

LONG BEACH
BUSINESS JOURNAL

An edition of the Long Beach Post



Chef Philip Pretty, co-owner of Heritage, grills duck breast at a media dinner at the Heritage Farm event space in Long Beach Wednesday, August 24, 2022.

Heritage is Long Beach’s 1st eatery to win a Michelin star. Why it matters.

Story by Caitlin Antonios
Photos by Thomas R. Cordova

How does a Michelin starred-chef celebrate the achievement? Fast-food pizza—they have work to do.

On Tuesday, July 18, the Michelin Guide handed out the famed Michelin stars to six new restaurants, including Long Beach’s own Heritage. The

restaurant is owned by Chef Philip Pretty and his sister, Lauren. It’s a dinner-only six-course tasting menu restaurant that sources locally and aims to create zero waste. In addition to gaining a star, it also received Michelin’s Green Star, an award given to restaurants with eco-friendly commitments at the forefront of sustainable practices.

Prior to receiving its star,

Heritage was recognized (meaning, recommended) by the Michelin Guide along with The Attic, Chiang Rai, and Sushi Nikkei. But Heritage was the first to break through that elusive bubble, bringing the first Michelin star to Long Beach.

“I get OpenTable reservation notifications directly to my phone,” Lauren Pretty, co-owner and director of operations at Heritage,

said. “That night, my phone didn’t stop going off.”

The history of the French tire manufacturer that creates the famed guide is long and expansive, spreading from Formula 1 to space to hospitality and dining. And its impact on the dining world, for better or worse, cannot be understated.

The guide, which was initially free, was published to help travelers

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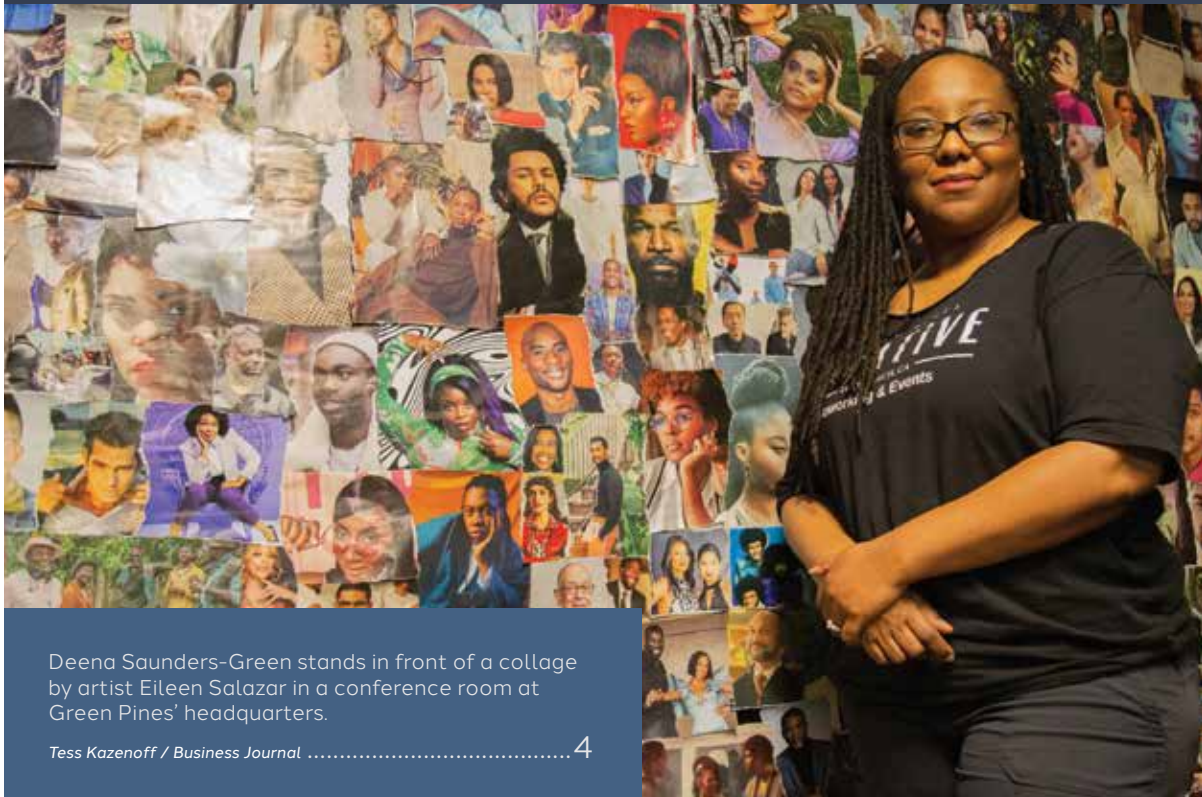
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Deena Saunders-Green stands in front of a collage by artist Eileen Salazar in a conference room at Green Pines' headquarters.

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July 25, 2023

BUSINESS JOURNAL

Newswatch

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City denies appeal of large housing development near 2ND & PCH retail center

A proposed six-story, 281-unit housing development will move forward after the Long Beach City Council denied an appeal filed by multiple groups who said the project would create traffic issues and was not compliant with zoning laws.

By Jason Ruiz

A proposed six-story, 281-unit housing development near the 2ND & PCH shopping center can move forward after the Long Beach City Council denied an appeal filed by

multiple groups who said the project would create traffic issues and was not compliant with zoning laws.

The city's Planning Commission approved the project in April, which would demolish the Congressional Place office building at 6700 Pacific Coast Highway at Studebaker Road.

On July 18, the council voted unanimously to deny the appeals while attaching some conditions about residents and construction crews not using the neighboring marina parking spaces, requiring parking decals be distributed to residents and the creation of a loading zone that won't impede traffic.

Because the project is in a zone that is not appealable to the California Coastal Commission, the council is the final decision-maker.

The 281-unit project is slated to include 13 units for low-income households, something that the city says qualifies it for the state's density bonus and allows it to exceed the five-story height limit in the area. The developer, Holland Partner Group, is building a separate 271-unit



Courtesy of the city of Long Beach

A rendering showing the proposed 281-unit housing development at 6700 Pacific Coast Highway. The rendering shows the building from the corner of Studebaker Road and Marina Drive.

project Downtown and Volta on Pine, also with 271 units.

However, it was challenged by three groups who alleged that the project needed a full environmental review to assess its effects on traffic and greenhouse gas emissions while adding that it ran contrary to the city's design rules for the area.

Michelle Black, an attorney representing the Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust, one of the appellants, said in a letter to the council that the project needed to be revised to comply with not only the city's zoning but also California Coastal Zone law.

Black said the project does not

conform with the city's Southeast Area Specific Plan (SEASP), which was adopted by the council in 2017 and established a three-story height limit at the intersection of Studebaker and PCH, which was given a lower allowable height to provide a gradual increase at the gateway into the city.

City planners said on July 18 that the city has no control over awarding exemptions or density bonuses, and the city's analysis said the project qualified for a waiver on its height because it included affordable units, is installing solar-powered facilities in the project and public art will be installed on the eastern side of the building facing PCH.

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Courtesy of Vast

Veteran NASA astronaut Garrett Reisman.

Vast lands veteran NASA astronaut

By Brandon Richardson

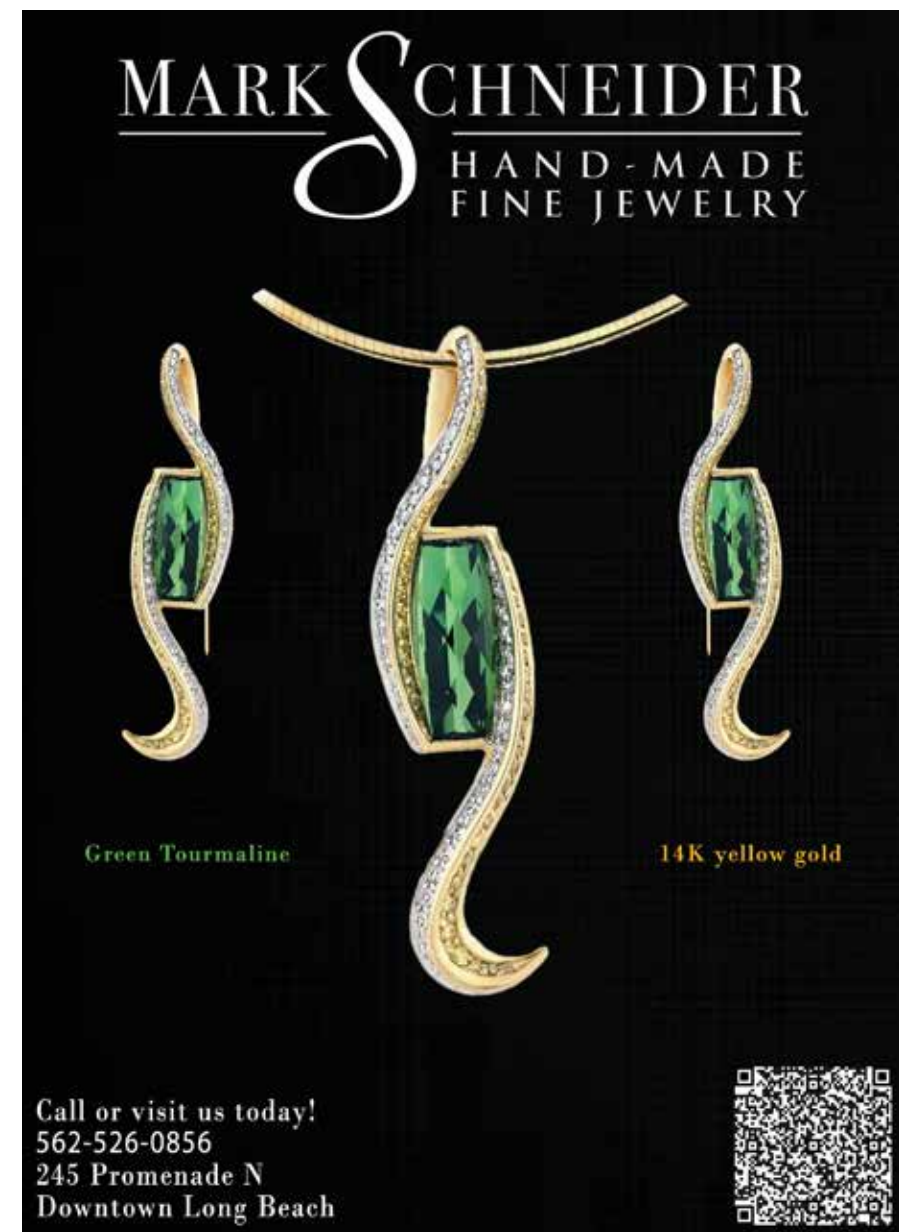
Veteran NASA astronaut Garrett Reisman has been tapped by space station developer Vast as its human spaceflight advisor, the company announced on July 11.

In a statement, Reisman said he is honored to join Vast, which

is developing the first commercial space station as well as the first artificial-gravity space station.

"Commercial space stations and artificial gravity space stations are both crucial components of humanity's future in space," Reisman said. "The Vast team is well-equipped to meet the needs of the growing in-space

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Green Pines Media collective builds creative community of musicians and artists—who are also former foster youth



Tess Kazenoff / Business Journal

Green Pines Creative Collective founder Deena Saunders-Green stands in a hallway at the organization's new headquarters, which is decorated with murals and artwork, both by Green Pines Media artists and community artists.

By Tess Kazenoff

Breaking into the art and music industry certainly isn't easy. But with the help of Green Pines Media, Deena Saunders-Green hopes that for former foster youth, the process will be a little bit easier.

With a background in social work, as well as having worked with young adults as they aged out of the system in San Bernardino County, Saunders-Green is no stranger to the barriers that many former foster youth face, and the limits of what the system can offer them.

"They would turn 18, and

basically, it was like, 'OK, have a nice life, good luck with that,'" Saunders-Green said. "Over half were becoming homeless. They were getting involved with the criminal justice system."

By the time many youth reached the agency Saunders-Green worked with, which was a nonprofit with a transitional housing program, many had experienced "dozens and dozens of different placements" while in foster care, she said.

"A lot of the services that we were trying to provide may have made sense on paper, but it didn't resonate with most of the youth," she said.

Many youth didn't necessarily

share the goals of the programs they participated in, such as attending college—particularly those who were artists and creatives, said Saunders-Green.

"I did not grow up in foster care. I had a very supportive family, but it took me 15 years to get a four-year degree because I was kind of a knucklehead," Saunders-Green said. "Some people just need time. ... I needed to live life before going to college to understand why I needed college."

To expect young people aging out of foster care, some of whom have never had a say over their lives, to automatically be prepared for college, isn't always realistic, nor is expecting young people to work at jobs that feel unfulfilling and can barely pay the bills, said Saunders-Green.

After Saunders-Green left traditional social work to instead become a foster parent to teens and a writer, one day, she received a message from a young woman she used to work with.

"She was like, 'Hey, Miss Deena, I'm doing pretty good, I have an apartment, I have a job, I have a car, but I'm a little short on rent. Do you know of any agency that can help?' And of course, nothing was available," said Saunders-Green.

After hiring the young woman as a consultant on the book Saunders-Green was working on (while fictionalized, it was based on the young people she had worked with),

"she basically said, 'Miss Deena, why are social workers so clueless? ... Instead of trying to teach life skills, or teach us something related to creativity, or something that we can do on our own, you keep trying to give us these jobs (like) retail that are never going to pay our bills, and as a creative, that kills your soul. Why can't you guys do something with art?'"

"I didn't have an answer, because she was absolutely right," Saunders-Green said.

After realizing that youth needed a source of income that resonated with them, even if it was gig work, the idea for Green Pines Media was ignited.

Initially, Green Pines Media was conceptualized to be a publishing and podcast company, to hopefully empower young adults to share their own stories, but Saunders-Green quickly realized that this wasn't the type of company that young people were looking for.

While on a speaking engagement to discuss her book, a woman in the audience raised her hand and asked, "'You wrote a book. I don't read. What else do you have?'" Saunders-Green recalled. "Apparently I should have asked the youth—of course, novel idea—what are they interested in?"

Although Saunders-Green knew she had to pivot the company away from indie publishing and podcasting, the idea of monetizing creativity continued to gnaw at her.

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Cargo movement slowed in Long Beach while LA saw growth

By Brandon Richardson

As cargo volumes at the Port of Long Beach dipped in June, Los Angeles saw its fourth consecutive month of growth since a dismal February.

During a press conference on July 12, Port of LA Executive Director Gene Seroka announced the nation's busiest container port moved 833,035 20-foot-equivalent units—the standard measure of shipping containers.

"Amazon is reporting that its Prime Days are expected to be its best ever, and that's a great indicator that consumers are still willing to spend," Seroka said, noting that the port is seeing some "softness" in July

with nine canceled sailings.

"So cargo will be down compared to June," he said.

June's volume is a continuation of steady growth since February, which saw the port move only 487,846 TEUs—one of its slowest months in recent years, second only to March 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic was shutting down facilities in China.

Year-to-date, the Port of LA has moved nearly 4.14 million TEUs, compared to over 5.41 million during the same period last year.

In Long Beach, meanwhile, dockworkers moved 597,076 TEUs, down from 758,225 in May, which was the third consecutive month of growth after a slow February. The June



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

The sun sets behind container handling gantry cranes at the Port of Long Beach.

figure marks a 28.5% decline from the same month last year, which was the port's busiest June on record.

Through the first half of the year, the Port of Long Beach has moved over 3.72 million TEUs, compared to over 5 million in the first six months of 2022.

A leading factor to the San Pedro Bay ports' struggles this year is the loss of market share to East and Gulf coast ports, first due to a historic backlog of ships amid a pandemic boom in online shopping and then due to labor concerns related to negotiations between dockworkers

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Road upgrades to begin at Long Beach Airport in 2024

Upgrades to the roadway will add lanes of traffic, crosswalks and ADA-accessible curbs outside its historic terminal building.

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach Airport is expected to break ground on roadway improvements that will add lanes of traffic and pedestrian safety elements like crosswalks and ADA-accessible curbs outside its historic terminal building next year, city officials said.

The Long Beach City Council voted July 18 night to approve a \$12.5 million contract to complete the improvements, which could start as soon as January 2024 and last through September 2024.

Stephan Lum, an engineering officer with the airport, told the council that the project would increase sidewalk space in front of the terminal building, create six lanes of traffic, two of which would be for loading and unloading, and add a crosswalk on either side of the building.

The current median that separates the two drop-off areas is also going to be replaced with a more uniformly shaped and larger island that will be better equipped for passengers with disabilities.

Kate Kuykendall, a spokesperson for the airport, said July 19 that most of the work is expected to be done at night and the project is going to be completed in phases, with one lane of traffic in each

direction being available during construction.

Still, the airport is expecting the project to affect traffic, and officials will be putting out information on the airport's site to advise travelers of any delays that might be caused by the construction and to allow travelers to better plan for their arrivals or departures.

"There will definitely be disruptions, but we hope it will be worth it in terms of improving long-term traffic conditions in front of the terminal area," Kuykendall said.

Kuykendall said access to the rental car lot and parking structures is expected to be maintained during construction.

The changes are part of a larger overhaul of the airport that included the construction of a new ticketing building, which opened in April 2022, a new baggage claim area that opened in April of this year as well as the historic preservation of the terminal building where rental car services will be shifted in the coming months.

Airport officials are also looking to fill the restaurant space on the second floor of the terminal building where the former Legends of Aviation once operated before closing in 2014.

Upgrading Donald Douglas Drive and Barbara London Drive, the two roads that run through the airport complex, was initially put off because of the COVID-19 pandemic that largely shut down air travel in January 2020 and ate into the airport's ability to pay for Phase II of the airport improvements because airport revenue dried up.

While airport traffic has been above pre-pandemic levels in recent months, the airport will pay for a majority of the roadway improvements through a \$10.6 million federal grant it received last year. The rest is expected to come out of other revenue generated through airport fees. ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Drivers maneuver through the Long Beach Airport drop-off and pick-up area, which is set for an overhaul.

Denied Appeal

Continued from page 3

The letter also called attention to the number of affordable units (13) because state law requires at least 5% of the project to be affordable to qualify for the bonus. The 13 units are just 4.6% of the total project, and Black's letter called for the city to require at least 15 units to be affordable to meet the 5% threshold.

The parcel where the project is being proposed was included in the city's Housing Element, a document that shows where future housing could be built. It identified the site as a space where 95 affordable units could be built in the future.

City staff said the lost units could be made up with accessory dwelling units, which the city is seeing hundreds of applications for annually, however, those units are not required to be offered at affordable prices.

Black's letter also states that most of the project's 27,500 square feet of open space would only be accessible to residents, potentially putting the project in conflict with the Coastal Act that requires projects to maintain a portion of its open space as open to the public.

"Unless the Project's roof decks and pool area will be available to the

public, the project is inconsistent with SEASP," Black wrote.

The project proposed usable green space for the public on the perimeter of the development including connections to bike paths along the San Gabriel River.

An attorney representing Supporters Alliance for Environmental Responsibility said the project's environmental impact report was flawed because it didn't contemplate two other large developments being proposed across the street from Congressional Place.

Together, the three projects could add about 1,300 units at the intersection of PCH and Studebaker.

Councilmember Kristina Duggan, who represents the area where the project is proposed, said that she believed it complied with SEASP and the plan had signaled to developers what the city and residents wanted to see in future developments.

Duggan said the project would bring much-needed housing to the area and the proximity to the 2ND & PCH shopping center made her optimistic that more people would opt to walk to the grocery store, restaurants and other shops instead of using their vehicles.

She added that she would push for the traffic signals in the area to be better synchronized to alleviate the traffic that regularly backs up near the project site. ■



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CSU union members and students rally for fair wages, against proposed tuition hike

By Tess Kazenoff

Faculty, staff, union members and students from across the California State University system rallied together on July 11 during the CSU Board of Trustees meeting in Long Beach to protest issues ranging from fair pay and compensation to proposed tuition hikes for students.

Most of the CSU workforce is currently in contract negotiations, and many union proposals are urging the university system to increase wages to be competitive with other comparable institutions and private employers, raise the floor for the lowest-paid faculty and staff, and to reinstate salary steps, which ended nearly 30 years ago and which union members claim have caused extreme pay disparities between long-time and newer CSU workers, according to the California Faculty Association.

Many employees have gone years without a pay increase and are underpaid compared to other people who do the same work, said Michael Harris, a painter at Cal State Long Beach. Harris added that some

can no longer afford to live in the state they work in, particularly as inflation has risen.

An independent salary study commissioned by the state found support staff earn 12% below market rate, while faculty wages are stagnant, trailing at least 9% behind inflation, according to the California Faculty Union. Union members say that the fight for a fair contract extends past just better pay, but it also leads to high turnover and vacancies, which jeopardizes quality of education for CSU's nearly half a million students.

"They say they care. We worked through the pandemic. ... I care about my campus, I care about the campus community, I wish the campus cared about myself," said facility project supervisor Dave Unger, who has worked at Cal State Northridge for over 23 years.

Unger, who is part of the Teamsters Local 2010 union, which includes about 1,000 skilled tradesmen members across the 23 university campuses, plus additional members at UC schools, described interviewing, hiring and training a

new employee, only to discover that the new employee was earning more than he was.

"I'm kind of stuck—I have so many years in, you know? What, I'm supposed to walk away from my retirement?" Unger said. "Sometimes I wake up in the morning and look in the mirror, and I feel like I've been suckered in."

Unger said he expects that a strike will be the only way to resolve the current conflict with the university system.

"On my campus, morale is down," he said. "We keep building new buildings left and right, and the campus is looking amazing. But

if negotiations for all the unions do not go well moving forward, we will go through the process that we have to go through," Toombs said. "If we do not get a good result, then we are prepared to take action."

The CSU system is notably facing a \$1.5 million budget gap between the revenue it collects and the money it needs to fund student academics, which includes instructor pay, tutoring support and other costs tied to educating and graduating students—and the proposed tuition increase is one way the school system could make up the difference.

Tuition could rise as much as 6% annually for both undergraduate

"They have the money to pay their workers a living wage—it shouldn't be the student's burden to fill that gap."

- Vaughn Wilbur, Cal State Fullerton student, Students for Quality Education

people forget about the people who get it to look that way."

Current salary negotiations mark one of the first times that all of the unions (which includes the Teamsters, Academic Professionals of California or APC, California Faculty Association or CFA, the Union of Academic Student Workers or UAW 4123, the CSU Employees Union or CSUEU, and the Union of American Physicians and Dentists or UAPD) have come together in a "coalition of summer solidarity," said Charles Toombs, California Faculty Association president and professor at San Diego State.

"We hope that the Board of Trustees actually understand that

and graduate students beginning in fall 2024.

While 33% of the increased revenue would support campus financial aid for low-income students, known as the State University Grant, students and union members in attendance voiced concerns that the tuition hike will make college increasingly unaffordable for its students.

"The majority of students in the CSU are students of color, and the CSU should not be balancing its budget on their backs and on their shoulders," Toombs said. "Students of color have witnessed so much in the last few months with legislation and Supreme Court decisions that

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Tess Kazenoff / Business Journal

Union members urge CSU to increase wages in order to be competitive with other comparable institutions and private employers, raise the floor for CSU's lowest-paid faculty and staff, and reinstate salary steps, which has caused extreme pay disparities between long-time and newer CSU workers.

City Council approves study to analyze hotel worker wages

Long Beach began the process on July 11 of potentially putting a measure on the March 2024 ballot that would push hotel workers' pay as high as \$30 per hour by 2028.

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach began the process on Tuesday, July 11 of potentially putting a measure on the March 2024 ballot that would push hotel workers' pay as high as \$30 per hour by 2028, after the City Council voted unanimously to approve a market analysis that could be presented to the body by the end of the year.

Hotel workers in Long Beach scored a victory in 2012 through Measure N, a voter-approved measure that provided inflation-adjusted wage increases and five sick days per year. Hotel workers' minimum wage is currently \$17.55 per hour, according to the city's website.

Labor unions across the region have seen their members strike and push for increased pay in recent months, including two Downtown hotels, the Hyatt Regency and Hyatt Centric, which agreed in April to pay its non-tipped workers to between \$22 and \$25 per hour.

Workers, labor leaders and allies showed up to Long Beach city hall on July 11 to demand that the council push forward with a ballot measure to let the voters decide if all hospitality workers in the city would get similar increases in pay.

"Fifteen dollars an hour does not get you anywhere, and again, I'd love to stay in Long Beach," said Gloria



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Long Beach hotel workers celebrate wage gains at the Hyatt Regency in Long Beach, Thursday, April 13, 2023.

Hernandez, a hotel worker who said she feared losing her home because of her current pay.

Yvonne Wheeler, president of the powerful Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, which includes the Unite Here Local 11 union that is leading the push for hotel worker pay increases, said that in the midst of a housing crisis, many workers are one missed paycheck from being homeless and told the council that it was "an opportunity to vote on a just policy."

"As a taxpayer in Long Beach, we've subsidized the Downtown area with a promise that it was an investment that would return to Long Beach residents through good jobs with benefits," Wheeler said.

John Edmond, a public affairs advocate for the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce who told the Post last week that he was skeptical of the \$30 per hour goal, said July 11 the chamber had not taken a position on the item yet and wants to be "part of the process."

While the vote authorized a market analysis to be completed

before the council makes a decision to put a wage increase question on the ballot in 2024, some council members already indicated they wanted to do just that and asked for language other cities incorporated into similar ballot measures be incorporated into Long Beach's.

"I hope that voters approve this at the ballot box," said Councilmember Cindy Allen, one of the co-sponsors of the item.

Other council members pointed to the city's own employees, many of whom don't make \$25 an hour. Councilmember Al Austin said he supported the market analysis but said the irony of the city's workforce pay scale was not lost on him.

"I hope we're as enthusiastic in raising up our own workers as we are these hospitality workers," Austin said.

When Long Beach approves its annual municipal budget later this year, it will include a new contract with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, the city's largest employee union, which represents over 2,800

workers including librarians, refuse collectors and ambulance drivers, all classifications that are often paid less than \$25 per hour.

Staff shortages have been cited by city officials in recent months for an ambulance crashing into a power pole when its driver fell asleep at the wheel as well as library closures and trash not being collected on regularly scheduled days.

In order to place a ballot measure on the March 2024 ballot, the council would have to vote by December.

If it makes the ballot, the measure would join another \$25 minimum wage increase ballot measure for health care workers, which the council tried to pass as an ordinance in 2022 but was blocked by opponents who turned in enough signatures to qualify it for a referendum vote.

The council requested an economic impact report for that issue to determine how a wage increase might affect the health care network in the city and voted to approve the ordinance the same day the report was made public in August 2022.

That report concluded that up to 58 jobs would be lost in the short term, with those who kept their jobs seeing gains of between \$7 million and \$9.9 million in wages. However, the report anticipated that health care facilities could close locations, raise prices for patients or reduce investments in the city to pay for higher wages.

The report was limited because of the roughly 30 days the council gave its authors to complete the analysis, with several firms turning down the job because of the lack of time needed to complete a thorough report.

A market analysis for the hotel worker wage increase is expected to be discussed at a council committee hearing before being sent back to the full council. ■

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CSU Rally

Continued from page 6

are just not honoring who students of color are—and we expect the CSU to do better, to be a real leader.”

Cal State Fullerton student with Students for Quality Education Vaughn Wilbur noted that presidents across the CSU system have received salary increases—in Long Beach, President Jane Close Conoley received a 7% salary increase last year, in addition to equity adjustments based on performance and comparison to similar universities nationally. According to the California Faculty Association, CSU also has a “rainy day fund” of over \$3 billion.

“They have the money to pay their workers a living wage—it shouldn’t be the student’s burden to fill that gap,” said Wilbur.

The purpose of the CSU system is to be accessible and to provide quality education, said Michael Lee-Chang, a Sacramento State student with the organization Students For Quality Education.

“The bottom line is that the later you attend a CSU, the more you will be paying,” said Lee-Chang. “Students from disadvantaged communities, from our Black communities, from our Latino communities—these are students that have been historically



Tess Kazenoff / Business Journal

Protesters urge CSU to increase pay for employees and to not implement a yearly tuition increase for students on July 11, 2023.

disadvantaged, and the CSU wants to put them at even more of a disadvantage. So we’re here not only fighting for us, but for pretty much the future of California.”

Cal State Long Beach student Luis Ortiz, also with the organization Students for Quality Education, said that access to free education, along with resources ranging from mental health support, food, and housing accessibility, ensures that students are able to land on their feet after graduating, rather than struggling,

which is the case for many students and employees living in Long Beach.

Meanwhile, within the Board of Trustees meeting, members discussed expanding accessibility and overall affordability for students, which includes assessing factors apart from tuition, particularly cost of living.

“We heard concerns that a tuition hike may decrease enrollment—we take that seriously,” said Trustee Julia Lopez during the board meeting. “The sticker price should

never be the reason a student does not apply to college.”

The overall cost for students to attend a Cal State University school over a nine-month period from 2022 to 2023 (which can differ per campus) ranges from \$21,133 for students who live at home, to \$27,175 for students living on campus, and \$30,191 for students who live off campus, which does not include costs for housing, food, and other expenses during summer months.

Trustee members noted that Cal Grants, Pell Grants and other scholarships assist many university students. While 60% of undergrads (about 249,637 students) have their tuition fully covered, and 81% of CSU undergraduates receive financial aid, board members discussed the need for improved communication and accessibility, particularly when it comes to better connecting with high school students and their families about financial aid, as well as simplifying the overall financial aid process.

The Board of Trustees is expected to vote on the tuition increase in September.

“California continues to leave genius on the table,” said Trustee Lateefah Simon during the meeting. “Those young people—with support and hard work, can revitalize the state if they’re given the opportunity to come into our university system. But we have a long way to go.” ■

Shop Long Beach contest in full swing; diners and shoppers can earn up to \$1,000 in rewards

Shoppers and diners can earn cash rewards and prizes for spending their money at local businesses this summer through the Shop Long Beach program.

By Caitlin Antonios

As small businesses continue to rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic hit dining and retail stores, Long Beach has launched the Shop Long Beach program, which rewards customers shopping at more than 60 local businesses.

The program kicked off with the “Small Biz Blitz” contest, which runs from July 1 until Sept. 3. During that time, customers can submit photos of their receipts from independent businesses to earn points and rewards.

Inviting friends to participate will also rack up points. Prizes range from \$500 and \$1,000 in LocalCash (money that’s available in the contactless payment app from Localight, which is the program’s partner), rewards worth \$20, and weekly prizes at local restaurants like \$50 at Willmore Wine Bar and Buono’s Authentic Pizzeria. Over 100 people will receive prizes and rewards, according to a Localight spokesperson.

The campaign aims to generate \$1 million in additional local spending by incentivizing shoppers and diners to spend their money around town. Winners can begin using their rewards through a phased rollout across different neighborhoods throughout the summer.

The Pie Bar in Downtown is one of the dozens of businesses participating.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Adolf Perez wraps freshly made burgers at Tom’s, located at 1600 W. Pacific Coast Highway.

“I joined the program because we love connecting with our neighbors,” The Pie Bar’s founder, Laurie Gray, said in a statement. “Small businesses grow and thrive on the support from those living and working in the local area. When you shop local, you’re investing in your community and that benefits everyone.”

Rewards spending will start Sept. 4, with a focus on North, West and Central Long Beach businesses to stimulate spending in areas the city has identified as low- and moderate-income areas with local businesses owners who identify as Black, Latino, Cambodian and Asian and Pacific Islander.

Shoppers and diners can sign up online to see the over 50 participating businesses and register

for the contest. Any independent merchant that hasn’t already signed up can join online as well. Here’s some businesses that have joined:

- The Wicked Wolf
- California Tan & Wellness
- Tom’s Automotive Service Center
- Long Beach Vintage Etc.
- Black Sheep Salon
- Baker Style Center
- Enhanced By Vee
- Feather & Leaf Acupuncture
- Shara Stores
- Bamboo Teri House
- Sculpt Fitness Long Beach
- Bixby Knolls Wellness Center
- Areté Beauté
- Los Compadres Restaurant
- Cassidy’s Corner Café LBX
- Simple Health Wellness
- The Vintage LBC
- AndyLiz Boutique
- Tom’s Burgers & Teriyaki
- Casa Chaskis Peruvian Restaurant
- Fluffy’s Sno-Balls
- Black Ring Coffee
- Got A Leaf
- Buvons
- Long Beach Ice
- All City Party
- Angel Food Donuts
- Hungry Drea Creations
- Hahn Jewelry
- Five Starr Pilates & Fitness
- Luv, Maman
- Catalano’s Pizza
- Vero Pilates
- Fair Trade Long Beach Retail Collective

- Wrigley Coffee
- C.M.R. Flowers and Party Supply
- WUT A PICKLE LLC
- Aguas Way
- Dainty Disco
- El Paisa
- La Guanaquita (both locations)
- Taco Loco 2
- El Pollo Imperial
- Ricardo’s Nursery
- The Teriyaki Grill
- 39 Degrees
- The Pie Bar
- Barry’s Long Beach
- Ethikli
- Colossus Bread
- Rainbow Juices
- Tuesday’s Sweet Shoppe
- Long Beach Beer Lab
- Buono’s Authentic Pizzeria
- GreenCoast Hydroponics
- Tracy’s Bar & Grill
- The Attic
- Wrigley Coffee
- Enrique’s Mexican Restaurant
- Partake Collective
- Jongewaard’s Bake n Broil

“Long Beach is committed to fostering economic growth by supporting increased spending at our local businesses,” Mayor Rex Richardson said in a statement.

In late 2022, the city sought vendors to launch the Shop Long Beach program, ultimately choosing the Long Beach Center for Economic Inclusion (LBCEI) in partnership with Localight, a Long Beach-based startup. Funding for the program comes from the Long Beach Recovery Act. ■

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Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Michael Baker, 67, cuts 71-year-old Vonell Garrett’s hair at Mr. Baker’s Style Center, which has been a Long Beach staple for 73 years.

There’s big demand for affordable housing in Long Beach. So why are there so few units?

By Jason Ruiz

When a new affordable housing development in Central Long Beach opened its application window last week, thousands of people applied for the 47 units available to low-income households, which will be chosen via lottery—underscoring the demand for affordable units, which are difficult and expensive to build.

The “Wellspring” project at the corner of Walnut Avenue and Anaheim Street will boost Long Beach’s affordable unit stock by 87 units—one is reserved for an on-site manager. But because 20 are being reserved for formerly unhoused seniors and another 20 units have been set aside for households with housing vouchers, just 47 were open to the application process.

Of those 47 units, 20 were specifically reserved for people currently living in Long Beach, with the other 27 units available to any qualified applicant in the county.

By July 14, Bridge Housing, the developer of Wellspring, had received 3,461 applications, with another two

Continued on page 13



Linc Housing’s “Spark at Midtown” at 1900 Long Beach Blvd. opened in 2021 and provided 95 affordable units for low-income families.

Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

CITY OF LONG BEACH Bid Opportunities		
Title	Bid Number	Due Date
Furnish and Deliver One (1) Asphalt Grinder	WD-23-055	07/26/2023
Water Main Lining Pilot Project MC-5174	UD-23-115	07/26/2023
Long Beach Activating Safe Communities	HE-23-250	07/31/2023
Water Main Improvement 3-A Ximeno Ave	UD-23-114	08/02/2023
Tire Labor and Services	FM-23-283	08/03/2023
Provide Engineering Design Services for the Water Main Improvement Project POF-01	WD-23-110	08/03/2023
Provide Construction Management Services for Water Main Improvement 3-A Ximeno Ave	UD-23-116	08/03/2023
Software & Implementation Solutions for Mobile Field Service	TI-23-211	08/04/2023
Mobile Field Services Solution	TI-23-210	08/04/2023
R-7209 Crest Alley Improvement Project	PW-23-286	08/10/2023
Kiteboarding Instruction Providers	PR-22-181	08/16/2023
E-Bikes and Equipment	PW-23-257	08/17/2023

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



Auto Lien Sale Auction

3111 E. Willow Street
Long Beach, CA 90806
(562) 570-2828
<http://www.longbeach.gov/autoauction>
August 1 & 15, 2023
Registration & Viewing:
8:00 A.M. - 9:50 A.M.

State bill could allow higher sales taxes in LA County—if voters eventually approve it

By Jason Ruiz

A proposed law could allow Los Angeles County to exceed the state limit on local sales tax, as county leaders eye an extension of a tax that has funded homelessness initiatives since 2017 but expires in 2027.

Assembly Bill 1679, which was introduced by Los Angeles-area Assemblyman Miguel Santiago, could allow Los Angeles County to exceed the 2% cap the county is allowed to collect in sales taxes by up to half a percent. It advanced out of committee this week and will head to a floor vote.

The bill’s passage wouldn’t automatically trigger a sales tax increase in LA County, but it would allow county officials to increase the rate.

It would require the county’s Board of Supervisors to put a measure on a future ballot for voters to decide, and the board has already signaled its approval; the panel voted July 11 to support AB-1679.

If the county moves forward with a half-percent hike, a

quarter percent of the funds would go toward continuing the county’s tax to fund homelessness initiatives (Measure H), with the second quarter going toward the recently formed LA County Affordable Housing Solutions Agency to help fund affordable housing production.

Exactly how the proposal would affect Long Beach is unclear. While nearly half of the county’s 88 cities are already at the local cap of 10.25%, like Long Beach, the city has a unique situation when it comes to how it pays into Measure H.

For some cities, Measure H could phase out and be reimplemented without increasing their current sales tax rates, or they could increase their tax rates by just a quarter of a percent if the county seeks funding for LACAHS.

But for Long Beach, if LA County pursues the full half-percent increase allowed under AB-1679, it’s possible the city’s sales tax rate would rise to 10.75%, which would put it at the highest rate of any city in the state, alongside multiple cities in Alameda County, which also have a 10.75%

Continued on page 13

Green Pines

Continued from page 4

Saunders-Green returned to graduate school to study business, and her idea for social entrepreneurship—essentially a traditional business that works to solve a social problem—began to blossom, now with a new direction in mind: music and art.

“Instead of doing traditional social work, which is like more case management, and all of the negative things, I wanted to do social work that we don’t hear about a lot, which is more advocacy and empowerment, not necessarily all the bureaucracy and all of the rules and all of that,” Saunders-Green said.

While there are many youth with talent who are already creating music or art, they may not know how to monetize it or much about entrepreneurship, Saunders-Green said.

With its new mission, and a new name, Green Pines Creative Inc., the organization hopes to fill that gap.

Although the company initially began operating out of a coworking space, Saunders-Green quickly realized that the company needed its own building where artists, specifically former foster youth, would feel comfortable, she said. Plus, the space could be utilized by the larger community for events and coworking, while serving as the company headquarters.

As the company began to release original music, create artwork, and sell merchandise under the Green Pines Media brand (Green Pines Creative Inc. is the parent company) throughout the pandemic, Saunders-Green searched for the perfect space, eventually acquiring a 10,000-square-foot facility in Downtown Long Beach in 2021.

“I just didn’t realize it would take 14 months for us to actually be able to open our doors,” Saunders-Green said.

Amid months of getting the building reclassified and improved, which came with numerous pandemic-related delays—setbacks which ultimately cost about \$85,000—artists from the community began to create murals and bring the space to life. The Green Pines Creative Coworking and Events space (owned by the Green Pines Creative Inc. brand) officially opened its doors in February of this year.

Since then, the event space has sold out nearly every weekend. The building has also hosted a number of exhibits for artists, which has been particularly special for former foster youth who have never publicly displayed their art before, Saunders-Green said.

Its coworking spaces, including private rooms, semi-private offices, and workstations, can be utilized on an hourly, daily, or monthly basis (foster care

alumni and transition age youth receive discounted rates). The building, though, is not strictly for foster care alumni—but for any creative or entrepreneur who wants to support Green Pines’ mission of helping artists impacted by systems such as foster care, Saunders-Green said.

Members receive access to the building’s facilities, plus workshops, events, business and personal development, and even an on-site therapist.

“It’s really teaching life skills, just using art, music and entrepreneurship,” Saunders-Green said. “I think that’s been the most powerful thing. And of course, paying people when we have the ability.”

At this point, about 12 former foster youth have worked consistently with Green Pines Media, from receiving support with sync licensing and working to get their music into television, film, video games or advertisements, to having their art licensed by Green Pines. Green Pines licenses artists’ work on a project-by-project basis, and profits are split, so artists are able to learn the process and then move forward without the company in the future, Saunders-Green explained.

As everything is self-funded at the moment, Saunders-Green hopes that the event and coworking space will continue to grow, eventually making the business profitable, she said.

“I want to see people out there who maybe have a passion for entrepreneurship, look at social enterprise, because I think that’s a way to really make a sustainable impact in our community,” Saunders-Green said. “I strongly believe we can all win if we do it the right way.”

And eventually, she hopes to be able to offer even more to foster care alumni and transition age youth.

Currently, Saunders-Green is considering the possibility of purchasing the building in the future, which could potentially

expand to offer micro apartments or mixed-use housing.

And although the Downtown space is still newly opened, an even bigger space may be in Green Pines’ future, Saunders-Green said.

“There are so many requests we get for things like a ghost kitchen, or a communal kitchen,” said Saunders-Green, who would also love to have a stage and more recording space for artists. A larger building (Saunders-Green has about 30,000 square feet in mind) would also allow Green Pines to host bigger events, which are also frequently requested—currently, its largest event room can only accommodate up to 76 people.

While it’s unclear what the future could hold, whether it’s purchasing the current building or finding a larger home for Green Pines Media, “we want to be bigger,” Saunders-Green said. “When it comes to creativity, the sky’s the limit.”

“It took us five, six years to find this (building), so it may take another five or six years to find something larger, but I don’t know,” Saunders-Green said. “We’re just trying to listen to our target market and see what they’re looking for and what their needs are.”

Not only does working with Green Pines empower youth to move forward in creative careers, but Saunders-Green hopes that it will also play a role in combating the stigma that can face those who were in the child welfare system.

“When people walk through these doors ... it’s all about the creativity, the art, the music,” and not about being labeled as someone who was in the system, Saunders-Green said.

“We work really, really hard to try to remove that (stigma),” she added. “And just, you know, make it a space for everyone who is a creative or an artist, who appreciates art or music, to come in and just enjoy and build community.”

The Green Pines Creative Coworking & Events space is located at 129 W. Fifth St. ■



Deena Saunders-Green walks through the music room at Green Pines, which assists musicians largely with sync licensing.

Tess Kazenoff / Business Journal

Cargo Movement

Continued from page 4

and their employers.

“We are hopeful to obtain a greater percentile of market share,” Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement. “We remain confident that our reliability, efficiency and unparalleled service will attract additional trade and economic activity to our Port.”

Last year, the Port of New York and New Jersey, which has long been the third-busiest U.S. complex overtook longtime-runner-up Long Beach in annual container volumes. The East Coast port continued to outperform Long Beach well into this year, but the West Coast port reclaimed its number two rank as of May, according to data from both ports—but it’s close.

New York-New Jersey has not yet released its June data.

Seroka is also confident that the twin ports will regain some of their lost cargo now that an end to extended labor negotiations is in sight, but he also acknowledges that, based on past experiences, it is likely that a portion of that market share will never come back to the West Coast.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union, which represents tens of thousands of West Coast dockworkers, and the Pacific Maritime Association, which represents terminal operators and shipping companies, began negotiations in May 2022. The talks dragged on over a year, which led to numerous work actions, including wildcat strikes.

On June 14, after more than 13 months, the organizations announced a tentative contract agreement. One week later, during an interview with Cordero, ILWU president Willie Adams stated the union would convene a caucus in Long Beach sometime in July to discuss the agreement before a ratification vote was held unionwide.

The union declined to comment about when the caucus would take place or when a ratification vote is expected.

The PMA declined to comment on its next steps following the tentative agreement announcement.

Julie Su, acting labor secretary for the Biden administration, who was instrumental in the parties reaching a tentative agreement, joined Seroka during his press conference to discuss the process. Su recalled only packing for a two-day stay in San Francisco where negotiations were being held—but she ended up staying for a full week.

“My goal was to really support the collective bargaining process, which is so valuable and so important,” she said, noting that she was encouraging the groups to remain at the table despite butting heads.

“The most important lesson is that collective bargaining works,” Su said. “It’s a healthy process ... to ensure workers get a fair share, to plan for stability and resilience ... and to really lay down a path, not just for today, but for the future.” ■

COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

Jeff and Pam Kellogg take to the water, list Los Cerritos house at \$1.595 million



Photo courtesy of Dick Gaylord

This Cape Cod two-story home in Los Cerritos, the soon-to-be former home of Jeff Kellogg and his wife Pam, is on the market, listed at \$1.595 million.

Swing by the Los Cerritos home of longtime Long Beach officeholder Jeff Kellogg and his wife Pam and you'll suddenly feel like raising a family. It has something to do with the white picket fence, the twin gabled dormers on the second floor and the all-around traditional architecture that comes right out of Hollywood as a location scene of Someplace in Middle America in the 1950s. All you need is Dad (maybe played by Fred MacMurray) walking down the path to his car after breakfast while his wife, two small children wave and the family dog yips happily and trots out to escort him to the gate. Soon, Jeff and Pam will be leaving the home at 212 E. Bixby Road where they've raised their son and daughter, and heading to a golden-years home on the water in Naples at 193 Rivo Alto Canal. Kellogg, 68, is leaving the neighborhood of his youth. In fact, his family has a long history in the area, going back to his grandfather settling on a home on Virginia Road in the 1930s and his parents making the short hop from the Wrigley neighborhood to Bixby Knolls in 1953. Jeff attended Long Beach schools, including Jordan High, where he excelled in sports and scored a football scholarship to the University of Oregon. He represented the 8th District on the Long Beach City Council from 1988 till 2000 and then three terms representing Area 1 on the Long Beach Community College Board of Trustees. For the Kelloggs, it was a do-it-now-or-never decision. "We've always wanted to live on the water," Jeff told me, though he hadn't taken the plunge until fairly recently. Just weeks ago he was doing a lot of work on his home that he and Pam bought in 2000, and a neighbor asked if he was doing the work so he could sell the house. Kellogg looked at

him like he was crazy. "I said, 'Why would I want to do all this work to make my house perfect and then move out?'" But then the opportunity to buy a canal-front home at 193 Rivo Alto Canal came up and the couple talked about it. Could they afford it? Are they crazy? Should they do it? If not now, as they tiptoe into their 70s, then when? So, it's off to the jewel of the 3rd District for the life-long 8th District resident and his wife for a chance to live where you can go paddleboarding in the morning and—if there's any loose change left over—maybe buy a Duffy boat and catch some sunsets in the electric boat that they can park in their front yard. In some ways, the Naples home mirrors the Kelloggs' Los Cerritos home: Both are white two-story houses with fenced front yards, and the Naples place even has the same two gabled dormers. The big difference, of course, is location. The Naples house, still in escrow, was listed at \$3.75 million, while the Bixby Road went up for sale last weekend, listed by Dick Gaylord at \$1.595 million. The Kellogg home has three bedrooms and two baths in 2,738 square feet. Recent improvements to the home include a metal roof and updated bathrooms. The living room is inviting, with a fireplace, and the handsome formal dining room with hardwood wainscoting below elegant patterned wallpaper. The kitchen includes glass-and-wood cabinets and top-end appliances, and its dining area opens fully to a waterfall terrace and outdoor fireplace along with a backyard bar and barbecue. Other interior offerings include the three spacious bedrooms capped by a primary suite with an elegant en suite bath, an adjacent office/library/nursery, a laundry room and a two-car garage with

room in the driveway for two additional cars. It's a fine family home in a great walkable neighborhood with brisk strolls to Steelcraft, Jongewaard's Bake n Broil and all the offerings of the Atlantic Avenue retail and restaurant corridor. The home's only drawback is: If you've always wanted to live on the water, this isn't your dream house. ■



The soon-to-be new home of Jeff and Pam Kellogg at 193 Rivo Alto Canal in Naples.



The Kellogg home's kitchen dining area opens out into the backyard patio and fountain.

Affordable Housing

Continued from page 10















weeks left in the application window, according to Bridge. A Linc Housing project that recently opened in San Pedro that offered 100% of its 90 units at affordable rates received over 4,300 applications. It's not uncommon to hold a lottery for these types of units—and seeing thousands of applications is normal, officials said. Developers work to pair applicants with units designated for their annual income and unit size. For instance, 27 of the 47 units in the Wellspring project are designated for households making 40% of the area median income (AMI) but are broken into one-bedroom (7), two-bedroom (12) and three-bedroom (8) options. That means while applicants are in theory vying for 47 units, they may actually be in the mix for as little as seven units. The fact that so many people apply for these projects demonstrates the need for units not set at market rate prices. The most expensive unit at Wellspring is \$1,859 per month, but there are only two of those three-bedroom units, and they're designated for people making 60% AMI, or about \$44,600 per year. Why it's so hard to build affordable units There's clearly demand. So why don't we see projects opening up more often? In short, it comes down to zoning, financing and sometimes a political will to make way for affordable housing projects. Getting the funding to build affordable housing is not as simple as going to the bank for a loan, said Frank Martinez, policy director for the Southern California Association of Nonprofit Housing, an organization that advocates for affordable housing developers. Martinez said one of the main obstacles for affordable housing developers is financing, which is difficult to obtain sometimes and can be scarce. Developers often have to tap into federal, state and even local funds like waivers for development fees and small loans from cities that can help them leverage other funding but also creates a complicated funding puzzle with deadlines for when the money needs to be spent. "It almost doesn't happen that a project has one source of funding," Martinez said. "It's not like buying a house. You have to take out multiple sources of funds." And despite the state putting in hundreds of millions toward affordable housing production, it's not nearly enough for the size of the need. Getting those funds is highly competitive, and providing

things like on-site health clinics, financial literacy classes and other community benefits can increase a developer's odds of getting funding. Those funds and tax credits are what help make the affordable units pencil out for developers. Zoning can also be an impediment for housing production. Cities can make it more difficult to build multi-family housing by keeping old zoning in place that prioritizes single-family homes and limits the amount of space where larger buildings can be built. Long Beach has updated its zoning to allow for more development along certain corridors, like in 2017, when it approved a specific plan to allow for housing production in Southeast Long Beach and when it approved its Land Use Element in 2018. The City Council also approved an inclusionary housing ordinance in 2021 that requires housing projects over nine units in Downtown and along Long Beach Boulevard to set aside 11% of its units for lower-income households. State law also provides developers with incentives to include affordable units by allowing taller projects to be built if affordable units are included. An upcoming project in Southeast Long Beach is using that to add an additional story and 17 affordable units to a proposed project on Pacific Coast Highway and Studebaker Road. What's in the works There are a number of affordable housing projects in various states of development in the city. Two projects that are getting closer to opening are the four-story, 68-unit senior affordable housing project from Mercy Housing that's located near Long Beach Poly High School. That will provide low-cost housing to seniors and senior veterans who were formerly unhoused with rents ranging from \$554 to \$1,222, according to Mercy's site. There's also the 26 Point 2 development near the Traffic Circle, which is under construction and will add 76 affordable units for previously unhoused and low-income households when it opens, potentially later this year. At least three other affordable housing projects are in the process of securing funding that could add another 237 units at the site of the old

First Lutheran School near St. Mary Medical Center, the Seventh Street Armory Downtown and in East Long Beach where a vacant county mental health facility now stands. There's also a push by Long Beach City College leaders to build affordable student housing in the city, and its board of trustees is considering asking voters to approve a \$990 million bond next year to help finance housing at its Liberal Arts Campus and in North Long Beach. New laws that could help Martinez's group is tracking a number of state bills that could help streamline affordable housing production in the state, but he says that no one bill this session is going to fix the problems that have stymied production. Senate Bill 4 could allow affordable housing production on land owned by religious institutions by changing zoning laws. Martinez said religious institutions have expressed interest in wanting to build housing as part of their missions to serve the needy and house the unhoused, but local zoning has prevented it. Sales Tax LA County Continued from page 10 sales tax rate. In an email, the city said it will continue to work with its consultants on how the bill would affect the city's effective tax rate if it's adopted and voters approve a new county tax measure. It could also seek a partial implementation of the tax increase if it's approved. For years, Long Beach has benefitted from Measure H without paying into the countywide tax because its own local sales tax increase, Measure A, was adopted a year before Measure H and put the city at the allowable local cap. The city has gotten around \$14 million annually from the tax to help pay for homelessness efforts in Long Beach, and earlier this year—the first year the city has paid into Measure H—Mayor Rex Richardson sent a letter to the county asking that the city receive its "fair share" of

While the bill's author, state Sen. Scott Wiener, has authored some controversial housing bills in the past, Martinez said this one is fairly narrow, and because of how churches are naturally dispersed through cities, the bill won't have widespread effects. His group has signed on as a co-sponsor of the bill. "No single bill is going to fix everything, but just the idea that we have these natural, willing partners that want to serve their brother, their sister, will make it easier," Martinez said of the bill. Getting funding could get easier as well through a constitutional amendment that could lower the threshold for voter approval for a state bill that could put a \$10 billion bond measure on the 2024 ballot. Long Beach is supporting both. The first bill, ACA 1, would lower the required support from voters from two-thirds to 55% for any bond measures to build affordable housing. However, ACA 1 also includes language that would allow cities to spend those funds on "public infrastructure," which could include public safety, library facilities and parks. AB 1657, meanwhile, would ask voters to approve \$10 billion in bonds to pay for affordable housing and homeownership programs. Voters could decide both issues at the ballot box next year, but Martinez is optimistic of how support for affordable housing production is trending. "We do think things are moving in the right direction, but we always want more and want it faster," Martinez said. ■

the funds, which city officials say is closer to \$25 million. Long Beach's Measure A 1% sales tax has helped the city fund police and fire staffing, road repairs and other infrastructure fixes since it was approved in 2016. It has generated upward of \$86 million annually for the city, but for the next four years, the 1% tax will be reduced to .75%, with the remainder going to the county. The estimated Measure A revenue for this year is about \$67 million. Measure A, like Measure H, was supposed to be a temporary 10-year tax, but city officials asked voters to make it permanent in 2020, and the measure passed by 16 votes. The permanent nature of Measure A could complicate how the potential tax increase in LA County affects Long Beach. When Measure H phases out in 2027, it's expected that the city will return to collecting the full 1% of Measure A, with that funding staying inside the city. ■

LONG BEACH BUSINESS LIST: RESTAURANTS					
LOGO	COMPANY NAME + SPECIALTY	ADDRESS + CATERING	YEAR / # OF EMPLOYEES	NAME + TITLE	PHONE + WEBSITE
	<i>business name:</i> The Hippea <i>specialty:</i> Falafel	<i>street address:</i> 2023 E. 4th St. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2016 <i># of employees:</i> 4	<i>name(s):</i> Vered Azari <i>title(s):</i> Owner	<i>phone number:</i> 562-343-7722 <i>website:</i> thehippea.net
	<i>business name:</i> El Barrio Cantina <i>specialty:</i> Modern Mexican Food and Cocktails	<i>street address:</i> 1731 E. 4th St. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2021 <i># of employees:</i> 35	<i>name(s):</i> Ulises Pineda Alfaro <i>title(s):</i> Chef	<i>phone number:</i> 562-612-0585 <i>website:</i> elbarriocantinalbc.com
	<i>business name:</i> The Hangout <i>specialty:</i> Charcuterie	<i>street address:</i> 2122 E. 4th St. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> No	<i>yr opened:</i> 2020 <i># of employees:</i> 5	<i>name(s):</i> Melissa Carpenter <i>title(s):</i> Owner	<i>phone number:</i> 562-676-6810 <i>website:</i> shopthehangout.com
	<i>business name:</i> Broadway Pizza & Grill <i>specialty:</i> Hot Wings	<i>street address:</i> 120 E. Broadway <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2006 <i># of employees:</i> 11	<i>name(s):</i> Mike Rosetti <i>title(s):</i> Owner	<i>phone number:</i> 562-901-9690 <i>website:</i> broadwaypizzalb.com
	<i>business name:</i> Axiom Kitchen Smoked Meats & BBQ <i>specialty:</i> Barbecue and Smoked Meats	<i>street address:</i> 4137 Norse Way <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2022 <i># of employees:</i> 4	<i>name(s):</i> Qiana Williams-Mafnas <i>title(s):</i> Owner	<i>phone number:</i> 562-966-9292 <i>website:</i> axiomkitchenbbq.com
	<i>business name:</i> Hangry Belly <i>specialty:</i> Gourmet Burgers	<i>street address:</i> 3768 Long Beach Blvd., Suite 114 <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2020 <i># of employees:</i> 10	<i>name(s):</i> Kat Vacharabul <i>title(s):</i> Chef/Owner	<i>phone number:</i> 562-336-1155 <i>website:</i> hangrybelly.com
	<i>business name:</i> The Bamboo Club <i>specialty:</i> Century-Old Tiki Cocktails, plus Hawaiian and Asian-Style Eats	<i>street address:</i> 3522 E. Anaheim St. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2019 <i># of employees:</i> 32	<i>name(s):</i> Brett Gallo and Jim Ritson <i>title(s):</i> Founders	<i>phone number:</i> 562-343-2534 <i>website:</i> thebambooclub.com
	<i>business name:</i> Sura Korean BBQ & Tofu House <i>specialty:</i> Korean Tofu Soup, BBQ and Authentic Korean	<i>street address:</i> 621 Atlantic Ave. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2008 <i># of employees:</i> 30	<i>name(s):</i> Soo Hyun Kim <i>title(s):</i> General Manager	<i>phone number:</i> 909-342-8231 <i>website:</i> surakbbq.com
	<i>business name:</i> Local Grind Coffee + Cafe <i>specialty:</i> Organic Coffee, Specialty Drinks and Bagel Sandwiches	<i>street address:</i> 5933 E. Spring St. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2020 <i># of employees:</i> 12	<i>name(s):</i> Robert and Laura Herrera <i>title(s):</i> Owners	<i>phone number:</i> 562-497-9848 <i>website:</i> localgrindcoffee.com
	<i>business name:</i> The MODERN Kitchen + Bar <i>specialty:</i> Chicken Pot Pie and Fresh Cocktails	<i>street address:</i> 2801 E. Spring St. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2021 <i># of employees:</i> 12	<i>name(s):</i> Mary Lallande <i>title(s):</i> Manager	<i>phone number:</i> 562-452-7288 <i>website:</i> themodernkitchenandbar.com
	<i>business name:</i> Baja Sonora <i>specialty:</i> Mexican Food	<i>street address:</i> 2940 Clark Ave. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 1998 <i># of employees:</i> 14	<i>name(s):</i> Mary Sophiea <i>title(s):</i> Owner	<i>phone number:</i> 562-421-5120 <i>website:</i> bajasonora.com
	<i>business name:</i> The Pie Bar <i>specialty:</i> Pies	<i>street address:</i> 450 Pine Ave. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2016 <i># of employees:</i> 8	<i>name(s):</i> Laurie Gray <i>title(s):</i> Founder and CEO	<i>phone number:</i> 562-435-6910 <i>website:</i> thepiebarlongbeach.com
	<i>business name:</i> Tacos La Pequena <i>specialty:</i> Mexican Food	<i>street address:</i> 4915 Long Beach Blvd <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> No	<i>yr opened:</i> 2020 <i># of employees:</i> 3	<i>name(s):</i> Amelia Contreras <i>title(s):</i> Owner	<i>phone number:</i> 562-612-3020 <i>website:</i>
	<i>business name:</i> Rance's Chicago Pizza <i>specialty:</i> Pizza	<i>street address:</i> 5258 E. 2nd St. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2016 <i># of employees:</i> 20	<i>name(s):</i> Aaron Tofani <i>title(s):</i> Owner	<i>phone number:</i> 562-786-5566 <i>website:</i> rancespizza.com
	<i>business name:</i> Wine on 2nd <i>specialty:</i> Wine Bar	<i>street address:</i> 5640 E. 2nd St. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2021 <i># of employees:</i> 4	<i>name(s):</i> Elena Shushkova and Teodor Todorov <i>title(s):</i> Owners	<i>phone number:</i> 562-343-1662 <i>website:</i> wineon2nd.com
	<i>business name:</i> Padre <i>specialty:</i> Latin Fusion	<i>street address:</i> 525 E. Broadway <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 2016 <i># of employees:</i> 49	<i>name(s):</i> Jay Krymis <i>title(s):</i> Owner	<i>phone number:</i> 562-612-4951 <i>website:</i> padrelongbeach.com
	<i>business name:</i> Santa Fe Importers Italian Deli <i>specialty:</i> Italian Deli and Market	<i>street address:</i> 1401 Santa Fe Ave. <i>Do you have Catering Services?:</i> Yes	<i>yr opened:</i> 1947 <i># of employees:</i> 10	<i>name(s):</i> Vincent Passanisi <i>title(s):</i> President	<i>phone number:</i> 562-437-7775 <i>website:</i> santafeimporters.com
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Long Beach local to open Juice It Up! on the east side of town

Owner Wesley Cureton said he wants to give back to Long Beach, where he has lived since 1987, by providing a fun and healthy option for students and residents.

By Brandon Richardson

Wesley Cureton was introduced to Long Beach as a kid completely by accident. Growing up in Compton, one day he and his friends were riding their bikes along Long Beach Boulevard. “We kept hearing this roar,” he said. “We heard it and we just followed the noise. It was the Long Beach Grand Prix.” Seeing the high rises and the atmosphere, Cureton, now 56, said he fell in love with the city. That love led him down a life path that is culminating in him opening his first-ever business, a Juice It Up! franchise, in Long Beach.

Cureton said the raw juice and smoothie bar concept used to have a location in Downtown, which has been closed for a number of years. So his forthcoming location at 6508 E. Spring St.—around the corner from Millikan High School, tucked between a brow-threading business and a mailing service—will be the only one in the city. Aside from raw juices and smoothies, Juice It Up! serves various fruit, acai and other bowls. The space is likely to open in January or February, Cureton said, adding that the road there has been long. He has always wanted to own his own business, Cureton said, and he knew he wanted to come back to the service industry. In high school, he worked at McDonald’s. While attending Los Angeles Harbor College, he worked at Foot Locker. In 1987, Cureton transferred to Cal State Long Beach, majoring in political science and minoring in public administration. He has lived in Long Beach ever since—first in a studio apartment at Redondo Avenue and Seventh Street, and now in a house about a mile from Millikan. He worked on campus as the student union manager, then he worked in food and beverage at a



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal
Wesley Cureton, a long-time Long Beach resident, is opening his first business, a Juice It Up! franchise, in an old hair salon at 6508 Spring Street.

Hyatt hotel. His managerial skills, however, truly formed after he graduated from college in 1994, when he started as a case worker for a community correctional center, or halfway house, in Inglewood. From there, he entered the federal government as a probation officer for the Ninth Circuit Court, worked as a pre-trial investigator and finally

landed in the U.S. Transportation Security Administration, where he has been supervisor overseeing operations throughout Southern California since 2005. “I’ve done a lot of jobs, but I hope that [being a] supervisor is what will translate into owning my own business,” Cureton said. For a long time, becoming an entrepreneur was a waiting game

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Candy Queen Jackie Sorkin, Amy Mason bring immersive candy haven to Belmont Shore

By Caitlin Antonios

If you asked North Long Beach native Jackie Sorkin and her Candified co-owner Amy Mason to describe each other in one word, it would probably be “badass.” The two have spent years cultivating successful, albeit radically different careers, although you wouldn’t know that if you met them now. They each wear half-heart, corny friendship necklaces, finish each other’s thoughts, and have supported one another through the extreme highs and lows of opening their first brick-and-mortar. Their families have come together as well to help them set up the store, one giant candy giraffe at a time. Sorkin may be a familiar name to some. Her face and hard-earned Candy Queen title has been splashed across TVs and celebrity Instagrams pages. But it was a long, tough road paved only by her deep determination and love of what she does best — making really good candy. Her parents, both immigrants,



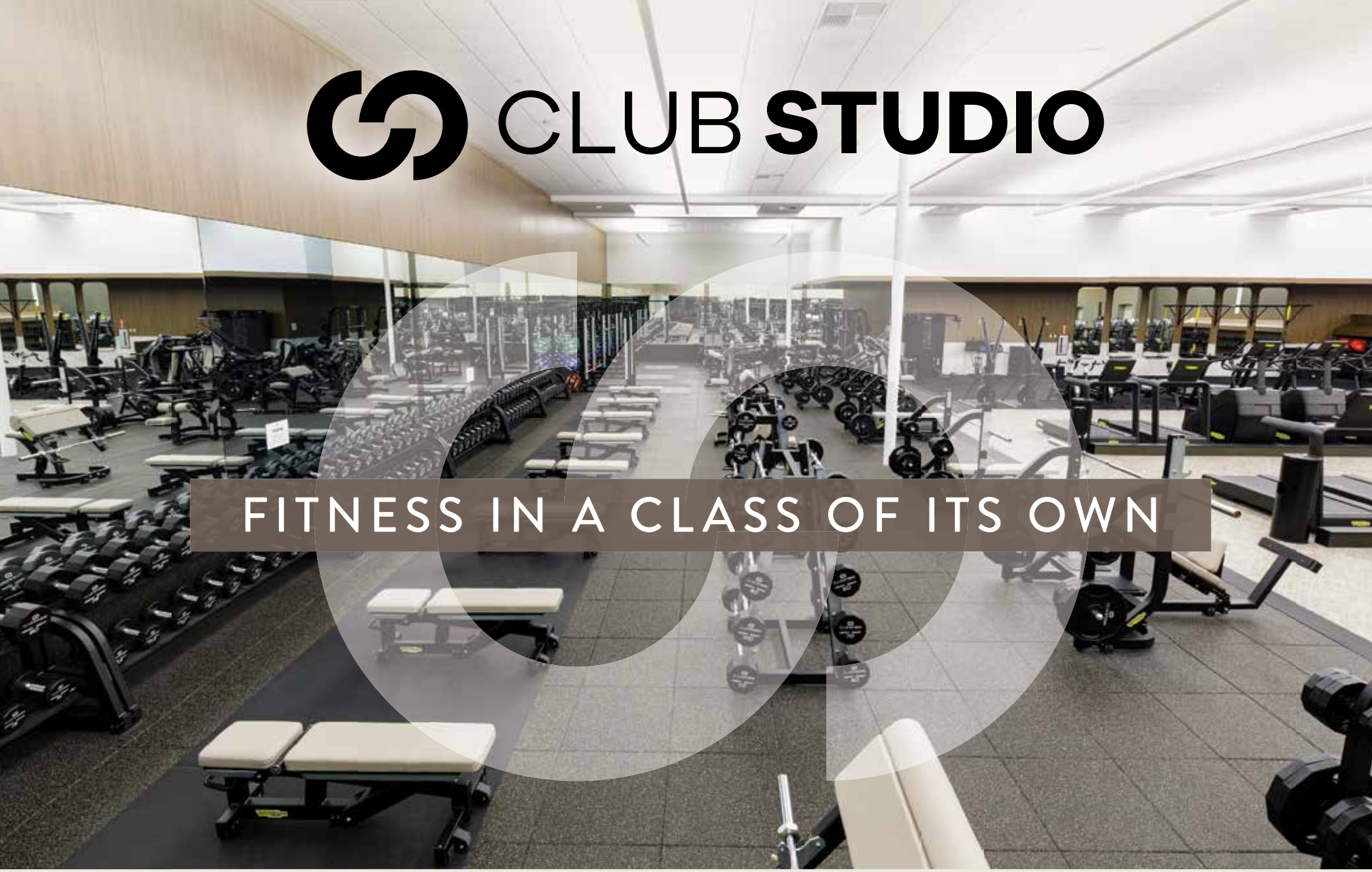
Brandon Richardson / Business Journal
Co-owners Jackie Sorkin, left, and Amy Mason stand inside their new shop, Candified, in Belmont Shore.

one from Mexico and the other from Argentina, met on a bus in Hollywood. She was always entrepreneurial growing up and extremely creative, but it was when she homed in on candy that things began to set in motion. “Candy makes people really, really happy,” Sorkin said. “I think

it’s because I’ve had so much darkness in my life I’ve just turned towards bring others joy and candy does that.” She built a \$25 website for Hollywood Candy Girls and worked out of her garage creating “fun foods.” No one else was making the candy creations she

was doing. It was special and niche enough that it attracted celebrities like Kim Kardashian and Paris Hilton to commission Sorkin to make her delicious masterpieces for themselves. Her work caught the attention of TLC show-runners, who needed a female counterpart to Cake Boss star Buddy Valastro. The show centered around Sorkin running her Hollywood Candy Girls candy and events company while juggling family life. The show became an international sensation, and soon, Sorkin was getting calls from companies in Taiwan and China asking her to make immersive candy experiences in their countries. While Sorkin built her candy empire, Mason was helping grow someone else’s. She started in tech working with companies like Apple, then moved to Starbucks to build out the company’s entertainment brand. After Taco Bell faced a lawsuit about their ingredients, Mason helped the company rebuild from the ground up and led the launch of the brand’s notorious “Live Más” campaign. It wasn’t until 2019 that she

Continued on page 22



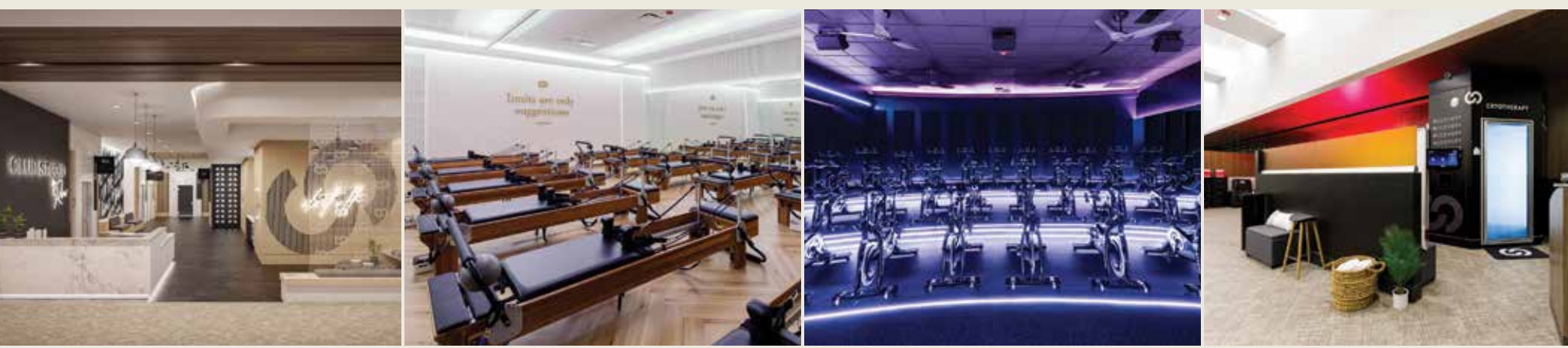
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Heritage

Continued from cover

and motorists find rest stops and food on their journeys in the early 1900s. After World War I, the popularity of the restaurant section had grown so much, the guide began handing out stars to fine dining establishments.

Eventually, it settled on the system we have today: one star denotes “a very good restaurant in its category,” two stars is “excellent cooking, worth a detour,” and three stars means “exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey.”

Anonymous Michelin inspectors eat repeatedly at establishments across the state, and restaurants don’t know they’re coming. In theory, there’s nothing a restaurant can do to attract an inspector, and Michelin intentionally shrouds its process and inspectors in mystery. That also means they can lose stars if they don’t maintain quality standards.

In 2021, South Coast Plaza’s fine dining contemporary French restaurant Knife Pleat, owned by Chef Tony Esnault and Yassmin Sarmadi, was awarded its first star, which it has retained the past two years.

“It was thrilling, it was absolutely thrilling,” Sarmadi said. “It’s not just the excitement, it’s the recognition of the work we had done and what we were delivering. It felt very gratifying.”

The couple previously owned two



Co-owner serves guests during a media dinner at Heritage Farm in Long Beach Wednesday, August 24, 2022.

critically-acclaimed restaurants in Downtown Los Angeles, Spring and Church & State, before moving their business to Costa Mesa and becoming one of only three Orange County restaurants to gain a star. When they had their restaurants in L.A., Michelin had pulled out of releasing selections in the area, a decision some critics found so unforgivable they shunned its 2019 return, when

the Michelin Guide California launched.

“It’s a Bible, a culinary Bible,” Esnault, who grew up in France, said. “It’s done by an inspector, you don’t know they’re here, it’s very different than other guides, I have to say. For me, the value is very important.”

The guide is a rolodex of restaurants that have been tried by people whose jobs it is to taste food and know

what’s good. They’re different from critics because complete, maintained anonymity means chefs can’t cook to them specifically. They sit down, order and pay, just like any other guest. The stars also factor in the dining experience, meaning there is a level of hospitality and attentiveness to guest experience that goes above the norm.

There have been criticisms of Michelin’s selectiveness, its tendency to



Oyster with salmon roe at Heritage Farms.

award stars to certain types of cuisine, like Japanese or French, versus others. For example, there are currently no starred restaurants in Africa (yes, the entire continent) or Mexico. And some food critics and writers have advocated for Michelin to be done away with as a measure for excellence.

But it is what it says it is—a guide, not an end-all-be-all with the only good food in a city. And in a notoriously unprofitable industry, restaurants ending up on an internationally recognized list receive an undeniable boost.

“We’re a small business with one investor. It was a struggle,” Pretty said. “Tonight has the most covers we’ve had, and that repeats for six weeks straight.”

After Knife Pleat received its star, the business had a similar boom. People were coming from all over to dine there.

“Not only do we get local traffic, we get traffic from other parts of California and even international—they’re not traveling here to dine at Knife Pleat, but if they’re here, because they’ve heard of us through the Michelin Guide, they choose to come see us,” Sarmadi said. “That’s meaningful.”

For Heritage, this is the first time Pretty hasn’t had to worry about getting people in the door.

“It’s overwhelming and exciting to be in a place to pay bills and not have to worry about the state of finances,” Pretty said.

The demand means that while they are taking it all in, they’re also putting their heads down because they have hungry diners to feed. The demand is so high they have to hire a

new cook—immediately.

“This will trickle down everywhere in the community,” Pretty said. More reservations means more spending at local farmers markets, more gardening at their farm down the street, Heritage Farm, and more local employees hired.

“We can continue to support the community even more and give people a place to work where they can be happy,” Pretty said. “That’s so important to us.”

Getting on the Michelin guide has made restaurants a destination—and not just restaurants with stars. In between star ceremonies, the Michelin Guide hands out additional recognitions separate from star rankings, like Bib Gourmand awards (good food at a moderate price), recommended restaurants, and new discoveries. Those restaurants appear on the same list when you search a city, right up there with the starred restaurants.

“Our congratulations to Heritage and all the recipients,” Sarmadi said. “Whether it’s a star or another recognition.”

Chefs from all over, including Chef Dima Habibeh, owner and executive chef of Ammatoli, and Chef Eric Samaniego of Michael’s on Naples, posted their congratulations to the Heritage team on their Instagram.

Heritage’s star means Michelin inspectors are here and they’re paying attention to Long Beach. Not only are they eating their way through the city, other restaurants can have confidence they too can attain a star—because it has been done before. ■



Chef Philip Pretty speaks to guests at Heritage Farm Wednesday, August 24, 2022.



Chef Philip Pretty waves to guests as they arrive at Heritage Farm Wednesday, August 24, 2022.




Chef Philip and Lauren Pretty, who are siblings and business partners, discuss the food they had just served to guests Heritage Farm Wednesday, August 24, 2022.



Chef Philip Pretty plates food as seen through a hand wheel of his charcoal grill at Heritage Farm Wednesday, August 24, 2022.



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The Vintage LBC creates a sit-down charcuterie experience

By Kat Schuster

Vanessa Harmon found something unexpected in the pandemic-induced office exodus: solace from the confining walls of her law firm. She also found the gumption to fulfill a decades-long dream of opening a cheese shop. Last September, she opened the doors to The Vintage LBC in Bixby Knolls, a cheese and wine shop that offers custom charcuterie boards—the elaborate grazing platters that became a social media sensation during the long months of lockdown. Luckily for Harmon, they survived the era and are more popular than ever.

“It’s such a fun, creative process. I mean, you’re really kind of designing a really intriguing visual,” Harmon told the Post.

Opening The Vintage LBC meant returning to her roots in fine dining and fulfilling a decades-long dream of becoming a cheesemonger, basically a cheese sommelier. Harmon, who still practices law full time from home, works at the shop any spare moment she can find—afternoons, evenings and weekends. She also delivers fresh bread each morning.

The Bixby Knolls shop is a reimagined and much more colorful evolution of Cheese Addiction, which previously operated in the space.

“So, when (Cheese Addiction) came up for sale, I was like, ‘Oh my gosh, this fulfills all of those fantasies that I’ve had for the last 20 years,’” Harmon said.

That shop was purely a retail space, but Harmon wants her customers to have the option of experiencing charcuterie on-site—something she says no one else in Long Beach is doing.

“It’s a party in the front, retail in the back,” she said. “The front aspect is very European, sit-down and have some cheese, wine, beer.”

Operating on a small budget, she illustrated her own logo, filled the space with art and furniture mostly from her home and designed a space that is reflective of its name. The atmosphere seeks to harken back to the mid-1970s—hanging pendant swag lights, vibrant earth tone paint and colorful vintage nappy glassware all characterize the space.

“I just kind of undecorated my house and brought it in here,” she said.

Cheese board basics

“Are you a blue cheese hater?” Harmon jokes, slicing a bit of what she considers to be a divisive cheese.

Harmon sells about 75 to 100 different types of cheeses that are cut to order at any given time. She also offers jams, gourmet butters, sandwiches and of course, charcuterie, which, she reminds us, is just a 15th century French term for cured meat (that’s shar-coo-ter-ee).

But The Vintage LBC also has



Vanessa Harmon, who opened The Vintage LBC last September, helps a customer select a block of cheese.

a robust amount of offerings for vegetarians and vegans alike.

“People don’t realize that a ton of really popular cheeses, really great cheeses, are vegetarian,” Harmon said. That’s because “they’re made with vegetable rennet instead of animal rennet.”

But these are different from vegan cheeses, she said. “Entirely different.”

“The rennet is the substance that coagulates the curds of the cheese and traditionally rennet is the line of a calf’s stomach or cow’s stomach,” she said. “But they now make vegetarian rennets which do the same thing ... and that doesn’t add flavor or change the flavor in any way. ... So it’s still made with milk obviously, but it’s not made with animal.”

For example, plant-based rennets can be produced with artichokes.

Alternatively, vegan cheeses are often nut-based. At The Vintage LBC, Harmon offers a vegan cheese flight for \$24.

The shop’s cheese flights and charcuterie plates, ranging from \$19 to \$43, are entirely customizable at the counter and can be ordered for dine in or takeout.

“For me, it goes cheese first, then meat and what I call accompaniments,” Harmon said.

For those who aren’t confident in their charcuterie board building skills, Harmon and her staff are able to advise. When it comes to charcuterie design, Harmon says there are no rules, but it’s always good to have a balance of complementary cheese and meat flavors as well as starches and accouterments.

“But I always let the customer take the lead,” she said. “Because the way they’re going to learn about cheese is by experimenting.”

Here are four steps to building a charcuterie board.

Step 1: Consider the season

Like fruits and vegetables, there are seasons for some cheeses, but not all, Harmon said.

First, not all animals produce milk

year round. Second, there are seasonal changes in milk composition, and third, grazing green grasses in the summer will produce different flavors than eating hay in a barn during the winter.

Thus, different flavors also characterize certain seasons. For example, Harmon says she likes a pumpkin spice Gouda in the fall, a Red Witch Alpine cheese around Halloween and Alp Blossom, which is covered in dry flowers and only available during the spring.

“During the winter, I might like something really heavy and stinky,” Harmon said. “In the summer, I’m gonna want something a little lighter—but I always love an aged Gouda with the little salt crystals.”

Step 2: Choose your cheese

Balance between flavor and texture is important when it comes to selecting cheeses. For example, you might want a variety—a hard or semi-firm cheese such as the Drunken Goat (goat’s milk); a soft, double-cream cheese such as Fromager D’affinois or an aged Gouda.

Harmon encourages customers to taste a few cheeses before committing to them on a cheese flight or a charcuterie order.

“I would say not to limit yourself

with one kind of cheese—don’t have five hard cheeses,” she said. “You’ve got to have a variety and range of milks and textures.”

Step 3 - Choose your charcuterie (cured meats)

After selecting a balance of cheese textures and flavors, it’s time to select the charcuterie, which, if you remember, just translates to cured meats.

“At that point I’d say with the super creamy cheese, let’s get you some prosciutto,” Harmon said. “Something really nice to kind of enhance that flavor.”

To pair with a hard cheese, Harmon suggests salami or a patte.

Step 4 - Make it pretty, fill in the gaps

Aside from the delights of grazing culture, the world fell in love with the pandemic era charcuterie platter for its colorful palette and endless possibilities from vegan platters to Mediterranean assortments.

“I’m always learning new techniques,” Harmon said. “You can make the meats into a salami rose, you can make these little bridges. There’s different ways of folding and cutting cheeses. ... If it’s a nice firm cheese, you can make these nice little geometric shapes.”

Then, Harmon fills in the gaps with sweet and savory accompaniments like fresh and dried fruit, chocolate, honey, jam, almonds, roasted tomatoes and olives.

“Lot’s of dried fruit and (dried candied) oranges are wonderful,” she said. “It gives it a nice pop of color.”

After that, the sky is really the cheese board limit when it comes to adorning it with the finishing touches—from edible flowers to rosemary.

“Fresh sage is also beautiful, especially during Christmas and Thanksgiving,” she said.

The Vintage LBC is located at 4236 Atlantic Ave. and is open Wednesday and Thursday from 11 to 8 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 to 9 p.m. and on Sunday from 11 to 5 p.m. ■



Vanessa Harmon, a Bixby Knolls resident who practices law, designed every inch of The Vintage LBC.

Juice It Up!

Continued from page 16

for Cureton—waiting for his financial stability and opportunity to align. That time came in 2019, so Cureton set off to find an established brand he could join as a franchisee.

Cureton came close to opening a Subway, but the effort hit a snag and then completely fell through amid the pandemic. He looked into Chick-fil-A, but that was a larger footprint and larger staff than he was looking to manage.

Then he considered Robeks, which he said he grew fond of while working in Downtown LA, but the timing for the company was off.

Finally, he remembered a friend mentioning Juice It Up! as a business opportunity two decades earlier, when neither had the time nor the money to realistically consider it. But in June of last year, Cureton was ready, and so was Juice It Up!

He explored a few different locations before settling on the Spring Street shopping center at Palo Verde Avenue, which he signed a lease for early last month. Cureton said he started the permitting process with the city earlier this month.

Cureton’s managerial style

includes a heavy focus on work-life balance, he said. He prides himself on working with his employees to meet their scheduling needs, a practice he said he will bring to his juice bar.

As a former student athlete, Cureton said he knows how challenging it can be to work while juggling school and sports. To that end, he said he is going to push to hire student athletes from Millikan and offer them flexible schedules to work around their other demands on their time.

“They’re a crosswalk away,” he said.

Cureton said he plans to retire from his TSA job in five to 10 years, so he wants to have his entrepreneurial endeavors solidified before then. And he said he doesn’t plan to stop at just one location. If things work out, he said he would like to open two more stores in Long Beach.

“The city kind of pushes you to be the best version of yourself,” Cureton said, noting that he wants to give back, not just to the city, but his neighborhood directly. “I wanted to give back with something that is fun.”

“These stores are indicative of that Long Beach lifestyle: fun, health conscious, living your best life,” he added. “That’s what attracted me most and that’s what I want to give to the city.” ■




Courtesy of Juice It Up!

Two types of smoothies that will be offered at the new Long Beach store.





Courtesy of Juice It Up!

An Acai Berry Bowl that will be sold at the new Juice It Up! Long Beach location.



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Candified

Continued from page 16

struck out on her own and formed Brand Masonry.

The two paths crossing happened serendipitously—Sorkin and Mason have the same hairdresser. But it could not have been a more perfect match. Sorkin is the creative, Mason is the corporate. Together, Candified was born.

“With everything going on, especially the pandemic, there’s so much sadness and darkness in the world,” Mason said. “We combined our superpowers to create something that will make people happy, and we’re using candy to spark that.”

Tucked in the middle of Belmont Shore’s Second Street next to a macaron shop opening soon, Candified transports guests into the candy haven of their childhood dreams. The store is stocked with nostalgic candy like Necco candy wafers, sour candy soda and squishmallows (if sugary goodness doesn’t entice).

Sorkin’s childhood growing up in North Long Beach “without a silver spoon” and Mason’s mission for purpose-driven business are at the forefront of their minds when it comes to accessibility. They plan on using the store to



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Art made out of thousands of pieces of candy are on display inside Candified in Belmont Shore.

host community groups, create a pass program so kids can come in multiple times at a reduced price, and offer workshops where they set aside funds to cover costs.

“There’s something for everyone,” Sorkin said. “We want it to be accessible to everyone. If you can only do only thing, it’s gonna be the best thing ever.”

In addition to the retail and

photo opportunities, which pedestrians passing by were clamoring for when the store was still prepping to open last week, the store will have a creation station, filled with multiple build-your-own projects. Basically the candy version of a Build-A-Bear or Color-Me-Mine, two brands Sorkin has always looked up to over the years.

“It’s a teenage dream, somewhere where you never have to grow up,” Sorkin said.

It’s also a place that will continue to change and evolve. Part of what make Sorkin a hot commodity for events was her ginormous candy sculptures. The duo plans to constantly change out the storefront with rotating candy sculptures so people can always see something new. The creation

station will also have new activities rotated in.

While Sorkin’s immersive candy pop-up experience, Candytopia, has been successful since it launched in 2018, a brick-and-mortar is a daunting commitment.

“Jackie kept raving about Second Street, and we wanted to be part of its renaissance and revitalization,” Mason said.

For Sorkin, it was a return to home. There were certainly other places in Southern California, like L.A. or Orange County, that would have welcomed Candified, but it felt important to set up shop in the city where she was born and raised.

Their primary hope for the store is that it’s a place where people can come together, leave their problems at the door, and have some outrageous moments of joy. ■

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Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Co-owner Jackie Sorkin makes a candy cookie pizza inside her new shop Candified in Belmont Shore.

MUSEUM OF LATIN AMERICAN ART

GALA 2023

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2023 | 6 PM

LEGADO Award for the Culinary Arts
Chef Enrique Olvera

LEGADO Award for Philanthropy
Mario Cordero, Executive Director of the Port of Long Beach

LEGADO Award for Community Commitment
Jumano Tribes in Northern Mexico

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For more information: gala@molaa.org

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