Space junk removal, asteroid mining
tech startup calls Long Beach home

By Brandon Richardson

Tens of millions of pieces of space junk have accumulated around Earth after more than six decades of humans launching objects out of the atmosphere—expanding our litter problem into the cosmos. A new Long Beach startup, however, is looking to help tackle that issue on its way to achieving grander plans of mining asteroids for resources.

After about two years of planning, ExLabs was officially co-founded last year by CEO Matthew Schmidgall and Chief Science Officer Miguel Pascual, both of whom live in Long Beach, as well as Chief Financial Officer Freyr Thor last year.

“We’re developing technology for object capture and control,” Schmidgall told the Business Journal. “Initial utilization for that...is cleaning up space debris. Our long-term goal is to scale that technology to deep space resource acquisition.”

The company is still in its infancy, with only 11 employees and a small office space inside the Aeroplex building on the south end of Long Beach Airport. The company flew under the radar until its operational launch in March, when hiring began and the team jumped right into the design and testing stages for its vehicle, dubbed Arachne, which Schmidgall described as a “big space arcade claw.”

The vehicle itself will be a base satellite bus designed by ExLabs, which will have standard guidance, navigation and control systems.

The robotic claw will sit on top of the vehicle as a payload, Schmidgall said. When the system approaches an object in space, the claw will wrap around it, allowing thrusters to guide it into a new orbit.

Schmidgall said the company plans to move into prototype
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As Virgin Orbit collapses, Rocket Lab expands in Long Beach

By Brandon Richardson

With the metaphorical ashes of Virgin Orbit’s collapse still smoking, Rocket Lab has stepped up to further solidify its position as Long Beach’s pre eminent space company, buying up millions of dollars in assets from the now-defunct firm that will allow for an expedited expansion.

“Every day we wake up and realize how difficult this is—space is hard,” Rocket Lab Chief Financial Officer Adam Spice told the Business Journal during a recent tour of the company’s headquarters.

“As sad as it is to see an entrepreneurial endeavor not work out for all the people involved, it happened to be a pretty good coincidence for us,” he said. “What they had is stuff that we needed, and it’s located two blocks down the road.”

Virgin Orbit (also known as Chapter) is bankruptcy in April, days after announcing it would lay off 650 employees because it failed to secure additional funding. Most of those employees had already been on unpaid leave for weeks.

In late May, Virgin sold off over $575 million in assets to various space firms up and down the West Coast, including Rocket Lab and Vantier here in Long Beach.

Rocket Lab placed the winning bid of $46.4 million for Virgin Orbit’s Douglas Park headquarters as well as much of the equipment in it, which Space said would have cost upward of $100 million if it were bought now. On top of that, Spice said the once crowded, it can take over a year to receive these complex pieces of equipment such as large 3D printers and state-of-the-art milling machines.

“For every one [piece of equipment] we have here, there might be free over there,” Spice said, comparing his company’s headquarters to the old Virgin Orbit facility. “I think they took a ‘Jurassic Park, spare no expense’ approach.”

The company’s current headquarters, which includes office space as well as manufacturing operations, is about 6,000 square feet, Spice said. The former Virgin Orbit building—one of the oldest at Douglas Park—is more than twice the size at 14,000 square feet.

The Long Beach expansion will allow the company to further compartmentalize its operations across its various facilities. As it is, the headquarters facility is where the company builds out its antennas and propulsion systems—Electron’s Rutherford engines and Neutron’s Archimedes engines.

The Rutherford is then sent to Rocket Lab’s New Zealand facility, where they are integrated into the Electron rockets. The company has a facility under construction near its Virginia launch complex, where the Archimedes engines will be sent for production.
**Commercial air travel at Long Beach remains above pre-pandemic levels**

By Brandon Richardson

For the third consecutive month, commercial air travel in and out of Long Beach Airport in May was above pre-pandemic levels, newly released data shows. In total, 993,886 travelers flew in and out of the small municipal airport, a 2.1% increase over May 2019. The passenger volume marks a staggering 25.7% recovery from May 2020, when all travel was virtually non-existent as the coronavirus spread around the world.

“As we enter a busy summer travel season, larger traffic is heating up at Long Beach Airport,” Director Cynthia Gusdy said in an emailed statement to the Business Journal. “We’re excited to continue supporting a positive trend in visitation that exceeds pre-pandemic levels.

Commercial air travel nationwide, meanwhile, continued to recover in May, with 202,455,697 passengers traveling through data from the U.S. Transportation Security Administration. Last month, TSA recorded just under 20.4 million travelers passing through U.S. airports, compared to nearly 17.6 million in May 2021.

Beginning in Long Beach, commercial air travel from January through May was 15% ahead of the same period in 2019, data shows. For the first five months of the year, 14,458,295 people traveled through the airport, compared to 12,517,072 people four years ago. The trend at the airport was years in the making. As first reported, larger volumes in March, which saw traffic 1.7% higher than the same month in 2019. The trend continued in April with volumes up 15%.

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**High school students learn about aviation through LBUSD, airport partnership**

The collaboration will see students from elementary to college level learn about the aviation industry in a “unique and hands-on way through various externships, internships and other programming.”

By Brandon Richardson

Over a dozen students at Cabrillo Academy of STEM schools learned about aviation careers as part of a partnership between Long Beach Unified School District and Long Beach Airport. Students from across the two schools were selected out of 60 applicants to take part in the airport’s first Careers Taking Flight Program, which is meant to give them a competitive edge in the aviation industry.

“Long Beach’s deep-rooted connection to the aviation sector, which contributes to our local economy, has always been a source of pride for our city,” Mayor Rex Richardson said.

The world of aviation has traditionally been one of the most attractive fields for potential career paths due to the opportunity for people to travel the world, work on the cutting edge of technology and work in high-level positions. In addition, it is a sector that is growing at a rapid pace and has the potential to continue this growth in years to come.

The collaboration with the airport is part of the school district’s continued effort to provide students with opportunities that will help them be successful in the workforce. The program is designed to give students a better understanding of the various roles and careers that are available in the aviation industry, and it is expected to provide them with valuable insights and experiences that will help them make informed decisions about their future careers.

Students will have the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning experiences, such as internships and externships, that will allow them to gain practical experience in the field. They will also have access to industry professionals who will serve as mentors and provide guidance on how to navigate the industry and prepare for a successful career.

In addition to learning about the various roles and career paths available in the aviation industry, students will also be exposed to the latest technology and equipment used in the field. This will give them a better understanding of the current state of the industry and the advancements being made.

The program is one of the many ways in which the school district is working to ensure that students are well-prepared for success in the workforce. The district is committed to providing students with the tools and resources they need to be successful in their future careers.
NASA taps Long Beach’s Vast for space station development collaboration

By Brandon Richardson

Vast, an innovative company based in Long Beach, has been selected by NASA to collaborate on the development of artificial gravity stations. This partnership is part of NASA’s broader initiative to advance spaceflight technology and services, with a focus on long-duration missions beyond Earth’s atmosphere.

Northrop Grumman, Blue Origin, and SpaceX are among the companies that have already partnered with NASA for the development of technologies such as in-space manufacturing and assembly. Vast’s selection marks the agency’s commitment to fostering partnerships with the private sector, enabling these companies to bring new capabilities to the in-space transportation ecosystem.

Vast is working towards realizing its ultimate goal of building the world’s first commercial space station, Haven-1, as early as 2025. This project is part of NASA’s Human Exploration and Mission Operations Program, which seeks to expand human presence and capabilities in low Earth orbit and beyond.

Vast realizes that this project requires a vast array of expertise, including structural engineering, propulsion, and robotics. The company has a clear vision for the Haven-1 space station, which is expected to include capabilities for long-duration missions, habitation, and scientific research.

NASA’s selection of Vast is a testament to the company’s innovations and dedication to pushing the boundaries of space exploration. This collaboration underscores NASA’s strategy to leverage private sector expertise for the advancement of space capabilities, ensuring that future space stations and missions are equipped with the latest technologies.

Through its Space Act agreement, Vast is collaborating with the space agency on the technology and operations required for its microgravity and artificial gravity stations. This agreement also includes the development of commercial services and mobility in low Earth orbit with Special Aerospace Services. Vast has plans to launch the Haven-1 space station in 2025, marking a significant step forward in the exploration of deep space.

Other NASA collaborations include Blue Origin and its Autonomous Maneuvering Unit (AMU) and Dragon improvements and Starship development with SpaceX. These partnerships benefit both the private sector and NASA, as they advance the growth of new space markets and support the expansion of the in-space manufacturing ecosystem.

The collaboration with Vast is expected to result in significant advancements, including the development of technologies and capabilities that will enable long-duration missions and the establishment of a sustainable presence in space.

This partnership is not only about technical prowess but also about creating a diverse workforce that can succeed in the challenges of space exploration. Vast’s collaboration with NASA is a strong testament to the company’s commitment to innovation and its ability to meet the demands of the future space landscape.

By Teo Kusmeroff

Khmer Kickboxing gym to relocate after 36 years, making way for new homeless shelter

The Long Beach Khmer Kickboxing Center will be moving from its Anaheim Street location after 36 years, to make way for a shelter for unhoused men with disabilities.

Khmer Kickboxing is a long-standing gym located in Cambodia Town, Long Beach. The gym has been an integral part of the community for decades, providing a safe space for individuals to practice kickboxing and develop physical and mental discipline.

After 36 years in its Cambodia Town location, the Long Beach Khmer Kickboxing Center will soon have to relocate. The current space located on Anaheim Street and owned by the Long Beach Rescue Mission will be utilized for the organization’s expansion of its homeless shelter services.

“I mean, naturally, we’re not gonna like it, you know, but it’s just a part of life,” said trainer and co-owner Ron Smith on the upcoming relocation, which is expected to be Aug. 1. Smith has been with the gym since 1991. “We have to deal with it … so we can move and continue on.”

The gym has two “very promising” possible locations in mind, both of which are also located in Cambodia Town. Smith said, noting that the city, as well as the Khmer Kickboxing Center, are “beyond grateful” for the move.

“Ultimately, these agreements will foster more competition for services and more providers for innovative space capabilities.”

The Long Beach Khmer Kickboxing Center will be moving from its Anaheim Street location after 36 years, to make way for a shelter for unhoused men with disabilities.
Hotel workers strike in LA for higher pay; no picket lines seen in Long Beach

Negotiations were underway at dozens of Southland hotels represented by Unite Here Local 11, including three Long Beach hotels, ahead of Fourth of July.

By Kat Schuster

Thousands of hotel workers across Southern California walked off the job during the busy Fourth of July holiday week to demand higher wages, pre-pandemic staffing, better medical insurance and long-term benefits.

Three of the hotels that could’ve been targeted by the strike were in Long Beach: Hotel Maya, Hyatt Regency Long Beach and Centric Long Beach, but picket lines had not materialized in the city as of the morning.

Representatives of the local hotels said in statements on July 3 that operations had not been disrupted by Unite Here Local 11’s strike announcement.

The status of negotiations was unclear at the Hyatt and Centric Long Beach, which agreed in April to raise pay by $4 an hour, from $22 to $25, for non-tipped positions. That six-month contract also granted employees free family health insurance and guarantees that the hotel will be staffed at pre-pandemic levels.

Representatives of Unite Here Local 11 couldn’t immediately be reached for comment, but in April they praised the deal made with the two Long Beach hotels, saying they hoped that it would set the industry standard.

A statement from the Hotel Maya, meanwhile, said union employees remained on the job July 3. In the event that a strike materializes, the hotel will remain open with non-union staff and management, according to a statement from Greg Guthrie, general manager of Hotel Maya.

Officials at all three Long Beach hotels said they remain willing to continue negotiations with the union. The July 4 announcement of a strike came the day after the contract expired between Unite Here Local 11 and 65 major hotels in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

On June 4, 86% of the members approved a strike authorization, which included the three Long Beach hotels.

The union, which represents some 17,000 workers in Southern California, announced on June 30 that its members could strike at any moment during the holiday weekend, disrupting one of the busiest weekends for the tourism industry.

While Long Beach remained quiet ahead of Fourth of July, workers in Los Angeles began picketing early the morning before the holiday, with many marching on sidewalks in front of hotels, waving signs, chanting and banging drums, according to footage from the scene.

Workers, including cooks, room attendants, dishwashers, servers, bellhops and front desk agents, earn $20 to $25 an hour. The union is demanding an immediate $5 an hour raise and an additional $3 an hour in the following years of the contract.

Youth programs to get funding in first citywide budget project

Youth between the ages of 13 and 26 who live, work, learn or play in Long Beach have selected the recipients of $300,000 of Measure US funds, following the first citywide participatory budget process.

Participatory budgeting, known as PB, is a democratic process that empowers residents, in this case youth, to decide how to spend public dollars. While over the years, there have been initiatives to introduce the PB process to various districts across Long Beach, this was the first citywide process.

The awardees, seven local organizations, will utilize their portion of the funds for summer programs, which align with the goals set in place in the Long Beach Youth and Emerging Adults Strategic Plan: to focus on community care, housing, health and wellness, and transportation.

The recipients are:

• California Families in Focus (Community Care), $75,000 — “Family is Everything”
• Long Beach United (Community Care), $80,000 — “Safe After School”
• Long Beach United (Community Care), $100,000 — “Youth Empowerment”
• Long Beach United (Community Care), $60,000 — “Youth Empowerment”
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Youth voted for seven local organizations to receive a portion of $300,000 Measure US funds, which will be used for youth summer programs.
City water rates likely to increase 9% this year

By Juan Reza

Long Beach utility customers will likely see their bills increase this year after the Utilities Commission approved a 9% increase for water usage during a special meeting on June 22. The increase would add about $35 to the average single-family household bill starting Oct. 1, which is when the city’s new fiscal year starts.

The rates, though, are subject to a public hearing that is tentatively scheduled for the last week of August. A majority of account holders would have to object to the rate increase to block it from going forward.

If a majority of account holders don’t object, the city Council is expected to approve the department’s budget and the new rates along with the city’s budget sometime in September.

The vote was part of the commission’s approval of the budget for water, sewer and gas. There are no proposed increases for sewer or gas services.

Department officials said increasing rates was necessary to help fund projects that will provide access to cheaper groundwater to residents in the future, and also to build up the department’s emergency reserves, which are currently a fraction of the roughly $30 million the department set as a goal for emergency repairs and operations.

Commissioners voted against a staff recommendation to freeze rates by 10%, saying they were uncomfortable with a double-digit rate increase for customers, some of whom may still be dealing with economic struggles brought about by the pandemic.

For spending the money it gets from higher rates, the city will have to reduce pollutants that are entering our rivers and beaches. We’re creating this opportunity to develop an area and create a usable open space for the city of Long Beach and its residents.” - Oliver Galang, Engineer at Craft Water

Stormwater capture pools could be built in El Dorado Park by 2026

By Kat Schuster

A stormwater capture project in East Long Beach that would help protect local waterways, boost the city’s water supply and create a usable recreational area is expected to be completed by late 2024, city officials announced in late June.

Construction on the El Dorado Regional Stormwater Reclamation Project is expected to begin in 2022 near the Long Beach Water Reclamation Plant along Willow Street, according to a plan presented by the Public Works Department at a community meeting on June 22.

The project, which is still in the design phase, would require the construction of three vegetated ponds capable of storing more than 3.5 million gallons of rainwater captured from a drainage system that spans 2,874 acres and includes Long Beach, Artesia, Norwalk and Lakewood.

“It’s a collaborative effort by the city with Long Beach helping to fund this effort,” said Oliver Galang, an engineering consultant who was contracted for the project.

Workers protest Kroger-Albertsons ‘mega-merger’ saying it would result in store closures, layoffs and price increases

By Kat Schuster

Dowen of grocery workers gathered in front of the Ralphs grocery store in Marina del Ray on June 30 to protest a “mega-merger” of grocery giants Kroger and Albertsons, a move they say would be detrimental to both workers and customers.

“The merger and the proposal that the nation’s largest grocers would monopolize the market, result in the closure of many stores and spur an estimated 5,750 layoffs. They also say that it would result in a rise in prices for consumers who are already struggling in the face of inflation. “This deal is a disaster for customers,” said Veronica Wheeler, president of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. “Kroger wants us to believe that if this merger goes through, that price will go down. Now, we know that’s not true. When has Kroger ever done that?”

Hotel Workers

In the face of a dire housing crisis, the union also seeks to create a hospitality workforce housing trust. Smiths of those working in Los Angeles County say they are commuting from more affordable areas like Apple Valley, Palmdale, California City and Victorville. “Our members were devastated first by the pandemic, and now by the greed of their bosses,” Unite Here Local 11 Co-President Kurt Petersen said in a statement put out by the union. “The industry got bailed out while we got cuts. Now, the hotel negotiators decided to take a four-day holiday instead of negotiating, shamefully.”

Attorney Keith Grossman of Hirschfeld Kraemer, one of two firms representing the hotel coalition, told the New York Times that the hotels have offered a less than a 1% pay raise in the first 12 months and $6.25 over four years. He said housekeepers at unionized hotels in Beverly Hills and downtown Los Angeles, who currently make $15 per hour, would get a 5% wage increase in 2024 and make more than $16 per hour by January 2027.

“If there is a strike, it will occur because the union is determined to have one,” Grossman told the New York Times. “City News Service contributed to this report.”
The Dolly Varden Hotel could be demolished to make way for a new multifamily building. In the late 1940s, even as Naples and the Peninsula were emerging as the high-dollar neighborhoods in Long Beach, Park Estates was designed to be among the most luxurious parts of the city’s brand-new east side. Developer Lloyd Whaley, who oversaw much of the east side’s booming growth in the late 1940s and on into the 1950s, sat aside the land, located in a somewhat wistfully triangle formed by Averton Street, Bellflower Boulevard and Pacific Coast Highway, for his exclusive Park Estates where homes were sold for $20,000 to $30,000 and more, double or triple the price for the $10,000 average for his homes in Los Altos. To help make the line of the street, Whaley hired Leon Deming Tilton, a national authority on civic planning who was nearing his death in 1933, Susan Wood, a senior architectural historian the city hired as a consultant, concluded in her report. Wood said she looked at historic maps, building records, ancestral records of Dolley, business records of the builders and other documents to gauge the historic nature of the building. Wood’s report concluded that Dolley, a small business owner who died in 1933, was “a significant adjacent” and not a big contributor to the city’s history. The architect of the hotel is unknown and its connection to Art Deco design was called “very modest” and “almost undiscernible” in the report. Rumors that the Ruby family or Dolly Varden the performer were somehow tied to the building’s history were not substantiated, Wood said June 27. Commissioners said June 27 that they appreciated the update but questioned if the sign would lose its historic value if was to be placed atop a new building, with a different purpose—long-term housing. They also spent considerable time discussing the two murals on the north-facing wall of the hotel that were installed in 2019, the inaugural year of Ponderosa Park Estates, which has recently referred to “Long Beach Walls.” “I have serious heartburn of any action that we could take that would destroy an artist’s work without their permission,” said Commissioner Amy Bodek, who requested the additional analysis of the building in May. The commission is expected to hold a vote on the sign’s removal, which could allow the construction project to move forward, in late July. But questions even if there is any contract stipulating how long those murals were supposed to remain in the end of a career that included co-creating a masterpiece for Westwood Village, serving as a chief planner for Santa Barbara County and planning director for San Francisco, to work out an overall community plan. In addition to hiring Tilton, who died in 1934 at the age of 66, Whaley commissioned several established and emerging architects to design homes in Park Estates. Bixby-Paul Breyer Williams, who had a hand in designing Whaley’s own residence on a three-acre lot on Bryn Mawr, architects whose works can be found in the Plaza include Edward Killingsworth, Richard Staton, Kenneth Wing, John Launor, Paul Tay and George Montastier. Rivaling some of those architects’ designs is the current listing by Realtor Lauren Comes to 1440 La Perla Ave. The four-bedroom, three-and-a-half bath home was built in 1961—almost by definition a Mid-Century home—and a fairly traditional one until another famed architect, Jonathan Glasgow of Long Beach’s Interiors, gave the house a thorough upgrade and transformation in 2018 (Glasgow died in July 2021). Large concrete pavers lead you to the front of the house and into a private courtyard with anything like wood decking. Once through the front door, you’re in the foyer, separated from the living room by a door set of double tall vertical ipe wood slides creating an airy hallway. Well over a million dollars have been spent modernizing the house, and it shows in every room. It’s a bit of a task for a property to crack the Top 10 Priciest Homes in Long Beach list if it’s located a long walk from the ocean. But a home in Park Estates, prestigious Estates section, a neighborhood within-a-neighborhood of some of larger-than-average homes built on larger-than-average lots in the heart of Park Estates, is now the sixth most expensive home currently listed for sale in Long Beach at $3,995 million. In the late 1940s, even as Naples and the Peninsula were emerging as the high-dollar neighborhoods in Long Beach, Park Estates was designed to be among the most luxurious parts of the city’s brand-new east side. Developer Lloyd Whaley, who oversaw much of the east side’s booming growth in the late 1940s and on into the 1950s, sat aside the land, located in a somewhat wistfully triangle formed by Averton Street, Bellflower Boulevard and Pacific Coast Highway, for his exclusive Park Estates where homes were sold for $20,000 to $30,000 and more, double or triple the price for the $10,000 average for his homes in Los Altos. To help make the line of the street, Whaley hired Leon Deming Tilton, a national authority on civic planning who was nearing his death in 1933, Susan Wood, a senior architectural historian the city hired as a consultant, concluded in her report. Wood said she looked at historic maps, building records, ancestral records of Dolley, business records of the builders and other documents to gauge the historic nature of the building. 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73 affordable housing units could be coming to East Long Beach

By Jason Ruiz

A 73-unit affordable housing project proposed for the Long Beach neighborhood of Bryant was approved by the Long Beach Housing Commission on Monday. The project, to be called Line Housing, would be developed on a site near Bryant Elementary School in Long Beach.

The project site was not included in the city’s Housing Element, a document where the city outlines where future development could happen, is near several parks, and would be located in the city’s downtown with nearby downtown East Long Beach.”

The Long Beach Housing Commission is expected to vote on the project in July, according to conceptual plans for the project. The commission is expected to vote on the project in July, according to conceptual plans for the project.

The new Anaheim Street site, which is about $35,750 to $83,416 for people earning between 30% and 50% of the area median income, would be the largest of the new affordable housing developments in Long Beach.

The city has not been determined, but it would be the first of its kind in the city.

The housing would align with Line’s mission to build communities and strengthen neighborhoods for people underserved by the marketplace.

“We know families thrive when they live in stable, affordable housing near good schools, grocery stores, and public transportation. This housing aligns with Line’s mission to build communities and strengthen neighborhoods for people underserved by the marketplace.”

A quarter of the units would be reserved for tenants with special needs. The units would be rented to people earning between 75% and 76% of the area’s median income, which is about $35,750 to $83,416 for a family of four.

The existing building would be demolished to make way for the new housing units, and Fountain Street would be converted to Wolfe Street, according to conceptual drawings submitted to the city.

Other amenities expected to be included in the project are vegetable gardens, patios and play areas for children.

Some public testimony on the project was heard at the commission meeting, but the commission did not announce a date for the meeting.

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The existing building would be demolished to make way for the new housing units, and Fountain Street would be converted to Wolfe Street, according to conceptual drawings submitted to the city.

Other amenities expected to be included in the project are vegetable gardens, patios and play areas for children.

Some public testimony on the project was heard at the commission meeting, but the commission did not announce a date for the meeting.

The commission is expected to vote on the project in July, according to conceptual plans for the project.

The new Anaheim Street site, which is about $35,750 to $83,416 for people earning between 30% and 50% of the area median income, would be the largest of the new affordable housing developments in Long Beach.

The city has not been determined, but it would be the first of its kind in the city.

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The rebranding included store upgrades such as a new self-checkout and the moving of the floral department, as well as an expanded wine selection.

By Brandon Richardson

The only Pavilions grocery store in Long Beach has been transformed into a Vons.

“We have been proud to serve the Long Beach community since 1988, and we will continue to be here for our neighbors as we celebrate the grand opening of our new Vons store,” Albertsons Companies, which owns both the Pavilions and Vons brands, said in an emailed statement to the Business Journal.

The reason for the rebranding was not disclosed by Albertsons, but one employee, who asked to not be named because they were not authorized to speak to the media, said the company thought Vons would “better suit the communities of Long Beach and Lakewood.”

The store did not close during the transition, and the roughly 120 employees remain, the worker said.

In addition to the exterior signage, some improvements and rearranging was done inside the store, including a new self-checkout area. The floral department was also relocated for an easier and more convenient customer experience, the company stated.

“We are continuously looking to improve the shopping experience for our loyal customers,” the statement continued. “We’ve also added more variety to our wine department and revamped our merchandise selection based on feedback taken from our Long Beach shoppers.”

Youth Budget Communityprogram

Matter z is a nine-week summer program for youth ages 11 to 13 that focuses on shedding light on bullying and suicide prevention. Youth will receive group mentoring by professionals who will share their life stories and tips on coping with issues affecting them and will also participate in a variety of entrepreneur workshops and other social activities.

• Casa Youth Shatter (Housing), $60,000 — “It’s on the Casa” is a six-week program in Central Long Beach, where participating youth will be connected to essential resources like housing, basic needs and incentives and will take part in fun activities that support their success, including mindfulness sessions, counseling and life skills workshops.

• Devotion Fitness (Health and Wellness), $20,000 — The “Sunset Car and Driver 101” will take place in May, beginning with a test drive at Long Beach City College. Voting locations were placed at high schools, teen centers and public libraries throughout the voting week, with online voting also available.

• Invest in Youth Coalition, in a statement.

“By involving (youth) in decision-making processes like participatory budgeting, we’re not just handing them a microphone; we’re creating a whole new dimension where their ideas, concerns, and aspirations take center stage,” said Alba Danely, founder and CEO of Our Generation Cares, in a statement.

The Invest in Youth Coalition, in a statement.

“So, get ready to witness a revolution. It’s time to pass the torch to these young visionaries and watch as they ignite a fire that will shape our world for years to come. Together, we’ll build a future that not only embraces their ideas but celebrates them with open arms.”

— Alba Danely, Founder, CEO of Our Generation Cares

knowledge about mental health care.

• Our Generation Cares (Transportation), $4,000 — “Ignite to Independence” Car and Driver 101” will take a comprehensive approach to increasing access to safe and affordable transportation for youth and emerging adults by bridging the gap in driver’s education, access, regardless of socioeconomic background. With classroom instruction, practical driving lessons using a real-car-driving simulator and a loaner vehicle for youth to take the DMV test, this program ensures that participants have access to the resources necessary to obtain their driver’s licenses.

• speLa (Community Care), $2,500 — “SpeLa Friends for Life Summer Camp” will involve youth ages 14 to 17 who reside in the 90804, 90805 and 90813 zip codes. Participants will engage in dog training, cat care, games and activities as well as an expanded curriculum around anger identification, conflict solving, empathetic choices, anti-bullying and kindness towards others.

The Invest in Youth Coalition, in a statement.

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Grocery Merger

Continued from page 11

By Alicia Robinson

customers and its employees and the

Since the merger was announced in October 2022, elected officials, grocery workers and their union representatives have been fighting to stop the $24.6 billion deal. In Southern California, Kroger owns Ralphs and Food 4 Less, but if the two largest grocers in the state were to merge, it would probably be the last to go, according to the brand's name itself. "So I'm gonna say that Kroger has asked us to trust them," Jesús Ricks-Oddie, District 9 councilmember, said during a meeting in Long Beach.

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Local chef to be featured on Netflix’s ‘Five Star Chef’

By Caitlin Antonios

Long Beach local chef Raquel Fleck, founder of Catered by Raquel, will compete as one of only a few contestants in a new global cooking competition set in the United Kingdom called “Five Star Chef,” which will air in the U.S. on July 11.

A teaser of the show includes Michelle, owner of Michelle’s Avenue, shown working in Fleck’s restaurant, Mud Mud Good, and her aunt, Oanh Ra, in opening the newest location of Pickle Banh Mi in Cambodian Town—their first outside of Orange County—so it isn’t something new.

“I really want (my mom and aunt) to be recognized. There were a lot of nos before a yes. It’s not easy to get a lease when you have no experience and a language barrier. As we get older, we have to be our parents’ voice.”

-My Nguyen, Pickle Banh Mi operator

Pickle Banh Mi opens in Cambodian Town

By Caitlin Antonios

Since she was a child, My Nguyen has worked with her mom. So taking on the challenge of helping her mom, Du Ng-Dong, and her aunt, Oanh Dong, in opening the newest location of Pickle Banh Mi in Cambodian Town—their first outside of Orange County—isn’t something new.

“My mom, my whole life, is an opportunity,” Nguyen said. Her mother, leaning on her arm, provided a love letter of sorts. A bánh mi sandwich has a few key elements: a French baguette, French-style mayo, pâté (think duck liver), and a assortment of pickled veggie. Nguyen said. The history of the sandwich itself is a mixing of cultures—a product of French colonization. So as the sandwich continues to evolve and change, everyone does it their own way.

“Pickle wouldn’t be what it is without my mom and her community,” Nguyen said. “It’s a group effort.”

The recipes are crafted over decades of learning from others and putting their own spin on it. One of the most important places at the Long Beach location is the bo bo xào, which takes from a love letter of sorts.

Catholic faith, has jumped at entrepreneurial pursuits that came her way over the 30 years she’s been in the food industry after emigrating from Vietnam.

Dong and her family moved to Orange County from Seattle in the ‘80s, and were able to sponsor her whole family, bringing her grandmother to teach her how. On the show, Fleck’s workshops will showcase diverse, elevated Puerto Rican cuisine.

“My passion for upscale Puerto Rican food comes from a deep desire to test our culinary heritage on the map,” Fleck said in a statement. The show is currently airing on Netflix, Channel 4, and will premiere on July 14.

Demystifying olive oil

By Caitlin Antonios

For thousands of years, olive oil was simple—sun Infused olive oil. Light a lamp? Olive oil. Roast some bread? Olive oil. As oil-infused foods became more popular, the industry watchtogs that pay close attention to what’s happening in the world said about the multi-billion-dollar global industry.

It’s just getting bigger and more confusing. The industry is projected to be worth about $8 billion by 2025, propellled by the skyrocketing popularity of Mediterranean cuisine and associated health benefits of the oil, according to Business Fortune Magazine.

Here in Long Beach, brothers Josh and Noah Ogilvie, who also own奈cura Health, founded Orange Olive Oil. They got into the olive oil business after discovering their family owned a 125-year-old olive grove up north. No one was taking care of the trees, and they even considered renting them to sell the harvest, but they took up the mantle to restore the farm. Now, handing out Hawaiian master miller Giovanni Stefani and starting the journey of producing their own award-winning olive oil and olive-olive-based products. Part of the journey has been creating olive oil and educating customers on those many confusion surrounding the product. Their tasting room can be found next to a local brewery.

I spoke with the Ogilvies in the industry to clear the air and understand how it’s made and how to know what to buy.

What it is

Olive oil is the fat separated out from olive paste and water. Olives are a fruit, which means they’re a seasonal product, usually harvested roughly between October through January, with some variations depending on climate, location and, of course, type of olive.

There’s a lack of discussion in the culinary world and the diet/ health world about seed oils (a topic Demystifying). While the seed oil is an important element in the process of making olive oil, it’s not a “seed oil.”

The paper thin skin of the olive, the meat and pit (bone) are all necessary to make the oil.

Extra virgin olive oil, commonly known as EVOO, is the highest in health benefits, meaning it’s been processed mechanically (not thermally) without any heat.

Applications for the 47 units will be available starting 9AM July 11th through 5PM August 1st. We encourage you to apply on-line at www.wellspring-pts.com. To apply in person step by step by our office located at 2338 E. Anaheim St. Suite 105 M-F 9AM-5PM. All pre- apps will be randomly ordered. Units available add A-D, Features: Large 2nd floor work preferences apply to some units. Income and other restrictions apply. Rent subject to change. Section 8 welcome. EHO.

To speak with a leasing agent, call our office at (562) 579-2074. For 24HR info, call +1-949-688-1358 or visit www.wellspring-pts.com. Wellspring, a newly built, affordable apartment community in Long Beach, is accepting applications!

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The beloved New Orleans-style shaved ice shop opened in 2021, serving 70+ flavors including ones you’ll probably only ever find there—stuffed cheesecake, pina colada and butter popcorn. New Orleans shaved ice is distinct because of its fine texture, while most shaved brands on the West coast come from Florida, which lends a fluffier texture to the product. Flames at Fluffy’s Sno-Balls are also made sugar-free.

Fluffy’s Scoo-Balls came in fifth nationally and was named Best in California cream shop. A second location will open soon in Los Angeles. “This is such a huge distinction,” she said, and co-founder Kevyn Lee-Welington said in an Instagram post that both customers and staff who continue a customer appreciation day will happen soon in thanks.

Lee-Welington was also recently announced as one of the recipients of the inaugural 2023 National Pride Grant, which invests funds in LGBTQIA+ businesses in the United States. Over 700 applications were submitted this year.

Yelp frequents puts out themed Top 100 lists, and this is the second list put out for ice cream shops. Businesses that were identified as falling under the “ice cream” category were ranked by Yelp using both total volume and ratings of reviews from Jan. 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023, among other factors.
Olive Oil

Continued from page 21

how their Nuvo Olive Oil is extra virgin. However, other parts of the world also produce virgin olive oil, refined olive oil, pure olive oil and so on.

How it happens

The Mardigians gave me some insight into how their Nuvo Olive Oil is produced. They begin collecting their olives up north at sunrise.

“As soon as you pick (the olive), it starts oxidizing,” Nate Mardigian said. For producers, that means the time is ticking to get oil into bottles and into customers’ hands as soon as possible—olive oil is not a product that gets better with age.

To separate the paste and water from the fat after they’ve been crushed and cleaned, unlithified olive oil could look cloudy, and there are plenty of debates among producers on the different schools of thought for both the filtered and unfiltered approaches. For the Mardigians, the extra (and money) it takes to filter their oil is worth extending its shelf life.

What to buy

The best way to buy olive oil is to read the fine print. First, look at the harvest date if one is listed, not an expiration date.

The California Olive Oil Council says extra virgin is best used within 18 to 24 months of the harvest. Nuvo Olive Oil does not sell their oil until 18 months past their harvest date (although they’ve never really encountered an issue of having bottles in stock past 18 months of harvest), they said. Nuvo bottle prices range from $12.99 to $39.99, depending on size.

Their bottles have a California Olive Oil Council seal, which means their oil has been tested chemically by a third-party lab and passed, and it is also sold to the council for a sensory evaluation. Certain extra virgin olive oils are sourced from brands including Kirkland Signature Single Estate, Cobram Estate, and Williams Sonoma were also granted seals.

For classic sandwiches, look to the company’s flavorings (like blood orange) and have detailed information about the oil you’re purchasing.

If you’re looking for specific sourcing, look for specific olive oils that are from a specific region, or that are from specific growers.

For classic sandwiches, look to the company’s flavorings (like blood orange) and have detailed information about the oil you’re purchasing.

For the Mardigians, Nuvo’s olive oil retails at $18.99, while Williams Sonoma’s is $18.99 for the same size.

To receive a seal from the North American Olive Oil Association, oils must be tested and meet the International Olive Council standard for olive oil (against, standards vary). The seal can be found on extra virgin olive oils and other types of olive oil and include familiar brands like Filippo Berio, Costa and Whole Foods brand oils.

Once the bottle is open, how long it will last will again depend on various factors. The North American Olive Oil Association gives olive oil a shelf life of extra virgin olive oil, storing it in a cool, dark-space is important. Also look for specific sourcing. If you want to make wine, you’re making it from a specific type of grape. You don’t make wine from wine. Well, at the grocery store, you’ll often see “Ingredients: Extra Virgin Olive Oil.”

Bottles that list the specific olive variety and have detailed information about the olive grove can lend confidence that the olive oil is well sourced. Some bottles may say they’re from a specific region, but looking at the fine print may show that the oil comes from multiple countries making it harder to track, the California Olive Oil Council says on the buying tips of its website. The North American Olive Oil Association points out multiple countries listed could be for flavor profiling purposes, not really up to the consumer.

Know what you want to use it for

For the Mardigians, Nuvo’s early harvest extra virgin olive oil (meaning oil made from olives while they’re still green) has a more fruity, papery flavor and is best used for finishing dishes or on fresh produce in a salad dressing.

Their all-purpose extra virgin (made from olives during the later part of the harvest) tends to have a more mellow flavor that’s great for bread dipping, baking and cooking. Yes, cooking.

One of the great myths with olive oil that’s developed in recent years is that you can’t cook with it.

The source of that myth comes from the fact that olive oil is thought to have a lower smoke point than some other types of oils—but as long as you know the smoke point and don’t need the oil to heat up beyond that, it’s fine to cook with. Olive oil smoke points range from 347 degrees to 464 degrees, according to the UC Olive Center. The Mardigians used 464 degrees as their baseline for good, fresh oil.

Some olive oils are infused with other substances that can be great for meals and, for Nuvo Olive Oil, the company’s flavorings (like blood orange or basil) are infused before the late harvest comes.

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Pro tip: Infused oils cannot be labeled extra virgin, according to the USDA.

This is part of a new “Demystifying” series, where we look at intimidating aspects of the food world and break them down. Next: Wine.

Peruvian staple, lomo saltado—style beef, and mixes it with Vietnamese flavors.

For classic sandwiches, look to the menu then their other locations, but it’s also a test of what future Pickles concepts. The Long Beach location could look like a more express type of service.

“Really want (my mom and aunt) to be recognized. There were a lot of years before a yes. It’s not easy to get a lease when you have no experience and a language barrier,” Nguyen said. “As we get older, we have to prove ourselves.”

The restaurant has been in its soft opening phase since April, with a full grand opening to be planned after final construction is approved by the city.

Current operational hours are from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.

Pickle Bank Mi

Continued from page 20

This is so normal,” Nguyen said. But the motivation was just that — kids aching for food they grew up with and being able to get it at a place like Pickle Bank. Easy, very, wonderfully made.

The sisters are constantly thinking of recipes, testing new things, their minds working overtime to research new flavors and concepts. The Long Beach location has a slightly smaller, more narrow menu than their other locations, but it’s also a test of what future Pickles could look like as a more express type of service.

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Pickle Bank Mi is located at 1371 E. Anaheim St.
The Port of Long Beach is innovating by testing and deploying the latest technology – new digital infrastructure to improve cargo tracking and electric yard equipment and trucks as we head to zero-emissions operations.