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A bicyclist makes his way through the Studebaker Road and Spring Street construction zone in Long Beach on Friday, Sept. 4, 2026.

Can Long Beach become a bike utopia? Studebaker is its biggest test yet

Construction along the major roadway has frustrated neighbors. The city says its part of a larger vision.

By Barbara Kingsley-Wilson

Imagine a sprawling network of roomy bike lanes, generously landscaped to calm relentless traffic. Think Amsterdam with newer buildings and fewer waterways. That's been Long Beach's goal, anyway.

Instead of wide postwar boulevards, roads would become slower and leaner, transforming Long Beach into a top-five global cycling city, said former city traffic engineer Paul Van Dyk. "Some of that is tongue-in-cheek, but if you shoot for the moon you land in the stars."

Long Beach has been working toward

this vision since it adopted its bicycle master plan 25 years ago, now with mounting urgency as auto-related fatalities rise. The biggest project so far — the Studebaker Road Transformation Project — is bringing this vision to the doorstep of Studebaker Road residents.

It has drawn mixed reviews.

"The intent of the design is malicious — it's immoral," said Joey Schilling, who drives the road six days a week and wrote a social media post criticizing the project that drew almost 1,000 comments. "It's people who do not use the road trying to tell other people how to use the road."

The \$65 million project runs over 5 miles from Second Street all the way up to Carson Street. It includes bike lanes, greenways and stonescape with fiber-optic cable running underneath. It is crucial to the city's long-term plan of knitting together 300 miles of bikeways

Bike utopia page 4

Sheldrake Coffee celebrates 50 years in Belmont Shore

The local staple was a pioneer of in-house roasting.

By Ashley Bolter

A soft *ch-ch-ch-ch* sound comes from a 100-year-old coffee roasting machine as it turns raw coffee beans in a heated drum. The sound is just barely heard over the quiet jazz playing through nearby speakers, but it helps create a certain ambience that fills Sheldrake Coffee Roasting, a small coffee shop on the corner of Second Street and Livingston Drive.

Outside on the patio, owner Mike Sheldrake can be found talking to customers like they're old buddies. Sheldrake has become friends with many of his regulars, some of whom have been coming since the shop opened in 1976.



Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

Mike Sheldrake at his coffee shop, Sheldrake Coffee Roasting, in Long Beach on Monday, Sept. 28, 2026

Last month, Sheldrake Coffee Roasting celebrated its 50th anniversary. It began as Polly's Gourmet Coffee and was the only in-house coffee roasting business between

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Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

Both sides of the 710 Freeway at Long Beach Boulevard are flooded following a rainstorm in Long Beach on Monday, February 16, 2026.

What a super El Niño means for Long Beach: High risk of rain and floods — but no guarantees

Find advice on how to prepare for the potentially historic rainy season at LBPost.com/elniño.

By John Donegan

Long Beach and the rest of Southern California are bracing for a strong, if not historic, El Niño period that will likely

translate into a very wet winter.

Technically, El Niño has already begun. It's been exacerbating the high tides and muggy weather locally. However, its worst effects may not arrive until the rainy season. It's impossible to say at this point when — or if — record-breaking storms will actually wash over Long Beach, but here's why forecasters say the conditions are ripe for it to happen.

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Rendering shows LBCC's plans for a 431-bed housing development, expected to be completed in fall 2028. See story on page 11.

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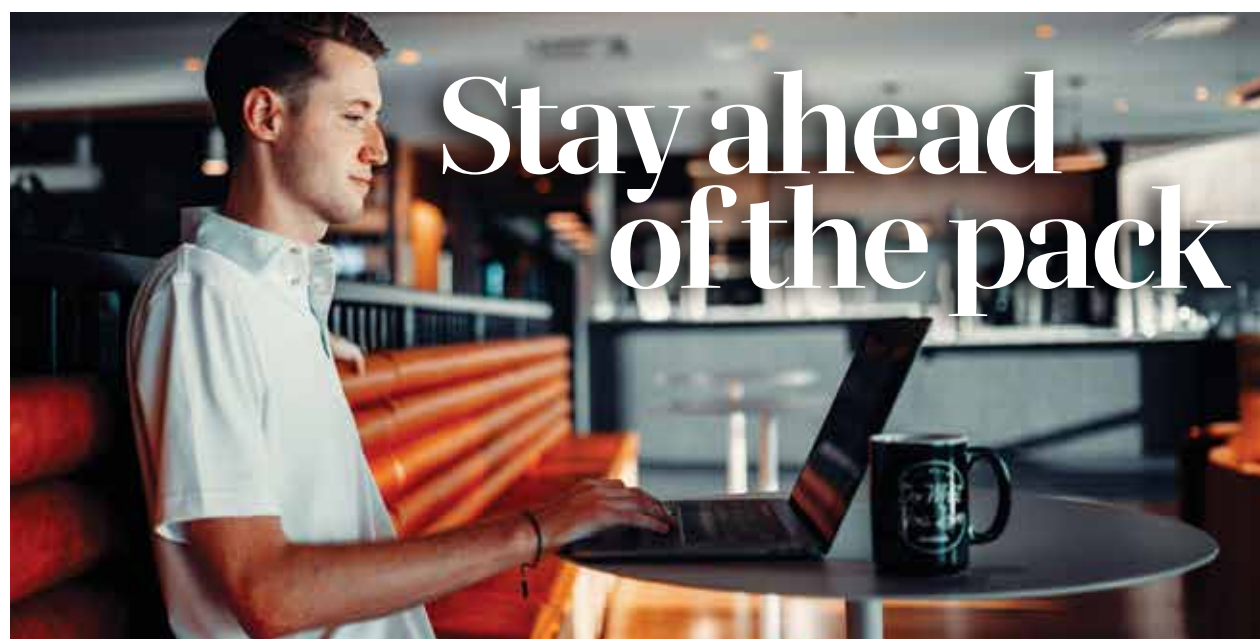
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ON THE COVER

Bike utopia from page 1

by 2040 to bring bicycle culture to Long Beach, as well as create safer streets.

The massive project, funded from 13 federal, state and local agencies, gives a glimpse of what's to come for Long Beach thoroughfares. The Clark Avenue work is in progress. Pacific Avenue and Orange Avenue "backbone" plans are on deck. Now Studebaker Road, the biggest, longest and most expensive, is well underway, spending the most dollars and, arguably, drawing the most resident anger.

Schilling, who lives near Studebaker Road, actually does ride his bike to work in Seal Beach and said he is OK with bike lanes in general. However, he says, the project is not practical in a community where he says most drive to work. "It's not a reasonable solution. It's not even for the greater good, that would be to appease the 95 percent who use their cars. The cost and the benefit do not match up. The cost is too high, the benefit too low."

The Studebaker project features raised bus stops and wider bike lanes than have been seen previously. No more flimsy bollards separating bikes from cars, said Van Dyk, the city traffic engineer who helped usher in the bikeway and traffic-calming street plan before he went on to consult on other urban bike projects.

The green bollards seen on Bellflower Boulevard and Studebaker before the redo often get hit by cars and can resemble thick blades of stomped grass. "People do not like the way they look, and I agree with their frustrations," said Van Dyk. "That's why we moved towards those concrete medians." He said planners "learned a lot of lessons along the way."

Studebaker will feature roomier bike lanes — 9 feet wide compared with the old 6-foot-across version. Wider lanes will allow riders to travel two abreast for a better ride, Van Dyk said. It also makes them easier to clean. Debris-filled lanes are a sore spot with bikers.

The old bike lane sweeper the city used to clean narrow paths was notoriously difficult to move and use. (Fourth District Councilmember Daryl Supernaw joked that sightings of the small sweepers were less frequent than Bigfoot.) But a regular street sweeper can get into the broader lanes where it can't on Broadway and Bellflower south of Atherton. (They actually set a street sweeper in a bike lane before planning and pouring the concrete to make sure it would fit.) Still, protected bike lanes are harder to clean than lanes merely separated by paint and "swept" by passing cars.

David Raslevich, a 41-year-old cyclist who frequently rides on the new lanes on Clark, said he has noticed branches, leaves and other debris. "I feel safer riding with the traffic, because they (cars) move debris out of the way for you."

One new component of Studebaker and the other newer lanes are raised bus stops. The new stops designed to accommodate bikes and buses are about 5 inches off the ground and separated from the road by a curb. Buses will stop in the No. 2 lane, halting traffic behind them, and pick up passengers, instead of easing out of a bus turnout.

Van Dyk said that change evolved from talks with Long Beach Transit, which revealed that buses would sometimes get hit when pulling into traffic. Planners reasoned it's better to have cars waiting for a bus to pick up passengers instead of forcing a bus waiting to pull into the No. 2 lane.

"It's math my second grader can do: What's better, 40 people on a bus wait or four people in cars?" Van Dyke said. "Which is the greatest cost to society? The bus is going to be more efficient." He also contends the new system is safe; there is less ambiguity as a bus will slow down in front of a car, so the car would be more likely to stop instead of zipping around a protruding bus bumper.

It is too early to know how this plan will play out —



Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

Amid red cones and barriers, a woman and her dogs navigate the construction zones at Studebaker Road and Wil-low Street in Long Beach on Friday, Sept. 4, 2026.

the new bus lane curbs on Clark show missing chunks already from drivers that likely didn't see them. Raslevich said he has seen cars turn into the curb by the raised bus stop. "They don't know that there's an island there, so they're hitting that island, pretty much daily."

Councilman Supernaw, whose district encompasses the \$65 million project, had reservations about the price tag before ultimately supporting it.

"All anyone asked for is a repave, to get rid of potholes and have a smooth surface to drive on," Supernaw said. "Should we just forgo the bike lanes and do a straight repave? The answer was no, we wanna use the grant money for the bike lanes."

The city saw it as a grander vision, weaving together a puzzle of state and federal grants along with \$8.5 million in local sales tax money for new transit stops, sidewalks and curb ramps that improve how all people can move through the city.

"It's not just 'I wanna ride a bike for fun.' People need it to get to work," said Jocelin Padilla, a spokesperson for the city's Public Works Department.

A series of community meetings were held in 2024, drawing limited feedback. But when residents later saw painted pavement markings showing the planned curbs and bike lines, "they got involved in a big way," Supernaw said.

"We call this communication via spray paint," said Supernaw. "Constituents see lines marked out and contact the council office."

Aside from the cost and the bus islands, some residents are frustrated by the execution. Leslie Goldman, who lives near Studebaker and Stearns, said large piles of dirt — at times higher than cars — have blocked residents from crossing the street or seeing oncoming traffic. Some concerns were addressed, including a bus shelter that was added due to feedback from residents.

"We're not saying we don't want construction done ever, that's life in the big city," she said. But Goldman contends the "assembly line" construction approach, as opposed to the work done in shorter phases, is leading to more "noise, vibration, dust, traffic, blind spots, trash, roadblocks, ... All at sporadic intervals unknown to residents. It's not just an inconvenience, it's a hardship."

Padilla of Public Works acknowledged the hardship,

but said the benefits would outweigh the short-term pain. She said doing the work in shorter segments would increase costs and project timelines — not a good thing when it needs to be finished by the Olympics. "This is a once-in-a-generation project," she said.

Not all residents are wary. "Studebaker is gonna be awesome when it's done," said Dan Olsen, who lives near Studebaker and Atherton. "It's new, it's fresh, the neighborhood is going to benefit. It's been a total pothole disaster for so long. ... Even though there are catches and hooks, it's still worth it."

Long Beach is not yet Amsterdam; it's still a patchwork of protected lanes and unprotected ones of varying degrees of newness. But Studebaker should be done in 2027. Pacific Avenue and Orange Avenue are next. The bike lanes and streets won't uniformly connect, but there will be more of them — Artesia Boulevard to service Jordan High, Clark Avenue near Long Beach City College and now Studebaker. "Long Beach's cycling network is reaching critical mass," Van Dyk said.

Van Dyk and other bike proponents say it's a long game. Amsterdam itself was car-dominated until the 1970s when the Stop de Kindermoord movement was launched in response to the high number of child deaths. "It's a generational effort; it took multiple generations to give us the infrastructure we have today," he said.

Will they help make transportation safer for cars and bikes? The city racked up 53 traffic deaths in 2025, the highest in a decade, and 32 bike/pedestrian and e-scooter deaths. This year has seen 36 traffic deaths through mid-September. The city is also trying other tools; speed cameras are being installed, and tickets will go out this fall.

It's not yet any safer to ride through Long Beach than it was 10 years ago, "but it's not safer to do anything in Long Beach," said Kurt Canfield, a cyclist and organizer for Car Lite Long Beach, a bike advocacy organization. He often rides the Broadway bike path, which he considers a success despite debris in the lane and other issues.

"They wanna bike, they wanna walk, people are driving 300 horsepower crossovers. We're in conflict for the same space," he said. "But this infrastructure gives us the ability to be safer." ■



Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

Smoke rises from a 100-year-old coffee roaster as Cameron Johnson, roaster at Sheldrake Coffee Roasting, roasts coffee beans, celebrating the company's 50th anniversary in Long Beach on Monday, Sept. 28, 2026.

Sheldrake *from page 1*

Beverly Hills and San Diego.

Sheldrake's father, Eddie, had opened a diner in 1968 called Polly's Pies — now with locations across Southern California. Eddie wanted to control the coffee they were serving and tasked Sheldrake, the resident coffee lover, to open a shop specifically to make quality coffee for the family's restaurant.

"I was the coffee fanatic in the company. I just lived for a good cup of coffee," he said. Sheldrake ran

the shop as a subsidiary of Polly's Pies for 13 years.

"Then I had what is called an 'entrepreneurial seizure,'" Sheldrake said. "That's a situation where you're working for somebody else, and one day you say, 'Wait a minute! If I know so much about what I'm doing, why are they getting all the money?'"

He bought the coffee shop from his parents in 1989 and has been running it independently ever since. Polly's Pies continues to be one of their biggest customers, buying 1,000 pounds of coffee each week. Sheldrake also supplies the coffee

sold at the Long Beach Airport and 15 other businesses throughout the city.

Sheldrake Coffee Roasting has built a name for itself as a coffee expert. The shop even appeared in an episode of the History Channel's "Modern Marvels" about the history of coffee.

The shop's identity was solidified when Starbucks opened down the street in 1993.

"Back in the day, [Starbucks was] the 800-pound gorilla. We just hung on everything they did and tried to do it," Sheldrake said. "Fortunately for us, we failed in everything that they were doing, and we eventually

learned that what we sell is coffee beans, coffee drinks and pastries."

Sheldrake said they always knew how to make good coffee, but they struggled with marketing. A consultant set up a David (Sheldrake) and Goliath (Starbucks) marketing campaign that garnered the attention of the New York Times in 1999.

Sheldrake's strength lies in his in-house coffee roasting program.

"Our mechanical advantage in the business is that coffee will lose 25% of its flavor in the first 14 days after it's roasted," Sheldrake said. "That's why we import the beans and bring them in green, and we roast them on our 100-year-old German machine."

On the large machine, Sheldrake and his team roast 8,000 to 10,000 pounds of coffee every month.

Only four people, including Sheldrake, know how to operate the machine. It's a very delicate process that requires a lot of fine-tuning, Sheldrake explained.

"It's like when you're riding a bicycle, you make a million adjustments every second. That's what these roasters do on this machine, without even thinking about it. They just react to what's being shown to them by the roasting process," he said.

The roasters can check on the beans as they roast by pulling out a rod that holds a small sample of the beans. When the beans are ready — usually once they're at a medium-dark roast — they're dumped onto a cooling tray then packaged by hand.

Sheldrake is proud of the product he puts out and the customers-turned-friends he's made along the way.

"People ask what my favorite coffee is, might as well ask me who my favorite grandchild is. I love them all. If I don't love it, it's not going to be good," he said. ■

Sheldrake Coffee Roasting, 4606 Second St., is open every day from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

El Niño *from page 1*

What exactly is El Niño?

El Niño dramatically changes the globe's weather patterns every two to seven years.

Experts say that under normal conditions, trade winds blow from east to west across the Pacific, pushing warm surface water toward Indonesia while cooler water rises along the coasts of Ecuador and Peru, a process known as upwelling.

During El Niño, those winds weaken or even reverse, allowing warm water to rush back across the Pacific, said Reinhard Flick, a researcher at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego.

All that heat, and the moisture that rises from it, stirs up the jet stream and changes weather patterns around the world. Wet regions can slide into drought, cold ones can turn to heat waves, and some dry ones see a spike in tropical storms and floods.

Why this El Niño is historically strong

When scientists say this El Niño is strong or record-breaking, all they're talking about at this point is a stretch of ocean water near the equator where temperatures are a little abnormal.

"It's what's happening thousands of miles away, down there off the coast of South America," said Ryan Kittell, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. Scientists have tracked those water temperatures since 1950, he said, and can boil an event's strength down to a single number, the El Niño index, which lets them compare one year to another.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration declares an El Niño when this stretch of equatorial ocean is 0.5 degrees Celsius above average for several consecutive months. It's considered "very strong" when it exceeds 2 degrees.

This June, the federal Climate Prediction Center found water temperatures more than 2 degrees Celsius above normal, which are especially ripe conditions — 90% chance, as of latest reporting — for storms to form and become strong quickly.

Only four or five past El Niños have crossed that line, Kittell said.

Two of them, in 1982-83 and 1997-98, brought drenching rain, big waves and coastal flooding to the region. Experts use the 1982-83 event as their benchmark, and this one is expected to be stronger in tropical terms. The most recent forecasts predict that

temperatures could reach 4 degrees above average in November and December. On Sept. 26, they hit 3.05 degrees, eclipsing a daily record set in 2015.

The stronger those conditions, the greater the potential for storms and other effects associated with El Niño, but it could also lead to nothing, Kittell said. The strongest El Niño on record, in 2015-16, reached 2.6 degrees above normal, yet it did not deliver the wet winter Southern California expected.

"There's nothing certain about our winter season," he said. "It just skews the odds towards a more active, wetter and more dynamic winter storm season."

When should we expect rain?

Our dry season typically runs through October with the peak of rainy season from December through March. Rainstorms in that period will be much more likely to reach Long Beach, and with far more intensity.

When the rain does arrive, it is likely to come in bursts, delivered by a handful of atmospheric rivers, rather than as a steady soak. That raises the risk of flash floods and landslides and, along the coast, of high tides and flooding.

Winter storms page 6



Locals and members of the media fill the boardwalk as king tides slam the wooden bulkhead on the Peninsula in Long Beach, Monday, Sept. 28, 2026.

Winter storms

from page 5

The California Coastal Commission has advised coastal communities to prepare for heavy rain, erosion and large waves. Warmer coastal waters can also stress marine life, because weaker winds slow the upwelling of the cold, nutrient-rich water that plankton depend on.

Why is the surf already high right now?

The answer is we're in an overlap phase. Hurricane season in the eastern Pacific runs from mid-May through November, and warm water fuels those storms, making it more likely that a tropical system reaches hurricane strength.

Hurricane-charged waves seen so far this year are moving north along the Mexican coast, able to cut through the gap in the breakwater and jetty that allows boat access to Long Beach's Alamitos Bay. Those powerful breakers stripped tons of sand and threatened homes on the Peninsula.

That should change once the city exits its hurricane season in late November.

Hurricanes later in the year are much more likely to form in the western Pacific — as opposed to the southeast — and the federal breakwater that shields Long Beach's harbor blunts the swells that originate from the west. That's why much of California's western coast may still see dangerous waves through the winter, though Long Beach is usually safe.

What can you do to be ready?

Emergency preparation is the single most important thing you can do regarding natural disasters. It's also important to know your evacuation routes, and check if your home is in the city flood zone here.

Kittell also suggested getting some sandbags and monitoring the forecast, and paying closer attention once warnings for an actual storm appear.

"Any winter we could have bad storms, bad waves, bad coastal flooding, so we should be preparing every winter for that," Kittell said. "You don't want to be too paranoid about it, but you also don't want to be caught off guard."

State and local officials are also getting ready. The city and Gov. Gavin Newsom both declared a state of emergency, which gives them more authority to spend money quickly in response to a disaster.

The city is also exploring projects to reclaim lost beachfront after Hurricane Marie battered the Peninsula. But that is largely separate from El Niño, though rains could impede projects. The greater worry is future tropical storms and high tide, the latter of which could be exacerbated by El Niño warming up the ocean. ■

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EDUCATION

New LBCC program teaches students to help heal trauma

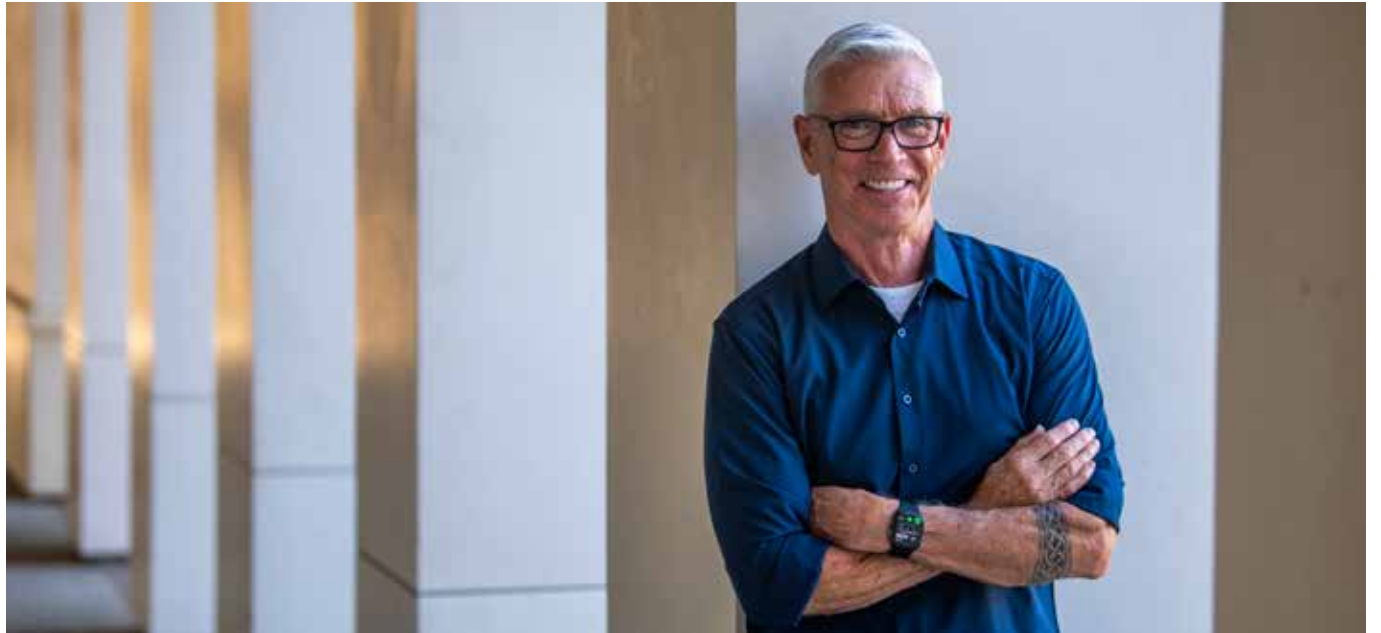
The college is offering one of the country's first undergraduate degrees in trauma studies, hoping to build the next generation of trauma-informed workers.

By Kate Raphael

In the year and a half since Long Beach City College began offering courses in trauma studies, enrollment has exploded, more than doubling from 68 students in spring 2025 to 180 students this fall.

LBCC psychology professor Kyran Barr, who has led the effort to bring trauma studies to the college, was initially surprised by the level of interest, but it reflected a comment he said he heard across campus: "This is much needed."

Now, Barr is helping the college take the work further. This fall, LBCC launched one of the country's first undergraduate degrees in trauma studies, a way to educate students on what trauma is — "an event or a series of events that overwhelms a person's capacity to cope," Barr said — and build the next generation of workers in mental health fields and beyond. The effort to bring a trauma-informed lens to the campus hasn't stopped there. The college is now training faculty and



Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

Professor Kyran Barr leads the trauma studies program at Long Beach City College in Long Beach on Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2026.

staff with the goal of giving everyone the tools to see trauma, address it and understand how it affects individuals and societies.

Barr's efforts were born from a 2018 trip to Northern Ireland. There, he observed the scars of the Troubles, a 30-year political conflict that killed more than 3,000 people. Artifacts of the violence — including the peace walls, which separated predominantly Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods — remain intact.

"I started thinking about what a great living laboratory Northern Ire-

land is to study the impact of trauma on mental health," Barr said.

Soon, Barr learned about the WAVE Trauma Centre, a charity founded in 1991 by women whose partners were murdered during the Troubles. Since then, WAVE has grown into an organization that helps thousands of trauma survivors heal, operating on the principles of safety, trust, collaboration and empowerment, said Paul Gallagher, the director of trauma education at WAVE.

Gallagher first came to WAVE as a client, after gunmen entered his West

Belfast home in 1994 and shot him six times, leaving him paralyzed. The psychological injuries came later, he said, but he didn't have the language for his experience.

It would take years before he had the "realization that what I was experiencing over the years was because of something that happened to me, and not that there was something wrong with me," he said. That launched him on a journey of wanting to understand trauma — and sharing that knowledge with others, he said.

Trauma page 8

LBUSD moves to close 2 more schools as enrollment continues to fall

By Kate Raphael

Long Beach Unified announced this month it expects to close Gompers and Edison elementary schools at the end of the school year, saying the campuses are underenrolled.

It's the district's latest effort to consolidate resources as enrollment continues to fall districtwide. LBUSD enrollment dipped below 60,000 students this year, the first time it crossed that threshold since the early 1980s.

As enrollment declines, so does school funding, and LBUSD is taking drastic measures as operating costs exceed revenue. In a recent budget report, the district said it expects to draw nearly \$45 million from its reserves this school year — the third year of deficit spending. Already, the district has reduced library support, mental health resources, and certificated and classified staff. Hoover Middle School closed last year due to low enrollment, the district said. Both LBUSD and the school board have signaled that more tough cuts are on the horizon; some are already here.

"It feels like a big loss," said school board member Juan Benitez, whose district includes Edison Elementary. Yet he added that low birth rates will continue pushing enrollment down. The district and board have a fiscal responsibility to take action — not only to balance the budget,



Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

Gompers Elementary School in Lakewood is one of the schools scheduled to be closed.

but to ensure students receive the best learning environment possible, which is difficult to maintain at schools with low capacity, he said.

If the school closures are approved by the board of education, the Gompers attendance boundary will be consolidated with three nearby Lake-

wood elementary schools: Cleveland, Holmes and MacArthur, according to a letter the district sent to families. Edison students would attend Chavez and Oropeza elementary schools, both within a mile of Edison's downtown campus.

Closures page 8



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Trauma *from page 7*

Barr borrowed that multipronged approach to trauma education and adopted it at LBCC, a campus that serves “very vulnerable students,” many of whom have been traumatized, he said.

Barr wanted to make the classroom a safer place for them. Over his career as an educator, Barr had noticed that sometimes students disappeared from class and guessed it wasn’t the right fit or they’d gotten busy at work, he said. But he realized there might be other reasons students stopped attending: “It’s very possible that we’re triggering students,” he said.

Now, LBCC staff and faculty are learning how to avoid retraumatizing students as well as how to cope with their own overwhelm, he said. The trainings have been received with enthusiasm and gratitude.

At the same time, the trauma studies program continues to grow, and students are coming from across the country to enroll, Barr said.

Henry Soo Hoo is one of them. Soo Hoo spent years working as a banker in New York City and volunteering as a crisis counselor in his spare time when he realized he was tired of feeling disposable in the finance industry and wanted to pivot into a helping profession, he said.

As he was preparing for a career change and speaking to friends who worked as therapists, “they all said you have to make sure that you protect yourself” while listening to trauma, Soo Hoo recalled. LBCC’s trauma studies courses were perfect, he said,

because they emphasized that he needed to have a “strong foundation in order to be a strong provider.”

Yet Barr sees many applications for trauma studies outside of treating patients. “I’m not trying to make people clinicians,” he said. “What we want to do is make people aware of how much trauma exists already” and give them the lens to begin to understand it in any career.

It has become a mission for him, he said, adding that he gets energized when he sees the light go on for other people.

For Angelina Larosa, that happened when she visited the WAVE Trauma Centre as part of a study abroad program with Barr’s class. There, she was surrounded by people who had experienced “capital T trauma,” she said, including a man who lost friends during the Troubles and said he had taken to the streets with a gun when he was Larosa’s age.

Despite the gravity of what she heard, Larosa left the trip with a sense of shared humanity. Trauma “affects them, yes, but it’s a piece of a much bigger puzzle,” she said. “They’re just people trying to live their lives.” Understanding that can bring everyone closer as a community, she said.

That’s one of the pillars WAVE’s work is built upon — and one that LBCC has adopted. “Trauma isolates us,” Gallagher said. “It’s very hard to recover from trauma by yourself. You need to do it with other people in a community setting, in a social setting, and that’s the beauty of this type of work.” ■

Closures *from page 7*

If families wish to send their children to different schools, they will receive priority in the school choice process, the letters added.

The campuses will not remain vacant, Benitez said. Edison may be used as a temporary site while other schools undergo modernization projects, and additional uses will be proposed for Gompers, he said. The Child Development Center currently housed at Edison will remain there for at least the next several years, he said.

Teachers on permanent contracts at Gompers and Edison will keep their jobs in the district, said Peder Larsen, president of the teachers union, and they will get precedence in school reassignments. But they may not learn their new school sites until April, once the school transfer and assignment process is underway, he said.

The news has hit hard for families. Ashlee Napalan, an LBUSD teacher and a parent of three children at Gompers Elementary, said the news was “heartbreaking” and surprising, especially because Gompers underwent a significant remodel last year, including the installation of a new HVAC system,

as well as fresh paint and new playground equipment, she said.

She described a tight-knit community at Gompers and said her children walk to school and play with other kids at the park across the street. When she told her son, a kindergartener, the news, she said he cried all night. “We’ve been really heavily involved with the school for seven years,” she said. “It’s a huge part of our lives.”

Some parents have already begun organizing to oppose the move. A petition to keep Gompers open accrued more than 600 signatures in one day. Some parents said they plan to speak at upcoming school board meetings. The board is expected to vote on Oct. 21. Parents at each school have been invited to informational meetings in the coming month, according to the letters sent by the district.

Benitez said he is pushing for “ongoing, constant, clear responsive communication” to the families affected by these proposed changes. “The recommendation is not being taken lightly,” he said, adding that he — and the district — will be listening closely to students’ and families’ concerns. ■

Long Beach library gives dozens of adults a second chance to earn diplomas

Demand has surged recently for the library's free, online high school program. "It was life-changing," one graduate said.

By Kate Raphael

Martha Coronel was a student at Cabrillo High School when she learned she was pregnant 25 years ago. She transferred to Reid, a continuation high school, before pausing her education as a senior when she learned she had a second child on the way. But that wasn't the end of the story.

More than two decades later, she has earned her high school diploma through a free program offered by the Long Beach Public Library. She said her kids — seven in total, some of whom have gone on to college — were her inspiration.

The Career Online High School allows adults 19 and older to earn their diplomas through a self-paced online program, available to Long Beach residents who have a library card. Students have 18 months to complete the curriculum, which covers standard high school subjects, including English, math, science and social studies, said Viviana Garcia, who coordinates the program. It also includes a career component, helping students prepare for jobs ranging from child care to commercial driving to hospitality, she said.



Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

Martha Coronel holds her high school diploma, which she earned earlier this year in Long Beach, on Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026.

That attracted Coronel to the program. For years, she had been babysitting and wanted a "better job," she said, yet most applications asked for a high school diploma. The program's childcare career path option seemed like a perfect fit.

Coronel was able to transfer some of her high school credits toward her diploma, and she finished the remainder of her credits in six months, often spending 10 to 12 hours a day on her courses, she said.

Since the program began in Long Beach a decade ago, 160 students have earned their diplomas, Garcia said. Yet

in recent years, it has grown significantly. Fifty-three students are currently enrolled as students.

In August, 32 students graduated from the program and participated in a ceremony at the Billy Jean King Main Library — the largest graduating class in the history of the program, Garcia said.

Coronel was one of them. When she walked into the library to pick up her cap and gown the day of graduation, she learned that a short speech she'd prepared had been selected to be read as part of the ceremony. She was nervous and surprised, she said, but she stood before the audience, which

included her son who took a flight from his college campus and friends who had driven from Bakersfield.

"Today is a dream come true," Coronel said, and addressed her children to say, "You have been my greatest inspiration and my reason to keep going."

Now, Coronel is considering pursuing further education at Long Beach City College, and she has referred one of her daughters and another friend to the program, where they're currently enrolled.

Garcia often observes students' confidence develop as they complete the program. "It's been beautiful to see," she said. "Sometimes they're embarrassed to say they haven't gotten their high school diploma," she said, but she sees that dissipate when they walk across the library's graduation stage.

That happened for Nicky Weeks, another graduate of the program and longtime resident of Long Beach. "It was life-changing," she said.

A parent of five, she said she'd poured everything into motherhood to keep her family afloat, but that meant her own education was delayed, even as she instilled in her kids the value of learning. "I've always told each and every one of my children that college may not be for everybody, but education is," she said.

When she decided it was finally time to earn her diploma, she started the program and told only one person, because "I did this for me," she said. "It was important to me to again finish what I started so long ago." ■

CSULB unveils Pyramid renaming in \$8.5 million sponsorship deal

Here's how they plan to spend the money

By Kate Raphael

Long Beach State hosted a ceremonial ribbon-cutting in late August for its iconic arena, which was officially renamed the LBS Financial Pyramid as part of an \$8.5 million sponsorship deal approved last year.

In advance of their first home competition of the season — a women's volleyball game against UCLA — university officials unveiled new signage for the pyramid. In addition to displays at the pyramid's entrances, the floors of the volleyball and basketball courts now prominently display the new sponsor's name.

The naming agreement will last 12 years, but the funds were delivered upfront, allowing Long Beach State to immediately put them to use. Already, some of the funds have gone toward renovating the basketball lobby, which was previously bare, a poor representation of the history of those programs, said Bobby Smitheran, executive director of athletics at Long Beach State.

The lobby renovation is an investment in recruiting and retention, especially because it's an "entry point" for student-athletes, Smitheran said.

The rest of the funds will be spent over the 12 years, and Smitheran said Beach Athletics intends

to be a responsible steward of the investment. That means evaluating the facility needs of all the athletic programs — within and outside the pyramid — and prioritizing accordingly, Smitheran said.

Some of the funds may go to repairs and upgrades (for years, the pyramid has been plagued by structural problems, from a leaky roof that has disrupted basketball games to a partial ceiling collapse). But since the pyramid was completed in 1994, the landscape of college athletics has evolved. In recent years, the focus has shifted from facilities to talent acquisition, Smitheran said.

As a result, the university previously signaled that the majority of the money would support student scholarships, essential in order to adapt to an increasingly competitive collegiate sports scene. As scholarship limits have been eliminated and student athletes receive compensation directly from their schools through revenue sharing, it has become even more costly to attract top talent, Smitheran said.

On top of that, costs to operate sports teams have risen sharply, from how teams travel to how they eat to the gear they receive, Smitheran previously said. All of these factors mean the sponsorship deal was sorely needed and could help launch Long Beach State into a new era of athletics, he added.

The gift will not only benefit student-athletes. Ten percent of the funds — \$850,000 — are ear-



Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

Women's volleyball supporters enter the Pyramid for a game against UCLA at Cal State University Long Beach in Long Beach, Friday, Aug. 28, 2026.

marked for the campus activities fund and will be directed to student programming and student life initiatives, Smitheran said.

Though the pyramid will lose the name of Mike and Arline Walter, who donated \$2 million to offset the pyramid's construction costs, Mike Walter previously said he understood the necessity of the move to keep up with a rapidly evolving collegiate athletics landscape. ■

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LBCC starts building hundreds of on-campus apartments

Stable housing for students has become a key issue for Long Beach City College.

By Kate Raphael

Long Beach City College is starting construction on a 431-bed student housing facility, part of a larger effort to make affordable housing widely available to city residents and students.

The facility will be built on the Liberal Arts Campus adjacent to Veterans Memorial Stadium (also set for major upgrades) and will include studio, single- and double-bed units, lounge and study spaces, and shared kitchen and laundry rooms. Preparation on the site has already begun, and construction is expected to finish in fall 2028. The \$127 million project is funded by measures LB and AC, voter-approved bond issues that support campus revitalization.

The project represents “the first time in Long Beach City College’s nearly 100-year history [that] students will have the opportunity to live and learn on campus,” Uduak-Joe Ntuk, president of the LBCC board of trustees, said in a press release.

Housing — and the lack of it — has become a central issue at LBCC, where nearly 12% of students who responded to a recent survey reported experiencing homelessness in the last year. Close to 800 students said they were housing insecure; 80 said they slept in their vehicles.

Many students are balancing studies with work and family obligations, and housing adds yet another potential barrier to education, the college said in a statement.

“Community colleges have traditionally been thought of as commuter campuses, but the students we serve today face very different circumstances,” Mike Muñoz, LBCC superintendent-president, said in a press release.

In response, LBCC is taking a multipronged approach to provide stability and address evolving student needs. Affordable, on-campus housing is one of the first steps.



Courtesy of LBCC

Rendering shows LBCC’s plans for a 431-bed housing development, expected to be completed in fall 2028.

In addition to the several hundred beds slated for the Liberal Arts Campus, the college is also building a few dozen affordable housing units in North Long Beach, expected to be completed in fall 2029, a year after the first housing complex opens.

Details on eligibility requirements, rental rates and placement criteria are still in development for each project (which may have different cost structures), said LBCC spokesperson Stacey Toda. The college has not yet decided whether units will be offered at no cost or through a specific subsidy program, she added. Yet affordability is a priority, she said.

The college has already made attempts to address housing instability, particularly through its safe parking program, which began in 2021 and allows students to sleep in their cars on campus with the protection of security and access to amenities including showers, electricity and Wi-Fi.

Edgar Rosales Jr. used the safe parking program

when he first started at LBCC, and since then, he’s led work to amplify the voices of unhoused and low-income students at the college, even creating a club, Voz, with that mission.

Rosales said the new housing projects could change the lives of hundreds of students by providing a direct path to housing while reducing the money students must spend to commute.

Rosales has housing now; the college helped him secure a place nearly a year ago. But there was a time when he couldn’t imagine a way out. “I thought I was going to live and die in my car,” he said.

He has worked to make sure other students know they have options and pushed the college to prioritize housing, he said. He hopes the new developments will make housing assistance less of a “taboo subject.”

“It’s an incredible feeling to know that people aren’t going to suffer like I did,” he said. ■

Homeless shelter to get showers, air conditioning, more space in \$8.6 million overhaul

By John Donegan

The Long Beach City Council last month approved an \$8.6 million contract to renovate one of its four homeless shelters, a project that will expand the year-round facility at 702 W. Anaheim St. from 85 beds to 126 to meet persistently high demand.

Since buying the 106-year-old building from the Long Beach Rescue Mission for \$7.2 million in 2023, the city has made only \$399,000 worth of repairs to its roof. Renovations under this contract will bring major changes, including to the facility’s layout, as well as the installation of an HVAC system (the building has only a heater), using a \$500,000 state grant and \$400,000 from the Port earmarked for energy efficiency.

Crews will install 16 showers — 10 for men, six for women — to replace the temporary trailers long used in the back lot. In the

sleeping area, currently an open space with lines of cots, they will install dividers between beds for privacy and put up partitions for areas meant for couples or those needing gender-affirming privacy. They will also build out a new family room and multipurpose lounge, as well as new entrance ramps into the building and a reconfigured parking lot.

The city says renovations are needed to keep up with an increase in demand they’ve continued to see, citing the 3,729 homeless people counted in January — a 3.7% bump from the prior year and the second consecutive increase. The number of people staying in shelters or interim housing rose from 989 to 1,141 in the latest tally.

Occupancy at the shelter has run between 85% and 95% in the past six months, said Paul Duncan, director of the city’s Homelessness Bureau, with many nights hitting capacity. “We’ve mostly been full,” he said.

Shelter page 12



John Donegan/Long Beach Business Journal

The city of Long Beach’s homeless shelter at 702 W. Anaheim St. is about to undergo a major renovation.

Shelter from page 11

Within the next two years, Duncan said the city wants to find the money to add a dining hall with a warming kitchen, laundry room and a kennel space for pets.

When renovations are underway, the city will use a warehouse at 1827 E. Spring St. for sheltering people. Long Beach bought the site earlier this year for city police to eventually use as a storage facility, as part of their plans for a new crime lab. The building can hold 81 beds and is near public transit, officials say.

Prior to the move, the city will spend about \$100,000 on upgrades for the site, mostly for the fire alarm system, a permanent fence along the perimeter and a rented shower trailer.

Work will start on the warehouse this fall, followed by the start of renovations at the shelter in late 2026 with plans to finish before the end of next year.

The Police Department has given the city one year to finish, and Duncan said a delay past December 2027 would interfere with the department's move, adding they haven't yet outlined a backup plan in the event that work runs over the timeline. Duncan said most of the work is indoors, which should limit weather delays.

Councilmember Megan Kerr pressed city staff to keep the project on schedule. “We know that building is an important part of our public safety in-

frastructure as well,” she said. “I’m really begging you to keep a close eye on our contractors to make sure they’re moving as efficiently as possible.”

Another potential complication is who will have authority over the shelter going forward. Los Angeles County is now moving to take over the contract that funds its day-to-day operations, leaving it unclear how much say the city will have.

LA County funds the shelter through the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, known as LAHSA, at about \$89 per bed per night. Long Beach uses that money to pay the shelter's nonprofit operator, PATH. But that arrangement may change, as the county continues to pull away from LAHSA after an audit found the agency mismanaged contracts, paid providers late and failed to track whether services were delivered.

Duncan said the county has made clear it would rather contract directly with PATH than go through the city. Later this year, he continued, the city expects the county to propose a transition grant, though it's still unclear how and whether it will change controls over the shelter.

In an emailed response Thursday, Duncan said the city “is not looking to change ownership of this building and will continue to own and ensure priority for the building is operating as a shelter.” ■

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Don't let scammers crash back-to-school season

Today's students and young adults are true digital natives, having grown up online, learning to navigate digital spaces as a normal part of daily life. As they transition to college, they turn to digital platforms and social media for everything from apartment hunting and job searches to shopping, banking and talking with friends.

That familiarity, however, can create a false sense of security, making younger adults just as much of a target for fraud and scams as older individuals. According to the FBI's Internet Crime Report, Americans ages 20–29 reported more than \$500 million to internet-crime losses in 2025.

As scammers become more sophisticated, including using AI, students need to be more vigilant than ever about fraud and scams. Understanding the most common ones can help you and your children avoid becoming victims.

Common scams targeting students (and the families supporting them)

Online shopping and marketplace scams

Whether your student is furnishing a dorm, moving into an apartment or buying textbooks — or you're helping them pay for essentials — online deals and secondhand marketplaces can help you save money while also creating more opportunities for scammers.

Buy from official and trusted retailers whenever possible, double check website URLs for misspellings or other red flags, and make sure the site uses https://. Be wary of deals that seem too good to be true as well. Avoid clicking links in unsolicited emails or text messages, including fake "missed delivery" notifications that often lead to fraudulent websites or malware.

Before making a purchase, read seller reviews and ratings. If you're buying locally, meet in a safe public place and inspect the item before paying.

Job scams

As students return to school this fall, some may be looking for part-time jobs or internships. Scammers target students with fake jobs offering high salaries, flexible schedules or jobs you can do from a residence hall, apartment or home.

If your child receives a job offer by text, email, or direct message — be cautious, especially if they never applied to work at that company. Encourage them to use well-known job boards and then apply directly through the company's official website.

Also, if an employer asks them to pay upfront for training, equipment, background checks or application fees, it may be a sign of a scam. Legitimate companies will never charge you to get a job. They also won't send you money and then ask you to return a portion of it.

Rental and housing scams

Scammers know student housing is in high demand. They'll often post fake apartment listings or copy legitimate ones to trick potential renters (or their families) into sending money for a deposit.

Rental prices that seem unusually low should raise a red flag. Use a reverse image search to see if photos of the property appear on a different website or in a different location. Research unfamiliar property managers or housing websites before sending money, and avoid paying deposits through wire transfers, gift cards or peer-to-peer payment apps.

Double check the address, read online reviews of the property management company and schedule a tour of the house or apartment before signing a lease or sending a deposit. That way, you'll know the listing and location is real.

The influence of AI

Thanks to artificial intelligence, scammers can now create cloned voices and deepfake videos, along with fraudulent emails, text messages and even websites and apps that look real. These AI tools let scammers impersonate family members, employers, banks, law enforcement, delivery companies and trusted brands to get you to send money or share personal information. They may even target parents directly — claiming your child is in trouble and needs money immediately.

How to protect yourself (and your children)

No matter what type of scam you encounter, a few simple habits can go a long way toward reducing your risk:

- **Limit the personal information you and your children share online and make social media profiles private** whenever possible. This can help reduce the information scammers can use to target you, guess your security questions or attempt to access your financial accounts.
- **When you're making a payment, use more protected methods**, such as credit and deb-

it cards, which generally offer stronger consumer protections than wire transfers, gift cards or peer-to-peer payment apps. Treat peer-to-peer payments, such as Zelle, like cash — once the money is sent, it's often difficult to recover.

- **Scammers can spoof phone numbers to make calls look like they're coming from your bank, law enforcement or another trusted organization.** Don't automatically trust your caller ID — if you get a call demanding immediate action or claiming there's a problem with your account, hang up and call back directly using a verified phone number. Banks will never call and ask you for account information, tell you to transfer money to "protect" it or pressure you to act immediately.

- **Don't click links or download attachments from unexpected emails or text messages** and avoid accessing your financial accounts or making online purchases on public Wi-Fi, where savvy cybercriminals can gain access to your login credentials.

- **Perhaps most importantly, slow down.** Back-to-school season brings a flurry of financial decisions and scammers know students and families are looking for deals. They often create a false sense of urgency to try to pressure people into making quick decisions. Taking a few extra minutes to verify information can make the difference.

The bottom line

Whether your student is shopping for school supplies, searching for a job or signing a first lease, their status as a student can make them a prime target for scammers — and families can be targeted too.

Stay skeptical of unsolicited offers, verify before you pay or share personal information, and slow down when something feels rushed. Those simple habits can help protect your money, your identity and your family's peace of mind throughout the school year from scams and fraud.

To help consumers stay ahead of common and emerging threats, Chase hosts more than 1,000 free fraud and scam prevention workshops each year in communities across the country. This September, Chase will host a workshop for California State University students focused on recognizing scams and protecting their money and personal information during the back-to-school season.

For more financial health tips, visit chase.com/scamproof.

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How do you dispose of an abandoned Russian submarine? Long Beach is on the hook to find out

By John Donegan

For 22 years, the Scorpion patrolled the Pacific as an attack submarine of the Soviet Navy. For 17 years, it stood guard beside the Queen Mary, welcoming aboard visitors eager to learn about the hidden world of undersea warfare.

Now the sub may be facing its final mission: a one-way trip to the scrap yard.

Long Beach is probing the local market for the possible cost and difficulty of towing the 55-year-old submarine out of the water and to an accredited disposal facility.

It's not a formal bid request, city officials say, but a request for information — asking qualified ocean towing operators to respond with a sense of the scope of work, the permits required and the likely price tag.

If enough qualified vendors respond, the city says it could issue a bid for the job.

Officials say the outer skin of the 1970s-era, Foxtrot-class vessel has been deteriorating for some time, its once sleek profile disfigured by holes, rust and protective netting. Salt water and the occasional severe storm have not been kind.

How did the sub get here?

Commissioned by the Soviet government in 1971, the Scorpion spent its working life searching for and tracking enemy forces in the Pacific before it was decommissioned in 1994. After a three-year stint at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney, it was bought by Palm Springs resident Ed Skowron and towed to Long Beach as a tourist attraction in 1998.

For years, it drew about 8,000 visitors a month, its own lure alongside the Queen Mary.

But after its hull ruptured and a ballast tank flooded, the sub closed to the public in 2015. It has sat empty and deteriorating ever since, and raccoons eventually moved in, according to past reporting from the Long Beach Post.

Since then, Long Beach's Public Works Department says the sub has seen significant deterioration along its outer hull, along the topsides and waterline.

"In the interest of safety, water quality, and to mitigate any risk of damage to the Queen Mary, the vessel has been identified by the City as an abandoned asset for removal, pending any future legal or administrative actions required for its removal," wrote Public Works spokesperson Jocelin Padilla.

In a preliminary assessment of the submarine, the city says the sub can handle a landside or waterside removal. "However, further analysis has to be conducted to determine the most appropriate course of action, taking



Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

into account safety, risk, impacts, and costs," Padilla wrote.

Ownership of the Scorpion has grown murky after years of legal disputes among the companies that leased and operated it. The submarine's most recent owner, an Australian company called NEWCO Pty Ltd., dissolved in 2020, leaving no one to answer the city's demand letters. With no one to take responsibility for it, Long Beach may end up paying for the sub's removal.

How hazardous would it be to move?

At one point, there was concern the sub could sink and damage the Queen Mary, but a more recent survey by engineering firm Moffatt & Nichol found the vessel still watertight and unlikely to roll toward the ship. City officials say further analysis is needed to settle on a removal method and account for any potential hazards.

Curtin Maritime Corp., a marine construction and salvage company with an office at the Long Beach seaport, is among the firms weighing whether to take on the job.

Ralph Botticelli, the company's director of business development, said the first question is whether the Scorpion can even be moved safely. Wherever the sub ends up, it won't be near the Queen Mary — Botticelli estimated it would be towed at least 4 or 5 miles offshore before any cutting begins to disassemble it.

The sub's batteries, asbestos piping, the thickness of the steel and its overall condition would all factor



Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

The Russian Scorpion, or B-427, is a diesel-electric attack submarine that now sits alongside the Queen Mary, closed to the public and deteriorating. The Russian Scorpion emblem remains visible on the submarine's side.

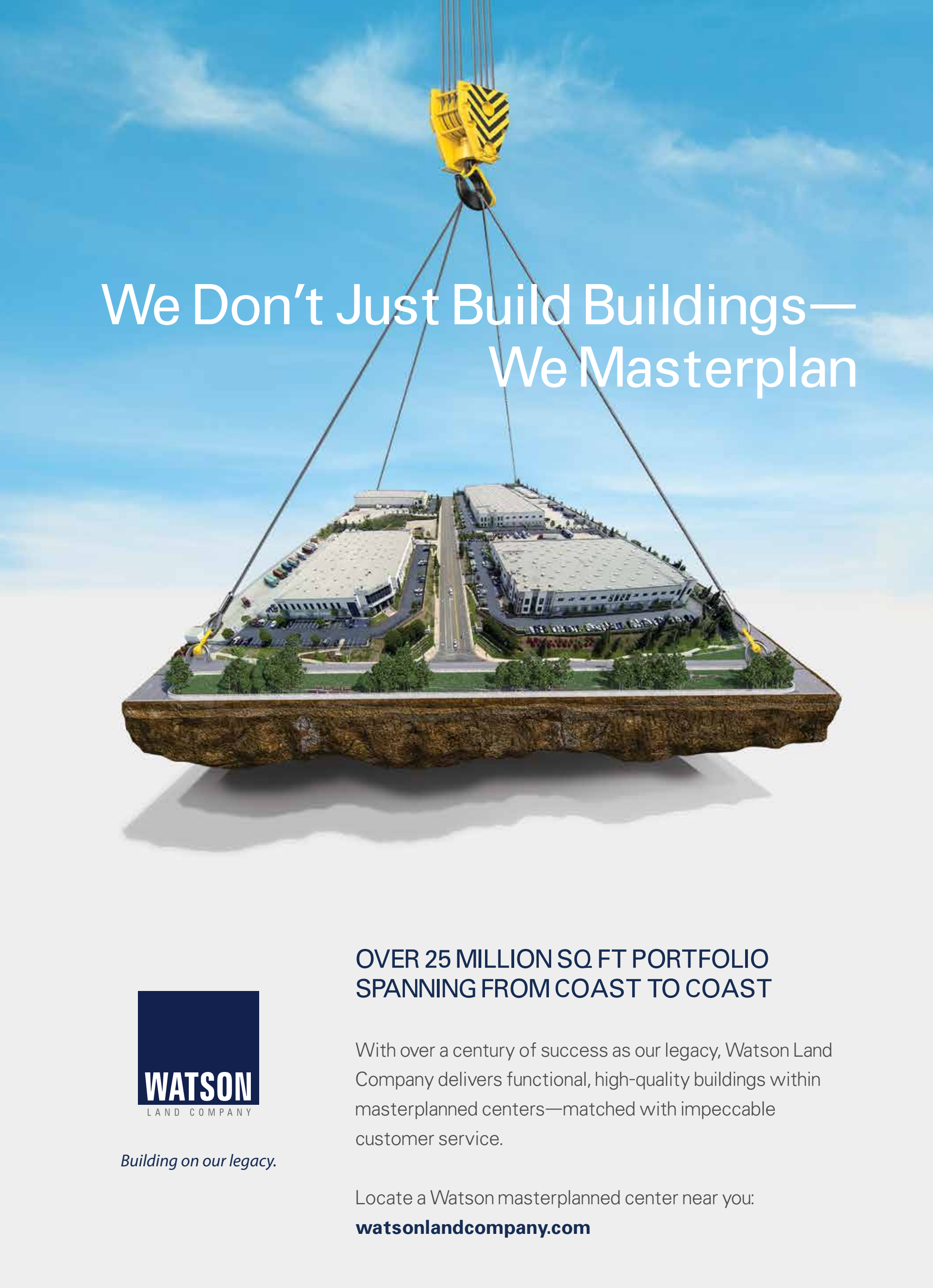
into whether crews put a towline on it or lift it out with a crane, he said. If hazardous materials need to come out first, Curtin would likely bring in a third-party environmental cleanup contractor, Botticelli said. Soviet-era diesel submarines like the Scorpion typically carry lead-acid battery banks, residual fuel and oil, asbestos insulation and sometimes PCBs.

Finding a hazardous-waste facility equipped to handle the job should also be manageable, he said, since Southern California has a number of preapproved sites for that kind of

material. It's just a matter of finding the right one.

But without a full assessment, it's difficult to say exactly how the sub would come apart — likely in sections, cut along its watertight bulkheads so the remaining pieces in the water don't sink. "There's no rule of thumb," he said. "It's just what is deemed appropriate at the time and most cost-effective and most safe."

"Thirty years in this business and I've never seen anything like this," Botticelli said, calling the Scorpion "a museum piece." ■



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