

LONG BEACH

BUSINESS JOURNAL

— An edition of the Long Beach Post —

From its 1942 form, The Clouds Restaurant and Bar, to its last iteration, Legends of Aviation, which shuttered in 2014—Long Beach hopes to restore the magic of the long-vacant space in its historic airport terminal.

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Creating a community destination: Airport to seek operator for long-vacant former restaurant inside historic terminal building

By Brandon Richardson

For more than 70 years, travelers, aviation enthusiasts and residents alike could gather on the second floor of the now-historic terminal building at Long Beach Airport for a bite to eat and a drink while watching aircraft arriving and departing with beautiful sunsets as the backdrop.

The restaurant opened within the terminal building—designed by William Horace Austin and Kenneth Smith Wing—in 1942. Then, it was called The Clouds Restaurant and Bar.

The space went on to become The Prop Room. Though airport staff aren’t sure when the name change occurred, the restaurant had the moniker at least as far back as the 1980s.

Then, in 2008, The Prop Room became Legends of Aviation, which ultimately shuttered in 2014.

“It is such a special, unique and historic space,” airport spokesperson Kate Kuykendall said. “It was a beloved restaurant. I have run into people within the last year who’ve been wandering around [the airport] looking for the restaurant.”

The space has sat empty for nearly a decade, sometimes used for



Other than the tiered-level floor, the interior of the former restaurant space inside the Long Beach Airport terminal building is not historic and can be drastically renovated by a new operator.

airport staff meetings, but the city is hoping to recapture its previous magic. As early as May, the city is expected to release a request for proposals, or RFP, for the former restaurant space as well as other concession opportunities at the airport, according to Commercial Development Officer Dale Worsham.

The RFP also will seek operators for small retail spaces on the ground

floor of the terminal building as well as a new, 1,100-square-foot pre-security concession stand just north of the terminal, Worsham said.

This will not be the first RFP the airport has put out for the former restaurant space since Legends closed. Worsham said there have been two RFPs issued over the past nine years.

“And there’s been various interest

in it,” he said. “We do two or three tours for people that are interested every year.”

While past RFPs and tours have been less than fruitful for the space, Worsham thinks this time around will be different for one main reason: the long-awaited retrofit and renovation of the historic terminal building is currently underway and will be completed by early next year.

Work on the historic terminal has been underway for years. Any new operator would likely fully remodel the restaurant space, Worsham noted, which would then be shut down for a year and torn up as crews seismically retrofit the building.

“It was hard to get someone to commit to something they knew was going to be closed for a year,” Worsham said. “Now, that won’t be the situation.”

Additionally, the second-story space previously looked out over the checked-baggage screening area—not a particularly enticing view. That operation, however, has been moved behind the new ticketing lobby and the courtyard will be open and activated with a meet-and-greet area as well as additional concessions.

The new baggage claim area, slated to be completed this year, also

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Philz Coffee opens a second location in Long Beach

By Kat Schuster

Third-wave cafe fan favorite, Philz Coffee, set up shop in Bixby Knolls more than five years after the chain opened its first Long Beach location in Belmont Shore.

The shop was expected to open March 22 at 3850 Atlantic Ave., after the building underwent some construction. The Philz sign went up on March 9, Blair Cohn, executive director of the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association told the Business Journal.

Previously, boutique AndyLiz occupied the storefront before moving a few doors down to 3912 Atlantic Ave.

The cafe first opened in San Francisco’s Mission District in 1978 and was among the pioneers of the specialty pour-over and sustainable

bean movement that has become increasingly easier to find over the years. The chain is also responsible for helping to champion the iced coffee and cold brew craze.

The beloved Bay Area cafe first made landfall in Southern California in 2014 when it set up shop in Santa Monica. In 2018, Philz arrived in Belmont Shore and has since become a bustling hub for the neighborhood, where remote workers and students on laptops are a frequent sight.

Philz is where you can essentially design your ideal cuppa by choosing a blend, temperature and how/if you’d like your cream and sugar mixed (the baristas generally do this part for you).

From dark blends like Ether, with notes of cocoa and cherry, to the famed Iced Mint Mojito (yes, this is still a coffee drink), there are around 20 different blends and coffee



A man walks his dog past the new Bixby Knolls location of Philz Coffee.

creations to choose from. If it’s a latte you’re after, you won’t find it at Philz. Although, the menu attests that the Tesora, a specialty coffee

blend, is “perfect” for latte drinkers. Philz Coffee is set to open Wednesday, March 22 at 3850 Atlantic Ave. in Bixby Knolls. ■

How a hot-pink neon beacon spawned a Long Beach Subculture: Fourth Street’s Retro Row



It's all a neon glow as Kathleen Schaaf stands in front of her vintage store Meow on Fourth Street's Retro Row.

Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

By Kat Schuster

Kathleen Schaaf remembers scouring antique shops scattered throughout the length of Fourth Street in search of vintage clothing at 16 years old. “True” vintage, she says—”30s, ‘40s, ‘50s.” It was 1974. “Can you imagine what they were stocking in the ‘70s? It was crazy, and it was all 10 cents,” Schaaf told the Long Beach Post.

In 1986, Schaaf would light the neon sign above her very own vintage shop, Meow. Gradually, over 37 years, a prismatic and like-fashioned smattering of shops opened up around Schaaf’s pink neon beacon at 2210 E. Fourth St.

Schaaf’s shop became a Long Beach destination years before the block was crowned “Retro Row”—given that there was no “row” back then. When Schaaf first arrived on the street, there was an antique mall and there was the movie theater, which was a revival house, but today’s Row, spanning from Cherry to Junipero, had yet to materialize. “The people who lived around

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Cena Vegan arrives in Long Beach

By Kat Schuster

When Carmen Santillan and her husband Mike Simms faced the unique challenge of feeding 200 people at the top of a mountain in 2015, they ended up with a vegan recipe for traditional Mexican street food that continues to mystify those who bite into their barbacoa today.

Almost overnight, their Cena Vegan taco stand was drawing long, snaking lines when it appeared on the streets of Highland Park in 2016. After garnering success and a faithful following at locations in Lincoln Heights and Whittier, Cena Vegan debuted in Long Beach on March 14 within Partake Collective, a ghost kitchen dining hall in the East Village.

But first, back to the mountaintop: About seven years ago, Simms, a volunteer forest ranger for LA County, was able to gather 200 volunteers, who worked tirelessly to help him achieve his dream of uncovering historic ruins and restoring a trail at the top

of Echo Mountain in Altadena. Together, teenagers, children, parents and grandparents worked to transform the area, with many clearing overgrown brush by hand.

Simms was so overcome with gratitude that he made a fateful promise: to feed all of the volunteers homemade vegan tacos when they returned to the mountain months later for the next work day.

“Are you out of your mind?” Santillan questioned her husband at the time.

“He’s a dreamer,” she told the Business Journal.

The couple had only recently decided to transition to a vegan lifestyle after Simms’ doctor dealt him dire warnings about his health and diet. At first, Simms jumped into action by becoming a vegetarian, but even after losing weight and adapting to that diet, he was told that he had the clogged arteries of a 90-year-old man.

“My husband is my best friend,” Santillan said. “If you’re vegan, we’re vegan.”

But the prospect of feeding 200



Kat Schuster / Business Journal

The “Big Vegan Burrito Bowl,” made with vegan carne asada, and the vegan barbacoa nacho boat is prepared at Whittier Brewing Co. Starting March 14, Cena Vegan will offer recipes like these in its new Long Beach location.

people with what had essentially been a home experiment was going to cost an estimated \$800. That’s because seitan, a vegan meat alternative made from hydrated gluten, comes with a massive price tag in large quantities.

It would have drained the couple’s savings, Santillan said. Simms had also just lost his job at the time. But that seemingly insurmountable promise was one that Simms was determined to realize.

“I got myself into this mess, I’ll

Continued on page 8

Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach prepares for an action-packed 48th annual race weekend

By Tess Kazenoff

Preparations are underway for Long Beach’s largest event, the Acura Grand Prix, a weekend that draws upward of 200,000 attendees to Downtown.

Last year, when the event returned to its typical April time slot for the first time since 2019, over 188,000 people attended the weekend festivities, a number that Grand Prix Association of Long Beach President Jim Michaelian suspects could be topped this year, based on current sales numbers.

“We’re actually trending slightly ahead of where we were last year, which, if that continues on, certainly is a strong indicator that this year’s event will be just as or even more successful than it was last year,” said Michaelian. “We’re very delighted about the way sales have been going so far.”

The Grand Prix, which is returning for the 48th year from April 14 to April 16, is an opportunity to showcase Long Beach, Michaelian said.

Between the 500 media partners who report on the race, along with a substantial social media effort, the Grand Prix demonstrates the growth and development of Long Beach over nearly 50 years, Michaelian said.

According to Michaelian, the Grand Prix produces about nine hours of television coverage, which is shown both nationally and internationally, and for the second year in a row, the headlining IndyCar race will be shown on NBC. This is significant both for its viewership and for the opportunity for viewers to see what Long Beach has to offer, from the Port of Long Beach and Shoreline Village, to the Pike, the city skyline and more, Michaelian said.

The Grand Prix generates a significant economic impact both for the region and for Long Beach—according to the most recent data, about \$64 million is generated for the region, while \$33 million is produced for Long Beach. Of the \$33 million, \$700,000 in tax revenue goes into the city coffers, and the event creates the equivalent of about 350 full-time jobs, according to Michaelian.

While specific hotel occupancy information was unavailable, in the past, the event has filled all of the first-class rooms in Long Beach, creating a “spillover effect” that also filled hotel rooms in some surrounding cities, Michaelian said.

Of the thousands of attendees, about 85% are from Southern California, another 5% are from



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Alexander Rossi comes down Shoreline Drive followed by Pato O’Ward during the 47th annual Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach.

elsewhere in the western U.S., and the remaining 10% travel from throughout the country and the world.

“Quite frankly, a vast majority of

the people here will be glad to tell you how many times they’ve come to this event,” said Michaelian, who estimates that about 70-to-75% of attendees have been to the

Grand Prix in the past. “I think that’s a very positive indicator of what they experienced and what they anticipate the following year is going to provide in terms of

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Kitchen Lingo Books brings culinary culture and history to Fourth Street with ‘seasoned’ volumes



Matt Miller, owner of Kitchen Lingo Books, does inventory inside his new culinary bookstore on Fourth Street.

By Kat Schuster

When Matt Miller opens a used book, he often finds it distracting when it is overly dog-eared and marred with underlined passages.

But when it comes to the pen marks within old cookbooks, his perspective shifts. Kitchen Lingo Books, Miller’s newly opened culinary bookstore on Long Beach’s Retro Row, offers what he describes as

“seasoned” rather than “used” cookbooks. These books—and their highlighted recipes and tagged pages—are time capsules, he says. A former restaurateur, food writer and former Long Beach Post contributor, Miller opened the doors to Kitchen Lingo for a soft opening on March 11. Just a few days later, he told the Post that he was, quite literally, up to his ears in books. He had just gotten a huge shipment of texts covering everything from foraging edible weeds to learning how to grow koji (that’s a fungus used for a spectrum of culinary purposes). Among the stacks, he plucked a particularly “seasoned” 1961 copy of The New York Times Cookbook by Craig Claiborne. Not only had its likely original owner written inside most of the pages, detailing their own edits and versions of the recipes inside, there were photographs, neatly preserved between the pages, of a dinner party they had thrown with the dishes they prepared using that book. “It was a big to-do, with everyone dressed up,” Miller said. “You don’t see that in an old thumbed-through copy of ‘Grapes of Wrath.’” Miller said he’s still heavily steeped in the process of building his inventory to the standard of what he envisions. “I hope to build up an enormous collection of things that are out of print and are collectible and rare and funky and different, along with a huge collection of new really interesting titles,” he said. Miller moved to Long Beach 10 years ago after leaving the restaurant world behind. He has worked just about every job in the food industry one can imagine, from restaurant employee to restaurant

owner to covering the local culinary scene. Now, he says he really just wants to share the magic—and the historical value—of cookbooks, from rare, out-of-print vintage to the lightly seasoned. “Recreating a dish that hasn’t been made in 50 years, 75 years or almost 100 years ... seeing what people were eating and finding those ingredients,” Miller said. “It’s like time travel.” New cookbooks, on the other hand, he says, tell the story of where we are now. “Which of these new cookbooks is going to have a true influence on who we become next?” But Miller doesn’t just want to be a vintage books salesman. He has already begun planning his first culinary event at the shop, which will gather food writers, chefs and others in the industry to have an intimate discussion on a chosen topic while seated at a long dining room table. While quite a few well-known food writers and chefs have already expressed interest, Miller said he has yet to mark a date or begin his discussion calendar. In fact, he’s yet to announce a grand opening date. For now, he’s open most days from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. stocking his shelves and meeting those who happen to stroll in. “I hope to create a community of people, and meet a community of people that are really interested in food,” he said. “Not just as in, ‘I want to go to a restaurant, snap a picture and post it to Instagram,’ but people who are really interested and want to talk about it.” Kitchen Lingo Books is now open in the heart of Retro Row at 2116 Fourth St. Miller’s tentative operating schedule is Monday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. ■



Kitchen Lingo Books owner Matt Miller retrieves a book from a display for a customer inside his new bookstore.

Queen Mary tours to resume next month

Work is still underway to get the historic Queen Mary shipshape, but officials expect to reopen for tours within weeks, said Steve Caloca, the ship’s new general manager.

By Alicia Robinson

Work is still underway to get the historic Queen Mary shipshape, but officials expect to reopen for tours within weeks, Steve Caloca, the ship’s new general manager, said March 15. Caloca told board members of the Long Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau that tours will start in April, and later that month he hopes to open lodging and restaurants and offer Sunday brunch. Caloca did not provide more details on which kinds of tours will

be offered next month. With a background managing events and food service for Hyatt hotels, UCLA Lake Arrowhead Lodge and Warner Bros. Entertainment, Caloca joined Evolution Hospitality — which was hired by the city last June to manage the Queen Mary — about a month ago. Evolution (via parent company Aimbridge Hospitality) also has been advertising jobs on the Queen Mary. On Wednesday, about 20 positions were listed online, including attendant and ticket agent for attractions, plumber and painter, and several management positions. Caloca said after the CVB board meeting that specific dates for reopening various parts of the ship will be announced in the coming weeks. “Tours will probably be the first thing,” he said, adding that right now, “there’s so much work that’s getting done on the ship.” In December and January, the city opened the Queen Mary to a limited number of visitors for tours of a few specific parts of the vessel. It was the first opportunity for members of the public to be on board since the ship closed in March 2020 due to the



Two bicyclists ride past the Queen Mary, which is set to reopen for tours in April.

pandemic. The vessel remained closed throughout the pandemic as officials determined the ship would need tens of millions in repairs to remain functional and above water, after previous operators deferred maintenance for years. In 2021, the city took over ship operations after the hired operating company gave up the lease in a bankruptcy proceeding. Some of the repair work has been performed over the past year or so, but city leaders will face tough decisions about the future of the historic ocean liner, which is estimated to need nearly \$300 million in fixes to remain a safe and viable tourist attraction. ■

Airport Restaurant

Continued from page 3

will be within view of the space, Worsham noted. In addition to restaurant concepts, Worsham said the airport could receive proposals to turn the area into an event space suitable for business luncheons and even small weddings. There also has been past interest in converting it into a co-working space, similar to WeWork, for business travelers who may need to get a few hours of work in. Most of the interior of the space is not original to the building and therefore a future operator would not need the approval of the Cultural Heritage Commission for most remodeling projects, according to Worsham. The main room is broken up into three tiers, which isn’t great for activation, Worsham said. Leveling the area for more functionality would require commission approval, he said. “If I had my way, my dream, it would be a restaurant again during the day, but there’d be spaces available for private events—the patio specifically,” Worsham said. “And then at night it could be rented out for events.” Worsham said he’d like the bar, which currently runs the almost entire length of the west-facing windows overlooking the airfield,

to be removed and replaced with a smaller bar. This would allow for massive floor-to-ceiling windows for optimal views of the airfield. If the tiered levels stay, Worsham said glass guard rails rather than the current wood would at least visually open up the space. One big selling point for events, Worsham said, is the location. Because the space is located at the airport, it is far from neighborhood homes and the noise level of music and guests would not be an issue, even late into the night. To the north of the main space is an outdoor patio that could accommodate numerous tables for outdoor dining or gathering, Worsham noted. When asked what type of restaurant he would like to see take over the space, Worsham laughed, saying, “One that is profitable and self-sustaining.” “Something that is affordable. Something with great cocktails,” he said more seriously. “High-end wouldn’t be desirable here. A Mexican-Californian fusion or an Italian-Californian fusion type of thing. I would like to see a Tantalum in here.” Regardless of the food type, Worsham said he would like to see a local operator. “It would have to be a Long Beach destination. This is an asset for the whole community,” Worsham said. “This has been part of the community for over 80 years and we want to retain what this room is.” ■

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Cena Vegan

Continued from page 4

grandmother and mother raised her with.

“We missed having the food I grew up eating, because ... in the Mexican diet, I mean, it’s very, you know, meat-centric.”

But for her, those recipes held an emotional connection.

“My mother passed away when I was 17 years old,” she said. “I felt like I got really lucky that I was able to spend time with her in the kitchen, that I was able to learn how to cook, that I could make these beautiful recipes—because to me, it’s a way of connecting and staying connected with her.”

One day, as Simms ran trial and error over and over again in an attempt to develop their home seitan recipe, Santillan set out two traditional Mexican marinades for her husband before she left that day: one for carne asada and the other for pollo asado. When she returned home, he told her, “I think we nailed it.”

“And the version of that seitan with that marinade is very similar to what you enjoy from Cena today,” she said.

Santillan then enlisted the help of her sister, Marcy Velazquez, to

help begin the weeklong task of preparing enough seitan to feed 200.

“She’s always been extremely supportive,” Santillan said of her sister, “no matter how crazy the idea is.”

When the big day on Echo Mountain finally came, the trio, along with a few other volunteers, drove up the fire access road and then lugged all of their supplies three quarters of a mile up to the top, where they set up tables and chafing dishes.

“Everybody ate. Some people ate twice, and everything was gone,” she said, describing the range of emotions they felt that day from anxiety to relief to absolute joy.

Shortly after, they began serving Cena Vegan at their taco stand in Los Angeles. The team consisted of Santillan, Simms and Velasquez. At the time, all Simms and Santillan could pay Velasquez was gas money. Now, Valasquez runs the kitchens, and Cena Vegan has 25 employees.

Cena Vegan’s recipes, which have garnered something of a cult following, are available for pickup at another ghost kitchen in Lincoln Heights and at a food stall within Whittier Brewing Company. Long Beach marks Cena’s third location.

While Cena exclusively offers Mexican street food, Santillan says she’s excited for the day the public will finally get to try some of their more “formal” recipes, when they



Courtesy of Carmen Santillan

Carmen Santillan and her husband, Mike Simms, decided to take up a vegan diet after Simms started to experience health issues related to his diet. Now, the couple run a successful string of vegan pop-ups that offer traditional Mexican street food with plant-based ingredients.

have a brick-and-mortar to call home.

But, Santillan says, Cena originated as a way to offer plant-based recipes to vegans and vegetarians who either can no longer or who have never been able to experience true Mexican street food.

“We used to go after a party or something. We would go find that taco cart on the corner somewhere,

where you see the shiny light bulbs, and we would stand there and eat tacos on the street,” she said. “You couldn’t do that as a vegan.”

Cena Vegan debuted its new location at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 14, at Partake Collective, 456 Elm Ave. The kitchen will be open Tuesdays through Sundays from 11:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. and will be closed on Mondays. ■

Retro Row

Continued from page 4

here—they went to the bank, they went to the insurance agency, they went to the dry cleaners. But other than that, it was pretty bleak,” said Schaaf, who is also a board member of the Fourth Street Business Improvement Association.

Schaaf pivoted from waitressing while studying costume design at Cal State Long Beach and University of California, Los Angeles to open her shop.

Quickly, Schaaf started to garner attention for her legendary feats in acquiring “dead stock” from various eras—essentially never worn garments that have remained on a shelf somewhere like a warehouse for any number of years.

So much so that by the late ‘80s, Schaaf was working with the sitcom “Roseanne,” supplying the show’s designers with vintage and dead stock. This, she said, led to work with “Seinfeld” in the ‘90s.

On March 1, Schaaf said she has been busier than ever lately with a post-pandemic content boom. These days, Netflix, HBO and other production companies are always on the horn. The Post even had to play a little phone tag.

“It was a hectic morning,” she told the Post that day. “When Hollywood calls, I have to drop everything.”

Schaaf has worked on a few productions you may recognize: “Mad Men,” “Stranger Things,” “Welcome to Chippendales,” “Licorice Pizza”—the list goes on. In fact, it’s so long, Schaaf can’t pull them all from the top of her head.

“I have my cheat sheet somewhere,” she says, prompting her



Courtesy of Kathleen Schaaf

A street view of Fourth Street in 1992.

employee Valerie Ramirez. “Valerie, what have we worked on lately? Oh yeah, ‘That ‘90s Show’, which is really funny because we worked on the original ‘That ‘70s Show’”

Of course, Schaaf couldn’t reveal which film she was working on when we spoke to her in early March.

“Because I know actresses’ sizes. I know plot twists, you know, that kind of stuff,” she said.

Today, there are around nine vintage shops on the street, with a handful of other shops that also offer some retro and vintage garb. Schaaf said it’s not out of the ordinary for her to run to one of those neighboring shops when Hollywood

calls and she doesn’t have what the designer needs.

“It took 20 years to build up the street with like-minded people. And now I think we’re kind of like a modern main street.”

Meow stood out like a sore thumb in its inaugural years. Then, in 1990, Kerstin Kansteiner opened Portfolio Coffeehouse. The space was beloved by locals for more than three decades and, in conjunction with Meow, it was responsible for attracting the subculture that still characterizes Retro Row.

“We had a nice back-and-forth traffic,” Kansteiner said.

In the ‘90s, cafe culture was different. For starters, there were no laptops.

Kansteiner didn’t offer early morning hours at Portfolio until much later in the cafe’s 32-year run. In the afternoon, people hung around. They played board games, they participated in chess competitions, they read books and they made friendships. After dark, the space would turn into an indie venue.

“We had a live band almost every other night,” she said.

In those days, Kansteiner and Schaaf remember most of the surrounding businesses being boarded. Many artists and even college professors lived in those buildings.

“Now, the unhoused ... they can’t afford a place,” Schaaf said. “But back then, there was lots of interesting street life. Eccentric people could afford to have an apartment ... it was a little dicey, but I always felt safe.”

Years before the neighborhood had a business improvement district, the two business owners would meet every Saturday morning with a trash barrel and brooms to clean up the block.

“We would just clean up. You know, kind of sweep other storefronts ... to give folks the

impression that it was cleaner and safer,” Kansteiner said.

Shortly after, a boutique called Siren would open and run for 18 years. Now, Songbird, a novelty gift and artist shop, operates in its place. But for several years it was just Meow, Portfolio and Siren.

Last year, Portfolio, a pillar of the neighborhood’s defining years, closed permanently after a lengthy dispute with her landlord and four-year legal battle. The iconic corner location remains empty, but Kansteiner has moved on, just up the street within her new venture, Alder & Sage.

Kansteiner said it’s sad to drive past her old cafe, which remains empty, but she’s grateful to be back working in Retro Row.

“It feels like home,” she said.

In 2002, Chris Reece, former drummer of Social Distortion, bought the old Googie-style Chippers Corner where many residents remember sipping 75 cent beers. And long before Chippers, it was Topsy Bobs, which opened in the ‘50s.

When the nautical Pike Restaurant and Bar opened, it was the first Retro Row style eatery. Now, the restaurant to retro shop ratio is much closer than it used to be. Lola’s, The Social List, Vine, Art du Vin, Wide Eyes Open Palms have all been Retro Row staples for years now. And twice as many bakeries and bars have opened up nearby, pushing Retro Row’s borders farther.

Before the Pike opened, Reece started publishing a quarterly shoppers map detailing the locations of all the Long Beach antique, vintage and thrift stores. When a cluster of these shops gradually appeared around Schaaf’s shop, he marked the area “Retro Row” on his map.

Once the Press-Telegram started printing that name, Reece said, it just stuck. ■



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Kathleen Schaaf walks across her vintage store Meow on Retro Row.



Courtesy of Kathleen Schaaf

Vintage store, Meow, in 1986 on Retro Row in Long Beach.



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Valerie Ramirez, employee, is seen in a mirror as she works the counter at the vintage store Meow.

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7 Long Beach vintage and antique shops to dig into

From fur coats to furniture, if you're on the hunt for vintage, you'll hit the lottery in Long Beach.

By Kat Schuster

Just as one might enjoy gawking at vases once owned by King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette in the 1700s at The Getty, others like to walk about town adorned with remnants of the past. Well, perhaps not of the 18th century, but a pair of '60s Chelsea boots will do.

Wearing vintage of a certain era or furnishing your home with such is just another way to observe history, much like taking up film photography or collecting vinyl records (the snobs will say

"original pressings, please"). Long Beach happens to be a well of places to rummage through racks, and sometimes piles, of vintage fashion. We even have a whole block dedicated to the sport. Chris Reece, former drummer of Social Distortion, has earmarked over a dozen of these shops in Long Beach. He has maintained his quarterly Reece's Antique & Retro Shoppers Map since 1997. When a cluster of vintage shops started appearing along a section of Fourth Street, he dubbed the area "Retro Row," where he opened Pike Restaurant and Bar in 2002. After the map's success, he expanded it to much of Southern California. Check it out here. His interest in antiques spans back three decades, he said, adding that he learned the art of antique dealing at a young age by watching his parents run antique shops in San Francisco.



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal
A couple makes their way along Fourth Street's Retro Row.

Below we've compiled a supplementary list. It doesn't exactly include shops that offer upcycled clothing or retro styles stitched last year—but shops whose owners are dedicated to collecting and identifying treasures from the last 100 years. Kathleen Schaaf is one of them.

She's been running Meow Vintage since 1986 and has witnessed a revolving trend of vintage fads over the years. In the 1970s, when she was shopping vintage as a teenager, it was a revival of 1920s style clothing (think Annie Hall). Now—millennials cover your ears—the kids are scouring her shop for relics of the '90s and early 2000s.

Schaaf says vintage has been a big part of Long Beach street fashion for decades. In the 1980s, "There were all sorts of music clubs here...so people would dress '70s, '60s or '50s—just whatever they were into and everybody hung out together—the mods would hang out with the rockabillys and so I stocked mostly

true vintage from all those eras." As for Schaaf, who has worn the gamut of eras, she's partial to a good pair of '50s jeans. But lately, she said she's still working on her fashion comeback, post pandemic. "I have been dressing like a sea hag for the last two years like I live on a boat," she laughs. "But give me 20 minutes and I'm deadly." So, without further meandering, here's a list of just seven fantastic Long Beach vintage shops in no particular order. Some are drawn from Reece's suggestions, others are our own.

Leslie's Antiques & Consignment Shop - 1345 E. Broadway
It should be hard to miss this little shop on Broadway, open since 1996, with its gold bordered red sign bearing the name Leslie's in old English scrawl—yet people do. It's not on Reece's list, but this place is a goldmine of mid-century furnishings, funky light fixtures, wall hangings, nostalgic oddities, patterned rugs and two sections of vintage clothing and accessories.

Continued on page 12



Kat Schuster / Business Journal
Far Outfit manager Isaac Sanchez peers up at the shop's beams.

Southwest announces nonstop flights from Long Beach to Portland, Boise

By Brandon Richardson

Southwest Airlines continues its recent onslaught of new routes out of Long Beach Airport with the announcement on March 9 of service to Portland, Oregon, and Boise, Idaho, beginning Oct. 7. The nonstop flights will depart Long Beach Saturdays and Sundays.

Since June of last year, as it continues to incur additional flight slots at the small municipal airport, Southwest has announced more than half a dozen new destinations, including nonstop to Nashville, New Orleans, Salt Lake City, Orlando and Kansas City. Last month, the air carrier announced service to Colorado Springs, El Paso and Albuquerque, which begin this summer.

"With today's announcement, our partner Southwest now offers a timesaving weekend option to fly nonstop between Long Beach

and the Pacific Northwest," said Mayor Rex Richardson. "These new weekend routes provide additional, valuable connectivity between both regions, with travelers from the Northwest looking for an easy gateway to Southern California." The Portland route is Southwest's first to the Pacific Northwest out of Long Beach. JetBlue previously provided the route before it exited Long Beach permanently in October 2020. Since arriving in Long Beach with four flight slots in 2016, Southwest has quickly grown to be the airport's leading carrier. It holds 45 of the airport's 58 daily flight slots—the maximum number of flights allowed each day per a strict city noise ordinance. The other flight slots are held by Delta Air Lines (7), Hawaiian Airlines (2) and UPS (1). Three flight slots recently relinquished by American Airlines, which is leaving the airport completely,



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal
A Southwest Airlines plane departs Long Beach Airport.

have yet to be reallocated, according to airport staff. Flights are allocated based on a waitlist, which currently includes, in order: Canadian airline Swoop, Utah-based startup Breeze Airways, Hawaiian Airlines and Southwest. Swoop, Breeze and Hawaiian have recently passed on slots, meaning Southwest is likely to receive one or more of the available slots, further solidifying its position as the airport's top carrier. Combined, Long Beach carriers offer nonstop service to 24

destinations, more than at any time in the airport's nearly 100-year history, according to the announcement. "We love seeing our route map fill up with more and more exciting destinations, and this new weekend nonstop link with the Pacific Northwest is a very welcome addition to the service Southwest offers daily in these markets," Airport Director Cynthia Guidry said in a statement. "Our convenient and easygoing airport now connects you to even more great places." ■

Grand Prix

Continued from page 5

entertainment." Apart from the headlining Indy 500 race, the weekend includes a sports car championship, a Super Drift Challenge, Robby Gordon's SPEED/UTV Stadium SUPER Trucks, the Historic Formula 1 Challenge and the Porsche Carrera Cup North America. Attendees can also enjoy off-track activities such as a Lifestyle Expo in the Convention Center, a Kings of Chaos concert and numerous food trucks, which will increase in variety this year—including more healthy options—based on feedback from previous guests, Michaelian said. "This is supposed to be a very family-friendly event," Michaelian said. "It lends itself to having families come and bring their youngsters and get them acclimated to what racing is all about in the Downtown streets of Long Beach." This year's race event also incorporates a theme: "Southern California's 200-MPH Beach Party," which will be reflected not only in advertising and social media, but also in the presentation of the track through its colors and other references to beach life, Michaelian said.

"What we're trying to do is to build on this thematically, to build on this whole concept that this really is a three-day entertainment vehicle featuring the idea of a beach party, and we are working very hard to see what we can do about solidifying the relationship between the event and our customers," Michaelian said. This year, attendees will also be able to use an improved website and an app that will alert them of upcoming events throughout the weekend, such as an autograph session or concert. Additionally, for the first year, Acura Grand Prix merchandise will be available throughout the year, not only during the event weekend. "This will be our 48th year of conducting this event, and the only way you have that kind of longevity is to make sure that you exceed people's expectations year after year after year," Michaelian said. "We're hoping that by the time we get done with the race on the evening of April the 16th, as people are leaving the facility, they give us a thumbs up and say, 'You know what? Great show, loved it. We'll be back next year,'" Michaelian added. "If we've been able to do that, in a safe and entertaining manner, then we'll have achieved our goal." Tickets range from \$38 for Friday general admission to \$175 for three-day admission with reserved seating on Saturday and Sunday. ■



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Vintage List

Continued from page 10

Yours truly was able to snag a brown suede 1970s trench coat for \$35—you won't find deals like this in Silverlake.

Meow Vintage - 2210 E. Fourth St.
Obviously, Schaaf's Meow was going to make the list. She specializes in "dead stock," untouched or unworn vintage clothing. In her shop, you can certainly find baubles, bangles and threads of a spectrum of styles from the '20s and up in pristine condition. Schaaf's shop was the first of its kind to open on what we now call Retro Row. She also regularly works with set designers in the film industry, helping to dress productions such as "Mad Men" and "Stranger Things." So, you'd be lucky to have her pick your britches.

Assistance League of Long Beach Thrift & Vintage Shop - 2100 E. Fourth St.
If you're willing to spend the time, this is the spot to find trinkets, housewares, clothes and shoes at a much lower price. I'm not sure if this counts, but I once bought a gorgeous 1980s amber crockpot there. She still works.

La Bomba - 2222 E. Fourth St.
Dee Hayes has been working at La Bomba on Retro Row for 22 years, so she knows a thing or two about what her customers are after. Recently, vintage sunglasses, cut-off shorts, Pendletons, cowboy boots, Carhartt pants, bell bottoms, mom jeans and vests have been hot commodities. The shop, which opened in 1996, has garments from the '60s up to the '90s available to try on. Hayes says the younger folk were pulling '20s sleeves on like yoga pants, so earlier eras are now reserved for the online store. Plus, if you ever feel like swimming through a pile of clothing like Scrooge McDuck (no, really), the shop hosts its pile sale on Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. You can find dresses, T-shirts, leather jackets and more for reduced prices. "It's pretty inexpensive but you have to do the work," Hayes said. I myself did the work and clinched a purple 1960s gown for \$12. It's one of my closet staples.

Long Beach Vintage Etc. - 737 Pine Ave.
Nestled in the heart of Downtown, this is an emporium you could really get lost in, so be sure to arrive with plenty of time on your hands. The 7000-square-foot shop is brimming with rhinestone jewelry, mid-century modern furnishings, clothing and kitsch, "for good



Neon lights up the walls of Meow as owner Kathleen Schaaf stands inside her vintage store on Retro Row.

measure," according to its website.

Far Outfit - 2020 E. Fourth St.
If you're scouring Retro Row for dresses of the long, loud and frilly sort, you won't have to look far (sorry). Far Outfit, boasts an assortment of kooky-sparkly-you-name-it garments fit to own the stage or better yet, to strut the sidewalk. Plus, the staff is always friendly and willing to give you feedback on whichever style you decide to brave that day.

Belmont Shore Discovery Shop - 5235 Second St.
This one is another one of those sleeper shops and what I mean by that is: It's routinely bustling but not necessarily with people hunting for vintage. If you're on the hunt for reasonably priced garments you can usually find some real treasures here, especially if you're looking for '90s garb. But you'll more easily find vintage housewares, including cloth napkins, lamps, furniture and knick-knacks here. ■

COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

Spanish-style estate with a solid rock history in Belmont Heights is for sale at \$4.45M

While combing through the real estate listings, I'm always on the lookout for houses of historical interest—the likeliest suspects are the old, large and magnificent homes in Los Cerritos and Bluff Park that were built for and lived in by some of the city's most notable citizens. And when I saw this beautiful Spanish-style estate at 238 Roycroft Ave. in Belmont Heights, I figured it likely had a fairly honorable and prestigious pedigree. It's a stately and beautiful property, a hacienda sprawling over two full Belmont Heights lots—just about a third of an acre. The house is largely obscured from view from the street. A blue door breaks the plane of the wall that surrounds the property. Its past is steeped in the legal profession. The original owner was Martin De Vries, a noted dahlia grower who was a longtime municipal court judge in Long Beach following a stint as a deputy district attorney in the city. John Paap, a prominent Long Beach attorney, followed as the home's owner in the 1960s. With his wife Madeleine and their two sons and a daughter, the family filled the five-bedroom, three-bath house. Paap was born in Australia, and in addition to being a high-power lawyer in Long Beach, he was a civic leader in numerous organizations and headed the Long Beach Recreation Commission for five years before his death at 62 in 1968. Then came Philip Madden and his family, and again, Madden was a big attorney and a deputy district attorney in Los Angeles County from 1963 through 1965, and he held the same position in Long Beach from 1965 to 1967. Things got a little looser in 2002, when the house was purchased by its current owners, Tim Swenson and his wife, Rosie. It was a surprise to me when I found out that local rock star Swenson was the owner of the 1929 house at 238 Roycroft Ave. I used to see him perform back in the 1990s at various venues in

Long Beach, including Bogart's, the Blue Cafe and even Que Sera with his bands Lunch Box, Vagabond Soul and Candida, and I had written about him often as a fan of his powerful vocals and strong lyrics. How does a guy go from being a rock musician who is amply talented—but not plugged into the once-lucrative music business that some recording artists used to enjoy—to this jewel in the Heights? It's an expensive home, listed at \$4.495 million. "Well, it wasn't that price when I bought it," Swenson, now 57, says. True. It was only \$1.6 million in 2002. "I worked hard and saved up enough to buy a Craftsman on Fifth Street in Belmont Heights, and I sold it for double what I paid," he said. His side gigs included working for his father at a circuit-board company, starting a skate shop and silk-screening T-shirts. Perhaps most importantly, he's been clean and sober for a couple of decades, emerging unscathed through an era when some of his bandmates and friends died or otherwise fell victim to heroin, pills and alcohol and falling into the cosplay of hard-partying rock stars. "I used to live on Broadway between Elm and Linden, and I would go on runs a lot from my place to Atlantic and back, and sometimes I'd run past the Roycroft house, and I'd wonder what's behind that blue gate," said Swenson. "And I always thought maybe I'd have that house some day, or maybe I won't." It came a lot closer to reality after his windfall from selling his Craftsman at a nice profit, and he and his wife set their sights on the Roycroft manor. "It was never on the market," said Swenson. "I just knocked on the door and asked the owner if he was interested in selling it, and he was."

So, what is behind the blue gate? You pass through into a courtyard that's landscaped as expertly as the foliage that covers the front of the property. There are brick patios with several sitting areas and a pool accompanied by a shaded and partially covered spa.

Inside, coved arches abound, as do high ceilings with exposed beams. Hardwood floors are found throughout. The formal living room and dining rooms have a fireplace, and the great family room has built-in shelving and another fireplace. There's one bedroom and full bath on the first floor, while the primary bedroom and three others are on the upper level. They're all spacious, with the primary having two walk-in closets and the bedrooms with one walk-in each. A fifth bedroom has a sitting area and a built-in office. All have views of the gardens and the grounds. The Spanish influence holds up throughout the 3,173-square-foot home that also includes a handsomely paneled office and a laundry room/storage area behind the house, which the listing agents, Christy Di Leo and Ellen Henry, say can be converted into an ADU. One of the home's most desirable features, once you get away from its architecture, is the privacy and seclusion it offers its residents, thanks chiefly to its foliage, which the Swensons have enjoyed for the 22 years they've lived in the house. "I appreciated the privacy of the home," said Swenson. "I've kind of become more reclusive." He and his wife have moved to San Juan Capistrano. "I never thought I'd leave Long Beach, but here I am," said Swenson, though he says he already misses the home on Roycroft. "It's kind of a quirky house, like most that were built in the 1920s," he said. "It's a special house. There're regular houses and then there are places that have a certain amount of soul. That house has a lot of soul." ■



This Spanish-style home in Belmont Heights is for sale at \$4.45 million



The wood-paneled library and marble fireplace in the Roycroft home.



A covered walkway leads to the home's entry.



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City, labor leaders celebrate completion of \$55M Pier G wharf expansion, extended PLA

By Brandon Richardson

The International Transportation Service terminal on Pier G can now move hundreds of thousands more shipping containers each year following the completion of a wharf expansion.

The \$55 million project added 240 feet of wharf that will allow for the terminal to accept bigger ships carrying up to 16,000 20-foot-equivalent units—the standard measure of a shipping container. According to ITS CEO Kim Holtermann, the expansion will allow ITS to move upward of 300,000 more TEUs every year.

“It’s actually only a 1% increase of our yard,” Holtermann said during a press conference on March 9. “But it’s a huge boost for the fluidity, for the volume. It’s fantastic.”

ITS recently purchased five container cranes, Holtermann said, adding that the terminal is dedicated to remaining powered by humans while others shift more operations to automated equipment.

The project included the demolition of the existing wharf, dredging and driving 185 100-foot-long piles, according to Tasha Higgins, director of program management for the port. Two acres of backlands were added to increase

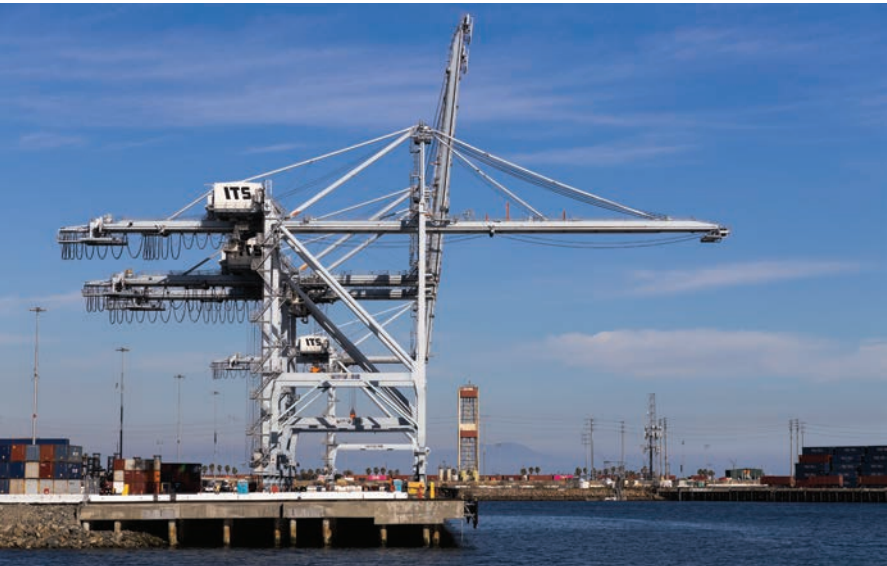
the terminal’s storage capacity.

The terminal’s infrastructure also had to be updated to accommodate the larger cranes needed to service bigger ships, Higgins said, as well as ship-to-shore power, drainage systems, lighting, fencing, signage and stripping.

The project was constructed by a joint venture between Brea-based Griffith Company and San Rafael-based Dutra Group. While the companies did not move heaven to complete the expansion, they did move earth, including 175,000 cubic tons of quarry rock, 7,500 cubic yards of soil, 23,000 tons of aggregate, 12,000 tons of armor rock, 5,600 tons of crushed miscellaneous base and 4,000 tons of asphalt, according to Higgins.

“ITS has been a port tenant for more than 50 years and we’re excited to be celebrating the completion of ... the terminal improvement project,” Long Beach Harbor Commission President Sharon Weissman said.

In addition to the expansion project, city, port and labor leaders celebrated a 10-year project labor agreement between the port and the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council, which represents over 140,000 members across 48 affiliate organizations. The parties previously had a five-



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Construction on the wharf expansion at the ITS terminal at the Port of Long Beach’s Pier G is mostly complete. The \$55 million project will increase the terminal’s capacity by 300,000 containers per year, officials said.

year agreement with a two-year extension, Weissman said.

The agreement, valued at \$5 million or more, was approved by the Harbor Commission in January. On March 8, Cordero, Weissman, Mayor Rex Richardson and trades council Executive Secretary Chris Hannan signed the agreement that ensures all workers—unionized or not—receive a prevailing wage.

The PLA also requires 40% of work to be performed by local

residents and ensures major infrastructure projects at the port won’t face stoppages, strikes or lockouts, according to port officials.

“I want to thank [the port] for entrusting in the Building Trades for the next 10 years,” Hannan said, “and the sweat equity of all our members to continue to deliver the infrastructure that not only this port needs, but this country needs to continue to be competitive and continue to be a leader.” ■

Suspects hit 2 more business in commercial burglary spree

By Alicia Robinson

Two more Long Beach businesses were burglarized between March 5 and 7, following a recent string of crimes that have targeted mostly small businesses such as restaurants and shops.

Smartphones, tablets and other items were stolen from Soggy Dog, a dog grooming business near East Seventh Street and Cherry Avenue, on the evening of March 5, and from Holé Molé’s Obispo Avenue restaurant between closing the next day and opening the next morning, people at the businesses said.

“The worst part of all is trying to function afterwards and pretend everything is normal,” Soggy Dog owner Tanyss Buchanan said March 7.

Long Beach police recently stepped up patrols and formed a special task force to investigate 23 commercial burglaries that took place in January and February, which they believe were committed by three organized groups, according to a news release the department issued



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Handyman Carlos Lopez boards up a glass door at Holé Molé on Obispo Avenue at Fourth Street as a customer eats after an overnight burglary.

March 3.

While Long Beach police have paid special attention to those 23 commercial burglaries because of how they’re linked, they are not the only commercial burglaries that have happened in the city

this year. The Long Beach Police Department, though, has not been able to provide a specific tally for overall commercial burglaries reported in 2023.

The task force was formed Feb. 6, police spokesman Brandon Fahey

said in an email. A list of the linked burglaries provided by the LBPD shows that 11 of the 23 occurred after that date. As of March 3, the last crime in the series police believe are connected was Feb. 15.

On March 7, a police spokesperson was unable to say whether the two most recent crimes have ties to the 23 other burglaries.

The news release also noted that in the past month, police have arrested seven people suspected of involvement in three burglaries and a vandalism incident; those cases were not believed to be connected to the series of 23 related crimes.

“We believe our officers and burglary task force have been and are continuing to be successful in deterring additional burglaries,” Fahey said in the email, adding, “our officers have been working diligently to identify and apprehend suspects” including the seven noted earlier and three more arrested March 7.

On March 7, the two latest businesses targeted by burglars were trying to carry on as usual.

Continued on page 22

Youth Chorus fills gap in music education

The Long Beach Youth Chorus is kicking off its first tour this year with a trip to San Diego in May, but a long-term goal for the organization is to eventually tour internationally.

By Tess Kazenoff

As the minister of music at Grace First Presbyterian Church, Stan DeWitt always thought about bringing a music program to the greater community.

With several children’s choirs sprinkled throughout Los Angeles and Orange counties, Long Beach was lacking a program of its own, despite its population size, DeWitt said.

“We thought, ‘This is perfect,’” DeWitt said. “This would be something for us to do that will create something that the city could use and wants.”

In 2017, the Long Beach Youth Chorus officially began.

“In the beginning, as a small organization, it was just kind of hard to get the word out and kind of hard to get traction in terms of word-of-mouth and getting kids to come in,” DeWitt said.

However, the organization continued to grow steadily up until the pandemic, reaching about 30 children in 2019.

In the summer of 2020, though, the organization’s first artistic director left to move out of state, and by the end of the 2021 season, the youth chorus had dwindled down to 10.

“I think that being small actually probably helped us weather the pandemic because it’s not like we lost a ton of money on tuition because we didn’t have that much coming in anyway,” DeWitt said. “I think the thing that saved us through those challenges was the support of the Long Beach arts community and Long Beach foundations.”

The organization primarily recruits youth through word-of-mouth, and through outreach in Long Beach schools, an approach that stalled during the pandemic.

“Right now, the main thing for us is just get the word out so that people know what we’re doing,” DeWitt said. “And then it kind of speaks for itself, I think, once they see what’s going on.”

But after hiring new artistic director Stevie Hirner, who brings an “energy and an excitement and a real kind of focused dedication to the program,” the Long Beach Youth Chorus is “now starting to take off



Courtesy of Long Beach Youth Chorus

Long Beach Youth Chorus participants perform during a concert in May 2022.

again,” DeWitt said.

For the first time in the organization’s history, the Long Beach Youth Chorus has grown to over 40 singers, and last season it added on a second program specifically for younger musicians in grades two through five.

The new program currently has about 20 youth involved, in addition to the sixth-through-12th grade program, which has another 22 students.

Adding an additional group for younger students, who are just starting to develop the ability to sing and understand musician concepts, was particularly important for DeWitt, he said.

While nearly all of the high schools in the Long Beach Unified School District have choirs (apart from magnet schools), DeWitt estimated that about seven middle schools do not have choirs. At the elementary school level, there are no choirs—while music teachers visit schools, it is fairly limited, DeWitt said.

“There’s much more of a need at that level than there is at the older level,” he said.

According to DeWitt, arts in schools typically take a backseat compared to athletics and STEM offerings, particularly since Proposition 13, which passed in 1978 and drastically shifted how California public schools are funded, he said.

During the youth program, students not only sing, but begin to explore reading music, along with fundamentals of music and rhythm, DeWitt said.

“That then helps them when they go to the older chorus, because they’re prepared to really do some more advanced work quicker,” DeWitt said.

DeWitt has his sights set on eventually growing to four or five

choirs, with some being audition-only—neither chorus currently requires an audition, and audition-free programs will always remain, he said. “We want to eliminate barriers for

any child to sing with us,” DeWitt said.

Music has the potential to improve the lives of both children and adults—and in some cases, even save lives, DeWitt said.

Continued on page 22

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LBCC superintendent-president says college has to transform post-COVID

By Jason Ruiz

After the COVID-19 emergency officially ended, Long Beach Community College District Superintendent-President Mike Muñoz was preparing to give his first post-pandemic state of the college address, which, on March 13, highlighted an institution that may have been permanently transformed over the last three years.

Like almost every other element of everyday life, COVID-19 changed the way the college had to operate to meet students' needs.

Enrollment, which the college avoided some of the steeper drop-offs suffered by other colleges in the state, pivoted almost exclusively to online classes. That required the college to hire a team of success coaches to help keep students on track.

It also distributed tens of millions in emergency funds and forgave student debt to remove financial barriers to enrollment after the

pandemic heightened existing socioeconomic issues in the city.

The college began having students answer short surveys when they registered for school to help determine who was housing insecure, who needed help accessing food, which students had children and which ones were foster youth or were formerly incarcerated.

Muñoz was thrust into his leadership position in the middle of it all when he was appointed to the superintendent-president position in March 2021. He wanted to move quickly to help the college's roughly 34,000 students.

"Prior to the pandemic, there was this false narrative that change has to be incremental and progress has to be kind of tempered and slow and you can't move an organization as large as a community college too quickly," Muñoz said.

"I think the pandemic taught us we need to respond quickly to the needs of our students."



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Long Beach City College Superintendent-President Mike Muñoz stands at the school's Pacific Coast Campus.

Expanding services

Those needs the college wants to provide now include housing.

It's started to wade into conversations that could lead to it building affordable housing for its students. Muñoz said LBCC applied for a \$90 million grant in January that could allow it to build a 400-unit student housing project near Veterans Stadium. The status of that application could be announced in the summer.

A \$285 million bond measure that

could have rebuilt the stadium and built additional student housing in its parking lot before the Board of Trustees opted not to put it on last year's ballot is not necessarily dead, Muñoz said.

The college is also in "exploratory" talks to build a satellite campus in North Long Beach near the Michelle Obama Neighborhood library, something that could also include housing. The college could also look into public-private partnerships to build housing.

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Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Alan Pullman, right, founder of Studio One Eleven introduces the company's new resident artist Mario Ybarra Jr.

Downtown architecture firm gets creative to fill vacant office space

By Alicia Robinson

After the coronavirus pandemic changed the nature of office work, likely forever, some business owners rushed to move out of spaces that were now too big for a staff that was partly or largely remote.

Not Studio One Eleven's Alan Pullman. The founder of the full-service architecture and design firm instead got together with colleagues to figure out how they could use the extra space in the cavernous former department store that is their home in Downtown Long Beach.

The result of their brainstorm was Long Beach Urban Lab, a collaborative and social space that can host nonprofits and small businesses, discussions and lectures and more.

The 25,000-square-foot building's high ceilings and open floor plan feel spacious, and it also holds several smaller conference rooms, offices and collaborative spaces.

"We hate to see it vacant—we knew we could make something out of it," Pullman said.

The office can accommodate about 125 people, but while some come in daily (including Pullman), others work Downtown two or three days a week, and others only show up when necessary, so even on the busiest days, the building is only about 60% to 70% full, Pullman said.

Studio One Eleven already shares its offices with RDC, another planning and design firm, and it's in the process of shifting its workers around to make room for Urban Lab ventures. Coming

in April are a pop-up retail shop by Muse Apothecary and artist-in-residence Mario Ybarra Jr.

Ybarra, who creates everything from drawings to large installations, said he hopes to be a sounding board, someone architects and designers can come to when they're working out a problem, but he also wants to stay open to learning from them.

The idea of the residency came at exactly the right time for Ybarra—his Wilmington studio was flooded twice in six months by broken water mains. He'd recently been asked to be part of a future exhibition at the Long Beach Museum of Art, so it seemed like all signs were pointing to the city, Ybarra said.

His approach to the residency—

which will include "office hours," artist talks and Ybarra just contemplating, planning and executing art projects—is based on "how can I be a muse, that kind of energy, bring in ideas and really be a listener too," he said.

Pullman said bringing in a working artist is of a piece with his larger effort to reimagine Studio One Eleven's office space and make it an engaging, active place people want to be in.

"What artists bring is a different way of looking at the physical world and the metaphysical world," he said.

"We're really always trying to think differently about how we can create an environment that is a better place for people and speaks to people and connects with people." ■



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Mario Ybarra Jr., right, and Alan Pullman, founder of Studio One Eleven, talk while in the architecture firm's office in Downtown. Ybarra will be the new artist-in-residence of the studio.

City approves \$50M loan application for affordable housing project

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach is applying for a \$50 million loan from the state that could help fund an affordable housing project near St. Mary Medical Center along with a variety of street and pedestrian improvements near Downtown.

The City Council voted to approve the application when they convened on March 7. The funding would go toward a project by AMCAL Multi-Housing Inc. that would build 100 units of affordable housing at the site of the First Lutheran School at the corner of 10th Street and Linden Avenue.

AMCAL is looking to develop a \$71.2 million project that would include a variety of one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units, all of which would be reserved for low-income households once the project opens. AMCAL also developed the 102-unit Las Ventanas affordable housing project at Pacific Coast Highway and Long Beach Boulevard.

The largest share of the project would be dedicated to one-bedroom units (38), with 30 two-bedroom units and 31 three-bedroom units making up the mix of the four-story building proposed to replace the Lutheran school, which would be demolished if the project moves forward.

Most of the units would be set aside for low-income households, which federal guidelines define as \$95,300 for a family of four in Los Angeles County. Eleven units each will be distributed to very low-income (\$59,550 for a family of four) and extremely low-income households (\$35,750 for a family of four). One unit will be reserved for an on-site manager.

While the city is applying for the funds, it won't be liable for paying them back if the project is not completed. AMCAL has agreed to indemnify the city.

Development Services Director Christopher Koontz said that he was confident if the application is successful that the project would move forward, calling it an important development that would improve the lives of the people who get to live in it.

"We don't have a lot of projects with large family units, and these are really critical units to stabilizing people's lives and being able to concentrate on raising their families and raising their kids, and their health, instead of worrying how they're going to pay their rent," Koontz said.

Long Beach is requesting funding

Continued on page 21



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VA hospital opens ‘one-stop shop’ resource center

By Tess Kazenoff

Veterans in Long Beach can now access a “one-stop shop” for services, as the VA Long Beach Healthcare System celebrated the grand opening of its Veteran Resource Center in the Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center on March 7.

Following a roughly eight-month renovation process, the resource center will now offer numerous services, including a patient advocate office, beneficiary travel services, social work services, veterans benefit administration, connection to veteran service organizations, assistance with release of information and medical records, a virtual health resource center and whole health services.

“The one-stop shop, I mean, they’ve just nailed it,” veteran Steven Grove told the Business Journal.

While he said he has received “really good care” at the Long Beach center, “before, you had to run all over the place, and you never knew for sure where anyone was going to be,” Grove said.

Veteran Teddy Corral has received services at the Long Beach center for about 15 years, and considers the Long Beach facility to be one of the best in Southern California, he said.



The VA Long Beach Healthcare System celebrates the grand opening of its new resource center, a “one-stop-shop” that will offer numerous services to veterans.

“I’ve taken so many veterans, maybe 600 veterans to all the facilities, and this one, they address exactly what their needs are,” Corral told the Business Journal.

“I have all my doctors here, and all

my appointments are here,” Corral added. “And I make it a high point of telling the veterans to come here.”

The VA Long Beach Healthcare System will be one of the few VAs with an on-site resource center.

“We’ve been wanting to do this for about five or six years, and we finally have the space to do this,” said chief experience officer Dustin Thompson during the event.

In addition to the medical center, the health care system includes community-based outpatient clinics in Anaheim, Laguna Hills, Santa Ana, Santa Fe Springs and Villages at Cabrillo in Long Beach.

“We do things that other health care systems simply don’t do, because our veterans come first,” Thompson added. “It’s why we exist. It’s why we’re here.”

Apart from the range of services offered, the resource center is conveniently located near a parking lot, a cafeteria and retail store, noted VA Long Beach Healthcare System director Walt Dannenberg

during the event.

Along with the new resource center, construction for a brand new community living center with 120 beds is also in progress, according to Dannenberg.

“That’s going to be absolutely fantastic, continuing to bring state-of-the-art facilities to our veterans who deserve absolutely nothing but the best health care in the country,” he said.

Construction is also underway for two new mental health facilities, including one outpatient and one inpatient building, which will potentially begin accepting patients around the beginning of “this next calendar year,” Dannenberg said.

“The VA Long Beach Healthcare System is on a special journey, and that journey is to become the No. 1 health care system in the country,” Dannenberg said.

The Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center is located at 5901 E. Seventh St. The Veteran Resource Center is located in building 165. ■



A veteran looks at the event program during the grand opening of a new resource center at the Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center.

\$50M Loan

Continued from page 19

from the state’s Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities program, which helps finance projects that help lower greenhouse gas emissions and benefit disadvantaged communities.

The loan would be broken up into two pools if the city is awarded the funds. About \$35 million would go to AMCAL for the construction of the project, while \$15 million would go to the city in the form of a grant for improvements to sidewalks, curb improvements to meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards and improve bus stops along Atlantic Avenue.

The funds could also help the city complete a long-planned bike route along Pacific Avenue that would run from Ocean Boulevard to Pacific Coast Highway, in addition to helping Long Beach Transit buy three new fully electric buses.

Long Beach has already awarded a \$5 million loan to AMCAL and waived over \$550,000 in development fees to help the project get built. AMCAL would still have to find about \$31 million in funding, but the city said that construction could begin as soon as December 2024 if the loan is approved. ■

LBCC

Continued from page 18

Muñoz said he doesn’t think it’s “mission creep” for a community college to provide the same kind of supports that are common at four-year universities, like child care services and housing.

“I could tell you that was not previously a priority for previous administrations,” Muñoz said. “We understand from the data that affordable housing is probably one of the biggest barriers to keeping students enrolled.”

Muñoz benefitted from student housing when he moved into a unit at the University of California Irvine at the age of 23 with his young daughter. She got to attend the child development center for free and he got to focus on his education, something that is a barrier for a lot of student-parents.

With online enrollment now at about 50%, Muñoz saw empty classrooms and a need that he experienced personally. The college partnered with the Boys & Girls Club, which played a large part in his daughter’s life, to offer free after school programming for students’ children.

Prioritizing inclusivity

There are more subtle changes

that the college has made since the pandemic.

It’s also doing away with the dual-color graduations where certificate earners were required to wear red and transfer students could wear black gowns.

“To create that spotlight on the students to wear red when everyone else is wearing black, so they know they’re different. It’s like, ‘Why?’” Muñoz said of the decision to end the practice, saying it wasn’t inclusive.

Muñoz said he’s also taken a personal pivot from when he focused on students transferring to a four-year university to being a champion for the college’s trades programs and other efforts to draw in people who didn’t view themselves as college students.

One of the student speakers Monday is part of the college’s new Phoenix Scholars program, a \$1 million partnership between LBCC and USC to promote higher education for young people who have been impacted by gangs.

Promoting student success

There are some challenges. Like the city, emergency COVID-19 funds are going to run out, and the college will have to prioritize which programs it implemented with those funds will stick around and figure out how to pay for them.

While LBCC’s “persistence” rate (71%) is up 10% from last

year, meaning more students who enrolled in the fall returned for the spring semester, a figure the college hasn’t seen since 2015, “course success” is down.

That metric measures how many students pass a course with a “C” or higher and Muñoz said the college is fighting the “online paradox” where more and more students are registered for online classes but online students tend to have lower course success.

The college will have to be willing to invest in things like the success coaches it hired during the pandemic and support for teachers who need help organizing online courses. Muñoz said he tries to illuminate how those investments translate into more funding for the college as student retention and achievement goes up.

When he gives the state of the college address Monday, Muñoz said he understands how iconic the college is in the city, and he wants the community to know that it’s working hard to keep it that way.

“What I want to be able to communicate is that we take that impact seriously, and we recognize it, and we’re working tirelessly as an institution to help our students and meet them where they’re at in this moment, coming out of the pandemic, and lifting them up,” Muñoz said. “We know that education is the great equalizer in our society.” ■

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

Commercial real estate has brought together a group of Long Beach locals & lifelong friends. 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 a partner to bring a new restaurant concept to Naples.

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Scrap Metal	WD-22-029	03/31/2023
HHAP Rapid Re-Housing and Homeless Prevention	HE-23-229	04/04/2023
ReEntry Achievement Program	HE-23-213	04/04/2023
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Strategic Planning Consulting Firm	TI-23-194	04/11/2023
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Youth Chorus

Continued from page 17

In high school, as DeWitt fell more deeply into music, it helped him avoid many problems that some of his peers faced, he said.

While singing in the Cal State Long Beach university choir as a student, DeWitt had the opportunity to travel to New Zealand and Australia for seven and a half weeks.

“It deepened my friendships with people in the choir. It gave me experiences that I never would have had otherwise,” DeWitt said. “That tour changed my life. I just want to give kids maybe not seven and a half weeks, but I want to give them those opportunities.”

In October, 10 of the nonprofit’s older singers had the opportunity to sing with the USC Chamber Chorus.

“When the USC Chamber Singers started singing, they were standing behind our kids ... our kids’ eyes just widened to the size of saucers,” DeWitt said. “They were just blown away, they’d never experienced anything like that. So those are the moments that for me keep me going through this because it’s just—we know we’re doing it for kids. And to actually see that reaction in them is what makes it all worthwhile.”



Courtesy of the Long Beach Youth Chorus

The Long Beach Youth Chorus recently expanded to include a young musicians program for students ages 11 and younger.

The Long Beach Youth Chorus is kicking off its first tour this year with a trip to San Diego in May, but a long-term goal for the organization is to eventually tour internationally.

“It gives choral singers a kind of sense of personal autonomy

and confidence. It expands their worlds a little bit and also creates really meaningful opportunities for even deeper friendships and relationships within the chorus,” DeWitt said. “When you sing in the choir, you have this sense of being

part of something that’s bigger than yourself and you’re an integral part of it, but to then take that on the road ... it just really deepens that experience for singers.”

Registration for the next Long Beach Youth Chorus begins in May. ■

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SCAN ME

Commercial Burglary

Continued from page 16

Holé Molé workers that morning encountered shattered glass from the front door and discovered three tablets and a phone had been taken, employee Rene Pozos said.

“It’s crazy,” Pozos said, adding that another Holé Molé location was broken into last month.

For Buchanan, it was the first burglary at her Seventh Street location — something she relocated from the East Village to get away from.

The thieves appeared to have picked the lock on the front door, then used a filing cabinet to haul away the phones and tablet she uses to talk to customers and book appointments, plus a cash register with small change in it and power tools.

A case of grooming clippers and blades — the tools of Buchanan’s trade — was missing too. “I cried when I saw that,” she said, but added that police found it dumped around the corner and returned it to her after taking photos and dusting for fingerprints.

She moved her shop in 2018 after repeated break-ins, she said, thinking the high traffic on Seventh Street would help ward off crime.

Buchanan estimated her losses around \$1,200 and said Long Beach police officers who responded were

attentive, thorough and polite. But she’s not sure how much the department can do to prevent more burglaries, which she thinks may be the result of drug addiction driving people to desperation.

“I do want small business owners like me to understand, you’re not safe,” she said.

“If it can happen to me, it can happen to you. Just be prepared.”

Staff writers Brandon Richardson and Fernando Haro Garcia contributed to this story. ■



Courtesy of Rene Pozos

Glass litters the floor of Holé Molé at Obispo Avenue and Fourth Street after an overnight break-in.



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