Long Beach housing outlook for 2023 likely a mixed bag, city officials say

By Alicia Robinson

Long Beach officials have promised a focused effort to address a housing shortage that’s exacerbated the homeless crisis, but forces beyond the city’s control—such as higher interest rates that could chill development—made 2023 likely to be what Development Services Director Christopher Koontz called “a year of contrasts.”

A number of high-profile projects will get started or come online this year in Long Beach, such as the former Broadway Block (now called Omni East Village), opening this summer with 432 apartments, plus space for businesses such as a grocery store and coffee shop on the lower floors, and the 776-unit West Gateway, which will turn the World Trade Center parking lot into a construction site in the coming months.

Four developments of apartments for lower-income families, with a total of more than 300 units, are slated to open this year, and the city just awarded $6.1 million in funding for two new affordable projects.

And the city Planning Commission recently approved a landmark development that will create 900 new apartments. Planning Bureau Manager Alison Spindler-Ruiz said Mosaic, as the project is called, is “the largest housing project, certainly, that I’ve seen in my tenure,” and would add almost as many units as there were housing starts citywide last year.

That’s all good news, but it won’t make up for the housing shortage Long Beach and California as a whole have been experiencing for years.

According to city data, 2019 was a record-breaking year with more than 1,200 building permits issued, and the next two years also hovered around the 1,000 mark—but those came after several rather anemic years, with 300 or fewer permits issued in 2014, 2015 and 2018. (Complete 2022 data is not yet available, city officials said.)

And now, as part of a state-mandated housing planning process, the city is also expected to figure out where to put a total of 26,500 new homes by 2029.

In the state’s last eight-year cycle, Long Beach had to plan for about 7,000 new units, Spindler-Ruiz said—and the city only saw about 60% of that total get built.

Koontz said despite the demand for new homes, interest rates that are “wildly different” from a few years ago and other factors outside the city’s control, such as a shortage of construction workers, could slow the production of new homes this year.

Gary Painter, a professor at USC’s Sol Price School of Public Policy, agreed that at least for the immediate future, developers will likely be cautiously waiting to see which potential projects will pencil out.

“I think on net, whenever there is a shock in the economy—in this case interest rates—builders, sellers, buyers all tend to pause, and we know pausing is not good for our housing market,” Painter said.

However, he said, “I think by the second half of the year, things will start moving again.”

Continued on page 3
Residents push for more commercial uses, safety along Santa Fe corridor on Westside

By Brandon Richardson

As the city continues its work toward rezoning Santa Fe Avenue on Long Beach’s Westside, residents are urging the city to consider changes that will bring more commercial uses, including grocery stores, pharmacies, banks and more. The MU-A zoning would allow for 1% of residential projects.

“If there is not a mandatory component to more of the designated zoning, it could further perpetuate the commercial inequities that the Westside currently experiences,” Bell said in a message to the Business Journal Feb. 10.

If the vision is realized and more commercial activity comes to the Westside, though, residents also voice concerns over safety and in the area. Susan Lopez noted the surge in property crimes across the city over the start of the coronavirus pandemic, which includes a recent spike in break-ins into more than half a dozen restaurants.

Another resident who identified themselves only as Ryan, a 30-something resident, pointed out increased commercial uses for the surrounding neighborhood should go hand-in-hand with making the area safer and more walkable for pedestrians.

“Traffic speeds and pedestrian safety are at odds,” Ryan said. “The higher the speed of traffic, the less likely it is that somebody’s going to feel safe walking. And the safety of walking is paramount when you’re looking for foot traffic.”

While more commercial tenants would be a win for people like Bell, Sanchez-Lopez said the city does not anticipate many proposals for 100% commercial projects as there has been a shift over the last several years in commercial development. Mixed-use developments that include both residential and commercial are seen as the path forward.

“The number of 100% commercial projects that the city has approved over the last few years is less than a dozen. So even if we allow for it in theory, in practice we don’t really expect that to be the case,” Sanchez-Lopez said.

“Being said that, if we start to see only commercial projects coming in, or we start to use a lot of our sites not developing as residential to the units that we had projected, then we would want to really identify new sites and maybe adopt new policies,” she said. “We just make sure that we’re meeting our RHNA requirement.”
Mayor kicks off series of forums to hear concerns from business owners citywide

By Brandon Richardson

Dozens of Bixby Knolls business owners gathered inside Lola’s Mexican Cuisine on the morning of Feb. 10 for a question-and-answer session with Long Beach Mayor Rex Richardson regarding the state of business in the city.

The event is the first of seven or eight similar meetings the mayor has planned over the next few months as part of his “100 Businesses in 100 Days Tour.” Future forums will include businesses from other areas of the city, as an opportunity for owners to share their concerns directly with Richardson.

“Making sure that we have a mayor’s office that is able to engage ensures that there’s a flow of communication that goes from the public, the community, up into the (City Council) and the city management,” Richardson told the Business Journal after the event. “The main focus for business owners overall was safety, including whether there was enough parking, etc.”

Richardson invited the business owners to continue their questions during a forum.

Parking isn’t an issue. It should be about being more business-friendly, he added. And getting people back out walking to support the restaurants and the stores. We could get more retail shops up here if we had more walking business, if we slow the damn street down.

An increase in the city’s unhoused population was another focus of conversation, with Wylie Streau, a law enforcement detective who has caused safety concerns in the area due to random, violent behavior by those who have mental health or addiction issues.

Richardson noted his administration’s dedication to putting homeless people on the forefront of its agenda, but he also said that when it comes to mental health services, the city is almost entirely at the will of the county.

“We have to work through the providers that LA County selects to operate within our city, and there’s not a lot of requirements for them to coordinate directly with our city,” Richardson said, adding that city staff is not exactly sure and city officials for better solutions.

The difficulty of working with various city departments was another shared concern in terms of attracting new businesses anywhere in the city. Van Fleet said to the mayor. He noted that the temporary road diet, which saw one lane on each side of the street closed, helped while it was in place.

In response, Richardson recanted how two years ago, the 9th District councilmember got a mayor-vetoed ordinance approved and funded a $6 million project that broke ground last week.

He said the whole of Bixby Knolls must come together, he said on the same page and engage with the city’s Public Works Department, especially Director Eric Lopez.

Van Fleet said he is in favor of bringing back the road diet permanently, including introducing bike lanes. Some residents and business owners, though, complained about a decrease in parking amid the road diet.

Parking isn’t an issue. It should be about above-solving, he said. And getting people back out walking to support the restaurants and the stores. We could get more retail

Local real estate brokerage, CART Group sells commercial building in Naples

Commercial real estate has brought together a group of Long Beach business owners.

Johnathon Cardwell & Zach Marsh work together as a real estate team at CART Group, Inc. Their friend, Joshua Sanchez, a high-end business manager also out of Long Beach, has teamed up with partner to bring in a new restaurant concept to Naples.

The building, located on 2nd St. at 1st Street in Naples, is a former movie theater.

“Looking to establish a foothold in this bustling coastal city. The building is a perfect location for a new concept to take root in this bustling coastal city.”

The building located on 2nd St. at 1st Street in Naples, is a former movie theater.

“Looking to establish a foothold in this bustling coastal city. The building is a perfect location for a new concept to take root in this bustling coastal city.”

The completed sale is a prime example of the real estate team’s capabilities.

“CART Group is making a name for themselves in the Long Beach real estate market. Whether you’re a first-time buyer or a seasoned investor, they have the expertise and experience to get the job done.”

Sunstone signs 5-year extension to foster Long Beach startups

Sunstone Community Fund and its nonprofit arm have announced an extension of the partnership behind Long Beach Accelerator, a program that aims to foster new tech startups in the city.

The partnership was launched in 2012, which ultimately saw the Sunstone Community Fund investing millions of dollars in startup businesses that participated in the accelerator program, which provides education and coaching to the new companies.

The “incredible team behind the Long Beach Accelerator have been crucial partners to Sunstone Management,” Sunstone CEO and managing partner John Keisler said in a statement. “The partnership has thrived over the next five years.

“Launch Beach,” the initiative includes city departments and will see $5 million pumped into local startups.

After answering some questions is not something that works for everyone. They have the expertise and experience to get the job done.”

Sunstone Accelerator program hosts two cohorts per year, with startup founders receiving educational, networking and mentorship opportunities. Upon acceptance into the accelerator, each startup will now receive a $35,000 investment on top of up to $500,000 in previous cohorts. Since the start of the partnership, Sunstone has invested about $3 million and $70 million into Long Beach Accelerator cohort companies.

Each company has the option to participate in “Demo Day” to pitch its concept to investors. Since 2012, the program has graduated 25 companies that have earned over $4 million in revenue, according to Sunstone.

“Though they have two past years have been an excellent collaboration, showing us what’s possible in building a next-generation, highly scalable tech accelerator in the city of Long Beach,” Andrea White-Kjoss, managing director of the accelerator, said in a statement. "The extension of this relationship creates the environment to build on those early successes and make Long Beach a global tech startup hub by 2030.”
Constructions underway on Downtown section of 4th Street expected to last through March

By Brandon Richardson

Sidewalks and gutters have been open-trench projects on the north side of Fourth Street between Alamitos Avenue and Elm Avenue as construction crews work to revamp the stretch of road.

In addition to sidewalk replacement and curbs and gutters, the project includes driveway replacements, ADA compliant curb ramps, traffic signal installations and repaving.

The work will add two more parking spaces to the portion of the street that the city continues to experience high levels of traffic, residents said.

The project budget is $1.8 million, with $25,000 coming from the city’s Measure A funds and the remainder being paid for via a Measure M grant from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Contreras said.

Residents passed Long Beach’s Measure M sales tax increase in 2018 after it was marketed as a way to fund infrastructure improvements and public safety. From 2017, the first fiscal year the sales tax was active, through July of last year, Measure A generated over $577 million. Of those funds, $53 million has gone toward street repairs. The police and fire departments have received over $21 million. The remaining funds have been used for improving city parks, buildings and other infrastructure projects.

The city’s streets, meanwhile, continue to deteriorate faster than they can be repaired at the current spending levels. Each street across the city has a condition score out of 100, and, according to a July 2022 city memo, the average score was 58. At the time, Lopez said the city would need to spend $8 million annually for five years to bring the average score up to 60. To bring the city average up to 80, a designation only 9% of city streets by metrics of citywide condition, it would cost $27 billion.

The Public Works department has a five-year plan outlining 46 pending Measure A projects through 2027, including to park improvement projects, 25 public facility projects, nine right-of-way, water quality and climate active projects and 13 mobility projects, which include street improvements.

When asked this week about the allocation of Measure A funds, Lopez said the department is “getting more infrastructure dollars than we ever have out of Measure A.”

“Adequate water drainage, ADA-compliant sidewalks and having a railway that is smooth to drive on, I think all those benefits have huge impacts, the long-term benefits, the long-term payoffs.”

The work on the sidewalks, curbs and gutters will continue on the north side of the street up to Elm Avenue, allowing eastbound traffic down Fourth Street, Contreras said. Then work on the south side of the street will commence from Elm to Alamitos, allowing westbound traffic once complete.

Once both sides of the street have been improved, the full stretch will be repaved.

The work began last week and is expected to continue at least through March, Lopez said. The construction, however, could last through April if needed.

Ramser sells North Long Beach property leased to Dollar Tree

By Tess Kazenoff

A 25-acre retail property in North Long Beach leased to a Dollar Tree was sold by Ramser Development Company, the company announced on Feb. 8. The sale of the property, located at 1157 Atlantic Ave., represents a strategic move for Ramser Development, as the company plans to reallocate the proceeds into one or more facilities in its core business of RV and boat storage, self-storage and industrial outdoor storage, according to a statement.

"Ramser Development Company is excited to be involved in a portfolio of core assets in 2023," Scott Ramser, founder and chief executive officer of Ramser Development Company in a statement. "While we are pleased with the performance of the Long Beach retail investment, this opportunity enables us to reallocate the capital from this sale into our primary investment strategy.”

Ramser Development acquired 3137 Atlantic Ave. in 2019 as part of a 10-property exchange, which is when an investment property is sold in order to purchase another.

The initial property was built in 1955 and renovated in 2016 and consists of two free-standing buildings totaling 21,770 square feet, along with 60 parking spaces.

Phil Ramminger of Farm Lee represents Ramser Development in the sale transaction, while the buyer, a private investor, was represented by Mark Rapoport of Southland Commercial Real Estate.

"The transaction was well timed and chaotic year for commercial real estate," Lacorte said for Ramser Development where we took several measures to work through the unexpected events and improve overall operations,” he said. “As the market continues to rapidly change, conditions shift and opportunities arise, we are well-positioned to execute on new potential investments.”

LGB passenger volumes in December plummet amid cancellations

While several factors contributed to the low volume, airport officials said Southwest canceling 166 flights over 10 days in December was the biggest.

By Brandon Richardson

Far fewer travelers passed through Long Beach Airport in December than during the same month in 2021, according to city data.

The final month of last year even failed to outperform December 2018 by nearly 17,000 passengers.

Usually bustling with holiday travelers, airports experienced a different kind of chaos to close out 2022, with Southwest canceling nearly 20,000 flights nationwide. In Long Beach, the cancellations cost the facility an estimated $500,000.

"There are so many factors that go into these monthly passenger numbers, from the cancellation of 166 outbound flights over a 10-day period was the biggest factor in the dip for December," LGB spokesperson Kate Kuykendall said in an email to the Business Journal on Feb. 1.

A total of 2,471,285 passengers traveled through the airport down a staggering 25% from the 3,308,853 passengers in December 2019. The 2012 figure was down 5.4% from December 2011, when travel was qualitatively by a surge in coronavirus cases.

Despite passenger volumes nationwide, meanwhile, were 2.7% below pre-pandemic levels, according to U.S. Transportation Security Administration data. About 97.7 million passengers traveled through U.S. airports, compared to nearly 76.4 million during the same month in 2019. Compared to 2021, U.S. air travel was down 10% in December.

Back in Long Beach, the airport's total passenger numbers for 2022 as a whole were much higher than the year prior, though they were still below 2019 levels. A total of 3,342,851 passengers traveled through the airport last year, up 1.4% from 2021, data shows. The yearly total, however, remained 9.5% below 2019.

"Although passenger travel was unexpected in 2022, we are on track for a stronger performance in 2023," Airport Director Cynthia Guidy said in an emailed statement.

Salvation Army center offers rehabilitation, addiction support

When participants walk through the doors of the Long Beach Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center, they begin a six-month journey toward rehabilitation.

Throughout the six months, participants of the program, which seeks to help men recovering from drug or alcohol addiction, spend eight hours a day working through the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, attending Bible classes, therapy and counseling, explained Captain Dan Garrett.

"My ultimate hope for the people that go through this program is that every man that comes through my door can succeed and get his life right,” Garrett said. "I know we offer and give what it takes to help a person, but it takes more on the individual themselves to come through the doors, that they gotta want this as much as I want to give it.”

After completing the first six months, participants can apply for a second round, or an additional six months, where they can work toward finding employment.

Six men are currently in the third phase, meaning they have found employment and are paying a small fee to stay at the facility, while they work toward finding permanent housing.

Unlike many other rehabilitation programs, everything from behavior, clothing and daily meals are entirely free to the men, apart from additional items such as snacks that can be purchased at the Salvation Army canteen, Garrett said.

"Finding the program is primarily through Salvation Army thrift stores, which sells donated goods including clothing, shoes and houseware. The Long Beach store is successful, consistently running $4,000 per month,” he said. Continued in next issue
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**Southwest announces new destinations**

Southwest Airlines continues its dominance at Long Beach Airport, and it’s been awarded five more daily flight slots, city officials announced Feb. 9. The carrier announced it would use the slots for new, returning and expanded services.

The carrier will begin daily nonstop service to Colorado Springs and El Paso beginning July 11 and Albuquerque beginning Sept. 7. Southwest’s seasonal daily nonstop service to Maui, meanwhile, returns March 19, and flights to Dallas will increase to twice per day starting June 6. The carrier will also begin service to Nashville, Tenn., on June 17.

“On top of offering one of the best flying experiences in the country, we now offer more destinations for our travelers than ever before,” Southwest Director Cynthia Guider said in a statement.

Carriers at Long Beach now offer nonstop service to 25 cities across the country—more destinations than any airport in the area’s 64-year history, according to city officials. The previous record was 19 nonstop destinations in 2020.

By Brandon Richardson

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**The Bungalow Kitchen will close temporarily and reopen as an immersive lounge**

Now that COVID-era restrictions have faded away, Brent Bolthouse is finally able to recast his Long Beach restaurant as the airy cocktail hangout it was intended to be.

By Kat Schuster

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**The Bungalow Kitchen**

Brent Bolthouse knows how to throw a house party, having garnered plenty of experience with Golden Globe parties and other soirées in the Hollywood Hills. Eventually, he was able to take this talent and transform it into an immersive cocktail lounge: The Bungalow.

On March 12, The Bungalow Kitchen within Long Beach’s AND & PCH will temporarily close to, for the most part, change its dining element. When it reopens this spring, he says it will finally reflect his original lounge-slash-house party concept, complete with DJs and multiple spaces to enjoy, he told the Post on Feb. 9.

“We want to be an extension of your living room,” Bolthouse said. “We want you to say, ‘Hey, I’m having a house party for a few people—oh my god it guy it go to—let’s go to The Bungalow instead of destroying the neighbors’ house.’”

The Long Beach location, he says, will be the best version of The Bungalow yet.

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**City of Long Beach**

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El Dorado Shopping Center in East Long Beach sold for $21.25M by DPI Retail

DPI Retail announced Feb. 6 its purchase of the 74,500-square-foot shopping center, El Dorado Shopping Center, located on the hard corner at 5400 East Middle Road and Wildflower Road, which has an estimated $400,000 car per day. The center holds a 10-year lease with El Dorado Shopping Center, which has reneged on its lease, which expired in 2018, with a five-year extension every five years, which demonstrates its “commitment to the community,” Fryman said.

“Investors see a flight to safety and security in the grocery sector, especially with value grocery retailers like Grocery Outlet,” he added. More than 513,000 residents with an average household income of $52,000 live within a five-mile radius of the shopping center, according to the news release.

El Dorado Shopping Center, built in 1981 and renovated in 2015, sits on 7.6 acres at the intersection of North Boulevard and Wildflower Road in Long Beach.

The center holds a 10-year lease with El Dorado Shopping Center, which has reneged on its lease, which expired in 2018, with a five-year extension every five years, which demonstrates its “commitment to the community,” Fryman said.

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El Dorado Shopping Center, built in 1981 and renovated in 2015, sits on 7.6 acres at the intersection of North Boulevard and Wildflower Road in Long Beach.

El Dorado Shopping Center, located in the East Long Beach area, was sold for $21.25 million, a regional investment group announced Feb. 6.

The 74,500-square-foot shopping center currently rents spaces to Grocery Outlet, El Dorado and others.

“The property offered a rare value-added opportunity to lease up a 5,040-square-foot former restaurant located on the hard corner at Norwalk Boulevard and Wildflower Road, which has an estimated 400,000 car per day,” Hanley Investment Group Executive Vice President Kevin Feyman said in a statement. “The buyer could re-tenant the existing building with other users or buy a ground lease.”

The center holds a 10-year lease with El Dorado Shopping Center, which has reneged on its lease, which expired in 2018, with a five-year extension every five years, which demonstrates its “commitment to the community,” Feyman said.

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CELEBRATING AND RECOGNIZING
DOWNTOWN

THE BLACK OWNED BUSINESSES OF
LONG BEACH
Long Beach Container Terminal will reach net zero emissions by 2030, officials say

By Alicia Robison

After investing $2.5 billion in clean technology and equipment over the last 12 years, Long Beach Container Terminal officials say another $200 million will get the cargo handling facility across the finish line.

Nixon said Thursday in explaining the net zero plan.

New automated, electric-powered cranes, self-driving chassis that move cargo containers and on-shore power that ships connect to so they don’t have to burn dirty fuel while loading or unloading have helped get the terminal 37% of the way to the net zero goal, Long Beach Container Terminal CEO Anthony Otto said.

The largest on-dock rail facility in the nation is able to load about 35% of the cargo coming into the terminal directly onto trains, reducing the number of trucks on the road, and terminal officials aim to get to 40%. And for the trucks that are still needed, the automated cranes get them in and out faster, with an average of just a minutes of sitting time, according to terminal officials.

“This facility is the most efficient, technologically advanced container terminal in the world. It is also the cleanest container terminal on the planet,” Otto said.

Reaching net zero, he said, will be “good for our community, that’s good for this region, it’s good for the maritime industry as a whole.”

The improvements have made terminal operations into a technological marvel, with cranes lifting, shifting and lowering, chassis weaving in and out to receive containers or driving themselves into a building where their spent batteries are traded for charged ones, and everything happening simultaneously like a well-oiled, gleaming, symphony-like machine.

The additional $200 million to be spent in pursuit of the 2030 goal will cover replacing about 210 gas-powered vehicles and other equipment, adding to the terminal’s three existing solar panel arrays, and finding other ways to make the energy that powers the facility cleaner.

Ships using the terminal must plug into shore power or potentially face state fines, with enforcement expected to begin April 1. And while the terminal can’t dictate when and how shipping and tracking companies clean up their emissions, “by 2030, everything we control here will be renewable, will not produce emissions,” Nixon said.

While automation has eliminated many of the hands-on, outdoor jobs once done by people, terminal officials said they’re spent more than $9 million on training workers for higher tech, higher paying jobs as machine technicians, new systems or monitoring operations and operating cranes and other equipment remotely. One building at the terminal houses a nerve center where workers sit in front of screens that show them what’s happening on the ground.

Overall, the reduction in pollution could help improve the terrible air quality in nearby communities like Long Beach and its Westside, sometimes called “ asthma alley,” for the health impacts it resides its residents. And as major ports often come to meet federal environmental goals, some are expected to partner with the Long Beach Container Terminal to find ways to reduce their emissions.

How one man left gang life and started his own publishing company

By Tess Kozoroff

Stanley James II says that the first thing he ever wanted to be was a gangster. But secondly, he wanted to help people.

James, who is now an author and founder of the publishing company, Gang Tales, grew up in North Long Beach in the area known as Long Beach lounges.

At age 12 or 13, he had begun selling drugs. When he was 17, he officially became a member of a local street gang, Front Corner Block Crips. A gang that initially established in the early 1980s, known then as the Spanish Crips before changing its name in the 1990s.

The next year, at the age of 18 and while a student at Wilson High School, James was arrested for the first time.

While James spent the next few years in and out of prison due to drug charges, it was during this time that he began writing poetry and short stories, which he passed around to other inmates, including what would become the basis of his first published work, “The Bust: Love, By the Gun, Die by the Gun.”

At the age of 26, James was released from county jail for the last time.

‘That’s the time when I finally started taking life seriously,’ James said. “I was going through a lot at that time when writing the book, ‘The Bust: Love, By the Gun, Die by the Gun.’

Six years after his release, in 2001, James said he began selling his stories outside of Good Time coffee shop.

After investing $2.5 billion in clean technology and equipment over the last 12 years, Long Beach Container Terminal officials say another $200 million will get the cargo handling facility across the finish line to “net zero” – which means terminal operations will produce no net-emission-harmful emissions – by 2030.

The earlier three-phase improvement project at the 5.4-acre terminal has already dramatically increased how many 20-foot equivalent containers (a standard measure) can be loaded and unloaded daily, while also significantly shrinking emissions since the first phase of upgrades opened last year.

Long Beach Container Terminal ESG and Sustainability Director Bonnie

Port of Long Beach continues to see diminished cargo volumes in January

By Brandon Richardson

Continuing a trend that saw the Port of Long Beach lose its ranking as the second-busiest container port in the U.S., the port saw a sharp decline in cargo last month, marking its slowest January in six years.

Dockworkers and terminal operators last month moved 573,772 20-foot equivalent units, the standard measure of shipping containers. The figure represents a 24.5% decrease from January 2021, which was a record month, with the port moving 800,941 TEUs.

January cargo volumes have grown steadily over the past three years, but last month was the slowest since the port moved 536,488 TEUs in 2018.

The decline for the decline, according to port officials, is a decrease in consumer spending due to prices being driven up by inflation. The result is a decrease in cargo nationwide.

Another factor, however, is the loss of West Coast ports’ market share to Gulf Coast and East Coast facilities. After decades as the second-busiest container port in the country, Long Beach was bumped to third by the Port of New York and New Jersey, which had a record year in 2021, moving over 500,000 TEUs for the first time in the facility’s 100-year history.

“We are taking aggressive steps to meet a new set of challenges for the new year,” Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement. “I remain optimistic that we will recapture market share and develop projects that will enhance our long-term growth, sustainable operations and the reliable movement of goods through the Port of Long Beach.”

The Port of Los Angeles retained the top spot for the year, but the East Coast agency was the second-busiest for the past four months last year.

During its annual State of the Port address last month, Cordero congratulated New York-New Jersey on its efforts. Container backlogs were centered around advancing the port’s environmental initiatives.

By Kat Schuster

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By Jeremiah Dobruck

Two top financial-level employees at the Long Beach Convention Center complained in recent years about the potential for public funds to be misspent, but they were ignored by their supervisors, according to a new lawsuit filed this month.

Falzon alleges that a portion of the $4.3 million in public funds he calculated Goodling spent on furniture, lighting fixtures and art, including items like giant pandas, crystal chandeliers and a set of Italian leather chairs worth $3,800. Despite the convention center and city officials agreeing to reimburse the company for such purchases, many of the items were broken, unaccounted for or left sitting unused and crammed into storage, according to Falzon.

Falzon also alleges that he hadn’t been brought into the chain of command for months, preventing him from bringing attention to alleged fraud and misspending.

Attorneys filing the lawsuit on behalf of Falzon did not return requests for comment.

A lawyer for ASM previously declined to comment.

The city of Long Beach owns the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center as part of the $1.3 million it spent on the property in 2021.

The firm found that accounting practices for the parking fund were so inadequate that performing a reliable audit would be more costly than originally thought.

The lawsuit shows 2nd finance director left convention center over spending concerns

By Jeremih Dobruck

The city of Long Beach owns the Long Beach Convention Center as part of the $1.3 million it spent on the property in 2021.

The firm found that accounting practices for the parking fund were so inadequate that performing a reliable audit would be more costly than originally thought. City officials have also defended the parking revenue at the convention center as a boutique destination with unique event spaces that have made Long Beach a leader in the industry.
Historic San Pedro Fish Market location to close when lease expires next month

The fourth-generation family operated business can trace its roots in San Pedro back to 1956, when Mackey Ungaro first opened Vista Seafood down the street from where the current fish market is today. By Fernando Haro Garcia

The popular San Pedro Fish Market, which has a long history dating back to 1956, is set to shutter its original location at the end of March. The fourth-generation family operated business is on its way out of the famous San Pedro Fish Market location, which today is known as one of the best places in the region to get seafood.

The company also has a location in Wilmington, which first opened its kitchen in 1990 before rebranding to San Pedro Fish Market grille in 2004, and another that opened in 2010 along the marina in East Long Beach. Those locations will not be affected by the closure, said Carl LoGuastro, the fish market’s chief marketing officer.

After six decades on the pier, the owners announced Feb. 7 that the lease ends March 7. After that, they’ll be moving to a temporary location soon that will operate as a pop-up shop while they explore long-term opportunities on the San Pedro waterfront.

“We will continue to offer our amazing fresh seafood dishes that we are known for, served family style on the waterfront,” LoGuastro said.

The new pop-up location will be just a short walk north, the company said. An opening date has not been announced.

RightMealz

RightMealz has a coffee, juice and smoothie bar, made fresh to order, ranging from $3 to $6, as well as a wine and beer menu.

“RightMealz changed my life for the better,” Sweeney said. “It brought a new light to my life, essentially saving me, and I can share that health and joy simply by just simply offering them a great product that’s healthy and nutritious.”

RightMealz is located at 620 E. 2nd St. Fourth St.

Bungalow Kitchen

Bungalow is the famous San Pedro Fish Market location where the current fish market is located, undergoing construction for a new long-awaited entertainment complex called West Harbor that is expected to open in 2024.

When the 10,000 square-foot space reopens, it will offer four full-service bars, multiple rooms and a smoothie bar, made fresh to order, ranging from $6 to $10. The new location will be a great lounge space, ” he said.

“We have a lot of kids around, parking spaces and pose safety risks for both pedestrians and restaurant patrons. Instead, they’re just going to meander guests to enjoy until 2 a.m. Tables and chairs will largely be cleared of spaces that once housed the bustling market. “It wasn’t really designed for dining, but if one were to form a bar, it will really get activated as this great lounge space,” he said. The location will still serve small bites and appetizers.

Bungalow said he will bring back Bungalow’s beloved dishes, as well as brunch breakfast burritos on Sundays and Saturdays. “If anything, we’re going to have a great time and we’re going to bring something really fun and really beautiful to the neighborhood for a great place to celebrate life,” Bohlbo said.

The Bungalow Kitchen, within 2nd St. & PCH at 6400 E. Pacific Coast Hwy, will reopen on March 12 on Wednesdays through Sundays from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Sundays from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. The Bungalow will reopen in the spring and shift to later hours.

A ‘woody rock ‘n’ roll oasis’ to 2ND & PCH

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Formerly a now-shuttered Federal Bar, the city has always lacked something quite immersive as The Bungalow.

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“The sidewalks do not belong to the businesses, but they’re acting like it, in addition to taking over the parking spaces,” Dean previously said. “If these restaurants, bars and gyms want more outdoor dining space, they should have leased a piece of land with more outdoor dining space. Instead, they’re just being greedy and using the free land of our city.”

Colossal owner Kristin Colarus Rodriguez is among second Street applicants working to get her parklet back, and told the Post earlier in February that her parklet was beloved by her customers and also added a popular seating to her small cafe.

Rodriguez said she is relieved at the absence of her parklet makes the area in front of her cafe feel less safe. “We have a lot of kids around, babies, dogs—so it just felt a lot safer to have this space where you could have your kids sitting down and not worry about them getting hit by a car that’s pulling in really fast,” she said.
Loosely based on James’ life, “The Bust” was published in 2017 by No Brakes.

James has since published several poetry and fiction books, and work on his ninth book is currently underway. Realizing that authors may not always understand what rights they are signing away when working with publishing companies, James decided he wanted to create opportunities for other authors like himself.

“You can make a million just off the audio books alone, and you just signed off for all that,” James said. “So it’s my thing just to independently touch the people that work with me.”

Officially founded in 2010, James’ publishing company, Gang Tales, has taken on seven other authors so far, including fellow former gang member Travis Edwards, who belonged to the Eastside Rollin 20s Crips, a rival gang to James’.

Gang Tales authors retain 100% of rights to their work.

“I felt like I always wanted to give back once I got to a certain level, always wanted to pull the ladder down and bring out the voices that really got overlooked,” James said.

Realizing that authors may not understand what rights they are signing away when working with publishing companies, James decided he wanted to create opportunities for other authors like himself.

“I’m down,” Villalobos said then. In the roughly 10 years that James has pursued writing professionally, he has doubled what he earned in the streets, he said. “I’m just starting and creating opportunities for others who have been in similar situations has been far more rewarding,” he said. “Just seeing that I could do something positive and bring other people up that walked in the same shoes, like pretty much I walked in, like just that’s more rewarding,” James said. And as for the future of Gang Tales? “To be around for the next 100 years,” James said. “I’m really loving the journey.”

Villalobos started working at Commodity as a barista in December of 2019, the same month he moved to Long Beach. While he had no plans to become a business owner, an unexpected series of events led him to where he is now, with Good Time.

“The staff has all stayed the same—but the name, concept and even the square footage is all new. Last year, Villalobos said he and the rest of the staff were planning to walk out on the job because of concerns with the owner at the time. But then, the folks behind the plant shop next door approached him with a proposition: to co-own a new café in the same space.

“I’m down,” Villalobos said then. It was always kind of a dream, like, ‘Oh, I’ll close to own and have my own shop.’ And then all of a sudden, all this chaos happened, and it just kind of landed in my lap.”

Ben Lau and Bill Uechi—the owners of a brand agency and also the next-door plant shop, All Plants—decided to offer up their own space to expand the coffee shop. (Remember the business journal: “The staff has all stayed the same—but the name, concept and even the square footage is all new.”)

But for James, uplifting and creating opportunities for others who have been in similar situations has been far more rewarding, he said. “Just seeing that I could do something positive and bring other people up that walked in the same shoes, like pretty much I walked in, like just that’s more rewarding,” James said. And as for the future of Gang Tales? “To be around for the next 100 years,” James said. “I’m really loving the journey.”

One thing about Commodity that was beloved was its coffee, which Villalobos said he is a highly sought after Arkansas roaster of specialty coffee. Another big draw of Commodity was the Long Beach-based pop-up Hamburgers Nice, which still serves its popular breakfast burgers, potato tots, dinner burgers and beyond at Good Time on Thursdays and Fridays. While Villalobos is proud of the coffee, the café’s food menu and the continued pop-up with Hamburgers Nice, he says he is mostly excited about bringing people together. And he’s especially smitten with being able to offer more events—like queer speed dating.

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Ranked in the top 3% of “Best Colleges in America, Ranked by Value”  
(Money Magazine, 2022)