

February 7, 2023  
In this Issue: **Ports and Transportation**

LONG BEACH

# BUSINESS JOURNAL

— An edition of the Long Beach Post



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Cranes are operated on two container ships at Long Beach Container Terminal at the Port of Long Beach.  
*Brandon Richardson / Business Journal*

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Bad Axe Throwing coach Jorge Betancourt pulls an axe out of the cottonwood target after throwing a bullseye at the company's new Long Beach location in Downtown.

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# Port of Long Beach doubles down on environmentalism, announces offshore wind turbine facility dubbed Pier Wind



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero gives the 2023 State of the Port address, which focused more on the port's efforts of environmental stewardship than container volumes.

By Brandon Richardson

As the state continues to push for a more environmentally sustainable economy, the Port of Long Beach remains steadfast in its mission to clean up operations. To that end, officials have announced plans to construct a wind turbine staging and assembly facility within the port complex.

During his annual State of the Port address on Jan. 26, Executive Director Mario Cordero announced the port's Zero Emissions, Energy Resilient Operations Program, or ZEERO, which will invest in projects that will reduce impacts of operations and improve air quality. "ZEERO is a major step forward," Cordero said. "We are the first port to adopt a policy this far reaching."

Part of the initiative is Pier Wind, which would be the largest facility specifically designed to accommodate assembly of offshore wind turbines at any U.S. seaport.

The project would help the state meet the California Energy Commission's goals for offshore wind development. The port is spending \$1 million to develop a conceptual design and construction assessment, which is expected to be completed in the spring, along with cost estimates.

The project would include creating up to 400 acres of new land for a terminal capable of handling heavy-lift crane operations. The area would be used to stage, store and construct the world's largest floating offshore wind turbines, which would then be towed out to wind farms off the

Central and Northern California coast. "We are ready, willing and able to answer the call by the Biden-Harris administration for ways to increase sources of renewable energy," Cordero said.

Port officials said Long Beach is an ideal location for such a project

because it is adjacent to a deep and wide federal navigation channel, it is at the center of the nation's supply chain, and it has access to the state's largest manufacturing base and construction workforce, among other reasons.

The agency would seek state and

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Courtesy of the Port of Long Beach

A rendering of the proposed Pier Wind project at the Port of Long Beach, which would serve as a staging and assembly facility for offshore wind turbines.

# New York-New Jersey officially overtakes Long Beach as 2nd busiest U.S. seaport

By Brandon Richardson

The Port of New York and New Jersey has been ranked the third-busiest U.S. seaport for years, trailing behind Los Angeles and Long Beach. But 27 consecutive record-setting months at the East Coast facility catapulted it into the No. 2 slot for 2022.

For the first time in the port's 101-year history, it moved over 9 million 20-foot-equivalent units (the standard unit of measure for shipping containers), Executive Director Rick Cotton announced Jan. 25 during a State of the Port event.

"While other ports struggled with severe levels of congestion, causing both unwanted delays and reliability issues for shippers, the Port of New York and New Jersey and all of its stakeholders demonstrated exemplary management of cargo vessels to avoid severe congestion," Cotton said.

In December, the East Coast port moved 613,011 TEUs, bringing its 2022 total to 9,493,664 TEUs. Long Beach, meanwhile, moved 554,104 TEUs in December for a yearly total of 9,133,658 TEUs, moving it into third place in cargo volume after decades in the second place slot.

For four months last year, New York-New Jersey was the busiest container port in the country, data shows.

Despite being outperformed, Long Beach's 2022 cargo volume was the second highest in the port's 112-year history, falling only about 250,000 TEUs shy of its previous record set in 2021.

"Cargo is moving smoothly as we move past the economic effects of COVID-19," POLB Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement last week. "In 2023, we will continue to invest in digital and physical infrastructure projects, focus on market share and develop long-term improvements that will strengthen our competitiveness and keep goods moving efficiently."

The Long Beach port set monthly cargo records in January, February, March, April, June and July last year, fueled by high levels of online shipping, according to port officials. Consumer spending cooled during the summer because of inflation, bringing container volumes down to normal levels.

Economists are forecasting a further decline in cargo volumes through 2023 as consumers shift spending from goods to services, port officials said.

Across the San Pedro Bay, the Port of Los Angeles also had its second-busiest year on record, moving 9,910,819 TEUs—over 750,000 TEUs short of its 2021 record. Even with the loss of market share to East and Gulf coast ports, LA maintained its title as

the nation's busiest seaport for the 23rd consecutive year.

As other ports across the country continue to modernize alongside the San Pedro Bay ports, slight shifts in market share away from LA and Long Beach is natural, officials for both facilities have said. The unprecedented congestion of the last two years, however, saw a much more drastic move away from the West Coast giants.

Congestion reached its peak in January 2022 when 109 container ships were waiting to enter the San Pedro Bay ports. The backlog was reduced slowly and, after 25 months, dwindled to zero in late November.

During the ship backlog, containers stacked up on docks, where they sat for extended periods due to truck chassis and driver shortages. Even containers being moved by train regularly languished on docks for a week or longer.

In December, containers leaving LA and Long Beach terminals by truck remained on dock for an average of 2.6 days, the lowest since June 2020, according to the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association. Only 6.7% of



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Jason Rendon, head of safety security and environmental at Long Beach Container Terminal watches trucks pass by the terminal's rail facility.

containers remained at terminals for more than five days.

Rail-bound cargo sat waiting for transport for an average of 4.9 days last month, "a significant reduction" from 9.1 days in November and 14.2 days in October, according to the association.

"Over the past few years, as we've risen to each and every challenge, we

have become a stronger, more resilient port," POLA Executive Director Gene Seroka said during his State of the Port address last week. "The capabilities that we developed during that time have positioned us well to grow our market share, fulfill our commitment to create jobs and build a better quality of life for our communities." ■

# Metro looking to expand homeless services, create service hubs along its train routes



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

People exit the Metro A Line at the First Street station in Downtown Long Beach.

The board voted unanimously to look at solutions that could include assigning outreach workers to all 13 "end-of-the-line" stations that include cities like Azusa, Norwalk, Redondo Beach and Long Beach.

By Jason Ruiz

Los Angeles County Metro's board of directors is pushing for increased homeless outreach services along its train lines, as some cities like Long Beach have blamed one of the agency's policies for their recent rise in homelessness.

Metro has a longstanding "end-of-the-line" policy in which the agency forces passengers to exit

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## Homeless Services

Continued from page 5

at the final stop when trains stop running every night. In Long Beach, that means passengers are required to exit the A Line in Downtown in the early morning hours.

The board voted unanimously Thursday to look at solutions that could include assigning outreach workers to all 13 “end-of-the-line” stations that include cities like Azusa, Norwalk, Redondo Beach and Long Beach.

Metro could also look at its surplus land for potential spaces for interim housing, and could use existing stations throughout its network to create hubs where people experiencing homelessness could meet with outreach workers and receive services. The agency is looking at the Willow Station in Long Beach to potentially be one of those hubs.

“Why not allow this Willow Station to be this ‘Hub of Hope’ that we saw in Philadelphia,” said LA County Supervisor Janice Hahn, who sits on the Metro board.

Hahn was referring to a Metro staff report that looked at models other transportation agencies have used to try and address homelessness on their networks. Philadelphia operates a hub

on one of its SEPTA system’s platforms, where it offers year-round support to those experiencing homelessness.

It offers things like meals, showers, case management and transportation to area shelters. The hub also provides group meetings and therapy sessions.

Jennifer Rice Epstein, a spokesperson for Long Beach’s Health Department, said that the city is working closely with Metro on solutions, but said “plans are not yet confirmed” regarding a hub being established at the Willow Station parking lot.

Multiple board members called for partnering with other agencies in the county and expanding hours of operation for homeless outreach workers and shelters.

“While we know that there are people who have the luxury of a 9-5 job, when you’re dealing with a crisis, it doesn’t hit between then,” said Supervisor Kathryn Barger, who sits on the board.

Long Beach thrust the “end-of-the-line” policy into the news when its City Council called on Metro in October to reevaluate its practices, claiming that it had led to an increase in its homeless population and safety concerns among Downtown residents and businesses.

Metro requires all riders to exit its trains when the trains are being

taken out of service for the day so they can be safely returned to its maintenance yard for cleaning and other fixes.

For the Downtown Long Beach platform on First Street, that means passengers are forced off around 1 a.m. every morning, with few options for housing and a single bus route that can take them back to Los Angeles.

After Long Beach’s request, Metro conducted a survey of the Downtown station with the help of its nonprofit partner, People Assisting the Homeless, which counted the number of people experiencing homelessness exiting the train and waiting for the first train (at 4 a.m.) over a six-day period.

The survey found that an average of 39 people experiencing homelessness per night exited the train at the Downtown Long Beach platform and another 45 per day waited in the early morning hours for the first train.

Only 44 people consented to the survey Metro conducted, and it found that just nine of them previously lived in Long Beach. The rest of the people interviewed said they were from Los Angeles, other area cities or out of state.

Of those surveyed, Metro staff said that 29 said they were ready to accept help and 22 had been homeless for more than a year.

While the vote was unanimous, several board members said they were concerned about putting services at the end of the line, with board member Paul Krekorian likening the suggestion to the idea of adding lanes to freeways, which typically results in just another lane of traffic.

“As we add end-of-line resources, those resources will be instantly filled,” Krekorian said, adding that resources should be distributed throughout the system.

Board member Holly Mitchell also opposed centralized areas, saying that adding services in certain parts of the system could result in different problems for those cities.

“I don’t want to centralize services,” Mitchell said. “We know what that looks like. That’s called Skid Row.”

Included in the vote are smaller fixes intended to help in the interim. The staff report said the agency would change signage to make it more clear that trains and stations are closed for the night and would look to move the bus stop for the 60 OWL, the bus that transports people between Downtown Long Beach to LA, closer to the train platform at the corner of First Street and Pacific Avenue.

Long Beach’s homeless population grew by 62% from 2020 to 2022, and the city conducted its 2023 count Thursday morning. ■

# Long Beach traffic deaths remained high in 2022 with 45, continuing 3-year trend

By Fernando Haro Garcia

Traffic deaths remained abnormally high in Long Beach last year with 45 pedestrians, bicyclists or motorists dying in crashes.

That number carries on a spike in fatal collisions that began in 2020, when 50 people were killed, and continued in 2021, when 43 were killed.

Before 2020, the numbers were much lower, with no more than 31 people dying in crashes each year from 2016 to 2019.

It’s not entirely clear why deaths spiked in 2020, but one thing the last three years have in common is how deadly crashes have been for pedestrians, who have accounted for the majority of the fatalities. Last year was no different, with 27 out of 45 traffic deaths, or 60%, being pedestrians.

City officials have given various explanations for what’s to blame.

According to the LBPd, many cases in 2022 involved a pedestrian breaking the law by walking into lanes of traffic or walking outside of a marked crosswalk.

But a different city department, public works, which maintains Long Beach’s streets, pointed to drivers going too fast as a major contributing factor.

“A pedestrian hit by a driver going 40 MPH has nearly a 6 times greater likelihood of dying as compared to a pedestrian hit at 20 MPH,” public works spokeswoman Joy Contreras said in an email.

Because speeding is the underlying cause of many serious crashes, Contreras said, it’s important to implement infrastructure improvements, and educate the public about driving safely.

The City Council made this stance official policy in 2020 when it adopted the Safe Streets Plan, which aims to eliminate all traffic-related deaths and serious injuries by 2026.

Under the plan, the city has begun reducing speed limits, re-designing streets to reduce excessive lane widths, and providing more protection for pedestrians and cyclists, Contreras said.

“The plan calls on City staff to take action to lower speed limits on neighborhood streets to 15-20 mph based on radar surveys,” Contreras said. “Based on the most recent results of the engineering and traffic surveys conducted on arterial streets, 107 street segments were identified for a decrease of their existing speed limits.”

Some of the streets up for changes are Pacific Avenue, Artesia Boulevard, Anaheim Street and Sixth Street, which were identified



Crystal Niebla / Business Journal

Loved ones mourn the death of 40-year-old Stephanie Moreno on Seventh Street and Los Altos Avenue in Long Beach Thursday, Jan. 6, 2022. Moreno died after crashing into a light pole days earlier.

*“Eliminating all traffic deaths and serious injuries in Long Beach will take collective action from the community,” Contreras said. “By looking out for one another and making safe decisions when we are driving, walking, or riding a motorcycle, bicycle or scooter, we can create a safer Long Beach for our families, friends and neighbors.”*

- Joy Contreras, public works spokesperson

as streets or corridors where injury traffic collisions were most common or severe. Crashes on Pacific Avenue, Artesia Boulevard and Anaheim

Street accounted for nine of the 45 traffic deaths in 2022.

All four streets currently have grant-funded traffic-safety projects

underway, although a timeline of when they’ll be completed is not clear.

To residents like Jesus Esparza, president of the Washington Neighborhood Association, the changes can’t come soon enough.

Esparza has long been vocal about traffic safety issues in his community.

Last year, he put together multiple rallies urging the city to increase pedestrian safety in the Washington neighborhood following a series of crashes that left three people injured.

It has gotten to the point, he said, where some residents, especially elderly ones, are afraid to walk to the nearby store or laundromat because they fear a speeding driver might hit them, Esparza said.

“The work is too slow,” Esparza said in Spanish. “Meanwhile, people keep dying in crashes.”

The Long Beach Post reached out to three City Council members, Mary Zendejas, Roberto Uranga and Jonie Ricks-Oddie, whose districts have roads identified as “high-injury corridors” by the Safe Streets Plan, but they did not respond to questions about the status of safety projects or whether there are plans to accelerate the process.

Mayor Rex Richardson was not immediately available to comment about whether there were any

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# City, business leaders pledge to grow 100 startups in Long Beach over next 5 years

By Brandon Richardson

As city and business leaders huddled in the offices of architecture firm Studio One-Eleven in Downtown on Jan. 23, preparing to announce a new initiative, guests in attendance were faced with a question: “Are your seatbelts fastened?”

“If they’re not fastened, fasten them up because we are moving forward,” Long Beach Economic Development Department Director Bo Martinez said.

Dubbed “Launch Beach”—not to be confused with “Space Beach,” which refers to the city’s burgeoning satellite launch sector—the new initiative will spend \$25 million with the goal of nurturing 100 startup companies in Long Beach over the next five years.

During the press conference, Mayor Rex Richardson said the program will focus on the “fastest growing industry sectors,” including health care, aerospace, goods movement, tourism and education.

Richardson noted that Long Beach has been dependent on revenue tied to oil production for over a century—a



Suny Lay Chang, board chair of the Long Beach Center for Economic Inclusion, signs a letter of intent to participate in the city’s 100 startups campaign.

funding source that is set to run dry around 2035, if not earlier.

“We’re creating a climate-friendly, climate-sustainable economy here in Southern California,” Richardson said. “In Long Beach, as this change is

happening, we have a responsibility to figure out not only how we continue to provide services, but how we make sure that we have revenue sources that are able to expand service in the future.”

Eight government and private entities have partnered on the initiative, including the city’s Economic Development Department, Sunstone Management, Imprint Venture Labs, the Long Beach Center for Economic Inclusion, the Long Beach Accelerator, the CSULB Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and the Long Beach Economic Partnership. The Sunstone Community Fund will provide the money for the program.

“This is not Monopoly money,” Richardson said. “This is a serious investment.”

For about two years, 37 startups have worked through the public-private Long Beach Accelerator, which provides fledgling businesses with guidance and education in addition to an average of \$100,000 in seed funding over an extensive four-month program. Similarly, private capital firm Sunstone has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant funding for startups, including college student pitches.

Vic Hill, CEO of MyRuck, a software that keeps service members more up-to-date on their military benefits, is part of the current

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Trash and debris gathers in the Queen Mary lagoon after a winter rain.

## City aims to reopen rooms, restaurants and retail aboard the Queen Mary this spring

By Jeremiah Dobruck

Three years after the ship closed to the public, Long Beach has plans to reopen portions of the Queen Mary this spring, with the rest of the historic ocean liner reopening in the following months, according to a city official who oversees the ship.

“We are looking at a phased reopening, but that initial reopening

phase in spring is expected to include hotel rooms, retail, some full-service food offerings, tours and event spaces,” said Johnny Vallejo, Long Beach’s deputy economic development director. “And then the remaining rooms, restaurants and other services will be phased in over the summer months.”

The Queen Mary shuttered amid the pandemic in March 2020, and since then, it’s remained almost

entirely closed to the public, except for a limited number of tours offered last year, while the city worked on millions of dollars of crucial repairs.

The Queen Mary, which has been a fixture in Long Beach since 1967, fell into disrepair after years of neglect by private operators overseen by the city. After the last operator, Urban Commons, filed for bankruptcy, Long Beach was left on the hook to pay for the millions of dollars in work the

ship urgently needed. A report by the marine engineering firm Elliott Bay Design Group said the Queen Mary needed \$23 million in pressing work just to stay “viable,” and the engineering firm Moffatt & Nichol said last year that long-term costs could range from \$150 to \$500 to maintain the ship.

A full accounting of the millions of dollars spent so far wasn’t immediately available, but Public Works Director Eric Lopez said his crews have found ways to make repairs “faster and cheaper” than anticipated.

Lopez and Vallejo made their comments Thursday at a meeting of the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau, which promotes tourism in the city.

CVB President and CEO Steve Goodling said he’d been part of a behind-the-scenes tour from Lopez that showed off some of the innovative repairs, such as using a shoreside generator and running power lines to the ship instead of paying millions to install a new shipboard one.

Lopez said it’s been a monumental task to get the Queen Mary this close to fully reopening.

“Johnny and I got a lot of white hair over this, but I am really really appreciative of where we’re at right now and how much work it took to get here,” he said.

Vallejo told the hoteliers gathered for the CVB’s meeting that the ship’s reopening will undoubtedly boost their businesses. The city, he said, has been getting daily inquiries about when the Queen Mary will reopen, and the limited number of tours the city offered last year filled up within hours, if not minutes.

“We feel very confident that there’s a lot of pent-up demand for the ship, and we’re anxious to facilitate that,” Vallejo said. ■

## CSULB programs offer path to success for students who have been incarcerated

By Tess Kazenoff

After spending 18 months in prison, Irene Sotelo had no idea what her next step would be.

At age 44, Sotelo had faced struggle after struggle throughout her life. After dropping out of school at 13 years old, she battled drug addiction for decades.

Even though she had passed the GED when she was 18, she left prison unable to work due to her lack of experience, as well as a disability from an anxiety- and drug withdrawal-induced stroke.

Still, Sotelo was determined to chart a new path. So she enrolled at Cerritos College.

By the time she transferred to Cal State Long Beach about four years

later, in 2016, she had earned highest honors at her community college.

“I started loving school, because my first A gave me a feeling of accomplishment,” said Sotelo, now 57. “I did something for myself—that feeling, ‘I’m going to challenge myself to see if I could do it again.’”

While at Cal State Long Beach, one of Sotelo’s first classes happened to be with assistant law professor James Binnall, who shared that he had been formerly incarcerated.

“After class, I thought, ‘I want to be where you’re at,’” Sotelo said. “I knew I was going someplace after that. If he could do it, it gave me hope. And after that, I just kept pushing forward.”

After connecting to fellow formerly incarcerated students Joe Louis Hernandez and Adrian Vasquez,

and with the support of Binnall, Sotelo in 2016 co-founded Rising Scholars, a student-run program that supports formerly incarcerated students and has since expanded across California community colleges as the Rising Scholars Network.

“That’s how we started identifying more students,” Sotelo said. “That’s when we realized there’s a need here.”

The creation of Rising Scholars also served as the groundwork to later officially establish Cal State Long Beach’s chapter of Project Rebound, a program first established in 1967 at San Francisco State University to help formerly incarcerated students succeed academically.

In 2020, funding for Project Rebound was added to the state

budget, creating official programming at five Cal State campuses including Long Beach; as of 2023, the program is at 15 Cal State University campuses.

“We’re hoping we could get all 23 CSUs,” Sotelo said.

The two programs now co-exist. While they have similar missions, there are some key differences: Rising Scholars receives no state funding, and while it accepts allies and those with family members impacted by the system, Project Rebound requires that participants be formerly incarcerated.

Since its inception, Project Rebound has seen significant success. According to the California State University system, Project Rebound students had a recidivism rate of 0% between 2016 and 2020, compared to the statewide average of

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# Beachwood Brewing to close its Downtown kitchen, citing area’s ongoing safety, cleanliness issues



A bicyclist rides past Beachwood Brewing in Downtown, which temporarily closed its kitchen on Feb. 1 amid safety concerns stemming from homelessness in the area and ongoing construction.

*Beachwood owners said they hoped to reopen the kitchen this summer, likely with a revised menu.*

By Brandon Richardson

Beachwood Brewing announced late last month that it will temporarily close its kitchen effective Feb. 1—a decision, co-owner Gabriel Gordon said, that came as the restaurant’s Downtown location has been hemorrhaging tens of thousands of dollars every month.

“As a business owner, it’s my job to adapt to both internal and external challenges,” Gordon said. “Unfortunately, the challenges that are going on in Downtown Long Beach—I can’t solve those.”

Specifically, Gordon pointed to homelessness, continuous construction and a lack of Downtown office workers as contributing to a drastic decline in business.

These issues are not new. In late October, Gordon wrote an email to the Downtown Long Beach Alliance that outlined a litany of issues he said had driven business down about 25%. At the time, Gordon said the situation was desperate and that the business was running out of options to stay in Downtown.

City leaders responded quickly at the time, promising more police officers, increasing Health

Department outreach, expanding homeless shelter capacity and even declaring a state of emergency. While officials claim to have made good on those pledges—there are more police and health workers in the area, a winter shelter has opened, and the City Council has approved a state of emergency—Gordon said there’s little evidence that any changes have been made.

“It’s not doing s— to change the perception of what is going down there for the customer, from my standpoint and from other business owners’ standpoints,” he added. “Every day is something—it’s unrelenting.”

Representatives for the Police Department and Mayor Rex Richardson’s office did not respond to requests for comment.

A spokesperson for the city’s Joint Information Center, which is managing the homelessness crisis in the wake of the city’s emergency declaration, said officials have deployed a Mobile Access Center to focus on the Promenade, Civic Center and Billie Jean King Main Library and that the Police Department has increased patrol in the Downtown area.

Public Works, meanwhile, is partnering with Development Services to maintain the Promenade and the nearby area with enhanced lighting, alley clean-ups and with a scheduled installation of hardscape landscaping, according to the JIC.

Gordon said he believes the city’s emergency declaration could make progress in addressing the issues in Downtown, but he noted it will likely take months or even years.

## With 3rd book release, Long Beach author Elise Bryant has become a force in YA literature

By Mike Guardabascio

Long Beach has a long literary history, both as a home of authors and a setting for stories, but it’s rare that a writer here makes an impact as quickly or as deeply as Elise Bryant.

After two successful books, the Long Beach resident has earned her place as a celebrated YA author, and this week will mark the release of her third novel set in the city she calls home.

“Reggie and Delilah’s Year of Falling” will be released Tuesday by HarperCollins. It is set in the same shared universe as her first two, 2021’s “Happily Ever Afters” and 2022’s “One True Loves.”

Like her earlier books, “Reggie and Delilah’s Year of Falling” is centered around a diverse cast of Long Beach teenagers. And, as with its predecessors, the book is likely to be a success. It’s been selected as the Target YA Book Club pick for February and will be featured in stores nationwide. It also received a coveted starred review in Publishers Weekly.

Bryant, who lives in Long Beach with her husband and two young daughters, already feels like an enmeshed part of the city’s artistic fabric. It’s hard for her to believe that her NAACP Image Award-nominated debut came out just two years ago.

“It’s gone fast. It’s definitely gone fast,” she said in a recent interview. “Even though this is my third book, it was actually the first one I wrote after I had been published because I wrote the second book in that little bubble before the first was published. So the only voice I was hearing was my own. This book was really challenging for me because there are a lot more voices in there now.”

Bryant’s third book is the strongest of the three, in part because of the way she grappled with those voices. The protagonists are Reggie, a Black Dungeons & Dragons gamer who struggled with where and how to fit into society, and Delilah, a biracial singer who helps catapult a young rock band to viral stardom, only to find herself uncomfortable with how she’s seen by a White audience.

“Being biracial, having people tell you you’re not ‘really’ Black, that was something I dealt with when I was, you know, a kid,” Bryant said. “And I dealt with it and thought I was good. Then now I’m in my 30s and I’m getting hateful and racist messages online and it’s like, ‘Wait, am I good?’ And that’s some of what I wanted to get into with Delilah’s character, that exploration of your own identity and how other people view you. I thought about that a lot.”

Continued on page 17

# Buvons Wine offers a vibrant venue to explore natural French wine in the Zaferia District

By Kat Schuster

From The Hawk down to Alex’s Bar, a stretch of the bustling Anaheim corridor has become home to some of the best watering holes to catch a live show or a glimpse of Long Beach subculture.

Those familiar with the Zaferia District may have done a double take when Buvons Natural Wine Bar + Shop first opened a year ago. Aesthetically, the storefront resembles a place you might expect to see along Retro Row across town, or more on the nose, L.A.’s Silver Lake neighborhood.

Just around the corner from Bamboo Club on Loma Avenue, Buvons offers something new: A vibrant, chic retreat with a spacious patio and plenty of intimate indoor seating to enjoy natural French wine paired with charcuterie boards and other hors d’oeuvres.

Buvons (that’s French for “let’s drink”) is helmed by two sommeliers who met in Paris in 2017 while individually pursuing their passions for French wine. Owner Alicia Kemper said the shop was only open in Long Beach for a few months before she was able to sway Marie Delbarry to move to the United States to help her manage the space.

Delbarry relocated from France to Long Beach to assist her old friend, Kemper, the soft-spoken visionary behind crafting Buvons and its sleek, art-minded atmosphere.



Marie Delbarry, manager of Buvon Wine Bar + Shop, stands by a fraction of the small shop’s collection of wines.

“We always kind of said, ‘One day we work together,’” Delbarry said while assembling a charcuterie board. “We have a good relationship so it’s easy. It’s like we know what to do.”

Kemper, who started working in restaurants at the age of 14, said she’s always had an affinity for small, family-owned vineyards and the story behind them.

“These are all small production, like families are making them or a husband and wife or a woman or you know just a guy and there’s a lot that goes into making them, it’s not

Continued on page 21

## 100 Startups

Continued from page 10

Accelerator cohort. The company launched in 2019, but operations were quickly paused after Hill was deployed. Upon his return in 2020, the startup got to work.

Starting a business is challenging, Hill said, but the Accelerator and the \$100,000 in funding MyRuck received has made all the difference.

“It’s everything,” Hill said. “Not just the monetary investment, but the time as well—it validated everything that we had been working so hard on and added fuel to the fire for us. It made us realize that outside eyes also see value in what we’re trying to deliver to the military community.”

Suny Lay Chang, board chair of the Center for Economic Inclusion, highlighted the fact that less than

5% of venture capital funding goes to women and minorities. Those undervalued companies could generate an estimated \$4 trillion in value if only they were given the tools and funding to grow, she said.

“It’s a big problem,” Chang said. “But it absolutely makes sense that Long Beach is the place to try to turn that around—that’s who we are.”

The center was founded out of the city’s Everyone In initiative following the civil unrest that swept across the nation in the wake of George Floyd’s murder. The focus of the group is on creating equity citywide.

To close out the press conference, a representative from each group signed a letter of intent, signifying the official launch of the initiative.

“We’re not just fighting to keep what we have, we want to build the Long Beach of the future,” Richardson said. “So we have to grow our economy and grow our revenue in new directions.” ■



Long Beach Economic Development Department Director Bo Martinez speaks during a press conference announcing a new initiative to foster 100 business startups in the city over the next five years.

# Historic and renovated Breakers Hotel and Ocean Center Building set opening dates

*The buildings are an easy stroll from one another on Ocean Boulevard, with the Breakers at 210 E. Ocean Blvd. and the Ocean Center at 110 W. Ocean Blvd. The 14-story Breakers was built in 1926, and the 14-story Ocean Center in 1929.*

By Tim Grobaty

Two of Downtown's most significant historic buildings, the Breakers Hotel and the Ocean Center Building, are scheduled to open within a year of one another after undergoing hundreds of million dollars worth of renovation by their owner, Long Beach's Pacific6 Enterprises, a group of investors headed by John Molina. The company also owns the Long Beach Business Journal and Long Beach Post.

The Breakers and Ocean Center Building are two historical cousins that have survived some problems since opening in the 1920s, including the effects of the Great Depression, the 1933 Long Beach earthquake, the removal of their oceanfront locations when the Pacific Ocean scammed off several blocks to the south to make room for Shoreline Village, Shoreline Drive and other developments, and the city's occasional tendency over the years to raze its historical buildings.

The buildings are an easy stroll from one another on Ocean

Boulevard, with the Breakers at 210 E. Ocean Blvd. and the Ocean Center at 110 W. Ocean Blvd. The 14-story Breakers was built in 1926, and the 14-story Ocean Center in 1929.

The Breakers, after improvements made at a cost of nearly \$200 million, is set to reopen as Fairmont The Breakers, making it part of the prestigious Fairmont group of hotels. Now set to open in early January 2024, the Breakers will be the city's only luxury boutique hotel. About half the scaffolding once surrounding the building has been removed, and the Fairmont and Sky Room signs are visible at the top.

The building remains owned by Pacific6, while the Fairmont family will be the operating manager in charge of all hiring, services and accounting while receiving a percentage of the hotel's revenue, according to Pacific6's Vice President for Real Estate & Hospitality Renato Alesiani.

"Initially, we were going to be an independent hotel, but we were asked to consider Fairmont," said Alesiani. "We liked them immediately. It was love at first sight. We started talks in March and signed with them in May."

Rates at the 185-room luxury hotel are expected to cost from \$400 to \$450 per night, with suites running higher.

Amenities include the Breakers Spa, which will also be open to the public; a lobby restaurant, which Alesiani expects to be the finest modern Italian restaurant in the city; two ballrooms and a dedicated kitchen for banquets; a terrace pool overlooking the Terrace Theater Plaza to the east; a jazz club, likely to be called Club 210 after the hotel's address; and the hotel's jewel, the famed and majestic Sky Room, which will

retain its name and expansive views. "We're not going to reinvent the wheel," said Alesiani.

The hotel will have a soft opening in January to allow the staff and kitchens to get running smoothly—Alesiani estimates the hotel will provide jobs for more than 230 full- and part-time employees—followed by a grand opening two to three weeks later. "And that's going to be a party," said Alesiani.

The Ocean Center Building, originally designed for offices, has been converted to apartments at a cost of nearly \$80 million. Set to open on May 1, the building will feature 80 luxury apartments, each equipped with modern appliances



A rendering of the historic Breakers building, which is slated to reopen as a luxury boutique hotel next year.



A rendering of the rooftop bar that will open next year as part of the new Breakers hotel concept.



A rendering of the living area in a room at the forthcoming Breakers hotel.

and other features.

The apartments will range in size from 625-square-foot studios leasing for about \$3,500 a month to the two-story, top-floor 2,158 square-foot penthouse which is expected to go for about \$17,500 a month.

Pacific6 is still in talks with potential business owners about what sort of retail establishments will occupy the ground floor of the building, including the large venue inside the arcade off South Pine that was once the entryway to the Pike.

Amenities for tenants include three rooftop terraces including one with kitchen and barbecue facilities, covered and secure parking space availability, bike storage and a private fitness center.

"The two buildings are the most beautiful ones in Long Beach in my opinion," said Alesiani. "The Ocean Center is going to be gorgeous, and the addition of the Breakers as the only luxury hotel in Long Beach will elevate the guest experience for visitors. In the past they'd have to go to other cities like Laguna Beach or San Diego. Now they're going to come here."

Editor's note: Pacific6 is the parent company of the Long Beach Business Journal and Long Beach Post. To learn more about our ownership and ethics policy, visit our transparency portal: <https://lbpost.com/about/>.



A rendering of a unit inside the Ocean Center Building.



A rendering of the rooftop common areas, including two grills, at the Ocean Center.



A rendering of the historic Ocean Center Building, which is expected to reopen later this year as a luxury apartment building.

## CITY OF LONG BEACH Bid Opportunities

Title	Bid Number	Due Date
Golden Ave Water Main Replacement Project	WD-23-049	02/08/2023
Point in Time Homeless Count App	HE-22-124	02/09/2023
Lincoln Welders - Qty 6	FM-23-218	02/09/2023
R-7207 LB Police Training Academy Project	PW-23-221	02/09/2023
Help Desk Call Center Operation	TI-23-206	02/10/2023
Desktop Support	TI-23-205	02/10/2023
Stormwater	PW-23-222	02/10/2023
Virtual Travel Experiences	PR-23-217	02/10/2023
Water Department Water Resources (MEDRR)	WD-23-048	02/10/2023
Water Department DevService	WD-23-047	02/10/2023
Digital Front Door	TI-23-216	02/10/2023
Renewable Natural Gas Supplier	ER-22-173	02/13/2023
LBRA Produce to Market	HE-22-174	02/16/2023
(10) Fire Engine Pumps	FM-22-175	02/16/2023

**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).



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# Long Beach sustainable fashion brand forced to shutter Downtown storefront

Crystal Early and Natalie Mumford have spent the past five years building community in the East Village Arts District through their shop, 3 Women.

By Laura Anaya-Morga

Stretching from Ocean Boulevard to Seventh Street and from Long Beach Boulevard to Alamitos Avenue is Long Beach’s East Village Arts District, a dynamic neighborhood with a distinctive character exclusive to the city. Repurposed historic buildings house a variety of unique shops, eateries and hangouts to suit any



3 Women owners Crystal Lee Early, left, and Natalie Mumford, right, stand with Margaret Stoll, owner of Burke Mercantile.

interest, and murals bring color to the area at just about every turn. Here, there’s no shortage of unique businesses, each with its

fabric that makes Long Beach special. On First Street, one beloved local business closed its brick-and-mortar at the end of January due to an onslaught of issues brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic—but it left behind more than just an empty storefront. Crystal Early and Natalie Mumford have spent the past five years building community through their shop, 3 Women. Together, the pair created a welcoming, inclusive environment that will be hard to replicate once they’re gone, according to their friend and neighboring business owner Margaret Stoll. Stoll owns Burke Mercantile, a sustainable shop with carefully curated fashion and lifestyle items right next door. “The space they have created here, they have always had their door open for everybody,” said Stoll. Earlier this month, Stoll created a GoFundMe page to raise money for Early and Mumford, to support their business and give them the option to secure their shop if they chose to do so. 3 Women is a sustainable fashion brand created in Long Beach that offers a variety of clothes made locally out of vintage textiles as well as a wide array of pre-owned clothing. In their eyes, the third woman is everyone they have connected or collaborated with over the years, and like their motto says, “A threefold cord is not easily broken.” Early and Mumford met in 2016 while selling vintage clothes separately at various flea markets across Los Angeles and quickly sprouted a lasting friendship. They joined forces and began selling clothes together for some years until, one day, Early decided it was time to realize her lifelong dream of owning her own storefront. The dream came true in February of 2018, when the pair opened up the space at 433 E First Street. Along with selling vintage clothes, they began creating one-of-a-kind garments out of deadstock fabric, vintage rice bags and flour sacks, custom-tailored and made-to-measure for anybody that came through their doors. Before the pandemic, East Village businesses were on the rise and gaining popularity. Early, Stoll and another local business owner, Amy Stock, reactivated the East Village Association website in 2019 to highlight each of the over 80 businesses in the neighborhood. The pandemic, however, brought it all to a standstill, and with it came economic hardship

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## Elise Bryant

Continued from page 12

The love story between the two teens is told from both of their perspectives, as they spend a year falling in love, marked by different holidays. Bryant’s books have been well-reviewed and received for being believable love stories about Black teens, but this book rings especially true in the back-and-forth tension between its protagonists. This comes largely from the way Bryant’s characters think through their identities, the way real teenagers do, with ideas that are sometimes messy and contradictory. There’s nothing tidy about the way the characters figure themselves out. “Having all those voices in my head, listening to them, it was a battle trying to write this book,” said Bryant. “It took a little longer. But I

had to get back to that space where I wrote my first two books: What do I like? What’s making me sit and giggle at my desk? What’s bringing me joy? And shutting everything out and focusing on that let me write something genuine to me. Once I got back to that place it was fun again.” Long Beach readers will enjoy looking for local landmarks in the book—parks, dessert shops, neighborhoods—as they did with Bryant’s first two books. Like those books, even though it’s a major national release, she’ll be launching it locally, at Bel Canto Books on Fourth Street. The store will host a ticketed release party with Bryant and fellow YA star Christina Hammonds Reed at 6 p.m., and they also have signed copies of the book. “I’m really excited to celebrate in Long Beach because this is my home and it’s where all my books are set,” she said. “I love doing a first launch event here.” ■



Elise Bryant holds up her first published book “Happily Ever Afters,” which was released in 2020.

## CSULB Programs

Continued from page 11

50% of offenders who are convicted of a crime again within three years. Project Rebound members across the state also had a higher student retention rate than CSU’s population overall, meaning more students in the program returned to campus after their first year. The support the students receive in Project Rebound is key because, for many formerly incarcerated students, adjusting to a college atmosphere can be difficult. Challenges include struggling with imposter syndrome and adapting to an academic environment and updated technology, Sotelo explained. With support from Project Rebound, students receive guidance in academic counseling and planning, study support and technology assistance, connection to re-entry services and other resources, and more. “A lot of these people get out, feel like they have imposter syndrome, that they don’t belong, because a lot of us are older. The more time you’ve done, the more trauma or anxiety you get coming to a campus like that,” Sotelo said. “We tried to ease that for them by letting them come to our safe space—It’s OK, there’s more of us here, don’t feel like you’re the only one here.” Over the past few years of advocating for other incarcerated students, Sotelo has also fought to heal from her own past. “There’s a lot of trauma in anybody formerly incarcerated,” said Sotelo. For Sotelo, her trauma goes back decades. Almost 10 days before Sotelo’s 12th birthday, her mother died by suicide, propelling Sotelo into drug experimentation and gang involvement. “I guess I was looking for

something in the streets that I wasn’t getting no more from home,” Sotelo said. “I didn’t have a home life, but the streets was my life. ... There was a lot of stuff that a normal 12-year-old shouldn’t be doing at that age.” After a string of drug-related arrests throughout her teenage years, Sotelo got sober right before her 19th birthday. She was in a serious relationship, and she wanted to have a child. She had her son, and her daughter followed three years later—a time Sotelo considers to be the best in her life. “Even though my husband was a drinker, it was still the happiest time of my life,” Sotelo said. “I had a purpose now.” But when Sotelo reached her 30s, she developed cervical cancer and was prescribed pain medication that sent her spiraling back into active addiction and drug use. By the time she was 37 or 38, Sotelo had turned to meth, and it wasn’t long before she left her home of 19 years to live in a nearby park, where she sustained her drug use by committing crimes. One night, Sotelo was violently attacked and assaulted. When her husband picked her up from the hospital, he told Sotelo that he couldn’t take her home. “I understood, (he) didn’t want the kids to see me that way,” Sotelo said. Without the money to pay for a hotel, Sotelo was dropped back off at the same park she had just come from. As much as she wanted to go home, Sotelo felt unable to remove herself from the cycle of drug use, arrests and violence, she said. “I would pray to get off that drug ... I didn’t want to live that way,” Sotelo said. “But I couldn’t find the right help.” The turning point in Sotelo’s life, though, didn’t come until she was ultimately arrested one more time. After being sentenced to seven years in prison, she suffered a stroke leaving her paralyzed on her left side. While in prison, she began the

process of healing from her trauma through substance abuse counseling, all while fighting to walk again. “I started learning my triggers, what causes people to do drugs,” Sotelo said. “That’s when I realized I was self-medicating.” But the true healing for Sotelo didn’t begin until she was released from prison after 18 months. “I was already going through the stroke part, dealing with that, I had a heart attack, not able to see my kids the whole time I was in prison—that was hard,” Sotelo said. “I got letters from my daughter here and there, but my son don’t write like that. ... That’s the part that was hard.” “The healing didn’t start until I got out,” she added. By then, though, she had regained her mobility. “I still struggle. I still now am back on my cane and I have a walker again,” Sotelo said. “But I was determined to leave that prison a whole different person.” While at Cerritos College, Sotelo began therapy, where she learned about the roots of her addiction. “Still to this day, there’s certain things that come up that I don’t realize that are part of my healing,” said Sotelo. She even began to attend stand-up comedy shows each week, finding that laughter—even if she had heard the same jokes before—was able to ease any mood she was in. Since then, Sotelo has focused her energy on helping others in similar situations. After earning her master’s degree in social work from Cal State Long Beach in 2021, Sotelo became the school’s Project Rebound program director. Apart from her work with Rising Scholars and Project Rebound, Sotelo has spent time with young girls in juvenile halls, and has attempted to partner with the city of Long Beach on a reentry program, although there have been difficulties, Sotelo said.

“They ask us our needs, we give them a whole list of stuff that we want to move forward with, but it never seems to move forward,” Sotelo said. “We don’t see the progress. Being part of something that is run by us, for us, that’s the only way I think we’re gonna get the assistance.” More support in particular is needed with job placement, as many formerly incarcerated students who receive their degrees are competing with younger graduates while potentially facing job discrimination, according to Sotelo. “But a lot of us are working with our population,” Sotelo said. “There’s just making those opportunities available, finding more resources specifically for us—but who better to help us but us?” Although recovering from her past is an ongoing process, as Sotelo shares more of her story, not only is she able to help others, but piece by piece, she is healing, she said. “All that I went through is what made me stronger today,” Sotelo said. In August of last year, she moved out on her own for the first time since she was in prison into her own apartment. “I feel freedom,” Sotelo said. “I’m living a life now where I have integrity. I didn’t know that word til I got out of prison,” said Sotelo. “To me, I feel like now paying it forward for all the damage I’ve done in my life.” After starting with 14 students including Sotelo in 2020, Project Rebound began this year with 64 Cal State Long Beach students, a number Sotelo expects to grow to 70 after the first couple weeks of the semester. Of those 64, 30 students will be graduating from the university this year—an enormous accomplishment for the program itself and for the students, Sotelo said. “I’m proud to say I helped build this movement,” Sotelo said. “We built those paths as I was a student, now we’re making it a little bit easier for those coming after us.” ■

COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

A house older than the city moves to start a new life in Drake Park/Willmore Historic District

Are you looking for a modern new house or are you more in the market for an old, vintage home with a significant and interesting history? Why not both? Hitting the market last week at \$1.075 million is what's reported to be the oldest wooden home in



The second floor of the Parsonage House is removed prior to its relocation in the Drake Park/Willmore Historic District.



The Parsonage House, left, next to the old Congregational Church.



A wooden picket fence surrounds the front yard of the Parsonage House in Long Beach.

Long Beach, at 326 W. 10th St. in the Drake Park/Willmore Historic District—at least that's where it's calling home right now. It's overly flippant to term it a "mobile" home, but the four-bedroom, three-bath house has more miles on it than your typical home, having

been picked up and relocated four times in the last 126 years.

You can be fairly certain that its current location will be its last stop, but with its nomadic past, don't bet the house on it.

It was built in 1887—a year before Long Beach became a city—by one of Long Beach's founding families, Jotham Bixby and his wife Margaret, to serve as the parsonage for the early version of the Congregational Church on Cedar Avenue at Third Street.

Even at that time, the two-story Queen Anne Victorian home was considered a masterpiece. The church's pastor, the Rev. Henry Kendall Booth, called it "an ornament to the town, an element of strength to the church and an honor to Mr. and Mrs. Bixby."

A dozen years after it was built, the house began its travels. It made the short jaunt from Cedar to Third in 1899 and when the present First Congregational Church was built in 1914, the Parsonage House hit the road again and moved off-site, and in 1927 it moved to a lot at Seventh Street and Pacific Avenue where it was converted into a duplex and settled down for an 85-year stay, and time passed.

In the 2010s, the home's owner had to move the house to make room for the 271-unit Volta apartments development, and he asked Realtor Greg Ernst to find an available vacant lot somewhere in the Drake Park/Willmore neighborhood to relocate the house, rather than tear it down.

A vacant lot was found at 326 W. 10th, and the house made its final journey down three blocks to the north and went through the process of being brought up to date.

From the outside, it looks pretty much like it did when it was built. The owners even spent \$3,000 for a forensic examination of its original paint color to make the home historically correct. It has also retained most of its original windows and its front porch.

Inside, it's a different story. "More than 90% of the interior is new," said Ernst. And that includes brand new plumbing, new electrical, new HVAC, new walls and ceilings, new lighting fixtures, new kitchens and baths, new flooring and tile work. It's virtually a new house, with little memory of the past wrapped in a historic Victorian home with decades of stories to tell.

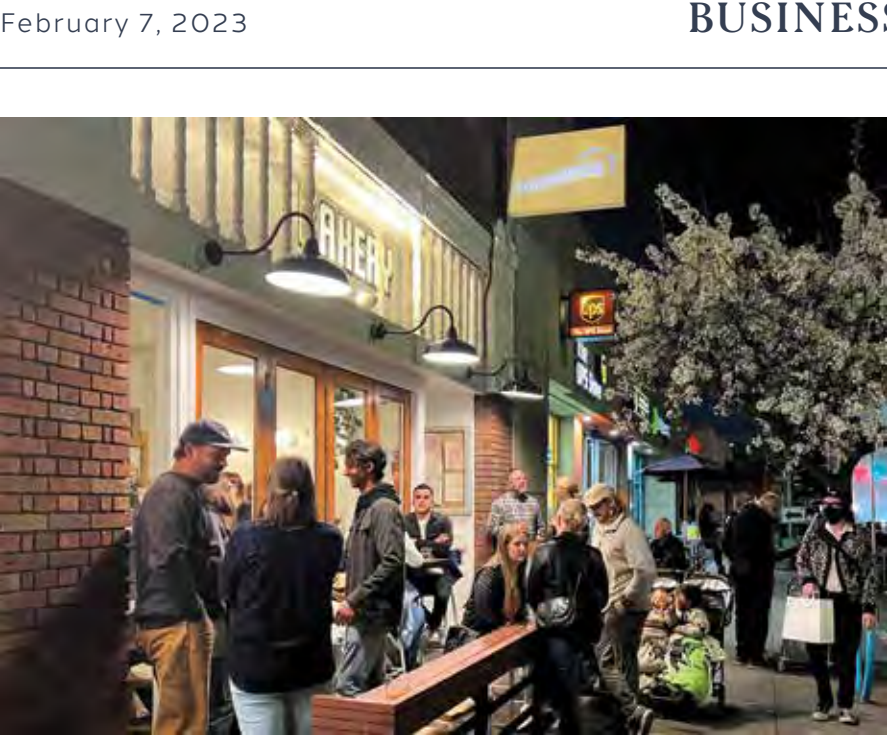
There are a few vintage touches remaining inside, including its staircase and a built-in wooden hutch in the living room.

The 2,017-square-foot house has a large, airy living room with a nice nook perfect for a reading chair and lamp, a bright kitchen and a fairly large bedroom. The primary suite has its own bath with a walk-in shower and a clawfoot bathtub next to a window overlooking a giant backyard that can easily accommodate a swimming pool and perhaps a garage, because many of the homes in the neighborhood were built before Model Ts began rolling off assembly lines. Ernst said the entire process, from moving the house to renovating it, cost nearly \$2 million.

Because its exterior is still true to the original, the house, still known as the Parsonage House, remains a Long Beach historic landmark. ■



The original wood staircase in the 1887 Parsonage House in Long Beach.



Colossus Bread in Belmont Shore reopened on Jan. 29, 2023, after a two-week closure due to flooding.

Colossus Bread reopens after flooding, rising from hardship to a fresh start

By Kat Schuster

On Jan. 14, bakers and baristas were scrambling to throw trash bags over espresso machines and use anything within reach to catch rainwater as a torrential downpour flooded Colossus Bread in Belmont Shore.

The flooding forced Kristin Colazas Rodriguez to close not only her Long Beach cafe, but also her San Pedro shop and farmer's market booth. Pastries, bread and other products were all lost during a two-week closure that followed as Rodriguez and her husband, Nick Rodriguez, knocked out and replaced a wall and parts of the ceiling and made other repairs.

The storm ultimately cost the business tens of thousands of dollars.

Colossus, which quickly became a popular morning spot on Second Street after setting up shop in 2021, reopened on Jan. 29, but with a few noticeable differences. The cafe will now serve beer and wine and offer happy hour, bringing the young cafe closer to a traditional kafenion like the one owned by her great-grandfather, Constantine Colazas, in Athens, Greece.

When you walk into the cafe and look immediately to your right, you can spot a framed black-and-white photo of that shop.

Traditional Greek cafes like her great-grandfather's in Athens weren't just places to get a caffeine fix. They were social hubs to play ping-pong, meet a stranger or even gamble while sipping a beer, wine or the harder stuff—ouzo or raki.

Constantine's son, Xenophon Constantine Colazas, would eventually move to the United States, leaving behind sisters in Greece.

"The joke in my family is that when you say 'Colazas' they think you've either said Gonzales or

Colossus, because it's not a common name, even with Greeks," Rodriguez said. "So the name died off in Greece. I got married and changed my name, so I kind of feel like it lives on," she said. Colossus "is kind of a low-key nod to my family name."

Not long after the flood, Xenophon, more affectionately known as "papou" (grandfather in Greek), died.

"It has been a trying two weeks," she wrote in a newsletter, thanking the community for supporting her and her husband through the closure and the loss of her grandfather. "I'm so grateful for all of your support and proud of the community spaces we have built in Long Beach and San Pedro, as I know my papou was."

"Great man," she said looking out the window at the space where her cafe's COVID-era parklet was recently taken down. "He would come here especially when we had the parklet. He loved the parklet. He would sit out here and say, 'This is the closest thing to being in Greece.'"

Rodriguez said she is working to get the proper permits in place to resurrect her parklet, which was also beloved by the community.

A Long Beach native, Rodriguez said her professional life began in the nonprofit sector, where she ultimately discovered her love for connecting and contributing to the community. Once she decided to pursue her passion for baking bread and eventually opening a bakery, she said things evolved quickly.

Over seven years, she developed her craft, from working as a bread baker in San Francisco to eventually developing her own pastries and bread to sell at farmers markets in Long Beach.

In 2019, she opened her first shop in San Pedro. Two years later she opened her larger space in Belmont Shore, where she and her team now



Constantine Colazas, Kristin Colazas Rodriguez's great-grandfather, stands in front of his kafenion in Athens, Greece.

bake their naturally leavened bread and pastries for all locations. "I think my grandfather thought I was crazy," she said. "Eventually, he was like, 'OK, I get it now. You figured it out. You got where you wanted to be,' and that was in a cafe." Despite the spectacle of the cafe's crowded mornings and being voted by Cal State Long Beach as the best

Continued on page 21

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# Throw axes for fun at this new Downtown Long Beach space

By Brandon Richardson

The art of axe throwing dates back to the Middle Ages, when soldiers and knights used the iron weapons in combat. There is debate as to when the skill first turned into a non-lethal competition: Some

say it started with Celtic tribes, while others maintain it was North American frontiersmen.

Axe throwing has been popular in many lumberjack competitions for decades, but over the past 20 years, the battle technique turned sporting event has become popular urban entertainment. Now, after a much-

delayed opening, Bad Axe Throwing has come to Downtown Long Beach.

"It's grown pretty rapidly," Operations Manager Zach Parker said. "It started as just some guys throwing axes out in the woods, guys throwing axes in the garage, and now it's a really fun recreational activity found in cities

Continued on page 22

MAYOR Richardson

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# Local taco truck gives daily meals to homeless residents

*Savage Tacos is teaming up with a Long Beach nonprofit that helps unhoused folks work together to improve their lives, little by little.*

By Jackie Rae

When the Long Beach City Council declared a state of emergency in early January over the state of homelessness, they pledged to take on some long-term issues like affordable housing and shelter space, but, on the ground, some locals are doing innovative things to address the immediate needs.

Duke Givens and his nonprofit Care Closet LBC is one of them.

Every day, Givens and his team hit the streets of Long Beach to provide resources to unhoused people. In addition to food, clothing and other assistance, Givens wants to empower those living on the street to take care of themselves.

"We get them to work together as a team," says Givens. The work includes keeping their areas clean, passing out food and clothing provided by Care Closet LBC, and looking out for each other.

Givens now has some much-needed assistance with food distribution. Not just sandwiches and snacks, but gourmet food. Every day, Savage Tacos Truck provides a hot breakfast to the unhoused between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. at various locations in Long Beach.

Keith and Rachel LukaSavage opened Savage Tacos in March 2020, just as the pandemic shutdowns began. After losing all of their catering clients, Keith LukaSavage says they found success along the bluffs in Long Beach. That success not only sustained their business but gave them a chance to feed every homeless person who came by their truck.

"It's really important," says Keith LukaSavage. "Everyone wants to help, but get involved in your community."

Keith LukaSavage and his wife try to impact the community around them every day and encourage others to do the same saying, "you don't have to change the world. Just change your community."

If you would like to donate or volunteer with Care Closet LBC you can do so at [carecloset.org](https://carecloset.org), or follow them on Instagram: [@careclosetlbc](https://www.instagram.com/careclosetlbc). ■

# Buvons

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like a big factory or mass-produced wine—there's a story behind all of them," Kemper said.

The spectrum of wine bottles that line the shelved walls in the space are small production, French and natural or organic.

"It's about being conscious of the environment," Kemper said. "The way that they're farming, the way that they're making the wine, what you're ingesting into your body—it's not just a bunch of chemicals."

"Because they're not adjusting and changing it, it's an expression or a capture of time in a place of a specific grape. So it's a little bit more poetic. And the wine is changing. It's not going to be the same time or same flavor, like vintage to vintage, you're gonna get a lot of different expressions and different experiences."

Kemper has always been drawn to French wine. She worked at a restaurant in Paris and has done wine harvest in France for six years. Now, she visits France twice a year to try new wines, and she hopes to share all that she's learned and discovered with her Long Beach customers.

For Kemper, French wine represents "purity and authenticity and elegance."

For many, Buvons is still an unturned stone. While the Anaheim corridor has become an evening destination for those in pursuit of a craft cocktail or a night of merry-making, it lacks foot traffic comparable to somewhere like Belmont Shore, where each business is likely to attract passersby.

"Every day we have a customer that comes in and they're like, 'Oh we live down the street, we have not heard of the shop.' How is this possible?" Delbarry laughs.

Kemper moved to the Rose Park neighborhood after signing the lease on 1147 Loma Ave. From hosting regular DJ nights to wine classes, Kemper says she's been working to connect with people in her new home under the roof of her new business in Long Beach.

"After living in L.A. for more than 10 years, Long Beach is so much more community-driven," she said. "It's just really nice and rewarding to be able to work with people that just have the same sort of vision and work mentality. We all want to support each other."

Buvons, located at 1147 Loma Ave., offers memberships to its monthly wine subscription service, the Tippler Club. The wine bar and shop is open Monday 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday noon to 9 p.m.; and Thursday through Sunday noon to 10:30 p.m. ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal  
A woman walks into Buvons Wine Bar + Shop on Loma Avenue between Anaheim and 11th streets.

# Colossus Bread

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place to meet a stranger on a date, Rodriguez said the team is still getting acquainted with Long Beach after the success of its San Pedro home base.

"It's crazy to say, but we're still meeting our neighborhood," she said. "We're still telling our community

about us. People still walk in and ask if we're a franchise. Here, we're way busier today than we were last year, and we just keep meeting new people and getting busier ... it's ever evolving. I'm super excited about that."

"Because we're a coffee shop, we have groceries, we sort of attract the gamut of people who love food and who love small business," she said.

The cafe has undergone a lot of subtle changes since it first opened.

The shop was able to do away with a tipping system, and Rodriguez raised all of her employees' wages by 15%, along with getting the licensing to serve craft beer and natural wines from Greece, Austria, Germany, Slovenia and more. Next, Rodriguez will work to bring back more seating within the parklet that was so beloved by her papou. Eventually, she hopes to extend her cafe's hours.

Rodriguez's business in Belmont

Shore is constantly evolving, but her vision for her cafe is unwavering: to bring the community together with more than a few nods to Constantine's Athens kafenion.

Colossus Bread in Long Beach is open Monday through Sunday from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., on Friday from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. (pizza night from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.) and on weekends from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Happy hour will be Monday through Thursday from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. ■



Jake Gotta / Business Journal  
One of Colossus Bread's menu offerings. The shop reopened Jan. 29, 2023, after a two-week closure due to flooding.



Courtesy of Kristin Colazas Rodriguez  
Colossus owner Kristin Colazas Rodriguez's grandfather, Xenophon Constantine Colazas (center), sits with friends at a cafe.

Sustainable Fashion

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and uncertainty. According to Early, foot traffic declined on their corridor, and sales moved mostly online which forced them to cut their hours of operation, issues that are difficult for any small business to bounce back from. Now, she said, the conversation surrounding Downtown businesses has shifted to issues of public safety and homelessness, factors that drive away business from those who need it.

“There’s no one to blame specifically, but there is a lot that needs to happen for even one business in this neighborhood to just survive,” said Early.

In an effort to revive local interest once businesses reopened Downtown, Early, Mumford and Stoll spent late nights in the store brainstorming to create events including clothing swaps, crafting sessions and community events to celebrate sustainability. Despite their best efforts, it hasn’t been enough, said Stoll.

3 Women continued to thrive online and has amassed over 110,000 followers on Instagram. Their pieces have been featured in British Vogue, Cosmopolitan, Teen Vogue, W Magazine and have been worn by the likes of Jhene Aiko, Maude Apatow, Maya Hawke and Gracie Abrams.

The brand will be sustained through e-commerce and will continue to operate and build connections at vintage flea markets in the area, but the freedom that comes with owning a storefront will be missed, said Early.

“Small businesses aren’t just people trying to sell stuff and make money. They really are businesses that are super passionate about Long Beach,” she said. “It’s been a total honor to live here, where I choose to live, and also have a business here.”

In the shop in late January, where vintage textiles hung from the ceiling and colorful clothes hung from clothing racks stacked up against the walls, Early, Mumford and Stoll reminisced over the past five years, the friendships they built and the connections they made.

Customers stopped by and some learned of the upcoming closure for the very first time.

“We’re leaving the shop at the end of the month, I’m sorry to break this bad news,” said Early to an elderly man named Richard who’s been a longtime supporter of 3 women.

Ten minutes later, he came back and slipped two \$20 bills under the door.

“This a very special place,” said Early. ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Bad Axe axe master Seamus Fitzgerald throws an axe at the company's new Downtown Long Beach location at 245 Pine Ave., Unit 290.

Axe Throwing

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all over the country.”

Bad Axe founder and CEO Mario Zelaya started the Canadian company in 2014. It now has 33 locations, according to the company website, including eight in Canada, two in the United Kingdom and 23 across the U.S.

Long Beach is the company’s first Los Angeles County location and the fourth in the state, with others in Fresno, San Diego and San Francisco.

In addition to Bad Axe, Zelaya founded the World Axe Throwing League in 2017.

Located at 245 Pine Ave., unit 290 above Chipotle, the new location is one of the company’s larger spaces, according to Parker. It includes seven lanes, each with two targets separated by a divider.

Each lane has its own axe-throwing coach who goes over rules and safety guidelines before customers can unleash on the cottonwood boards and painted targets, which must be changed out every few days, according to Parker. The coaches also teach people games such as Cricket, 21 and Horse.

People must sign waivers to participate but Parker said over nearly a decade of business, accidents are exceedingly rare due to the fact that throwers are monitored by coaches. Additionally, the specialty axes—both hatchet and full size—are WATL regulation, which are designed specifically for throwing.

The larger axe, as well as 14-inch throwing knives, are an additional charge on top of the initial fee that runs from \$28 per person to \$42 per person.

Pre-booked groups must include at least six people, which includes a coach and lane for an hour and a half for \$42 per person. Additional lanes can be reserved for larger groups such as birthday, bachelor or bachelorette parties, or corporate events.

There is no minimum group size for walk-ins, who enjoy a cheaper rate of \$28 per person, but they could be saddled with wait time and the cover charge is only good for 45 minutes.

The company does offer a special birthday rate of \$21, good any time during a person’s birthday week, Parker said.

Groups of six or more people can pre-book online or take their chances as a walk-in, which could include a wait. Larger groups should book appointments online.

“This is a fun thing that anyone ... can do,” Parker said, noting it’s one of the very few entertainment options in the area in a similar vein as bowling—an activity the city of Long Beach does not have. Bad Axe joins Birdies N Brews, the city’s first and only indoor golf bar, which

opened nearby in September 2021.

“You can grab a drink and get competitive with your friends and have some fun,” Parker said.

Long Beach, however, is the company’s first location with an age restriction of 21 and older, he said, due to local laws and regulations.

For now, the Long Beach location is only accepting pre-booked groups as construction wraps on the finishing touches and training continues for the new coaches. By the end of the month, the branch should be ready to serve up beer and wine to walk-ins from 5 to 11 p.m. seven days per week, Parker said.

“We’ve been waiting on Long Beach for a while,” Parker said, noting the company has had the location secured since 2019. “COVID put a stop to our opening and we’ve been waiting around for the right time to get back into the game.”

Since signage went up, people have stopped in repeatedly to ask when the space would be opening and voice their approval of new entertainment in Downtown, Parker said. “People seem excited about it.” ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Bad Axe Throwing coaches Tytyiana Peterson, left, and Jorge Betancourt practice at the company’s new Long Beach location in Downtown.

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# Educational Opportunities

The Port of Long Beach's high school internship and college scholarship applications are open through March 1. Our internships cover areas from engineering to communications, and if you're interested in a career in logistics, trade or business, check out our Port scholarships – we've awarded \$1.3 million over the past eight years. Find out more and apply at [polb.com/education](https://polb.com/education).

