Queen Mary

Long Beach city leaders are working to develop a formula to turn the historic ocean liner into a bustling hub for community and tourism.

Story on page 5
From prison to clippers: How Andre Cobbs transformed his life to become a celebrity barber

By Jackie Rae

In 2009, Andre Cobbs should have been planning his trip overseas to play basketball with the Philippines National team. Instead, he was facing a 16-year prison sentence for robbery and assault. Cobbs claimed he was sentenced for a crime he didn’t commit. Still, he said he had to humble himself, learn from others who had been in similar predicaments, and try to be better. That led Cobbs to join the fire crew while in prison.

“Some inmates did lose their lives,” Cobbs said reflecting on his time with the fire crew. While he admits seeing friends die in the line of duty for $8 per hour was difficult, he said there is a positive aspect.

“When you get out after being on the fire crew, you change for the better.”

Part of being better while in prison meant falling back on a skill cultivated over the years. Cobbs’ grandfather was a barber, Cobbs’ grandmother taught him about clippers, and he began cutting hair. Cobbs said he “messed up” several haircuts before getting better. Once he took classes, he began to perfect his craft, and he managed to improve even more while in prison. Then, in February of 2022, Cobbs was released from prison after serving 13 years of his 16-year sentence.

Because of his time with the fire crew, he was able to find a job fairly quickly, but he was in a prison cell when he received an opportunity to give back and provide the same opportunities to others he has received. “I’m a better person,” said Cobbs, “I want to help others and still give back.”

Eventually, one client invited Cobbs to be the celebrity barber at the beach. When people heard from Cobbs, they book him through his social media. It’s always been a question of whether or not we are going to be judged because of our past. People who were untruthful will get free haircuts, and those who were able to pay will pay. So, Cobbs was able to grow his clientele and slowly build a name for himself.

Eventually, one client introduced him to Winnie Stackz, a celebrity stylist who works with Missy Elliot, Morgan Thee Stallion and Saweetie. Not only has Stackz made Cobbs his preferred barber, he has also invited Cobbs to be the celebrity barber for the BET Celebrity Sunday Show on June 4.

“Him believing in me has made me a better person,” said Cobbs, who added that he is determined to grow back and provide the same opportunities he has received.

Although he might not be at the beach as often as his demand grows, Cobbs encourages everyone to seek out his help for a beach cut when needed.

“If I’m a celebrity barber, I’m still coming back. I’m not going to change for nobody.”

Anyone interested in getting a cut from Cobbs can book him through his Instagram page @june4th. •
After a series of work actions and terminal closures, operations at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles have “generally improved,” the Pacific Maritime Association said June 9. The statement came a week that the Marine Exchange of Southern California described as “continuing,” noting that the week started with an anticipated trio of delayed container ships but ended with only three anticipated delays. The impacts came after two container terminals at the Port of Long Beach closed on June 5, according to port officials, following an intentional slowdown by workers the week before as negotiations over a new labor contract dragged on.

Total terminals International on Pier 7, the largest container terminal in Long Beach, and the Pacific Container Terminal on Pier J did not move containers during the day on June 5, port spokesperson Lee Peterson confirmed to the Business Journal.

When asked if the closure was a continuation of recent work actions by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Peterson said, “access to close were made based on operational needs.” The two terminals reopened for the evening shift, according to Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero.

TTI sent out a notice June 4 that all gate appointments at the terminal the following day were canceled, according to an email obtained by the Business Journal. The operator did not give a reason for the cancellations.

Southern terminal operator responded to requests for comment. Pacific Container Terminal, owned by Carrix Inc’s SSA Marine, was closed on June 5 for normal operational reasons having nothing to do with labor, terminal general manager Randy Galosic told reporters.

The closures came two days after the ports of LA and Long Beach saw slowdowns due to work actions by the ILWU. On Friday, June 1, ranks and dock longshore workers staged a wildcard strike that created labor shortages at container terminals, slowing down cargo movement.

The action was the latest in a series that have taken place up and down California as the union negotiates a new contract for workers with the Pacific Maritime Association, which represents terminal operators and shippers.

“Over the weekend and continuing today, the ILWU has continued to stage intentional and disruptive work actions that have slowed operations at key marine terminals at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and elsewhere on the West Coast,” including the Port of Oakland and Seattle,” PMA said in a June 5 statement. “Unfortunately, instead of focusing on action playbooks, including refusing to discharge cargo to the terminals, slow operations, and making unfounded health and safety claims.

“The ILWU’s coast-wide work actions since June 4 are forcing retailers, manufacturers and other shippers to shift cargo away from the West Coast and the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles for more than 25 years in the absence of any federal or state regulatory oversight,” said Peter Knatz, who held high-ranking jobs with the West Coast longshore union for the past 23 years.

According to Knatz, the ports of LA and Long Beach are facing a series of challenges that are forcing shippers to find alternative sources for their cargo. The resulting slowdowns have caused delays in the movement of goods, leading to increased costs for shippers and consumers.

With the Queen Mary back in city’s hands, officials eye new development plans

By Alicia Robinson and Brandon Richardson

Instead of a deteriorating ocean liner surrounded by a sea of asphalt and needed in a maze of port operations with semi trucks whizzing by, what if the Queen Mary was a polished historical gem providing the backdrop to a vibrant waterfront promenade, where residents could grab a coffee or sit down to a meal, hear an outdoor concert or enjoy a unique view of the city skyline?

With a recent infusion of cash to fund continued repairs on the neglected ship and renewed plans to explore shore-side development, Long Beach city leaders are hoping they’ll finally find the formula to turn the tide in creating a bustling boardmaker that draws locals as well as tourists.

As the twin ports work slowdowns on June 2, ILWU local 13 trades began a new strategy which included a “stop” upon themselves to voice their disapproval of delays and terminal operators’ position."

The statement pointed out that PMA members accumulated upward of $300 million in net profits with limited access and restrictions on how it can be used.

Johnny Valley, the city’s deputy economic development director, pointed to the difficulties of accomplishing both tasks simultaneously.

“Nobody was able to successfully maintain and manage the ship. The ship was put to work through the development process,” he said.

Such as the city has taken on maintenance and operation of the vessel, with the help of contractor Evolution Hospitality, and officials are hoping development proposals will follow.

“We want the ship to be the crown for not just this site, but for the city,” Valley said.

“We want someone to come to the site and think, ‘Wow, that view, that ship–we want to develop something out here.’”

A history of failure

Whatever development goes pitched, it won’t be the first try.

In the past few decades, ideas that failed include Disney’s plan in 1990 for a development that would have included an amusement park with replicas of historical ships, a "Mysterious Island"-themed area, a massive aquarium and a working research lab.

The $1 billion park and accompanying resort—including five hotels and hundreds of boat slips—would have covered 350 acres, much of which is underwater and would have been filled in.

Faced with a tangle of regulatory issues and lukewarm reception from residents, Disney deep-sixed the idea and instead built a second attraction next to its flagship Anaheim park.

More than two decades later, Urban Commons—which held the ship’s lease from 2016 to 2021—revealed a $250 million plan for Queen Mary Island, a 65-acre entertainment district with a 2,400-seat bowl, a 200-room hotel, shops, and restaurants.

“entertainment” adventure such as an ice climbing wall, zipline and skydiving simulations.

But by 2019, the ship’s longtime inspector was reporting critical repairs that had been neglected and that the vessel could soon become unsalvageable, the city later filed him. In 2021, Urban Commons was in bankruptcy court and the city was scrambling to compete with urgent maintenance on the Queen. Some of the earlier proposals were so grandiose, it seemed unlikely they’d come to fruition, said Sam Baldauf, whose Ensemble Investments LLC operates two hotels about a half mile from the Queen Mary.

“It needs to be more realistic,” Baldauf said. “It’s challenging developing down there, but it can be done.”

For previous operators, the work of keeping the ship from falling apart likely took their focus away from the land side, said Geraldine Knatz, who held high-ranking jobs at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles for more than 25 years before her 2014 retirement.

“I suspect that the ship was always the challenge for them in terms of how that property was going to be developed,” she said. “It’s not like a clean slate.”

That’s why the city’s current plan is to handle Queen Mary operations itself and keep that separate from land-side development, Valley said (though he left the door open for a grant proposal or alternate direction from the City Council).

“Our emphasis since the city took control is to stabilize, maintain and improve the ship,” he said.

“my belief is that by stabilizing the
New report shows how colleges hurt and help students’ mental health

By Tess Keasenoff

A global pandemic, economic uncertainty and racial injustice have all contributed to an overall decline in mental health across the country and globe in recent years, studies have shown. And according to a new report, co-authored by Cal State Long Beach professor Lindsey Pérez Huber, students on college campuses are mirroring that trend.

“Degrees of Distress: How Higher Education Institutions Hurt and Help Student Mental Health,” commissioned by College Futures Foundation and written by Pérez Huber and UC San Diego professor Pam Mushou, explores how college students, particularly students from marginalized groups, are impacted by mental health challenges, and the role that higher education institutions can play in both helping and harming mental wellness.

The report cites one particularly poignant statistic: In 2021, about 1 in 4 college students reported experiencing at least one mental health challenge that year.

“The statistic was really striking, because it shows that the vast majority, a large portion of our college students, are experiencing mental health challenges,” Pérez Huber said.

When examining the way that higher education institutions play a role in perpetuating these challenges, there were a couple of key findings. “One is that institutions by their design, by their comprehensive and individualistic cultures, can promote social isolation,” Pérez Huber said.

Although it is a common experience for college students in general to experience feelings of not belonging particularly while transitioning into a college environment, students of color, who oftentimes are coming into predominantly white institutions, are disproportionately impacted, said Pérez Huber.

Even students at institutions such as Cal State Long Beach, for instance, which serves many students of color, can still find that the school “prioritizes dominant cultures,” Pérez Huber said.

“This sense of not belonging is a very common experience for many students of color, even when they are in institutions where they see a lot of students around like them,” she said.

Students of color typically do not see their experiences reflected in college curriculum unless they are taking an ethnic studies or gender studies course, and oftentimes do not see professors who look like them, Pérez Huber said.

Of course, other societal issues have contributed to a sense of isolation college many students are experiencing, according to the report.

“Historically, we’ve been seeing a bump around racial conflict in the summer of 2020 in which people demanded a recognition of racism, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy, students entering higher education are still trying to grapple with what that means,” Pérez Huber said.

Plus, there are the everyday experiences of racism on campuses, and more subtle experiences such as racial microaggressions, which “can take a psychological toll and physical toll on students who experience those as a daily part of their campus culture and experiences,” Pérez Huber said.

National, the phenomenon of higher education has had an impact on students’ wellbeing and has led to economic performance measures to which they are contributing.

Because of this, the report says it is critical to determine how to best get students the support they need to succeed in college, and move beyond the days of feeling disconnected from their college experience.

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The YMCA of Greater Long Beach will offer on-the-spot interviews at today’s Career Fair from 10am-2pm at the Expo Arts Center.

For information about Northern California’s YMCA of Greater Long Beach, call 562-495-5884 or visit www.smtps.org.
Throughout the pandemic on the backs of dockworkers who continued moving cargo, despite the dangers presented by the pandemic, 43 ILWU members died from the virus, the union stated.

Despite high profits, "our crews and terminal operators have thumbed their noses at the workers' basic requests, stomping on the health and life of the hundreds of people endued during the pandemic did not matter to them and they were expendable in the name of profits," Local 13's statement reads.

The organization claims the disruptions as the union "refused" to dispatch lashers, who sort containers for trans-Pacific sailings and unload arriving cargo.

"Without this vital function, ships sit idle and cannot be loaded or unloaded, leaving American ports sitting idle at the docks unable to reach their destination," the PMA statement reads.

In a June email, a spokesperson for the National Marine Exchange, which represents about 21,000 dockworkers at the 29 West Coast ports, said the union "does not have anything to share at this time."

ILWU Local 13, which represents about 12,200 dockworkers in the San Pedro Bay, did not respond to a request for comment.

The alleged work actions and delays have resulted in delays for at least 10 container ships and in out of the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, according to the Marine Exchange of Southern California. The organization said the vessels are "delayed because of the labor shortage."

"Some agencies either did not want to comment as to the labor shortage or the reason for vessel delays, or the emails we received from them did not specify the reason for a delay," said Richard Palmer, assistant maritime information manager for the Marine Exchange. "While the ships identified by the Marine Exchange were experiencing harder delays, Palmer noted that "basically every container vessel is having their schedule pushed back by about a day or two."

The union's failure to dispatch lashers is part of a broader effort to withhold labor from the docks as contract negotiations between the two groups continue after more than a year, a PMA claims.

On June 7, the two parties entered into conservatorships—county employees to serve the homeless population. "I get calls from people who believe they're going to see an overnight reduction in people with mental health issues on the streets," Supervisor Holly Mitchell said. Mitchell said she felt like she had no choice to support the measure. "I knew we're not going to close down those shelters, but I let people off the streets."

Others questioned if the $151 million the state has set aside to help pay for facilities and to be assigned care plans or be put into treatment. "The county could file a petition to get the court to rule on a mandatory care plan, or a family member or other person could file a petition, but either way, they have to be verified by a licensed professional that the person has a qualifying mental illness."

"If we're able to get voluntary enrollment, we could get the petition dismissed," Draxler said, noting that the county would push for voluntary enrollment in mental health services.

If a plan is mandated by a court, it would last for one year and could be extended for a second year, Draxler said.

Long Beach was supportive of the county's proposal and legislators ultimately adopted it in September. Long Beach's 2023 homeless count estimated that about 14% of those counted had some form of severe mental illness, but it's unclear how many of those people would be eligible for CARE Court. The county could also file a petition to have those cases removed. The state is directing funding to those cases.

"I'm inclined to vote no today on this motion because I don't feel we're ready," Supervisor Lindsay Horvath, who was the lone dissenting vote.

LA County to hire more health workers amid CARE Court launch

By Jason Ruiz

As Los Angeles County prepares for the December launch of the new statewide CARE (Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment) Court system—which could allow some people with mental illnesses to be assigned care plans or be put into conservatorships—county supervisors voted on June 6 to start the hiring process of about 10,000 mental health workers.

The state's 55 counties are expected to phase in the new CARE Court system over the next two years, but LA County opted to move more quickly and is hoping to start accepting petitions for the court by Oct. 1. A motion by Supervisors Janice Hahn and Kathryn Barger said that pushing for the court's implementation this year instead of December 2024 could mean that people in need of help with severe mental health issues could get it sooner.

CARE Court, which was proposed by Gov. Gavin Newsom and adopted by the legislature last year, was pitched both as a way for the state to grapple with its growing mental health crisis and as a way to get some of the most vulnerable unhoused people off the streets and into treatment.

Supervisors voted 4 to 1 to start the recruitment and hiring process for more county employees to serve the anticipated cases, the number of which could range between 4,500 and 5,000, according to the county.

Some supervisors tried to temper public expectations of how the CARE Court would affect street homelessness, since only those with schizophrenia or some other psychotic illnesses would qualify for the program, which is projected to be about 10% of the county's unhoused population. "I get calls from people who believe they're going to see an overnight reduction in people with mental health issues on the streets," Supervisor Holly Mitchell said. Mitchell said she felt like she had no choice to support the measure. "I knew we're not going to close down those shelters, but I let people off the streets."

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"I'm inclined to vote no today on this motion because I don't feel we're ready," Supervisor Lindsay Horvath, who was the lone dissenting vote.

Once the program is operational, there will be one dedicated court room for CARE Court, but other courts that handle mental health cases would still operate. The state is directing funding to nonprofit legal services to represent people who end up in CARE Courts, but if the firms decline to represent a person or the person declines six services, the county's public defender would represent those cases.

Connie Draxler, acting chief deputy director of the county's Department of Mental Health, said that she would be the two parties for a person to enter the CARE Court. The county could file a petition to get the court to rule on a mandatory care plan, or a family member or other person could file a petition, but either way, they have to be verified by a licensed professional that the person has a qualifying mental illness.

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Four new community projects in Central Long Beach are slated to receive a total of $182,000—all in the name of supporting young children and their families.

The projects, led by Long Beach Community Table, the Long Beach Public Library Foundation, Long Beach Residents Empowered and M.O.R.E. Mothers, were selected to receive the money as part of an initiative known as Best Start Central Long Beach.

Best Start Central Long Beach was launched through First 5 L.A., an organization that uses Proposition 10 tax funds to support children in their first five years of life. The group provided the funds for the four projects, with the support of The Nonprofit Partnership and Long Beach Forward.

But while the organization is providing the money, First 5 LA didn’t choose how to spend it. Instead, Long Beach parents, families and their neighbors will decide how to use the funds.

The projects are scheduled to receive the following amounts and are as follows:

- $50,000 to LiBRE, or Long Beach Residents Empowered, received community change funds, voted upon by Best Start Central Long Beach member families.
- $50,000 to the Long Beach Public Library Foundation for a program to provide adults with literacy skills.
- $35,000 to St. Andrews Preschool, which is working on a satellite site to provide child care services in the area.
- $32,000 to the Salvation Army, which is working to better equip its services in the area.

“With this money we’ll be providing children with educational and support services,” said Mary-Anne Keating, CEO of First 5 L.A. “We hope this will help provide Long Beach families with the support they need to succeed.”

The projects are expected to be completed by the end of June 2023.
Commissioners discuss hikes to Long Beach water rates; vote expected June 22

A staff-recommended hike of 10% for water rates next year would amount to a $5.69 monthly increase for the average customer.

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach Utilities commissioners met last week to discuss a potential rate hike for water, which could be as high as 10% next year as the department deals with declining sales due to customer conservation, increasing costs and a plan to add capital investment that could, in the long term, increase the city’s supply of less expensive groundwater.

A staff-recommended hike of 10% for water rates next year would amount to a $5.69 monthly increase for the average customer, according to the department. However, an alternate increase of 9% that was recommended during the commission’s last meeting would add about $3.32 to the monthly bill.

The commission is expected to set rates for water, sewer and gas at its June 22 meeting, but only water rates are expected to increase in the new fiscal year that begins in October.

By Braden Walker, the Utility Department’s director of finance, told commissioners.

Walker has presented scenarios for rate increases for the upcoming year through 2028, which show that a smaller increase in 2024 would likely result in larger increases in the following years to allow for the department to get back to its minimum reserve level, which is about $10 million.

A 10% increase could be followed by an 8%, 7%, 6% and 5% increase over the next five years under the department’s current projections, while a 9% increase next year could be followed by increases of 8%, 7%, 6% and 5% increase over the next five years.

The hikes are necessary because the department is projected to receive about $9.3 million less in water sales due to customer conservation efforts and wet weather, but it’s also planning on investing millions of dollars in groundwater projects and new infrastructure.

The department has about $8.9 million in reserves currently and would drop to $4.4 million without a rate increase in October, Walker said. The reserve minimum is the amount of money the department would need to operate for 30 days or make emergency repairs.

Walker said having a healthy reserve allows the department to borrow against certain terms on credit that it uses to fund large investments into its network.

The projected increases are also necessary, Walker said, because the department’s costs continue to grow. Pensions, benefits, replacing vehicles, pipes and other materials are getting more expensive and could continue to grow because of inflation.

Even imported water, which the city is reducing its reliance on, is getting more expensive, as well. While it becomes a smaller piece of the pie where the city gets its water from, it is expected to become more costly over the next few years.

“With inflation, inputs are going up, they have to be balanced and forecast somewhere, and unfortunately, they’re on the backs of the customers,” Walker said.

If inflation or other costs start to increase, the projected rate increases for future years could decrease or go away altogether, Walker said.

Commissioners asked if there were ways to minimize the increase for customers for the coming year by transferring funds from more financially healthy arm of the department, like the gas utility, but California law limits how utility money can be used, typically tying it to the source of where it was generated.

But commissioners could look at ways to conserve water utility money.

While the city’s loss of the Measure M lawsuit early last year means the Utilities Department can no longer transfer up to 12% of water and sewer revenue to the city, the department still must pay the city for repairs on any infrastructure the department owns, the amount that the department owes the city is known as the “system charge.”

And the utility owes the city a new system of dollars because of road work that will be necessary after water pipe maintenance is completed. But rather than that money coming from the water fund, the commission is exploring whether the water fund could cover the cost.

It’s unclear if that would be legal. Details on that are expected to be presented to the commission at the June 22 meeting.

Once the commission approved the proposed budget, it will go to the City Council for final approval, which is expected to happen before the new fiscal year begins in October.

Mental Health

Continued from page 6

of student success, which focuses on how quickly students graduate, what kinds of jobs they get, and other “return on investment” measures, rather than focusing on meaningful experiences students can have, and the opportunities they’re exposed to, Perea Huber said.

Apart from that, financial literacy is “a huge issue” for college students, particularly as the gap in working-class and affluent groups have drastically increased over the past couple of decades in the U.S., added to increasing anxiety, stress and mental health challenges.

Many who enter higher education don’t have the financial resources to pay for it. “They’re leaving college with tens of thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars in student debt, depending on what university they attended,” Perea Huber said.

Some students are coming into college not only unable to afford tuition, but without having their basic needs met—which could mean not having housing, food, or other necessities that contribute to health status.

While schools typically have services available for struggling students, complex bureaucracies in higher education create barriers to accessing resources, the report details. For example, many institutions can have a relatively small counseling staff serving a campus of thousands of students, making initial and then consistent access a barrier, Perea Huber said.

Despite the negative impact that colleges and universities positions

Sea otter pups make their debut at Aquarium of the Pacific

By Alicia Robinson

Three young sea otters, all born stranded on California beaches but now being fed, frolicking and generally looking furry and cute at the Aquarium of the Pacific.

The otter pups, named Elle, Bee and Cee, were born in March and April, according to the aquarium’s Sea Otter Programs manager. While a stranded pup is found, the moms take care of feeding and grooming their babies, so the best thing that we can do for our community is to give them a new home, the manager said.

The aquarium announced on June 6 that the three youngsters in Long Beach are visitors in the otter habitat.

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Despite the negative impact that colleges and universities positions

Sea otter pups make their debut at Aquarium of the Pacific
Cultural Heritage Commission to reexamine historic nature of Varden Hotel building

By Joseph Ruiz

A vote to approve the temporary removal of the historic Dolly Varden Hotel sign from the building, which could be demolished to make way for new housing, was postponed by the Long Beach Cultural Heritage Commission on May 30 as the panel sought more information. The commissioners voted unanimously to approve the temporary removal of the sign to the extent that the building could be demolished to make way for a new multi-story building.

The Dolly Varden Hotel could be demolished to make way for a new multi-story building.
Hollywood Bowl by the sea

Despite its administrative and maintenance headaches, some people truly love the Queen and want to see it prosper. Among them is Danny Rangel, 96, a Long Beach resident who was devasted to be laid off in early 2020 after spending nearly eight years on a tour guide on the ship. He was one of at least 25 former employees, some with decades under their belt, who were thrilled to return to their jobs as the management company ramped up hiring to reopen the ship early this year.

As an actor, Rangel enjoys the performance aspect of giving tours, he said, but also “it's the history of the ship, what she means to not only Long Beach history but world history, getting to see all walks of life, people who had traveled on board and talked, you know, people related to families who worked on the building (the ship).”

His favorite fact about the Queen Mary is that during World War II, a voyage with 16,683 troops and crew members set a record for the most passengers carried on one vessel, the record still stands.

With the restored ship as an anchor for shore-side development, some observers said they believe the area could be transformed into a success. (Land-use optimism the area could be “Hollywood Bowl by the sea.”)

The ship will always own a piece of history

A new study of development possibilities for the Queen Mary and its environs could come later this year, according to financial recommendations suggested mixed-use development with a public promenade and an amphitheater with about 5,000 seats, Michael Bohlin, an architect with Studio One Eleven, who chaired the group.

In the long term, he said, there might be a market for a pretty rich mixed-use environment that would take advantage of the views of Downtown Long Beach but keep the Queen in the mix as he said, “What better place than to sit near the Queen Mary and look at our city and see a performance—it could be the Hollywood Bowl by the sea.”

Bohl said the city’s plans should be bold, but he also agreed that first the right development could be crucial and that the city should limit any involvement until it’s clear what will work.

Any project would need to connect the ship with the rest of the area and from the site, which has limited access (via the 710 Freeway and Queen Mary Bridge), Knott said. She suggested water taxis, improved access (the 710 Freeway, and accessibility upgrades, and infrastructure updates, among other improvements),” Somora added.

In addition to the new construction planned at Stanford, there are other HVAC projects currently underway or starting soon across the district. The HVAC project at Arrowhead Elementary started back in April, and construction is scheduled to begin at Emerson and Compton this summer. During the 2023-24 school year, HVAC projects are expected to begin at Millikan High, Tinscher Prep, and Minna Cany Elementary. Additional

The entertainment of Stanford Middle School.

Continuing the Long Beach Unified School District’s efforts to have air-conditioned classrooms on all of its campuses, Stanford Middle School will be the latest Long Beach school to receive an HVAC upgrade starting this summer. The $9.5 million project is expected to be completed prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year and is being funded by Measure E funds, which were approved by voters back in 2016. According to district spokesperson Evelyn Somora, the timeline on HVAC installation was moved up after a heat wave at the beginning of the current school year, which prompted demands from parents for more action to protect kids from the blistering temperatures inside classrooms.

“The planned installation of an air-conditioning system at LBUSD schools was accelerated in response to last fall’s heat wave and the increasing frequency of extreme heat and poor air quality days,” Somora said. “The health and safety of our students remains the district’s highest priority; we’ll continue to implement heat mitigation measures at schools that aren’t yet fully air-conditioned.”

The LBUSD’s current timeline calls for air conditioning on every campus within the next four years. The lone exception will be at Poly High School, which will undergo a major campus renovation and is slated to have AC installed in 2028. Somora said that portable, air-conditioned classrooms will be installed at Stanford to accommodate students during construction. Once the project is complete, she said, the district will have full HVAC capabilities in all buildings. As with the rest of the district’s HVAC projects, Stanford’s renovations will include new, high-efficiency air conditioning systems in all permanent buildings, technology and accessibility upgrades, and infrastructure updates, among other improvements,” Somora added.

In addition to the new construction planned at Stanford, there are

Queen Mary Financial Records, 2007 - 2019

For now, the focus is on fixing up the ship—Vallejo and Managing Director Steve Calva said the state of the ship was beyond a year or two of work. In 2015 to gather input and make recommendations suggested mixed-use development with a public promenade and an amphitheater with about 5,000 seats, Michael Bohlin, an architect with Studio One Eleven, who chaired the group. "At the time, the project was for a pretty rich mixed-use environment that would take advantage of the views of Downtown Long Beach" but keep the Queen in the mix, he said.

Bhn said the city’s plans should be bold, but he also agreed that first the right development could be crucial and that the city should limit any involvement until it’s clear what will work. Any project would need to connect the ship with the rest of the area and from the site, which has limited access (via the 710 Freeway and Queen Mary Bridge), Knott said. She suggested water taxis, improved access (the 710 Freeway, and accessibility upgrades, and infrastructure updates, among other improvements),” Somora added.

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winning projects, all of which Beach network got to vote on the caregivers and community leaders.

The winning projects included presentations from 18 of the 19 applicants. Each voter was able to rank the top five projects they hoped to see included in the organization's May community meeting, or during the meeting itself, which included presentations from all of the 18 applicants.

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The leadership team for the next two years will be voted on at this time. The new Ike’s location in Long Beach, the sandwich shop gained popularity during the rise of Yelp, which included any community member who participated in a Best Start program in the previous six months. Voters were able to cast their votes online in the two weeks leading up to the organization’s May community partnership meeting, or during the meeting itself, which included presentations from all of the 18 applicants.

One of the top five projects the organization said that it knows about it, and then make sure that everybody who needs it knows about it, and then make sure that no one else is hungry,” said Shannon Thomas, fundraiser and grant writer for Long Beach Community Table. “If you can remove the barrier to having good, healthy, nutritious food for families, you just give everybody a leg up.”

Particularly amid the food shortages that have been impacting mutual aid and food distribution organizations locally and across the state, the funds will be “such a blessing,” this year, Thomas said. “At the end of the day, we want community to have a say on how these funds are spent because we anticipated that that’s ultimately like how we get the best outcome, it’s that a community that is the most impacted have a voice in the process, and then ultimately on how the funds are used,” Flores said.

“The company’s headquarters relocated from the Bay Area to Long Beach at Clark Avenue and Spring Street in 2021, three years after the opening of the first Ike’s on Long Beach on Pacific Coast Highway near Bellflower Boulevard in 2018.

“Ike’s Love and Sandwiches, the popular sandwich chain founded in the Bay Area, is continuing to expand, with the opening of its second location in Long Beach. The shop, located in Long Beach’s food hall The Hangar at LBX, had a soft opening on Tuesday, May 30. Grand opening activities on June 7 presented the first 50 attendees with an opportunity to get a free T-shirt and sandwich. Plus, guests entered to win free sandwiches for a year or one entered for this, he was just there chatting people up. All sandwiches were discounted at $7.97 for the entire day.

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Epic Wings opens in Bixby Knolls

By Caitlin Antonios

Epic Wings, a beloved San Diego-based chain, has landed in Long Beach, with a new location recently opened in Bixby Knolls.

After owner Lewis Khashan waited months to open amid a long permitting process, the store hosted an official grand opening on June 10.

Khashan, an attorney used to live and attend school in Long Beach. He owned a business in the city in the mid-2000s, before deciding to move to the Island Empire to open his personal injury law firm, Khashan Law Firm, in Murrieta. Now, he’s back in Long Beach as a franchisee for Epic Wings—and a new law office in Bixby Knolls, down the street from the restaurant.

“I really love the community, it’s so outgoing, friendly,” Khashan said. “We also wanted a place that had a big patio, and it all worked out.”

“We also wanted a place that had a 10 sauce options like garlic parmesan, lemon pepper, and zero-calorie atomic sauce.

Despite only having been open for a short time, Khashan has been paying staff for a while as he waited for city permits to come through. His manager has been on payroll for four months, and the rest of his staff, which he hired two months ago, were paid for an entire month while they all waited, Khashan said.

“They didn’t want to lose them, so I said, ‘Let’s just pay them, and they can enjoy a month-long vacation.’

But the store is finally open, and Khashan is considering bringing more Epic Wings to the area—if the permitting process isn’t so difficult.

Epic Wings is located at 4494 Atlantic Ave.

Music to the Street

By Caitlin Antonios

It took $20 for Maria Leyesa to see her future.

Leyesa had been working as an occupational therapist for three years when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Her Instagram account, Foodologie (the study of food), at the time was dedicated to highlighting restaurants and food she had made for fun. But working three different jobs didn’t give her a lot of time to be active on the account.

When the world shut down, she decided—like many others—to learn how to bake.

“I’ve always had a huge sweet tooth,” Leyesa said. “At the time we didn’t really know when things would re-open, or if, and I was worrying, like, ‘What if three places close? I need to learn how to bake.’

She documented her journey baking one chocolate chip cookie a day (and sometimes two) on her Instagram account, a tangible marker of her improving skills. Leyesa was baking so much that she shattered her oven door from overuse and was giving away tons of baked goods to her friends, family and co-workers.

They expected her to start selling them, but Leyesa didn’t feel she had the right to.

“Call it impostor syndrome, but I didn’t feel like I had the right to sell with no baking experience,” Leyesa said.

“I made money on something I made with my very own hands.”

-Maria Leyesa, Owner of Foodologie

Foodologie bakery gets brick-and-mortar in Belmont Shore, slated to open this summer

By Caitlin Antonios

Owner Maria Leyesa stands out front of her soon-to-be-bakery, Foodologie, as she remolds the Belmont Shore location.

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But when a friend of a friend asked to buy a vegan, gluten-free chocolate tart on May 2020, she said yes.

Her first customer pulled up to the street of her small studio apartment, lowered her window, and paid the $20 Leyesa charged, despite the cost of materials and labor being much more, but despite the financial loss, that $20 set Leyesa on a path that led her to renting a small, roughly 500-square-foot shop, just off Belmont Shore’s famed Second Street.

“That moment, walking back (to my apartment), looking at money—the cash spoke volumes. I made money on something I made with my very own hands.”

Leyesa posted on her Instagram account, which had steady audience growth since she began posting her baking journey, that she would begin selling her baked goods, and people were immediately receptive.

“It’s been been constant orders since that day,” Leyesa said. Foodologie will mainly be a cookie and brownie bakery, featuring staples like The Chocolate Chip, The Churrodoodle, Salted Toffee Chocolate and Ube Brownie.

Leyesa hopes to include a rotating cookie of the month and a baked good of the week. She plans on adding a strawberry and matcha brownie to the menu.

And while the term “small business” can mean different things, Foodologie fits the bill.

Leyesa runs her own social media account, which—up until signing for a physical space—served as her storefront. And, until recently, she was the only employee. She now employs three women to help her meet demand.

The decision to open a physical store was not a decision, it was a need.

Multiple people said don’t get a
Long Beach Rascals Teriyaki Grill to relocate to Carson in July, owner says

The popular Rascals Teriyaki Grill near Cal State Long Beach will soon be closed as owners prepare for a long-planned move to Carson, according to Phil Kiyokane, one of the South Bay chain’s owners.

Patrons have filed into the location near the corner of Bellflower Boulevard and Altherr Street for 17 years to grab up teriyaki bowls and the chain’s beloved Chinese chicken salad. The original plan was to close the location at the end of June. “I was trying to do it simultaneously so (employees) can move over—we can keep them employed and working,” Kiyokane said, noting that he has a lot of long-time workers at the Long Beach location.

The first Rascals location opened in Gardena in 1987 as Phil and his brother Wayne partnered to launch the first teriyaki chicken, beef and curry to the South Bay for nearly 40 years.

The new location in Carson has been in the works since 2019 as Kiyokane sought a new spot after the YMCA in Long Beach told him it was looking to expand.

The Los Alsom Family YMCA is located next door to Rascals, and its website shows a proposal for a new two-story, 25,000-square-foot fitness facility the organization wants to build next to its Bellflower Boulevard location. The facility could have a renovated pool, rooms for group activities and fitness classes and a child watch center, according to the site.

Kiyokane said the YMCA has worked with Rascals as it started seeking permits to build out the new location. “It’s been a good 17 years,” Kiyokane said. “We were looking all over Long Beach, in Lakewood for a new location, but this one is closer to our other shops.”

Kiyokane said the facility would be taken longer than expected to complete. Construction was held up by the pandemic, and there were issues with the soil that needed to be remediated. Now, he’s working to get all the utilities connected, he said.

“We were looking all over Long Beach, to Lakewood for a new location, but this one is closer to our other shops.” Kiyokane said. As the last few weeks of operations of the Long Beach location wind down, Kiyokane said there is an element of sadness. “Many of the employees and their families have gotten to know customers who frequented the location when it opened.”

Kiyokane said the facility will be able to complete at the beginning of the next month, from July 1 through July 31. For diners who order online and donate a minimum of $3 with their order, the coupon will be available when they pick up their meal, and it will be redeemable in July as well. In the month of July, aside from being able to redeem the coupon, any purchase of a chicken pot pie or breakfast pot pie will result in the restaurant donating $1 to help provide students with new backpacks for fall.

Kiyokane said the new Rascals Teriyaki Grill will be located at 205 E. Carson St., Carson.

Get restaurant recs from the people you trust most with Beli

Hof’s Hut kicks off school backpack fundraiser with ways for customers to donate

All three locations—Long Beach, Seal Beach and Torrance—will participate to help provide students with new backpacks before fall.

By Caitlin Antonios

The first thing most people do when they want to try a new restaurant for dinner is Google, “best restaurants Long Beach.”

But there’s a problem with that method. How can you trust that those restaurants would actually cater to your specific tastes?

July Thalen and Eliot Frost were questioning just that when they started dating.

“They are always going to classes with good critic reviews or high ratings and ending up disappointed,” Frost said.

They documented all the restaurants they would go to on dates on complicated spreadsheets, a process that eventually led to a marriage—and the creation of Beli, an app that centralizes restaurant tracking.

The app launched in 2021, and it’s now approaching 10 million restaurant ratings. In Long Beach, the top five highest rated restaurants are: Nick’s on and, Mammon Thai, Little Coyote, La Paraiso Detera, and Anamtable.

The most bookmarked restaurant in Long Beach by users is Phnom Penh Noodle Shack.

But unlike Yelp or Google, anyone who uses the app would never see that list. Instead, the recommendations are all personalized based on your own past experiences at other restaurants.

When the couple began searching for more reliable recommendations and a place to track their restaurant adventures, they saw an opportunity to fill a need that internet searches had yet to satisfy. They found that lots of people were like them, keeping lists of the restaurants they go to, but not necessarily leaving public comments on crowd-sourced review websites like Yelp.

In the month of July, aside from being able to redeem the coupon, any purchase of a chicken pot pie or breakfast pot pie will result in the restaurant donating $1 to help provide students with new backpacks for fall.
Buckeyes” spelled out in donuts, can be found on their Instagram account. Examples of custom orders, like “Go Ohio State,” are available for any occasion can order in advance.

By Caitlin Antonios

The fried chicken joint, which made a name for itself at its first location in Fullerton with its menu of both Korean and American spins on the classic dish, will open a second spot in Bixby Knolls this summer.

Chicken University expected to open soon in Bixby Knolls

The fried chicken joint, Chicken University, which made a name for itself at its first location in Fullerton with its menu of both Korean and American spins on the classic dish, will open a second spot in Bixby Knolls this summer.

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Korean fried chicken has become more and more popular in the U.S. in recent years. The batter and marinade is different than traditional American fried chicken, although the restaurant serves both to cater to different tastes. Asian flavors like spicy Thai basil, gochujang (a fermented red chili paste pronounced go-choo-jang), are on the menu, but traditional American fried chicken flavors like lemon pepper or garlic parmesan are also found. Guests can also get rice cakes Korean specialty dishes like tteokbokki (pronounced toe-toh-kee), which are rice cakes cooked in a spicy, gochujang-based sauce or fish cake soup.

The re-design of the menu will mainly be a change in portion sizes, and less about the actual items on the menu. The changes will affect the Fullerton location’s menu as well.

“We’re targeting one person meals,” Chun said.

Since the opening of the Fullerton location, Chun noticed guests would come in groups, but they wanted different items or flavors and wanted to pay separately. In Asian culture, it’s less personalized, as everyone will order, eat and pay together, Chun said.

The restaurant’s menu was designed for large portions for a shareable, family-style meal. The new portion sizes will be changed to reflect more personalized, individual meals for people to enjoy.

Chicken University

By Caitlin Antonios

Chicken University was one more marker that she is perpetually growing. She didn’t win, but the experience allowed Leyesa to open a physical store, her online presence caught the attention of Magnolia Network’s (owned by Warner Brothers and Chip and Joanna Gaines of “Fixer Upper” fame) Silos Baking Competition. Leyesa filmed in Texas for five days as a contestant in the competition. The episode can be watched on Magnolia Network or Discovery Plus. She said a lot of the experience was one more marker that she is exactly where she needs to be.

Foodologie

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To help cater to a user’s specific tastes, Beli doesn’t rely on a rating system. Instead, the app uses a comparative question—did you like this restaurant more than that restaurant—to assign a restaurant a score, which forms a personalized stacked ranking list. Essentially, it’s a game. And the app blends into the social media element by creating a leaderboard for restaurant reviewers that even Thelen and Frost were surprised people took seriously. The key to the app lies in the comparative question, which forces the user to think critically about the dining experience—for foodies, it’s addicting. It also allows a user to be surprised by their own choices and the way their list comes together.

Full disclosure: I was a user of the app before I began reporting this story. And no matter how many wonderful, critically acclaimed restaurants I go to, a hot pot chain restaurant has yet to be superseded for my top spot.

“Taste is subjective,” Thelen said. “Beli puts all the opinions that matter into one place.”

Users can also indicate which restaurants they want to try, and with enough data (at least 15 ranked restaurants), the app can then begin to suggest personalized recommendations. Beli looks for users from all over with similar taste for those recommendations—not just people nearby or a friend’s ranking (although those help). Restaurants are then assigned a score for the user to see, which tells the user how much Beli thinks they will like a place.

The app is meant to help users from the beginning to the end of their restaurant journey—from hearing about a restaurant to then documenting the experience, Frost said.

“We don’t work with restaurants,” Thelen said. “Our main goal is to match the perfect pair (of user to restaurant).”

The only people who can see someone’s ratings are a user’s followers, a decision that was very intentional to avoid the type of public shaming that can appear on review websites, Frost said. If a user and someone they follow both bookmark the same restaurant to try, the app will suggest they get together for a meal.

While anyone can download the app, the experience is technically invite-only—a decision intended to foster the social element of the app. Users who download it without getting an invite will automatically be “invited” by Thelen after they sign up. But the ideal way for people to learn about and access the app is through an invitation from someone they know—it allows users to build their community, and their recommendations, based on the people they trust most.

“The number one trusted recommendations are from your friends,” Thelen said. “That’s not going to go away, even with A.I.”

The app still has more to do, the couple said. They hope to add dish recommendations at a restaurant, answer most questions that come up in the restaurant journey (like making a reservation) and expand beyond just restaurants to other types of food establishments. The app already has lists ranging from Michelin restaurants to coffee shops—ice cream shops are next to be added.

Restaurant app Beli ranks your favorite restaurants in your area.

Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

What we do...

The Civil Service Commission determines whether those seeking work for the City of Long Beach are qualified to do the job for which they are applying. This is done through an application and selection process in which applicants are asked to describe their qualifications and are tested to determine if they possess the required knowledge, skills and abilities for that particular job.

Job Interest Cards
Fill out a Job Interest card to be notified when a job opens for applications.

Governmentjobs.com
Create a profile on governmentjobs.com. This is the application management platform the City of Long Beach uses for all of its jobs.

Applications
The first step in the Civil Service process. Fill them out completely and by the application deadline.

Eligible Lists
If you qualify after participating in the examination, you are placed on a list that the hiring department will use to fill vacancies.
An Economic Engine

The Port of Long Beach is more than a great place to work – trade coming through the Port supports 1 in 5 jobs in Long Beach and 576,000 jobs in Southern California.