

LONG BEACH
BUSINESS JOURNAL

An edition of the Long Beach Post



Grand Opening of St. Mary 1923.

Courtesy of St. Mary

St. Mary celebrates 100 years

By Tess Kazenoff

Long Beach was one of the fastest growing communities in the country when St. Mary Medical Center first opened its doors 100 years ago.

It was 1923, and in St. Mary's place was not a clinical hospital, but instead a "medical spa" that was constructed around 1904. The owner at the time, Dr. Truman Boyd, sold the building to the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word for \$160,000.

The 70-bed facility officially opened its doors on August 26, 1923.

"St. Mary will make Long Beach a better place for all," said the leader, Mother Placidus, at the time, according to Michael Neils, president and CPO of the St. Mary Medical Center Foundation.

That has been the lasting legacy of the hospital ever since, Neils said.

"It's our ongoing commitment," Neils said. "We will provide services for you, regardless of your ability to pay or not. If you are in need, we're here for you. And we really do make Long Beach a better place."

A decade after the hospital opened, a 6.4-magnitude earthquake shook Long Beach, destroying St. Mary in its entirety—including the hospital, convent and chapel. Over 70 people were in the hospital that day, but nobody was injured.

With the help of William Reid, the chairman of Hancock Oil, St. Mary was rebuilt, reopening to the public in 1937.

Decades of growth
Over the following decades, St.

Mary continued to expand.

After World War II, with the help of hotel mogul Conrad Hilton, St. Mary more than doubled its capacity, from 100 beds to 253 beds.

Then in 1970, officials broke ground on the construction of a \$10 million, 10-story project, which was supported with a \$4.3 million gift from Modestus and Evalyn Bauer, an expansion which included private patient rooms, a larger emergency department, a new intensive care unit and heart care unit, and maternal child health services.

In its long history, St. Mary has celebrated numerous firsts, Neils said.

Last month, "we had an event for some people from the Rotary Club of Long Beach, and one of the men there was visiting, had the first open heart surgery in Long Beach in 1955 as a kid," Neils said.

Today, St. Mary employs more than 1,500 people and has an operating budget of over \$400 million a year. St. Mary is part of the CommonSpirit Health hospital system, which includes 142 hospitals across the country.

Over time, the focus has shifted more toward the needs of the immediate ZIP code, although the hospital cares for the entire city, Neils said.

In 2022 alone, St. Mary provided in-house services to over 58,000 people, accounting for nearly 13% of

City will not transfer Queen Mary to the port

By Brandon Richardson

Two years ago, the company tasked with running the Queen Mary collapsed, leaving Long Beach, which owns the ship, facing a monumental question: What to do with the historic vessel, which needed hundreds of millions of dollars worth of repairs?

One option the City Council voted to explore at the time was to transfer the ship to the control of Port of Long Beach. But officials announced on April 25 that the proposed transfer is off the table—at least for now.

After over half a century of failed operators, the city will remain in control of the landmark.

"In the end," a City Council staff report reads, "the city's experience with hotel, restaurant, parking, and passenger terminal leases and expertise related to special events and filming activity pointed to the city as the best steward for the Queen Mary and Pier H for the foreseeable future."

The news came after an April 24 press conference in which city and port officials announced a proposed partnership to infuse \$12 million

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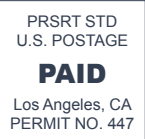
Tentative partial labor agreement reached for West Coast ports

By Brandon Richardson

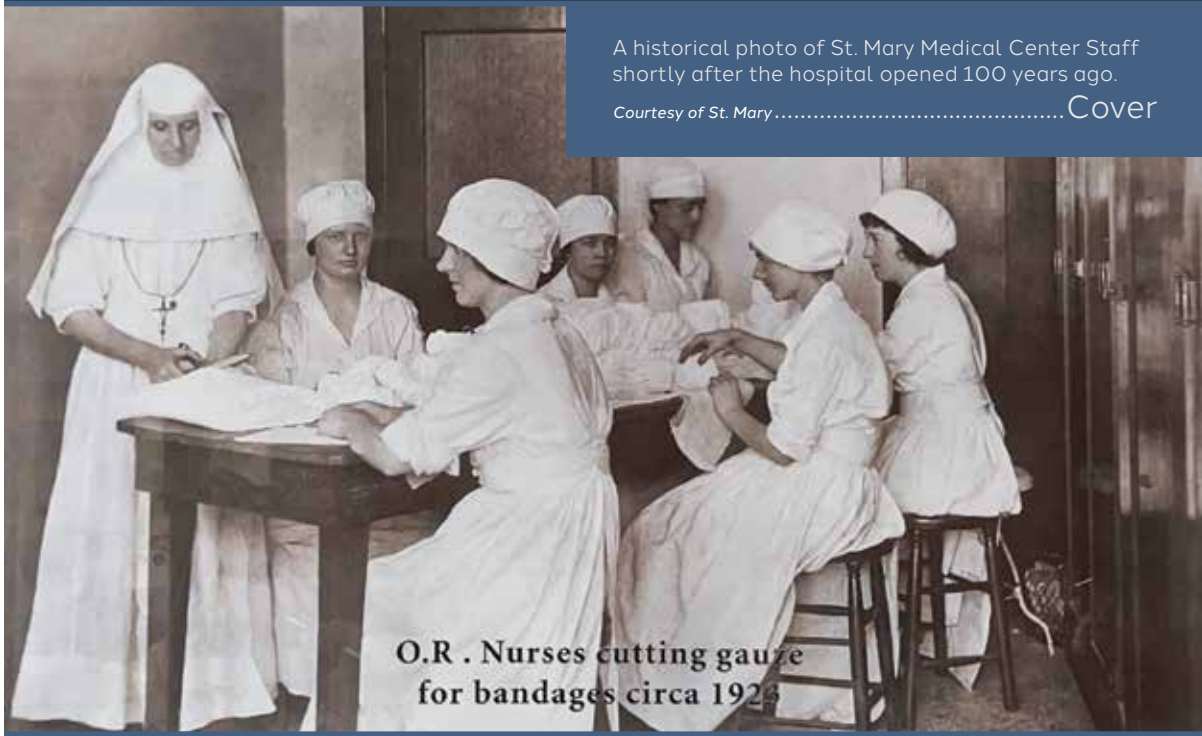
The International Longshore and Warehouse Union announced April 20 that a tentative agreement had been reached with the Pacific Maritime Association on some key issues, but negotiations are ongoing.

The ILWU represents more than 22,000 longshore workers at 29 West Coast ports, including the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach—two of the busiest ports in the nation. The ILWU has been negotiating with PMA, a group representing shippers and terminal

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A historical photo of St. Mary Medical Center Staff shortly after the hospital opened 100 years ago.
Courtesy of St. Mary Cover

O.R. Nurses cutting gauze for bandages circa 1923

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Proposed land swap between port, city would provide \$12M for Queen Mary over 3 years

By Alicia Robinson
& Brandon Richardson

The city will be able to pump at least \$12 million into fixing the historic Queen Mary over the next several years, under a proposed land swap with the Port of Long Beach, officials announced on April 24—but the ship will need a far larger investment to stay afloat in the years to come.

The deal would transfer control of nearly 14 acres of city land to the port, which would lease out the property to third parties and split any net revenue with the city equally. The land in question is a collection of smaller parcels (the largest is 6 acres) scattered around the west side of the port, most of which contain inactive oil operations.

“This partnership will provide investment for the Queen Mary while in turn strengthening two Long Beach industry sectors: tourism and hospitality, transportation and logistics,” Mayor Rex Richardson said.

It’s not a long-term solution. The \$12 million the port will give the city as part of the deal is billed as a loan that will carry 5% interest, to be repaid from the city’s share of lease revenue, and the ship needs an unknown—but undoubtedly large and costly—amount of maintenance.

Richardson said the \$12 million “will be used to fund the Queen Mary’s many reopening amenities



Mayor Rex Richardson speaks at a press conference in front of the Queen Mary.

Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

and activities, ongoing restoration projects and infrastructure needed at the site. This is going to help expedite the Queen Mary’s return to profitability.”

Richardson and City Manager Tom Modica declined to provide details on what specific projects the money would be used for, though Modica noted that investing in

future development of the area could be on the table.

“So you’re also standing on about 25 acres of open land, 43 when you include the Carnival (cruise ship terminal),” Modica said. “This is a huge development opportunity to do something real special over here. So part of it is starting to invest in that process.”

The history of what’s been done to fix the ocean liner, which first sailed in 1936, is a bit spotty.

After years of creeping neglect by a string of operators, Long Beach in 2017 issued \$23 million in bonds so then-leaseholder Urban Commons could complete emergency repairs to address structural and safety issues. But a few years later, the operator

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Three COSCO Shipping vessels are at berth at Long Beach Container Terminal at the Port of Long Beach.

Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Long Beach cargo volumes drop 30% within a year

By Brandon Richardson

Cargo volumes at the Port of Long Beach decreased by almost one-third in March compared to the same month last year, according to data released April 19.

Dockworkers and terminal operators moved 603,878 20-foot-equivalent units (the standard measure of shipping containers) last month, down 30% from March 2022—the busiest March on record for the 112-year-old port. 574,452 TEUs moved, down over 33% from the same month last year. Still higher YTD than LB or LA, with 2,043,138 TEUs moved. Imports decreased 34.7% to 279,148 TEUs,

while exports increased 16.9% to 133,512 TEUs.

The number of empty containers moved through the port declined 40.5% to 191,218 TEUs.

“Warehouses remain full and fewer cargo containers are crossing the docks because consumer spending remains slow,” Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement. While part of the blame falls on the overall economy, with inflation further shifting consumer spending from goods to services, port officials acknowledged that another glaring problem the facility faces is the continued shift of shippers away from the West Coast to East and Gulf coast ports. Last year, the Port

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El Dorado Frontier could close permanently due to ongoing safety concerns, owner says

“It’s really important for people to understand that this isn’t about money,” said Patrick Wolovich, owner of El Dorado Frontier. “If we have no support and no safety, then what’s the point?”

By Fernando Haro Garcia

El Dorado Frontier may soon be closing permanently as the owner says the city has failed to address ongoing concerns about public safety at El Dorado Park.

“It’s really important for people to understand that this isn’t about money,” said Patrick Wolovich, owner of El Dorado Frontier. “If we have no support and no safety, then what’s the point?”

The potential closure was first reported by the Press-Telegram.

Ever since he was a kid, Wolovich dreamed of creating his own theme park. In 2018, that dream became a reality when he expanded on what was previously known as the Caboose Corners and created a small Western-style theme park for families now known as El Dorado Frontier.

But after nearly five years, Wolovich says he is thinking of calling it quits, prompted by what he says is a lack of concern from city officials to invest in the public safety of park-goers and business owners alike at El Dorado Park.

“It’s devastating,” Wolovich said



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

El Dorado Frontier, a Western-style theme park in East Long Beach, may permanently close due to safety concerns

about the possibility of closing the theme park. “We don’t want to leave, but I don’t have a choice. I can’t keep doing this dance with (city officials).”

The city’s Parks, Recreation and Marine Department, for its part, is working on improving conditions at the city’s 166 parks, according to officials, starting with the addition of more resources through a new Park Safety Ambassador program aimed at keeping park amenities clean.

“We’re hopeful that it will have a good impact and that people will feel safer going into a park that’s clean and maintained,” said department spokesperson Jane Grobaty.

Since starting construction on the park nearly five years ago, Wolovich says that El Dorado Frontier has been plagued by a number of break-ins resulting in

tens of thousands of dollars in items stolen and property damage.

Over the years, the situation has only worsened, according to Wolovich, who says city officials have continued to ignore concerns and suggestions to invest in the park ranger program as a way to improve safety for park-goers.

To Wolovich’s disappointment, Long Beach officials have instead proposed to eliminate the “park ranger” classification altogether, which would involve moving hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Long Beach Police Department budget to the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department for the Park Safety Ambassador Program.

The new program, which is expected to roll out by early May, will send workers to clean and maintain bathrooms several times a day and lock them at night.

Parks workers already clean and open up restrooms in the mornings and check them again later in the day. However, the additional staffing will allow the city’s park maintenance team to tend to park bathrooms—which are sometimes vandalized or used for illicit activities—multiple times a day to make sure they are being used for only what’s intended, according to the city.

“I’m not hopeful it will make a difference—I’m confident it will make a difference,” Hurley Owens, bureau manager for park maintenance operations, told the Post earlier this month about the ambassador program.

In addition to helping maintain park bathrooms, ambassadors will

also get safety training from the Long Beach Police Department and will be able to call on officers if they need help.

But Wolovich, who is petitioning to save the park ranger program, says city officials are only making a bad situation worse by putting ambassadors, who are unarmed, in harm’s way.

“Somebody is going to get hurt,” Wolovich said. “Other cities have tried (the ambassador program), and it falls apart.”

Wolovich called into question the effectiveness of ambassadors altogether, referencing a recent brawl in West Hollywood that was caught on video where an ambassador can be seen standing by, calling authorities while the fight goes on.

Wolovich said the video of the incident demonstrates how ambassadors don’t offer any practical use, since anyone can pick up the phone and call 911.

“It’s about principle and the safety of the parks,” Wolovich said. “They’re taking away rangers and bringing in people to do a job they’re already paying people to do.”

It’s not exactly clear when Wolovich plans to cease operations at El Dorado Frontier.

He says he has already advised the city about the possibility of leaving and demolishing the business if the two sides can’t come to a resolution soon, but he’s yet to hear back from anyone.

“If (city officials) came back and said, ‘Let’s figure something out it,’ I’d be happy to talk about it,” Wolovich said. “But I don’t want to waste my time talking about nothing.” ■

Prospector restaurant to be shuttered, converted into coffee shop, Latin restaurant

By Jason Ruiz

The Prospector bar and restaurant has served its prime rib and fried chicken dinners at the corner of Junipero Avenue and Seventh Street—where dive bar lovers, karaoke superstars and local musicians also showcased their work—since 1965.

But soon, the building will be split into two businesses after the sale of the property is completed.

Hilco Development Services is acquiring the building, which was listed for sale for \$3 million in 2022. The Signal Hill-based firm is planning to adaptively reuse the building, but when it reopens it will be split to accommodate two new businesses, according to Cameron Hildreth, the firm’s principal and project manager.

The new tenants will include a new bar and restaurant called MAZ from the family that

operated La Cieba, a Mexican and Central American comfort food establishment that has sold its pupusas with bagged sides of curtido and other classics since 2007, and a to-be-determined coffee shop, Hildreth said in an interview.

Hildreth said he was happy that the new building will include Long Beach businesses like MAZ, which will be run by Abel Salazar and his sister, Ziboney, whose family operated La Ceiba for the past 15 years.

Salazar said that his parents are retiring and La Ceiba, which was asked to relocate from its current storefront at 400 E. Anaheim Street because Hilco is trying to develop it into a seven-story mixed-income housing project, will close.

MAZ will be named after the family’s first restaurant, which his parents ran at the corner of Fourth Street and Coronado Avenue when he was a child. The name is an acronym for his parents’



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

A bicyclist rides past The Prospector restaurant, which is scheduled to close.

three children, Michelle, Abel and Ziboney.

“In all honesty, I’m ready for it,” Salazar said of the fresh start. “It’s like turning a page to a new chapter, you can’t stay in that chapter for the rest of your life.”

While the second tenant is still to be determined, Hildreth said it was important to his team to have local Long Beach operators lease the spaces.

Just because The Prospector will soon be gone, it won’t be forgotten.

Hildreth said there is talk of preserving parts of the restaurant.

That could include a mural inside the new businesses that shows the frontier-themed building, and additions to MAZ’s menu, like The Prospector’s prime rib.

The Salazars have had a twisting journey since opening their first location as restaurant operators in the city. The original MAZ was shuttered after Michelle was murdered by her boyfriend as a teenager, which ultimately led to its closure as their parents dealt with depression, Salazar said.

When La Ceiba originally opened on Seventh Street, Salazar

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Port Labor

Continued from Cover

operators, since May of last year.

The previous contract expired on July 1, 2022.

Shortly after the agreement expired, the union and the PMA announced a tentative agreement on terms for the maintenance of health benefits. In February, the organizations announced they remained hopeful of reaching a deal “soon.”

“The ILWU and PMA meet regularly in San Francisco to continue negotiating the collective bargaining agreement, and are committed to reaching an agreement,” the union said in a statement Thursday.

Both parties agreed not to disclose the terms of the tentative agreements as negotiations continue.

The negotiations continued without incident for about 10 months. In March, however, the PMA began accusing union members of taking work actions to put pressure on the association.

The association first accused ILWU Local 13 of weaponizing lunch breaks, with all workers taking them together rather than staggered, effectively shutting down terminal during the days’ three lunch hours. The union, for its part, stated



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

A dockworker drives a container stacker at the Port of Long Beach's ITS Terminal.

workers were not being paid if they worked through their lunch, so they have opted to take them in full.

In April, 11 out of 13 terminals at the ports of Long Beach and LA shut down for a day as union members claimed they were attending a monthly meeting and then observing religious holidays. When asked why other meetings and holidays had not shut down terminals, union leaders did not respond.

Some have called the action a “wildcat strike”—a work stoppage not authorized by the union, which requires an official member vote.

Most recently, the PMA accused the union of delaying the standard dispatch process, which is jointly

administered by PMA and the ILWU, and refused to allow PMA's participation in the labor dispatch process.

PMA said the ILWU's actions slowed the start of operations throughout the Southern California port complex and forced crucial cargo handling equipment to be taken out of operation at several key terminals.

PMA said in an April 20 statement that union actions continue to interrupt port operations.

“While significant progress has been achieved in coastwise contract negotiations, several key issues remain unresolved,” the organization said. “Meanwhile, work actions led by ILWU Local 13 at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach continued to disrupt some operations at key marine terminals today. The Union is deliberately conducting inspections that are not routine, unscheduled, and done in a way that disrupt terminal operations.”

The union, for its part, said in an April 19 statement that ILWU members were continuing to work

despite a drop in cargo volumes. Specifically, the statement argued that terminal operators fell behind on maintenance of cargo-handling equipment in recent years, which is now impacting ILWU members who must inspect the equipment and resolve any issues that arise.

“Terminal operators that have a clear shortage of mechanical personnel on staff, naturally have the longest list of shortcomings to address,” the statement said. “We hope to complete these inspections in a systematic and expeditious manner for the benefit of all our supply chain partners. Meanwhile, our members are continuing to move cargo with skill and efficiency.”

The contentious labor negotiations and work stoppages continue to place a cloud of uncertainty over West Coast ports, especially Long Beach and LA, which continue to lose market share to East and Gulf coast ports.

Paul Brashier, vice president of drayage and intermodal for ITS Logistics, a third-party logistics firm that offers nationwide transportation services such as trucking, stated on April 20 that the recent work actions are the “opening salvo” in what will be tense negotiations in the coming months.

“This was the first major public display of how far both parties are apart and has moved the Pacific Region to a severe concern on the index,” he said.

“Shippers should avoid West Coast Ports for the next two months and add additional dray capacity immediately across North America,” the company stated.

Port officials, for their part, have stated they are in constant communication with the ILWU and PMA as well as federal, state and local officials to support a return to normal operations in the ports. ■

CSU undergraduate workers file for union representation

By Kat Schuster

Thousands of undergraduate Cal State University workers filed a petition on April 17 to form a union that would represent more than 10,000 students across the state's largest public university system.

The campaign has been dubbed the largest non-academic organizing effort in U.S. history, and it would affect working conditions for those who fill non-academic positions including clerical workers, student media, library assistants and more across the system's 23 campuses.

The 4,000 workers and counting who have signed union authorization cards are calling for a health care plan, high wages, paid sick time, holiday time and more

work hours.

At Cal State Long Beach, there were 1,315 students working on campus without union representation last fall. During the same time, 348 academic student employees—researchers, teacher assistants and more—on the Long Beach campus were represented by United Auto Workers, according to a 2022 employee report provided to the Long Beach Post by CSU.

“They work because they have to. They work because they need the money to support themselves, pay rent, buy food, etc.,” Catherine Hutchinson, president of the California State University Employees Union, said at a news conference the day of the filing. “But instead of providing resources to help make the students’ lives easier, the CSU exploits this labor pool because they can.”

Continued on page 19

New zoning aimed at increasing commercial space in West Long Beach heads to City Council

Previous zoning rules were decades old and had resulted in single-family homes being built along corridors that officials hope will now house grocery stores, restaurants and banks.

By Jason Ruiz

West Long Beach could finally be getting updated zoning that will require commercial uses along some of its biggest corridors to try and draw businesses like banks and grocery stores to the side of the city that currently lacks them.

The Planning Commission voted to recommend the City Council approve new zoning changes April 13 that would apply to Santa Fe Avenue between Pacific Coast Highway and Wardlow Road as well as the portion of Willow Street that is west of the 710 Freeway.

Long Beach officials had enacted a building moratorium along those corridors in June 2021 to prevent more residential developments from sprouting up before the city could rezone the area to align with the city's Land Use Element. The moratorium was extended to June 2023 to allow the city to hold community meetings and update the building rules in the area.

The previous zoning rules were decades old and had resulted in single-family homes being built along corridors that city officials hope will now house commercial services like grocery stores, restaurants and banks.

Commissioners said the changes were long overdue and acknowledged the patience of the property owners along the corridors who have not been able to develop anything new over the past few years. The changes, though, will ensure that the community's needs are built into new projects, the commission said.

“This puts forth a plan that the community has a lot of input on, and I think it's important we put in place before this moratorium ends in June,” Commissioner Mark Christoffels said.

The zoning forwarded to the City Council on April 13 will require certain intersections in West Long Beach to have

commercial space included in future projects under what's known as MU1-B zoning. That could mean putting housing units above ground-floor retail, something that has become a popular model in Downtown, or simply building retail space.

The intersections that would have the MU1-B zoning and the mandatory commercial-use restrictions placed on future projects are along Santa Fe Avenue and include its intersections with Pacific Coast Highway, Hill Street, Willow Street, Spring Street and Wardlow Road.

The other zones being implemented along the corridors are known as MU1-A, which would allow for mixed-use projects to be built but also 100% residential projects to be constructed in the future. Both zones would be limited to three stories in height.

The MU1-A zoning would exist primarily between the intersections along Santa Fe Avenue but are also proposed for the spans of Willow Street and



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

A car passes as two pedestrians cross Santa Fe Avenue at Willow Street in West Long Beach.

Wardlow Road to the east and west of Santa Fe.

Residents have been supportive of the changes because of their potential to drive more neighborhood-servicing businesses to the area. West Long Beach currently lacks a bank or pharmacy

and has few options for shopping for groceries. The new zoning will include incentives to build those types of businesses.

The City Council will have to approve the changes at an upcoming meeting on May 2 before the zoning takes effect. ■

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Monica Hernandez, 20, browses vinyl records at Fingerprints in the East Village Arts District.

Where to shop for records in Long Beach

Story and photos by Brandon Richardson

Vinyl records aren’t for everyone. After all, it’s an expensive hobby. As collections grow—and as my modest and completely reasonably sized collection of over 1,600 records does—it can be hard to find space for them all. Plus, compared to streaming, they require more effort and equipment than the phone you can simply pull out of your pocket.

But there is a lot to love about the medium: enlarged, and sometimes expanded, album art, easier to read lyric sheets, not to mention the wild and crazy colors and designs the records themselves now come in. Some also argue that the sound of vinyl is warmer than those digitized and compressed files you find on Spotify. Imperfections in the wax even add character to the music.

The best part of vinyl records, though, at least for me, is the ritual. It’s hard to be a passive listener when it comes to vinyl. You have to put the record on the platter and position the needle. After one side is over, you need to flip it. And multi-disc releases require even more attention.

It’s easier to absorb the music. To be in the moment.

Last year, vinyl records out sold CDs (in units) for the first time since 1987 (the year I was born), according to a report by the Recording Industry Association of America. And it wasn’t a slim margin: 41 vinyl albums were sold compared to 33 million CDs.

Despite their resurgence, vinyl is still a long way off from its glory days in the ’70s and mid-’80s when the industry peaked with between 200 million and 350 million units sold each year. And it will probably never reach those levels again. But for collectors or those looking for a new way to spend money, Long Beach has no shortage of record stores for you:

Bagatelle Records



“Vinyl ain’t dead” at this traditional record store that has been slinging wax in Long Beach since 1977, making it the oldest record store in the city. The store specializes in vintage vinyl from the 1950s through the ’70s, according to owner Steve Mintz, but features all genres and eras among its thousands of used 45s, LPs, 78s, 12-inch singles, CDs and other music memorabilia. Some albums may still be in their original cellophane but they are far from “new,” Mintz said.

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Dizzy on Vynyl



Walking into this shop is like stepping into another world on just a little bit of acid. I mean, come on, you walk through a bead door to enter the store. Top to bottom, the walls are covered in band posters, flags, stickers, fliers and quite the eclectic mix of tchotchkes. Owner Dizzy opened the shop in 1999 and heavily features classic rock, ’70s soul and funk, ’60s psychedelic rock and classic metal. All of the store’s stock is used, mostly brought in by folks and sold to the store, but also from swap meets and other avenues. Dizzy also likes to host live local band performances in his small shop: he records every performance on tape and then burns it onto a CD for the bands.

3004 E. Seventh St. | 562-225-9579

Fingerprints



Easily the biggest shop in the city, Fingerprints’ website describes the shop as an “8,000-square-foot shrine to music and pop culture.” The store first opened on Second Street in 1992 but moved to its now-home in the East Village in 2010, where it has an eclectic stock that includes tens of thousands of new and used records, collectible CDs, cassettes, 8-track tapes, DVDs, Blu-rays and other oddities. The vinyl covers all genres, including some more aggressive stuff for all you metalheads and punks. But what really sets Fingerprints apart is the live, in-store performances owner Rand Foster is able to bring in. Past appearances include Foo Fighters, Brian Wilson, Jack Johnson, Taking Back Sunday, Charli XCX, The 1975, Damien Rice, G. Love and dozens more.

420 E. Fourth St. | 562-433-4996

Record Box



The newest vinyl shop in Long Beach, Record Box first opened its doors three years ago, but will celebrate its one-year anniversary at its current location in June. The small shop, which shares a space with plant shop Vida, carries a little bit of everything, but is heavy on hip-hop, jazz, soul, and even has a Filipino section, according to owner Jose Jurado.

324 Elm Ave. | 562-273-2388

Retro Stereo



This shop is easy to miss. For almost 20 years, it has operated inside other Long Beach stores, according to owner John Karras, who said he spent nearly a decade inside Inretrospect on Fourth Street. He moved to his current home inside Urban Americana when it opened in 2015. His inventory consists exclusively of used vintage records, mostly from the ’60 through the ’80s. Karras’ current stock is heavy on classic rock but he also has a healthy selection of jazz, classical, country and other genres.

1345 Coronado Ave. | 562-494-7300

Third Eye Records



No relation to ’90s rockers Third Eye Blind, this Retro Row shop first opened its doors in 2002. Third Eye’s stock is heavy on “good records,” manager Ian Steele joked, adding that there is “no filler.” He said the small store carries a solid mix of everything from rock to rap to hip-hop and beyond—new and old. The store is similar to Fingerprints but much more curated and often with lower prices, Steele said.

2234 E. Fourth St. | 562-472-4366

Toxic Toast Records



Toxic Toast, located on the outskirts of Downtown, has the most niche record offerings of any store in Long Beach (and maybe LA County as a whole): Japanese imports. Owner Andy George regularly travels to the island country for these rarities. George also has an affinity for ska and punk, which are heavily featured in the store along with more common genres. Recently, the shop dropped a selection of Japanese City Pop, or J-Pop—music that emerged in the ’70s and peaked in the ’80s in Japan with elements of disco, jazz fusion, Okinawan, Latin, Caribbean and more.

757 Pine Ave. | 562-999-2516

Twelves



The second youngest record shop in the city, Twelves opened in October 2019. Our Assistant Editor at the Post DJs on the side and speaks highly of the selection of singles and other desirable discs for the job. In addition to supplying DJs with the goods, Twelves specializes in hard-to-find first pressings and carries a wide selection of jazz, rock, soul, international and more. Due to its connections to the DJ and other music scenes, the shop also gets rare and limited releases from active artists other stores don’t.

746 E. Seventh St. | 562-393-6880

World Famous VIP Records



Last but certainly not least, Long Beach’s second-oldest (and arguably the most famous as the name suggests) record store: World Famous VIP Records. Though the most famous due to its ties to absolute legends such as Snoop Dogg, Warren G, Daz Dillinger and Nate Dogg, the Long Beach store was not the first VIP Records location, according to owner Kelvin Anderson. The first store opened in South Central in 1967, he said. The eighth location, Long Beach opened in June 1978 and is now the last VIP location—down from a peak of 12 stores across the region, including the OG, Compton and Inglewood. The store specializes in “Black music,” Anderson said, including rap, hip-hop, jazz, blues, reggae and R&B.

1028 Pacific Coast Hwy. | 562-591-2349

Wrigley-area office building designed by Killingsworth could get historic designation

The Berg Office at 822 W. Willow Street is one of the earliest works designed by KBS, the firm founded by famed local architect Edward Killingsworth.

By Jason Ruiz

A 1961 office building in the Wrigley neighborhood that was designed by famed architect Edward Killingsworth could be designated as a historic landmark by the City Council after the city's Cultural Heritage Commission recommended it on April 25.

The building at 822 W. Willow Street was built as an office space for Wallace G. Berg, who ran an accounting practice out of it until moving to another building, which he also commissioned Killingsworth to help design. It's known as the "Berg Office."

It was one of the earliest works of Killingsworth's firm, KBS, and



The Berg Office building at 822 W. Willow St. The building was designed by Edward Killingsworth and is now up for historic designation in Long Beach.

Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

includes some of the hallmarks of its design features like an elongated entry door that gives the impression that the door is much larger than it is, vertical windows and an enclosed planter in the building's entryway.

Katie Rispoli Keatamai, a consultant hired by the building's owner for the

landmark designation process, said the building would be the first midcentury building in the Wrigley Neighborhood to be designated, and if it is, it would help raise awareness of Killingsworth's work across the city instead of just in the areas where it's concentrated, such as Naples and Bixby Knolls, where his old office is.

Spoli Keatamai said the owner, Keiro Koga, also owns the Opdahl House in Naples, a home designed by Killingsworth and built in 1957, which is already designated as a historic landmark. The office building on Willow is currently a nail salon, but Koga intends to use it as office space for his import and export business.

Killingsworth and his firm worked on a few commercial projects before transitioning into hotel projects in the 1960s, but there are several local examples of his work. He helped design the student union building on the campus of Cal State Long Beach and worked on the old Long Beach Civic Center, which was demolished after the city moved into the current City

Hall campus on the corner of Magnolia Avenue and Ocean Boulevard.

Under the city's rules for historic designation, the Berg Office qualifies under two criteria, according to city staff. It's associated with the life of a person important to the city's past and it embodies distinctive characteristics of a period or method of construction or "represents the work of a master."

In order to be eligible for landmark designation, a building needs to meet at least one of the four criteria included in the city's cultural heritage ordinance, which also includes buildings "associated with events that made a significant contribution to broad patterns of city history" and sites that "have yielded or had the potential to yield information important in prehistory or history."

The designation of the building as a historic site will now be forwarded to the City Council after the commission voted unanimously to recommend that the council approve its historic status. ■



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

A public notice is posted on the windows of the Berg Office building at 822 W. Willow St. The Killingsworth-designed building is up for historic designation.

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Cargo Volumes

Continued from page 3

of New York and New Jersey was the second-busiest container seaport in the U.S., a rank held for decades by Long Beach.

In February, New York-New Jersey outperformed both Long Beach and Los Angeles—the No. 1 port in the nation. The East Coast port moved 823,256 TEUs in February, nearly 41% more than Long Beach and over 51% more than LA.

Last month, LA moved about 20,000 more TEUs than Long Beach, a significant bump from February when it trailed Long Beach by over 50,000 TEUs.

Year-to-date, Long Beach has moved 1,721,325 TEUs, compared to LA's 1,837,094 TEUs. Long Beach's first-quarter figure marks a 30% decrease from the same period last year.

In March, New York-New Jersey dockworkers and terminal operators moved 574,452 TEUs, down over 33% compared to the same month last year. While the East Coast port moved less cargo than Long Beach and LA last that month, it continues to track ahead of both in terms of total movement this year at 2,043,138 TEUs. It's possible New York-New Jersey will continue to outperform

its competition, at least until an agreement is struck between the union representing West Coast dockworkers and the association for shippers and terminal operators.

Negotiations between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the Pacific Maritime Association began almost a year ago in May, with the previous labor contract expiring July 1 of last year.

Cargo moved uninterrupted

“Warehouses remain full and fewer cargo containers are crossing the docks because consumer spending remains slow.”

- Mario Cordero, Port of Long Beach Executive Director

through the twin ports as negotiations continued behind closed doors and under a media blackout. In the last two months, however, union members have taken actions that could be construed as “wildcat strikes”—work stoppages without the consent of union representatives, which require official member votes to authorize a strike.

Earlier this month, 11 of the 13 container terminals at the ports of Long Beach and LA shut down for a full day due to not having enough

workers on site. Non-unionized workers who did show up for work were sent home.

While the PMA claims the workers were sending a message amid contract negotiations, union leaders stated workers first attended a union meeting on April 13 to witness newly elected President Gary Herrera being sworn in and then were observing Good Friday the following day, which they said explains the mass absence

from terminals.

When asked why other meetings, which are held monthly, and previous Good Fridays and other holidays have not shut down the ports, union leaders did not respond.

In March, the employers' association accused workers of using their lunch breaks to cause disruptions, claiming they used to be staggered to ensure work was continuous rather than shutting down for an hour. Herrera, however,

recently told the Business Journal that workers realized they were not being paid when they worked through their lunch hours, so they have opted to take them in full.

In mid April, the PMA accused the ILWU of delaying the standard dispatch process, which slows the start of port operations in the morning. The ILWU did not respond to request for comment regarding the situation.

Union members have cited record profits that have been raked in by ocean carriers. In October, Drewry Supply Chain Advisors forecasted that ocean carriers would make \$270 billion in profits in 2022—\$70 billion more than 2021 and five times what they made in 2020.

The ports, for their part, have no part in the labor negotiations but are merely landlords with terminal operators as their long-term tenants. Despite the turmoil between the union and employers, the ports continue to push toward the future.

“We continue to invest in our infrastructure projects and look for ways to efficiently and sustainably move cargo so our customers, new and old, are reminded why we are the Port of Choice,” Long Beach Harbor Commission President Sharon Weissman said in a statement. “We will be ready when cargo volumes are on the rise again.” ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Two newly built homes at Ocean Boulevard and Balboa Place are near twins at the same price and same layout.

COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

Beachside cousins: A pair of new builds on the Peninsula, same size, same price

Two houses sit next to one another on an off-water corner of Ocean Boulevard and Balboa near the western end of the Peninsula. Pick one.

It's a difficult decision. There's little difference between the two. Both are 4-bed, 4.5-bath, 3,105 square feet, and they're even identically priced at a not-insignificant cost of \$3,788,888.

The one on Ocean is three stories with glimpses of Alamitos Bay to the north and of the Pacific Ocean to the south—not full-on views, but fairly sufficient; you would not be lying or even exaggerating to say that there are water views from either place, especially from their third-floor deck and patio, but the views don't smack you in the face like the IMAX panorama you get from the houses along the sand.

And if you're in the market for a brand-new home, these two are right off the lot, currently the only new builds in the city, according to listing agent Andy Dane Carter. That makes the houses turnkey-plus; you can even haggle with the stager to keep all or some of the furnishings. “Buy it furnished for a second home or a summer place and all you've gotta do is show up with a suitcase and a toothbrush,” says Carter.

To visit one of the homes, both built on the site of a former and long-vacant triplex, is pretty much to visit both. They've got great pedigree, designed by Long Beach luxury architect Steven Sennikoff and built by Esoteric Homes in Newport Beach.

They've got everything a high-dollar home on the Peninsula could want, except for jaw-dropping views. For a waterfront home on the peninsula,

you can expect to pay an additional \$1 million for a full-on view, especially on the Pacific side, so it's difficult to say whether these homes are overpriced or if they'd go for upward of \$5 million on the water. That's a decision the buyer has to make. As one Realtor who deals in waterfront properties tells me, a house is worth whatever someone will pay for it.

While the homes' floor plans are essentially identical, the overall vibe in design varies a bit, with the Balboa Place house having a bit more of a casual, beachy feel with lighter colors and fixtures, while the Ocean house has a more modern and formal appearance.

Few couples who look at the houses can agree which one they like more, says Carter. “There's always one who likes the Balboa house and the other likes the Ocean house.”

Both homes start out with kitchens stocked with high-end appliances, including Bertazzoni refrigerators and six-burner stoves with double ovens and Sharp drawer microwaves. The open design has the kitchen wide open to an informal dining area.

The second floor has three bedrooms, all ensuite with walk-in closets. The primary has a larger walk-in closet and floor-to-ceiling glass doors that open to a balcony.

There's also a niche among the bedrooms and baths that is staged as a children's play room in the Balboa house and as an office in the Ocean one.

The third floor is for entertainment with a family/theater room with a wet bar and a wide

fold-out access to the patio deck with further partial views of the bay and the ocean over the rooftops and through Balboa Place.

Both homes have elevators, a selling point, says Carter, for people of all ages, especially the higher ones. “People can live here into their 100s, not having to climb the stairs.” It's also an easier way for people of any age to transport food and party stuff from the ground floor to the top deck without squandering the calories to climb three floors of stairs.

The downside of spending \$3.9 million for one of these houses is, again, the fact that they're off water, but not far off. They're located at a narrow point of the Peninsula where the beach feel is at its height and the sometimes overused phrase “steps to the beach” is real at this location, where it's a breeze accessing either the ocean or the bay. ■



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

From the balcony off the primary bedroom you get a view of the Pacific Ocean.



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The Long Beach Business Journal makes every effort to verify the information included in the list above, but we also rely on the accuracy of the information provided by the employers and organizations represented.

Isabel Patterson Child Development Center at CSULB could receive \$3.5M in critical funding

By Tess Kazenoff

The Isabel Patterson Child Development Center on the Cal State Long Beach campus could be getting a substantial boost in federal funding in the next fiscal budget year.

The child care center, which has primarily served children of enrolled CSULB students for the past 50 years, is eligible for potentially \$3.5 million in funding.

The funds would go toward the necessary maintenance at the center.

For the facility, which includes four individual buildings and several play yards throughout, and offers the capacity to serve 180 families among its licensed infant and toddler, preschool, and school-age programs, its deferred maintenance costs currently amount to around \$8 million, said Miles Nevin, executive director of Associated Students Inc., a CSULB nonprofit that runs a variety of services including the Isabel Patterson Child Development Center.

The potential funding “would tackle the most immediate needs, and about half of the needs,” Nevin said.

According to Nevin, the plumbing and irrigation that undergirds the land is failing and doesn’t drain properly, which becomes problematic, particularly when it rains.

Additionally, the funds would support the replacement of the main electrical panel and all the related circuits, which has become a risk-management issue, Nevin said. It will also replace all of the flooring, heating, ventilation and air conditioning units across the center.

While it varies when each item has last been replaced, most are either original or haven’t been replaced since the ‘80s. “It’s all very old and needs to be replaced immediately,” Nevin said.

ASI runs a variety of facilities and programs across the organization,



A father and daughter run and scoot by the Isabel Patterson Child Development Center and Cal State Long Beach.

and there just isn’t enough funding to address everything, including deferred maintenance, Nevin said.

While state and federal grants are utilized for the operating budget, “this capital budget is not really addressed anywhere,” Nevin said. “That’s one of those items that tends to get pushed to the lower end of the priority list when we’re doing our budgets.”

While some items get addressed each year, it is never to the level needed, Nevin said. In the current year, for example, \$100,000 was budgeted for deferred maintenance items.

“Obviously \$100,000 per year, it’s just not going to catch up to \$8 million ever,” Nevin said.

However, the potential \$3.5 million will not only address

deferred maintenance and make the play environments safer, but it will be utilized to modernize the center and make it a “contemporary” space for the children, he said.

The improvements will also decrease the center’s annual utility and overall budget costs, allowing the center to invest more resources into program materials and into staff, which includes hiring more student employees, rather than thinking about investing in capital outlay, Nevin added.

The funding is part of Rep. Robert Garcia’s recent Community Project Funding submission to the House Committee on Appropriations.

As an alumnus of Cal State Long Beach, and as the former ASI student body president, Garcia is familiar with the organization and has remained connected since graduating, Nevin said.

“He was proactive in coming to us and further discussing these issues,” Nevin said. “So we collaborated with his office on this application, and really worked in partnership with him and his staff to get the proposal in.”

Garcia, for his part, said the need for the funding was clear.

“As an educator myself, I know supporting more accessible child care makes it easier for parents of any age to work and achieve their educational goals,” Garcia said in a statement. “The Isabel Patterson Center at CSULB provides critical child care and education to our community and campus. I’m grateful to submit this important funding request.”

Following approval from

Congress, more requirements lie ahead before the funding can be put to use, such as conducting an environmental review and working with campus professionals to plan out a detailed project and timeline, Nevin said.

The funding will then be issued as a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant in fiscal year 2024, although, at this time, it is unclear when exactly the funds would be dispersed, Nevin said.

While the funding has not yet been guaranteed, “it’s for urgent facility needs at a large child care center on a public university campus—it’s important for early care and education. It’s important for our local workforce development concerns,” Nevin said. “So I’m actually very confident and hopeful.”

While the center is already an attractive space that operates at capacity, the improvements will further garner trust and goodwill in the community and across the university, Nevin said.

“Child care is one of the great barriers to our students, not only here, but across the country,” Nevin said.

“And when you have a center like this, that’s serving 180 families and doing it in a very high quality environment, it’s an important component of getting an education here.”

“Just being able to provide early care and education, being able to be part of the workforce development ecosystem in our region, where we are taking care of children so that people can work and go to school—that is super critical,” Nevin said. ■



George Wolfe, co-owner of The Wicked Wolf, tries out a non-alcoholic whiskey at his new bar in the Wrigley neighborhood.

Wrigley gets woodsy: The Wicked Wolf cocktail lounge hopes to be a home for artists

Dangling vines, cocktails like the “Ginderella,” velvet sofas and a portrait of the wicked wolf herself — the team behind the Wrigley neighborhood’s first themed bar has been working to bring a living room in the forest to Long Beach.

By Kat Schuster

Thea Mercouffer has never been a drinker, yet she is preparing to open her first bar in Long Beach. She has worked as a documentary filmmaker and explored numerous art mediums

throughout her life. Now, she’s using 2332 Pacific Ave. as her canvas.

Mercouffer and her husband George Wolfe have spent months working with general manager Christian Warren to open the doors to The Wicked Wolf, which will held its grand opening on April 26.

Wrigley’s first themed bar has invoked some well-deserved rubbernecking from those passing through the neighborhood.

“We’re going for a romantic living room in the forest,” Mercouffer told the Post.

Once Chimbas Sports Bar, the space has been wholly transformed from its former aesthetic. When Mercouffer, who calls herself a “real estate foster mom,” first saw the property, she immediately suspected there may be some magic lurking beneath its divey dust.

“To me it looked like a cottage in the woods, like Hansel and Gretel,” she said. “We just thought of fairy tales.”

After coming across an illustration of a feminized wolf by storyboard

artist Angelina “Spikie” Ricardo, the story around the wolf of Wrigley started to unfold. That whimsical concept isn’t likely to be lost on those who wander in to see dangling vines above velvet Victorian sofas

and a large illustration of the wolf herself above the bar.

Ricardo’s wolf isn’t the sleuth villain of Red Riding Hood or The Three Little Pigs. Instead, the illustration presented a “feminine

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A gin cocktail with edible flowers made by bartenders at The Wicked Wolf, a new cocktail lounge in the Wrigley neighborhood.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

A playground sits empty at the Isabel Patterson Child Development Center and Cal State Long Beach.

St. Mary 100 Years

Continued from Cover

Long Beach’s population. “We are caring in a big way now for people who have no place else to go,” he said.

A focus on health equity
St. Mary is a “disproportionate share” hospital, meaning it cares for far more Medi-Cal or uninsured patients than the typical hospital, Neils said.

Overall, 70% of patients are on Medi-Cal insurance or are completely uninsured, and last year, the hospital absorbed about \$29 million of reimbursed medical costs, Neils said. However, “with the challenges come opportunity,” Neils said. Recognizing that housing-insecure patients would come into the emergency department for numerous issues within a short period of time, St. Mary began providing case management through a partnership with Mental Health America LA and a UniHealth Foundation grant.

“Those challenges also offer us a chance to provide innovative care—let’s not just treat this person over and over again. Let’s see if we can help this person so that she doesn’t have to come here all the time,” Neils said. “And we’re really grateful for success stories like that, increasingly, in the whole world of nonprofits, but it’s especially true in the field of medicine. We love to collaborate. We don’t just stand on our own.”

To Neils, what is equally important has been St. Mary’s efforts to reach the wider community through a variety of health initiatives such as the community grants program.

“I love that about St. Mary, obviously we take good care of you when you come in the door, but we’re out there trying to make sure you don’t have to come here,” Neils said.

In 1976, St. Mary opened its Low Vision Center, which provides free vision screening to underserved children. Its Families in Good Health program, which was formed in response to the immigration of many Cambodian people to Long Beach following the Khmer Rouge genocide, provides a wide range of services from parenting workshops to tobacco prevention for teens, and served over 8,000 people last year, almost all of which were grant-funded and free.

Two or three days a week, a mobile clinic, funded by the Port of Long Beach, provides services ranging from blood pressure screening to support with chronic respiratory conditions, Neils said.

“Health care doesn’t just happen in the four walls of the hospital,” said St. Mary Medical Center president and CEO Carolyn Caldwell. “So we’re out in the community, making sure that we can reach as many people as possible, because access is also important as well.”

Issues with transportation and fear



St. Mary Medical Center President and CEO Carolyn Caldwell stands in front of the hospital, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

surrounding hospitals can sometimes create barriers with accessing care, particularly for marginalized communities, Caldwell said.

“If you go to them, if you go to their community center or their churches, they are more likely to receive care, and there’s an element of trust that’s there,” she said.

Perhaps one of St. Mary’s most significant equity-focused efforts came in the 1980s, amid a wave of AIDS cases, which at the time was still largely misunderstood, Neils said. “You couldn’t be admitted to a hospital. Doctors wouldn’t provide care for you, because nobody knew where the boundaries were,” Neils said.

AIDS was identified as a disease in 1981, and 1986, “the nuns who were running this hospital looked at Long Beach and said, ‘Well, we don’t know what it is, but people are dying. And we’re not going to let them die alone.’”

What became known as the CARE Center still remains today, and it

rearranging space, and staffing difficulties—Neils noted that a critical staffing shortage, particularly among registered nurses, is facing hospitals across the country, including at St. Mary.

Adding to the challenge of staffing is that, nowadays, young people are far more mobile, Neils said.

“We don’t necessarily get people right out of nursing school, who are gonna be here the rest of their lives,” he said.

Amid the challenges of navigating the pandemic, being part of a larger organization was highly beneficial, Caldwell said.

“We never ran out of anything, even if we got low on supplies, our wonderful supply chain could look across our system,” Caldwell said.

Improving communication, reacting quickly, and collaborating with other hospitals in the community, city officials, as well as state government, were “critical,”

“Health care doesn’t just happen in the four walls of the hospital.”

- Carolyn Caldwell, St. Mary Medical Center President and CEO

provides services to about 2,000 patients each year, some of whom are living with HIV, while others are considered at-risk, Neils said.

“They’re a community of people who can be marginalized by many, but they’re welcome here,” Neils said.

COVID-19

Neils and Caldwell agree that for St. Mary, the largest challenge arose in 2020, with the start of the pandemic.

St. Mary’s intensive care unit has 40 beds. But at the height of the pandemic, there were 108 COVID-19 patients in the hospital, Neils said.

“Nobody was prepared for COVID,” he said.

A huge obstacle presented itself, Neils said—in the beginning, “nobody knew what COVID was, and then how to treat it.”

The hospital had to navigate

Caldwell said.

Once the vaccine became available, it was “a wonderful feeling,” said Caldwell, noting the additional benefit of Long Beach having its own health department.

As of late last month, St. Mary had one COVID-19 patient, she said.

The St. Mary of today

Over the past 100 years, St. Mary has seen drastic changes in technology and innovations in medicine—some of which didn’t exist just 10 years ago, Neils said.

Outcomes for patients who suffer from strokes are far better today than just a few years ago, as are outcomes for babies who are born prematurely, Neils said. At St. Mary, over 200,000 babies have been born in its 100-year history.

“As health care has expanded, we’ve made sure that as a hospital and as an

organization, that we expanded, that we grow as well, so we can make sure our patients are getting that same level of care,” Caldwell said.

Due to the ever-changing nature of medicine and technology, St. Mary staff is constantly in continuing education, Neils said.

“But at the heart of St. Mary, is compassion. When you’re treated here, you’re treated with deep respect.”

Executives frequently visit patients in their rooms, and Neils makes his rounds each Friday morning.

Universally, people share their love of the nurses, Neils said.

“We love their patience, their kindness, they go way out of their way,’ And that’s a great thing to be able to hear. And I hear it every week from people.”

The future of St. Mary

Just as St. Mary has evolved over the years, it will continue to do so into the future.

For instance, to combat the disproportionately low percentage of African American physicians, St. Mary has partnered with the historically Black, all-male Morehouse College. Morehouse and CommonSpirit are each contributing \$100 million to getting more Black students admitted to medical school, who will have an opportunity to complete their residencies at one of CommonSpirit’s 142 hospitals, an initiative that Neils hopes will extend to other historically underserved communities.

In addition, Neils hopes and expects that between 2030 and 2040, St. Mary’s parent company will support the construction of a new hospital.

“You always need a place for surgery for people to recover, for babies to be born and so forth. But medicine is changing,” Neils said.

For Caldwell, the hope is that St. Mary is able to continue evolving to offer cutting-edge and high quality care, she said.

To make it to 100 years is “remarkable,” Caldwell said.

As the Long Beach community has grown, so has St. Mary, Caldwell said.

“So this, this hospital, being a part of the Downtown Long Beach area, being able to reach out and serve this community and provide care that is equitable for everyone—I see our hospital as that beacon of hope, you know, that people can look to us and know that they’re gonna get great care,” Caldwell said.

Caldwell referenced the original mission of the founding Sisters—to ensure that equitable care is provided to everyone, regardless of who they are or their ability to pay.

“And that’s what we will continue to do,” Caldwell said.

St. Mary Medical Center’s centennial day is August 26. Community members are invited to join St. Mary on September 30 for a day-long street fair, which will include food, drinks, cultural dances, live music, local merchants, and family games and activities, located at the St. Mary campus, 1050 Linden Ave. For sponsorship or vendor inquiries, please contact Michael Neils at Michael.Neils@commonspirit.org. ■

Long Beach, LA County unemployment ticked back down in March after two months of increases

The recent Virgin Orbit layoffs are expected to push the city’s unemployment rate up, officials said, but not significantly.

By Brandon Richardson

The unemployment rate across Los Angeles County, including Long Beach, ticked back down in March after two consecutive months of increases, according to data from the California Employment Development Department.

The rate in both Long Beach and across the county reached a recent low of 4.4% in December, but it crept back up to 5.2% and

5.3%, respectively, over the first two months of the year, according to data released in late April. However both unemployment rates dropped slightly to 5%—just shy of the statewide rate of 4.8%, which was unchanged from February.

“Given the adverse weather last month, it’s difficult to get a true read on how California’s labor market actually performed,” Taner Osman, research manager at Beacon Economics, said in a statement. “Interestingly, while labor markets in inland communities had been outperforming coastal communities since the start of the pandemic, we are now starting to see these differences level out, with stronger job growth in some coastal communities.”

In Long Beach, the labor force decreased by 400 jobs to 232,700, as did the number of unemployed residents, by 700 to 11,500. The number of employed residents,



Workers break down grandstands Downtown following the 48th annual Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach race weekend.

meanwhile, increased by 300 to 221,200.

The positive shift came just before mass layoffs at Virgin Orbit, which previously was one of the city’s pioneering satellite launch companies. The company announced on March 30 that it

would lay off 675 employees, or 85%, of its workforce, effective days later in early April.

On April 4, the Richard Branson company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

While a small increase is likely, the layoffs are not expected to cause

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Blue Shield to open Long Beach office

About 1,000 Blue Shield of California employees will be coming to Long Beach this summer, when the company opens an office on the Aero Long Beach campus.

By Tess Kazenoff

About 1,000 Blue Shield of California employees will be coming to Long Beach this summer, when the company will open an office on the Aero Long Beach campus.

The nonprofit insurance provider's decision to open a Long Beach location stemmed from its transition to a hybrid work model, explained spokesperson Mark Seelig.

"We've sort of tried to reconfigure and rethink ... our real estate ideology," Seelig said. "We're trying to make the best use of our resources."

The new office will consolidate three locations—Monterey Park, El Segundo and Costa Mesa—into one, said Seelig.

"We did an extensive search, and Long Beach won out," Seelig said. "We were really excited to find a space there."

The Long Beach space proved to be a desirable location partially due to its easy access to Long Beach Airport and highways, considering that many executives have to travel to different offices throughout California, Seelig said. Long Beach also served as a central location to the employees who will be commuting from around Los Angeles and Orange County, Seelig said.

Barring any unforeseen circumstances, the company expects to move into its new office at 3840 Kilroy Airport Way in early July, with plans to officially open for business on July 10.

The building is currently undergoing a redesign for certain specifications, and is a LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, Seelig said.

Introducing about 1,000 people to a new office building will certainly benefit the Long Beach economy, Seelig said—from parking, grabbing a morning coffee or bagel, dining out for lunch, or picking up groceries on the way home, he said.

"Long Beach is going to win big, I think, with 1,000 employees—not all there at the same time, of course, but certainly, just more folks are rolling in and being introduced to Long Beach as a community," he said.

Some employees may even end up wanting to relocate to Long Beach, Seelig added.

Plus, according to Seelig, Blue Shield of California is a company that loves to give back and volunteer.

"Long Beach is definitely going to benefit in that capacity as well," Seelig said. "Our employees are really, really strategic about looking at the landscape and finding spaces where we can make improvements that help underserved communities, residents ... and to make a big difference."

Ahead of the opening of the new office, work is already underway to establish community partnerships and introduce Blue Shield to Long Beach, said Seelig, referencing a new partnership with the Conservation Corps of Long Beach.

"We want to be good neighbors," said Seelig. "We're not just here to take up space and to be a big company," Seelig's first week with the company, Blue Shield moved into its Oakland headquarters office, and immediately donated \$1 million to a local nonprofit that served high school students from underprivileged communities, he said.

"It's part of our culture," Seelig said.

Along with establishing its new office, in an effort to further serve the Long Beach community, Blue Shield recently opened a community resource center located at 5599 Atlantic Ave., with a grand opening planned for June.

The community resource center will serve individuals from Long Beach as well as from surrounding communities such as Lakewood and Signal Hill, through a variety of different services and classes ranging from monthly food pantries, seasonal flu clinics, family cooking classes, exercise classes and homework assistance to K-12 students. Blue Shield Promise staff will be available to offer support to all individuals who come into the center, which is open to all community members.

"It's an opportunity for underserved communities to come in and get top-notch services and clinical help," Seelig said.

The Long Beach resource center is the 12th location of its kind, and it follows the opening of a similar space in Norwalk in March. Both centers are part of an L.A. Care's and Blue Shield Promise \$146 million commitment to operate 14 community resources centers in Los Angeles County.

"We're super excited about this building and moving in," Seelig said of the new Long Beach office. "Long Beach wins, Blue Shield wins, our members win because we're excited to be doing more great work in the community." ■

Unemployment

Continued from page 19

a substantial rise in unemployment when April data is released next month, according to Nick Schultz, executive director of Pacific Gateway, the city's workforce development arm.

"It's tough to say," Schultz said, noting that there are many factors at play. "But I don't expect a big shift. Maybe around two-tenths."

Shortly after the Virgin Orbit announcement, Pacific Gateway went to work on outreach to assist those who were laid off. The organization has held multiple in-person and virtual sessions to provide information and help connect people to new job opportunities.

On April 26, the agency hosted an aerospace job fair at the Convention Center, which will include representatives from over 30 aerospace companies. Over 200 former Virgin Orbit employees had signed up as of April 25, Schultz said.

Back at the county level, the overall region followed the same trends as Long Beach, with the labor force dropping by 8,600 jobs to 5,034,100. The number of employed county residents increased by 5,500

to 4,783,000, while the number of unemployed residents decreased by 14,100 to 251,100.

Only one-third of LA County's cities and designated areas have higher unemployment rates than Long Beach, data shows. Across the county, 76—or over 61%—of cities and areas have lower unemployment rates than Long Beach.

Seven areas—Charter Oak, Cudahy, East LA, Huntington Park, Pico Rivera and Rolling Hills—have the same unemployment rate as Long Beach.

Leisure and hospitality led the county in month-over-month gains, adding 7,300 jobs, the EDD stated. Accommodation and food services recorded 7,900 additions, which was offset by arts, entertainment and recreation losing 600 jobs.

Other sections that saw job increases were government (4,900), information (4,600), private education and health services (3,900), manufacturing (2,300) and other services (1,100).

Several sectors contracted month-over-month, including construction (1,800 jobs), financial activities (1,500), and professional and business services (1,200). Mining and logging remained unchanged. ■



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LGB surpasses pre-COVID passenger volumes for 1st time

During the first quarter of this year, passenger volumes were up 1.1% compared to the same period in 2019.

By Brandon Richardson

After a turbulent three years, Long Beach Airport reported passenger volumes above pre-pandemic levels for the first time since the coronavirus outbreak, according to data released April 24.

In March, 296,663 passengers traveled through the small, municipal airport—up 2.3% from the same month in 2019. In March 2020, the coronavirus effectively shut down airports nationwide, which have struggled to recover since.

Last month's figure marks increases of 120.6% and 158.3% over March 2020 and 2021, respectively. The volume is 8.8% over March of last year.

"Long Beach Airport continues to see signs of recovery and strong travel demand as passenger numbers trend upward," Airport Director Cynthia Guidry said in a statement. "We're pleased travelers make LGB their airport of choice."

Passenger volumes nationwide, meanwhile, remained nearly 2.2% below 2019 levels in March, according to U.S. Transportation Security Administration data.

Back in Long Beach, the airport continues tracking ahead of last year in terms of passenger volumes for the

second month in a row. During the first quarter, 814,328 travelers passed through the facility, a 1.1% increase from the same period in 2019.

The figures are a big boost for the facility, especially after closing out the year with a Southwest Airlines meltdown that caused passenger volumes to dip sharply. In the fallout, January traffic fell 1.8% short of January 2022 levels.

The data shows that more passengers flew out of Long Beach than flew into it in March. A total of 148,648 passengers boarded a plane in the city, compared to the 148,015 who landed here. Year-to-date, however, more people have arrived (405,555) in Long Beach than flown out of it (406,773).

Despite its major issues at the end of last year as well as its recent, but brief, nationwide grounding, Southwest is leading the charge in LGB's recovery. The airline is the leading carrier at the airfield, holding 45 of 53 daily flight slots. As it continues to pick up additional slots, Southwest announced new destinations.

Since June of last year, the company has announced nonstop routes to Nashville, New Orleans, Salt Lake City, Orlando, and Kansas City, all of which are now in service. This summer, the airline will begin flights to Colorado Springs, El Paso and Albuquerque.

And in March, Southwest announced its most recent additions: The airline will offer weekly flights to Portland and Boise beginning this fall.

Between Southwest, Delta Air Lines and Hawaiian Airlines, travelers can reach 24 destinations with nonstop service out of Long Beach—more than at any time in the airport's nearly 100-year history. ■

Prospector

Continued from page 5

remembered being homeless after losing their house in 2009 because of the collapse of the housing market.

The family slept in the storage room on concrete floors with blankets and considered closing the restaurant as the economy struggled to recover. Then they put a large sign propped up on the back of an old, red Ford F-150 advertising 99-cent pupusas and business began to flood in.

"I remember we were driving down to Mexico and we got to about Irvine when the staff called and said 'You need to come back, there are a lot of people,'" Salazar said. "That's what saved us."

Like many businesses, they were blindsided by the COVID-19 pandemic. They lost multiple long-

to The Prospector with prime rib, burgers and other staples.

The new home will include a full bar because the purchase of the building will include its alcohol license and its entertainment permit, which Salazar said his family hopes to utilize for its karaoke nights and also more traditional entertainment like mariachi and bachata performers.

Weekends will offer brunch and Salazar hopes to use the entertainment permit to make MAZ into a destination for things like UFC fights and other sports. Salazar said he's already picked a muralist and he's hoping a design can be worked out to further honor The Prospector, but the plan hasn't been completed.

"I am sad The Prospector is shutting down; it will always be in our hearts, but it's a great opportunity for us to be in that new location," Salazar said.

"I am sad The Prospector is shutting down; it will always be in our hearts, but it's a great opportunity for us to be in that new location."

- Abel Salazar, Co-Owner of La Ceiba

time customers and employees to the virus and moved away from their original home at Seventh Street and Nebraska Avenue.

A lot has changed for the Salazars but the old red Ford F-150 that used to hold the 99-cent pupusa sign is still parked behind the shop.

MAZ will continue to sell pupusas as part of a Monday-through-Friday menu that will include small selections from Mexican, Honduran, Salvadorian and American cuisine. The American portion will pay homage

Salazar said he hopes that MAZ will be open by November but first, the family will have to close La Ceiba, something that he expects will happen by September.

The idea for MAZ's name came from his parents, Salazar said.

"When they said it, I remember they were getting sad and tearing up and I was like 'Woah, OK,'" he said.

Salazar said there will likely be a picture of the parent's three children somewhere in the restaurant so everyone will be able to see them together. ■



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

One of the doorways to The Prospector restaurant.

Long Beach couple opens well-traveled charcuterie shop within The Hangar at LBX



Courtesy of Brannen Fitzgerald

Fior Di Latte, which opened April 29, offers several different specialty charcuterie boxes, including cured meats, artisan cheese and other snacks.

By Kat Schuster

Whether they were traveling through the colorful coastline of Cinque Terre or perusing quaint artisan shops of Paris, the Alvarengas always made it a point to stop and taste the cheese.

But Connie Alverenga says it's hard to credit any one destination for inspiring Fior Di Latte, a specialty charcuterie shop that she and her husband Steven opened within The Hangar dining hall at Long Beach Exchange on Saturday, April 29.

Connie and Steven, both Long Beach locals, met when they were 17. "We're actually high school sweethearts," she said.

Over the years, the pair explored several different countries together, though their favorite memories—and flavors—belong to Italy. And now, so does the name of their first business together.

"It's an Italian word that means flower of milk," Connie said. "The flower kind of symbolizes the end product after the milk is stretched and mixed. So to us, we wanted to incorporate it within our store to represent our process from beginning to end."

Fior Di Latte is also a semi-soft cow's milk cheese that is similar to mozzarella cheese.

Just to back up, for those who don't know, charcuterie is a French term for cured meat, and while "charcuterie boards" were assembled as far back as 15th century France, the meat and cheese-choked platters became a social media sensation during the pandemic.

During the long first few months of lockdown, the Alvarengas, no

longer able to travel, hunkered down in their home and started thinking of what they could do to make a living and how they could share their well-traveled cheese obsession with Long Beach. But before they settled on the idea of a charcuterie venture, they started renting out their vintage Airstream trailer to locals.

"But then, as time progressed, we continued to think about new ways to bring new experiences to Long Beach," Connie said. "And so that's when we started thinking about opening up a cheese/charcuterie store."

While she doesn't want the shop to be thought of primarily as a cheese shop, Alvarenga says the site will offer luxury artisan cheeses from up and down the state—from espresso-bean-laced El Californio to the stout-infused craft beer cheddar. Other selections will come from Texas, Wisconsin and beyond.

Primarily, they will showcase their unique take on charcuterie, which will be pre-assembled in boxes that LBX guests can grab on the go or share with a group right in the dining hall.

Boxes are \$15, \$40 and \$65 and all include cured meats, artisan cheeses as well as an assortment of nuts, crackers, fresh and dried fruit and other finger food goodies. Eventually, they will add a children's box as well as a vegan box.

"So, there's going to be a little bit for everyone," she said.

Fior Di Latte will be open within The Hangar Food Hall at Long Beach Exchange, 4150 McGowan St., Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from noon to 6 p.m., and Fridays and Saturdays from noon to 7 p.m. ■

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Long Beach to cut cannabis taxes for equity businesses, explore broader industry-wide reductions later this year

By Jason Ruiz

The Long Beach City Council voted April 19 for city management to look at how retail cannabis tax rates could be lowered to help a struggling industry in the city, as operators say they can't compete with an illicit market that is still thriving in part because of its ability to charge lower prices.

Long Beach currently charges an excise tax of 8% on adult-use cannabis sales and 6% on medicinal cannabis sales on top of the normal 10.25% sales tax that other retailers in the city have to pay.

Combined with other state taxes, industry members say these taxes have forced them to charge high prices at retail locations that have led to sagging sales and businesses on the brink of closing.

While this is not the first time that the industry has asked for tax relief, the city will now look at cutting the tax rate to help cannabis operators in the city level the playing field with illegal operators.

"Our current cannabis tax structure makes it difficult to compete," said Councilmember

Joni Ricks-Oddie, who introduced the item.

Ricks-Oddie said she believed that, with a measured approach, the tax reductions could have a host of benefits like increased sales and a larger tax base for the city, as well as the potential to bring some illegal operators into compliance with city laws.

Before cannabis sales were legalized in Long Beach in 2016, there was reluctance among council members at the time to welcome the industry, as some said an increased cost on things like police patrols could mean the city would lose money or "break even" at best.

Cannabis, though, has been one of the surprisingly high-performing areas of the city's tax revenue streams, with it generating \$13 million in the last fiscal year. It's projected to create another \$12 million this year.

In 2022, \$9.9 million of the \$13 million collected by the city came from taxes charged to adult-use customers, according to city data.

Most of those funds come from adult-use retail sales, with smaller portions coming from things like manufacturing, lab testing and

distribution licenses.

Options for cutting cannabis taxes are expected to return to the City Council to consider alongside this year's proposed budget, which generally is released in July or August and must be adopted by October, when the new fiscal year begins.

Long Beach is facing a projected \$6 million deficit, which is down from an original projection of over \$40 million, but significant cuts to cannabis taxes could add to that sum without additional funding or cuts.

Industry operators have called for cuts as big as 5% for adult use sales and a zeroing out of medicinal cannabis taxes, but it's unclear how big of a range of cuts the council will be presented with.

Ricks-Oddie's request included Santa Ana's recent cannabis tax reductions as an example. That city reduced its taxes by 1% across the board with an additional 2% in cuts granted to businesses that met certain labor benchmarks like providing full-time hours and pathways for advancement to its employees.

'Equity' tax cuts

While the city's 32 dispensary operators will have to wait a few

months to find out how much their tax rates will be cut, other lower-income business owners could soon see theirs reduced by half.

On April 19, the council asked the city attorney to bring back an ordinance that would amend the tax rates for "equity" license holders, which are prospective business owners who have been negatively affected by the war on drugs, come from underserved parts of the city or are generally less wealthy than other cannabis operators in the city.

Those business owners will see a tax rate of 4% for adult use sales, 3% for medicinal sales and a cultivation tax of \$6.85 per square foot. City leaders hope that the tax reductions will allow more equity applicants to actually launch their businesses.

Of the 32 dispensaries in the city, none are equity applicants. However, the City Council voted in May to allow eight additional dispensary licenses to be reserved for equity applicants in the future.

The tax changes that will be in the requested ordinance will have to be voted on by the council twice before the mayor can sign the changes into law. ■

Wicked Wolf

Continued from page 17

force," Mercouffer said.

"[We're] reclaiming the wolf idea from that lecherous male to the empowering female," she said.

So, Mercouffer purchased the rights to Ricardo's piece and started foraging platforms like Craigslist for charming furniture pieces fit for a Victorian wolf's living room, she said.

Ahead of opening day, Mercouffer said she was overwhelmed with positive feedback from Wrigley residents and Long Beachers curious about the new cocktail lounge.

"We're starting to call it the Long Beach effect," Mercouffer said. "People are not just friendly, they're connected."

Mercouffer said she received an astonishing amount of RSVPs, about 600, to the grand opening on April 26.

Beyond the bar, beer, wine and the usual spirits you'd expect will be offered, there are fabled elixirs like absinthe and a lineup of cocktails with names like "Ginderella," "Poison Lips" and "Once Upon A Lime."

But The Wicked Wolf's cocktail menu also includes an equally extensive roster of mocktails,

non-alcoholic wine and beer. The mocktails all include zero proof spirits, to give those who wish to abstain from alcohol the "same bite" that a traditional cocktail has, Mercouffer says.

"I'm not really a drinker, but I thought if I could create a community space and an art space, then I'm OK with running a bar that has a really strong mocktail menu for people like me," she said.

Mercouffer admits she doesn't know a whole lot about alcohol, which is why she recruited Warren, co-owner of Melody Bar in Los Angeles, to help create the Wolf's cocktail menu.

"It's a fun journey for me to really feel the place, the energy and the vibe," Warren said. "It's going to be a lot of cocktails or classic cocktails done our way, as well as fresh fruit-forward cocktails and martinis."

LGBTQ-centric events, poetry nights, DJs, art galleries, play readings, live jazz bands, swing dancing, what have you—Mercouffer's motive from the beginning was to conjure up something of an intimate melting pot for creatives.

"We want to be a home for artists," she said.

The cocktail lounge is open from 5 p.m. to midnight on weekdays and from 5 p.m. to 2 a.m. on weekends. ■



Cheantay Jensen / Business Journal

George Wolfe, left, and Thea Mercouffer are the owners of The Wicked Wolf, a new cocktail bar in Wrigley.



Cheantay Jensen / Business Journal

The Wicked Wolf is pictured above the bar of her namesake cocktail lounge.



Cheantay Jensen / Business Journal

The interior of the Wicked Wolf, a new cocktail lounge in Wrigley, is decorated with vintage couches, chairs and chandeliers.

Queen Mary Swap

Continued from page 3

was verging on default of its lease, the bond money was gone and not all the work had been done.

A review by the city auditor and extensive reporting by the Long Beach Post found that various missteps by the operator and lax oversight from the city resulted in the city overpaying for some of the work, some maintenance not being done to acceptable standards, and other projects not done at all.

The city alleged in 2020 court filings that tens of millions in critical repairs had not been completed, and a 2021 survey put a specific number on it: Another \$23 million was urgently needed to address issues including the hull's structural integrity and watertightness, compromised sewage holding tanks and nonfunctional boilers.

Last May, the city had all but two of the ship's severely deteriorated lifeboats removed to relieve stress on the vessel's structure. Since then, improvements have been made to the ship's bulkheads and bilge pump systems, and an emergency generator has been installed.

In late December, the city reopened the ship after two and

half years to guided tours, but only offered a few to limited areas of the ship. Public tours began more broadly earlier this month.

Most recently, the city spent \$1 million on safety fixes such as new boilers and heat exchangers, which provide hot water throughout the ship—a requirement for hotel, restaurant and bar operations, and another \$1 million on things like carpet repair and new room locks to improve the guest experience.

"This is a huge development opportunity to do something real special over here. So part of it is starting to invest in that process."

- Tom Modica, City Manager

Hotel and restaurant operations are expected to resume next month.

Other projects the city has stated will be completed ahead of next month's broader reopening include upgrades to the ship's main boarding entrance, elevator and restroom repair, kitchen and restaurant improvements, as well as painting, lighting and other enhancements.

Long-term, the ship likely requires hundreds of millions of dollars for additional preservation and maintenance, and so far no

funding has been identified.

Long Beach officials had hoped in 2021 to convince the port to take over responsibility for the Queen Mary and all the needed repairs, but that proposal doesn't appear to have progressed beyond some closed-door discussions. Some harbor commissioners have expressed reservations about taking on the ship and its expenses; port officials commissioned their own survey of its condition that should be done in a

an opportunity to generate revenue.

"Demand for real estate at the port is so high that the companies that we typically lease land to can make use of virtually any type of property in any configuration or condition it is," Hacegaba said.

At some point, though, city leaders will face a big decision: Can they find an operator who will make enough money—whether from the ship itself or, more likely, from potential future development alongside it—to keep up with repairs, or should they look for a way to remove what's become a costly albatross from around the city's neck?

The Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, for its part, pushed back against further use of public funds on the ship for the time being.

Pointing to a 2016 marine survey that found \$289 million in critical repairs would be needed for the vessel to remain viable, the association said in a statement, "that survey was done almost ten years ago."

"Before more public funds are spent on the vessel, it would be prudent to wait for the latest marine engineering survey to be completed and made available to the public," the statement continued, "so that everyone can have a complete understanding of the structural integrity of the ship and the scope and size of needed repairs." ■

CITY OF
LONG BEACH

Bid Opportunities

| Title | Bid Number | Due Date |
|--|------------|------------|
| Forklift PM and Repair | WD-23-091 | 05/03/2023 |
| Enterprise Land Management and Permitting Consulting Services | TI-23-201 | 05/04/2023 |
| Water Main Lining Pilot Project MC-5174 (WD-34-19) | WD-23-061 | 05/04/2023 |
| R-7207 Long Beach Police Training Academy Project 3005010029 | PW-23-221 | 05/04/2023 |
| Construction Management Services for Water Main Lining Pilot Project MC-5174 | WD-23-072 | 05/05/2023 |
| Architectural, Landscape Architectural and Urban Design Consulting Services | PW-23-251 | 05/09/2023 |
| Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus | FD-23-219 | 05/09/2023 |
| Parts and Repair for Pneumatic | WD-23-092 | 05/10/2023 |
| Design Services of Water Main Bridge Crossings Repair Sites #2, #3, #28, and #34 | WD-23-079 | 05/10/2023 |

Bidder Registration

To receive notifications of bid opportunities, register with the city, and download additional bid details, visit www.longbeach.gov/purchasing.

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Queen Mary Transfer

Continued from Cover

into the declining ship through a land swap.

Mayor Rex Richardson said in a tweet that day that the plan “brings closure to the question of whether or not the Queen Mary will be transferred to the Port of Long Beach. The ship will remain with the City of Long Beach. The Port will be a partner.”

Richardson lauded the proposed land swap, which was slated to be voted on by the City Council in early May, saying the partnership will fund repairs and restoration projects as well as strengthen the city’s economy.

City Manager Tom Modica told the Post that the city is open to restarting communications with the port about transferring the ship in the future, but added that he is enthusiastic about the prospect of the city overseeing and investing in the Queen.

Port officials also see the plan as beneficial.

“The port welcomes the city’s proposal to continue to manage the Queen Mary,” Deputy Executive Director Noel Hacegaba said on April 25. “As always, we stand ready to work together with the city team on measures that benefit tourism, trade and transportation in Long Beach.”

The port, for its part, commissioned a study of the ship



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

The smokestacks of the historic Queen Mary can be seen from the ITS container terminal at the Port of Long Beach.

in June of last year to determine its potential fiscal obligations, should the ship be transferred. The report is expected to be completed in the next three to four months, spokesperson Lee Peterson said in an email on April 24.

The initial idea of transferring the ship came after Urban Commons, the vessel’s previous leaseholder, went bankrupt in 2021.

The city was left holding the bag for the deteriorating ship, which likely needs hundreds of millions of dollars in repairs and deferred maintenance. So in September of that year, Councilmember Cindy Allen, whose district at the time included the ship, brought an item to the council to open negotiations between the city and the Harbor Department, which oversees the Port of Long Beach.

The item passed unanimously, with Modica stating negotiations could take up to a year.

The proposal was controversial, with Harbor Commissioners voicing their concerns over the effects the transfer could have on the port’s numerous crucial—and expensive—capital improvement projects.

“Not to be on the negative side of this, but I’m hoping that our City Council really understands that we have to be careful with what we get ourselves involved with and how do we financially make this work,” Harbor Commissioner and former City Councilmember Frank Colonna said at the time. “We can’t magically create new money to deal with what hasn’t been dealt with in the past.”

The plan also received pushback from port stakeholders, including the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, and the California State Lands Commission, all of whom pointed to potential impacts the move could have on port operations due to the financial strain that would be brought on by footing the bill to repair and restore the ship.

John McLaurin, PMSA president, said April 25 that the association is “pleased” the transfer is off the table. He did, however, note that there is still concern over an ongoing partnership

between the city and port when it comes to the iconic ship.

“According to a (2016) marine survey, the ship needs \$300 million to restore its structural integrity,” McLaurin told the Post in an email. “With cargo volumes dropping, port competitiveness intensifying and in order to meet the strictest environmental standards in the nation, the Port of Long Beach is not in a position to fund the many needs of the ill-fated Queen Mary.”

While repairs and restoration to bring the Queen back to its former glory are costly, so are any other options for handling the vessel, according to a 2021 report from engineering firm Moffatt & Nichol. The city-commissioned report examined various ways the city could deal with the ship—from fixing it up to scrapping it.

The findings of the report were plain: No matter what the city does, the price tag will be large. Dry docking the ship was the most expensive option, at \$200-\$500 million. Turning the ship into an artificial reef would run between \$105-\$190 million.

The cheapest option, which the city has opted for, is preserving the vessel with a one-time cost of \$25-\$50 million, with ongoing costs of \$5 million annually for more than 25 years.

A City Council staff report states that states that, prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the Queen Mary generated upward of \$57 million gross revenue annually, which the city hopes to generate once again for reinvestment into the ship.

“In the end,” the staff report states, “the (city and port) concluded the best option for the Queen Mary to support herself was through an investment in the ship ... to give her every possible chance to generate revenue that would then be dedicated to the significant operational and maintenance costs to preserve the ship in the future.” ■

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