562) 513-1619
1000 EAST 10TH ST	5,340 SF   7 UNITS	MULTIFAMILY   SALE	SEAN BANEY (714) 501-3866

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Bid Opportunities

Title	Bid Number	Due Date
Construction Mgmt. Svcs. for Terminal Roadway Improvements Project at LB Airport	AP-22-160	11/03/2022
Home Improvement Grant Program Administrator	DV-22-150	11/15/2022
Purchase & Development of 5571 Orange R-7171 I-605 Soundwall, Coyote Creek to Spring Street	DV-22-127	11/15/2022
Catholic Protection Improvement of Recycled Water Systems Project - Phase 5	PW-22-147	11/15/2022
Organic Waste Consultant	WD-23-026	11/16/2022
Construction Mgmt. Svcs. for the J. Will Johnson Tanks Roof Repairs Project (EO-3630)	PW-22-128	11/16/2022
Point in Time Homeless Count App	WD-23-024	11/18/2022
	HE-22-124	02/09/2023

Bidder Registration

To receive notifications of bid opportunities, register with the city, and download additional bid details, visit [www.longbeach.gov/purchasing](http://www.longbeach.gov/purchasing).

Auto Lien Sale Auction

3111 E. Willow Street Nov 8 & 22, 2022  
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## Able ARTS Work raises \$20,000 toward renovation efforts



Able ARTS Work celebrated its exhibit at the Long Beach Airport during the organization's fall fundraising event.

By Tess Kazenoff

Able ARTS Work celebrated its exhibit at the Long Beach Airport during the organization's fall fundraising event last month. The event, which included about 50 attendees, raised around \$20,000 for the nonprofit's capital campaign—an ongoing effort to move into its new building that was

purchased this past spring. That purchase was made possible thanks to fundraising efforts that the organization, which offers a variety of inclusive art services to people of all abilities, kicked off nearly two years ago, in November 2020. The funds raised during the Oct. 14 event directly support the second stage of fundraising, which aims to raise \$1 million for renovations to make the building fully accessible to

its participants. Including the \$20,000 contributed during the fundraiser, the organization has raised a total of \$210,000 so far. “The support is really critical to getting the work started,” said Able ARTS Work’s director of community advancement, Kristy Glass. Sponsors of the event included Arts Council for Long Beach, Long Beach Airport, Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture, Environ, REMO Inc., Long Beach Councilmember Stacy Mungo, Onisko & Scholz, The Morrison & Foerster Foundation, John Gogian Family Foundation and Paradies Lagardère. Apart from raising funds for the organization, guests were able to view Able ARTS Work’s CORE 2022 exhibit, featured at the organization’s Bixby Knolls gallery space, along with its CORE 2021 exhibit, currently on display at the airport. Long Beach Airport first reached out to Able ARTS Work in August 2021 about installing an exhibit for its construction barriers; for almost a year, the organization brainstormed and designed the current exhibition, which has been on display since July. The exhibit, featuring 14 pieces of a variety of mediums, will likely be on display until December—or

longer, if the airport encounters any delays in its ongoing construction work. The airport is in the midst of a major renovation project that includes a new baggage claim area, which officials have said they expect to be completed in December. While Able ARTS Work has curated annual CORE exhibits since 2005, and the exhibition has evolved over the years, recent displays feature collaborations between community artists and Able ARTS Work day program participants across the nonprofit’s four adult day program locations. Able ARTS Work has one program in Long Beach and two in Hawthorne, and its newest is in San Diego, which opened in 2021. The collaborations have allowed Able ARTS Work students to engage in conversation with local artists and embrace different mediums, Glass said. One of the collaborating local artists is Lawrence Yun, an artist and professor at Cal State Fullerton who works primarily with watercolor, who teamed up with Able ARTS Work’s Long Beach day studio, Glass said. Local artist Jazmin Urrea, who frequently incorporates food into her work, meanwhile, collaborated with the Hawthorne program, creating an end result themed around food. While Able ARTS Work focuses largely on providing art therapies and art classes for people of all abilities, supporting its participants in their journeys toward becoming working artists is also a goal of the organization, Helen Dolas, Able ARTS Work founder said in December. Through the organization’s gallery space, many participants have become working artists. Particularly since the pandemic, Able ARTS Work students have sold more artwork than ever before in the organization’s history. Along with showcasing the collaboration and introducing viewers to the services offered at Able ARTS Work, the Long Beach Airport exhibit provides an opportunity for Able ARTS Work artists to gain exposure and even facilitate sales, Glass said. The exhibit includes a QR code where viewers can learn more about each artist, visit their portfolios, and view any artwork that’s available for sale, Glass said. “It’s definitely exposure for our artists and their artwork and an opportunity to share their creative visions,” Glass said. “Over 5,000 people a day walk past this installation.” Learn more about Able ARTS Work’s capital campaign at [ableartswork.org/capital-campaign](http://ableartswork.org/capital-campaign). Visit Able ARTS Work at its Bixby Knolls gallery, open Tuesdays through Sundays at 4321 Atlantic Ave. On Nov. 4, join Able ARTS Work during its First Friday event, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. for a night of art, music, food, drinks, shopping and entertainment. ■

## Long Beach Unified will diversify workforce using its own students

By Mike Guardabascio

At a recent Long Beach Unified School District Board of Education meeting, district staff presented the board with some harsh realities about its workforce: The district is being affected by a nationwide teacher shortage as it seeks to replace retirees, and it also needs to diversify its workforce, which is much whiter than its student body. Students themselves are asking the district to hire more diverse educators, according to feedback presented to the board.

“We’re seeking to plant different seeds so that new roots will take hold,” said LBUSD Deputy Superintendent Tiffany Brown.

There are no silver bullets in the complex world of public education, but the district has come up with a program that could help solve a few of its workforce problems simultaneously. The LBUSD has partnered with Long Beach City College for a program called Grow Your Own, which will give students at Poly, Millikan and Jordan a chance to start taking education-related classes at LBCC while still enrolled in high school with the goal of speeding them toward a career in teaching.

“This helps us not only diversify our workforce but also have that next generation of teachers when we’re in a shortage,” said LBUSD Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources David Zaid, whose department has done much of the heavy lifting on the district’s side in getting this program ready to launch for the spring semester. “You can’t match our students any better than hiring students.”

Poly, Millikan and Jordan were selected because they already had clubs for students interested in becoming teachers, and Zaid said the response to the pilot program was overwhelming, with way more than the hoped-for number of 20 students at each school expressing interest in enrolling.

A big part of that appeal is that if students complete the minimum



Fourth-grade teacher Jeannice Colbert starts her class on the first day of school at Barton Elementary School.

12 units required for the program, they’ll receive a certificate as well as a conditional employment contract.

“When we told them that, the kids are like ‘Hey, that sounds good. I understand the benefits of dual enrollment,’ but when we told them about awarding the contract, that was a big ‘wow’ moment,” said Zaid.

With that offer in hand, students can go get their college degrees and teaching credentials and then come back to work in Long Beach, even if they went away for college.

“Some students will take advantage of the Long Beach Promise here, and some of our students will go off to college and come back and be committed to the Long Beach community, which we love to see,” he said. “We will go to your graduation and award a contract—it says if you complete your bachelor’s and your credential and you come back to Long Beach, we’re going to hire you.”

With a current starting salary of \$63,990 for LBUSD teachers with a full credential as well as strong benefits packages and membership in an established union, that’s a great “first job” for recent college graduates in their early 20s.

Details of the Grow Your Own

program are intended to help smooth the road for Long Beach students who want to teach. One of the offered classes is an A-G requirement, for example, and the courses are also CSU transferable, giving students a head start on their college requirements.

Another detail is that one of the courses requires 45 hours of teaching observation time. Students can enroll in that course in the summer while also accepting employment in the school district’s SEAL summer school program, where they can earn money at work while also simultaneously completing their observation hours.

Zaid said that after so much hard work creating the program, it’s been gratifying to see the program take shape and to have so many students interested in it prior to launching.

“It’s incredibly gratifying, and we have quite a few employees in the district who are former students,” he said. “I’ve often said when students leave Long Beach Unified, I want them to have a passport that will take them anywhere they want in the world. This gives them a passport to go further their education, but also to come back to the Long Beach community and change the world by investing in the next generation.” ■

## Cranes Converted

Continued from page 15

“Each terminal has different existing electrical infrastructure, and the cost to add electrical infrastructure will vary by terminal,” Tomley said. “It will vary significantly if the terminal needs to upgrade the power supply to their facility.”

Total Transportation Services also is demonstrating four liquified natural gas plug-in hybrid-electric trucks for drayage service, according to Tomley. The grant application was submitted in 2017, a time when zero-emission trucks were not commercially available, Tomley explained, which is why the near-zero emission demonstration is taking place despite the zero-emission goal being only seven years away.

As part of the demonstrations, data is collected over the course of six months and the equipment must be operated for a year, Tomley said.

The transition project is expected to reduce greenhouse gases and smog-causing nitrogen oxides by more than 1,323 tons and 27 tons, respectively, each year, according to a statement from the port. These are welcome reductions following a recent report that pandemic-induced backlogs at the port caused emissions to increase.

As terminal operators continue to move forward with zero-emission equipment, one major question that has dockworkers concerned is whether to also make a shift to more automated equipment. The issue has caused delays in labor negotiations over the last four months between the union representing dockworkers and the association representing terminal operators and shippers.

The port, for its part, said there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach on the path toward zero emissions.

“Each terminal will make decisions about what works best to meet the needs of their operations,” Tomley said. “All of the grant-funded demonstration projects managed by the Port of Long Beach have focused on development and demonstration of first-of-its-kind zero-emission human-operated equipment.” ■

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## Commercial Zoning

Continued from page 19

AB 2011 requires that developers meet affordable housing requirements of at least 15% as well as abide by strict environmental requirements that will result in reduced greenhouse gas emissions and water use for new developments in exchange for a streamlined approval process for their project.

An analysis published in August by Urban Footprint, a platform that analyzes city data for urban developers

and local governments, found that AB 2011 could significantly improve the environmental impact of new housing. It is predicted that households along the commercial corridors affected by the bill would use 40% less water, travel 33% fewer miles and emit up to 45% fewer greenhouse gas emissions, according to the analysis.

The analysis also found that “commercial corridors targeted by the bill could provide up to 2.4 million new homes, including up to 400,000 homes affordable to low and moderate-income households across the state.”

SB 6 places labor unions and middle-income housing as its priority,

requiring union-scale wages for construction as well as ensuring that they are part of a “skilled and trained workforce,” essentially guaranteeing that most workers are unionized.

While Development Services typically opposes legislation that limits local control, the department said the effort to rezone underutilized space is consistent with the city’s so-called Zone In: City Core plan that will determine the look and character of a sizable chunk of Central Long Beach that stretches from Magnolia Avenue to Ximeno Avenue near the Traffic Circle and includes nearly every parcel of land between Tenth

Street and Pacific Coast Highway. The initiative is currently in the third and final phase of community engagement. It aims to update zoning regulations to support the development of new housing and mixed-use buildings to create a more walkable, pedestrian- and bike-friendly neighborhood. The zoning changes are anticipated to facilitate more than 3,000 market-rate and affordable housing units in the area, according to Development Services. The Zone In: City Core plan, the city estimates, will have a greater impact on its development than the state’s housing package will. ■

# Free electric shuttle service starts in Belmont Shore; Downtown route to launch next week

Though the two service areas will not be connected, city officials “will explore ways to connect these two service areas to allow easy transfers if desired,” officials said.

By Anthony Pignataro

A free micro-shuttle designed to reduce car trips and stimulate the local economy began last week in Belmont Shore, city officials announced. Circuit Transit is providing electric-powered shuttle service for business districts, amenities and services free of charge Thursdays through Sundays, according to an Oct. 24 memo from Long Beach Public Works Director Eric Lopez to City Manager Tom Modica. The City Council approved the \$1.6 million shuttle program in September. The shuttles are operating from 4

to 10 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10 p.m. on Saturdays and noon to 6 p.m. on Sundays. The shuttles offer both on-demand and fixed-route pick-up and drop-off services, according to the memo. The shuttles, which are electrically powered, carry five passengers. There are three to five shuttles available for use during its time of operation, one of which is ADA-accessible, according to city officials. Customers must be within the shuttle’s service area, which includes Alamitos Bay, Naples, Belmont Shore and Belmont Heights, to get a ride. Riders can use the Ride Circuit mobile app or visit [ridecircuit.com/ride](http://ridecircuit.com/ride) for more information. On Thursday, Nov. 10, Circuit will begin operating an identical free shuttle service in the Downtown area. Though the two service areas will not be connected, city officials “will explore ways to connect these two service areas to allow easy transfers if desired,” according to Lopez’s memo. City officials chose the two service areas because of the density of businesses and services, and because the areas include several underutilized public parking lots that can be useful in easing the



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal  
An electric shuttle that carts people around the Belmont Shore area for free drives down Second Street on the first day of service.

crunch of on-street parking during weekends, according to the memo. In 2018, Circuit Transit operated a similar service for eight weeks in Downtown called Free Ride. That service carried 16,742 riders, created 17 jobs and reduced 7.5 tons of CO2 emissions, according to Lopez’s memo. A year later, Councilmember Suzie Price, who represents the Belmont Shore area, asked officials to look at options as struggling retailers along Second Street complained that the lack of parking paired with the soon-to-open 2ND & PCH shopping center could make business worse. ■

## Rising Crime

Continued from page 16

recently, they’re very mentally ill and they’re dangerous.” The LBPd in a statement said police are often called to respond to incidents involving homeless individuals experiencing mental illness, and if someone meets the state criteria to be involuntarily held for 72 hours, known as a 5150 hold, they will be transported to a medical facility for treatment. But with a shortage of psychiatric treatment beds, many have nowhere to go. Moreover, the department said some misdemeanor crimes must be committed in the presence of an officer for the officer to make an arrest. “When the calling party is a passerby or is unwilling to affect an arrest, an officer’s options are limited, however we still direct our officers to take the most appropriate action to resolve the issue,” the department said. Long Beach City Prosecutor Doug Haubert said he often hears concerns as to why police aren’t arresting individuals who are committing misdemeanors, but in many cases, officers’ hands are tied due to laws reducing criminal misdemeanors and early release from jails.

“Law enforcement watches as people they arrest are released quickly and that has to be demoralizing for them to keep arresting the same people over and over again, only to see them being released immediately,” he said. “I feel that frustration, too.” City officials have said they’re working to figure out why Long Beach has seen a significant increase in homelessness and crime, but residents said they believe it’s partly due to the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s practice of forcing passengers off its trains at the end of the A-Line in Downtown, when the train closes for cleaning around 1 a.m. “There’s people who get off the train and they have no idea where they are. They think they’re still in Los Angeles,” Palermo said. “And there’s no supportive services for them. They have no support and nowhere to go.” After hearing testimony from concerned residents and business owners, the City Council last month voted to send Metro a letter asking it to reevaluate its practice of forcing people off the train at its terminus Downtown. Metro’s Executive Management Committee, at the behest of L.A. County Supervisor Janice Hahn, voted in favor of

reassessing the policy shortly after. Mary Zendejas, whose 1st District includes Downtown, said she would support a greater police presence in the area and wants to explore more ways to work with the county on mental health support. Zendejas did not have specific details on ways the city could address the mental health issues for the homeless. She said there are many challenges. “Unfortunately, I feel we are getting overwhelmed with the needs of the unhoused, and just when we feel like we’re getting close to addressing the needs, especially with Downtown, we just get inundated with even more people experiencing homelessness,” she said. “We don’t have the component that we should be able to help these individuals with mental illness.” Zendejas said she’s hoping for relief with a new, statewide approach called CARE Court, which would connect those with severe mental illness to a court-ordered treatment plan for up to two years. For now, local business owners say they’re concerned the problems will impact their bottom line and overall visitors to Long Beach. Austin Metoyer, CEO of the Downtown Long Beach Alliance, said crime, safety and homelessness are top concerns for local businesses. In one of

its efforts, the organization for the first time is planning to hire a homelessness outreach coordinator to connect people with city and county resources. “Everything is coming to a boiling point for people,” he said. “Everyone can agree this is acute in the Downtown area and it needs to be addressed.” While Downtown has long had issues, Jeremy Harris, president of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, said the frequency and brazenness has reached crisis levels. He noted the recent closure of the Main Library due to safety concerns and a fatal stabbing spree last month that stretched from Anaheim Street to the beach bike path. The girlfriend of the man accused in the fatal stabbing said he was not homeless, but had recently gone off his medication and was in the midst of a mental health crisis. “Now and beyond this current election cycle, all Long Beach leaders need to be stepping up their involvement to create real solutions to these increasingly volatile issues,” Harris said. This story is part of the Long Beach Post series, “Locked Out: Homelessness in Long Beach.” To support this project, donate to the tax-exempt Long Beach Post 2022 Investigative Reporting Fund at [givebutter.com/lbpost2022](http://givebutter.com/lbpost2022). ■



# LOCKED OUT

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