Long Beach Guide

A Look Back at the Storied History of Downtown Long Beach

Downtown Long Beach Embodies a Complex and Attractive Interplay of the Historic and the New

The industrial roots that spawned Long Beach's rapid growth since its incorporation in 1888 also characterize its modern-day energy. Strategically oriented to the sea, Long Beach appeals to the transfer of goods, services, and people. It is this tactical position that dictated the original development of the City and continues to act as the nucleus of activity and sustenance.

At the dawn of the 20th century Long Beach exploded as both a resort and commercial center. It was during this time that the Pike, a seaside amusement center complete with swimming plunge and roller coaster, opened. Long Beach was the fastest growing city in the nation and it continued to flourish with the establishment of the Port and the discovery of oil on Signal Hill.

Things came to a crashing halt in 1933, when a 6.25 magnitude earthquake shook the town to its core. Buildings collapsed, roads buckled and within seconds much of Long Beach was reduced to debris. Yet, Downtown Long Beach was quickly rebuilt in the Art Deco fashion, an architectural style that defined the era and continues to interest architectural enthusiasts. In addition, a group of Pine Avenue merchants founded the Downtown Long Beach Associates (DLBA) and decided to launch a cooperative advertising campaign in the local newspapers. Spearheading the DLBA campaign was Harry Buffum, the founder of Buffum's Department Store.

Throughout much of the 1940s, Downtown Long Beach continued to profit under the guidance of the DLBA. During World War II the area became a magnet for active servicemen returning from duty overseas, many of whom spent their free time at Pike Amusement Center. In its heyday, the Pike regularly drew 50,000 visitors on the weekend. One of the biggest draws was Charles Looff's carousel where jeweled horses cantered just inches from the sand-across the midway from the Plunge bathhouse and the Majestic Ballroom, adjacent to the Jack Rabbit Racer roller coaster.

Things began to shift during the fabulous 50s, which proved not to be so fabulous for urban communities. Downtown Long Beach was no exception. Post-war housing boomed as servicemen were discharged and suburban living became a way of life. Shopping took a turn for the worse in Downtown Long Beach as suburban shopping centers and malls became the new metropolises. Even the development of the 710 Freeway in 1951 fostered a symbiotic relationship with the growth of suburbs.

By the early 1960s Downtown Long Beach, once a thriving urban center, was struggling. Many of the major department stores and retail anchors, including Walker's, Desmonds, Howard Amos and part of Buffums, had vanished. To the astonishment of longtime retailers and their customers, vacant storefronts were slowly being replaced with adult movie houses and entertainment, which catered to the servicemen at the nearby naval base. As things continued to decline in Downtown, the DLBA forged ahead with its efforts to attract the clientele of pre-war America by maintaining clean streets and sidewalks, as well as hosting family-oriented events. In addition, the Long Beach Redevelopment Agency was established and the Long Beach City Council purchased the Queen Mary, the crown jewel of the Cunard Lines. The ship quickly became an icon, drawing millions of visitors to its storied decks.

While the 1970s saw the Pike close, Downtown Long Beach revitalization was well under way. The RDA adopted Downtown as a project area and developed a Downtown Plan which addressed issues of growth. Construction of the Long Beach Plaza Mall, the Promenade, and the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center began. In addition, the first racing of the Grand Prix of Long Beach took place. The 1980s saw the opening of Shoreline Village and the development of the first modern high-rise hotel, the Hyatt Regency. Soon after, several large office buildings and more hotels were added to the Downtown scene. Multi-million dollar condominium developments along the Ocean Boulevard corridor and the development of the Downtown Harbor also played a pivotal role in the transformation of the central business district.

As the final decade of the 20th century dawned and the recession faded, Downtown Long Beach began to prosper once again. Office occupancy rates began to rise, Pine Avenue began to emerge as a mini restaurant row with the opening of new and exciting eateries, and the East Village blossomed as a burgeoning arts district. The Metropolitan Transit Authority began operation of its first light-rail train, the Blue Line, which linked Long Beach to Los Angeles. Long Beach Transit established a free Downtown Long Beach shuttle service. Southern California's largest aquarium, the Aquarium of the Pacific, recently celebrated its 10th anniversary and attracts over 1.4 million visitors annually. And, in 1997, Downtown property owners voted to implement a property-based Business Improvement District to be managed by the DLBA.
CSULB CCPE: Transforming the Lives of Long Beach Residents

BY ANGIE MATHEWS

The College of Continuing and Professional Education (CCPE) at California State University, Long Beach, is an interdisciplinary college that works closely with its university, business, community, and international partners to serve Long Beach and the great Los Angeles workforce and economy.

Whether getting area locals trained and employed or preparing candidates for the state, national, and global workforce, the innovative workforce development and training programs being developed and cultivated by the dedicated CCPE team of educators, advisors, and staff generates some of the most rewarding and impactful work coming from the university’s educational system. CCPE’s Professional Programs department is helping to meet California’s ongoing employment and retraining challenges with new offerings developed in collaboration with the workforce development agencies who share this same goal.

By drawing on the academic strength of the diverse programs available, the individual community needs, and partnership opportunities, CCPE leverages the transformational power of education to help transform the lives of students and help many Long Beach and Los Angeles-area residents attain new heights in their careers and new levels of fulfillment in their lives.

CCPE has developed strong ties with a handful of area Workforce Investments Boards, such as The Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network (PGWIN), matching job seekers with employment and training in growing areas of the economy, and Goodwill Serving the People of Southern Los Angeles County (SOLAC) where CCPE offers training and career services for students, while partners provide job placement and cost assistance.

“We’ve been working with the Professional Programs department at CCPE for several years developing special programs to meet specific industry needs,” said PGWIN Executive Director Nick Schultz.

Schultz explained that CCPE provides an exceptional resource with high quality coursework for local residents looking to build upon their skills.

“The programs are rigorous and industry-backed, so students are sure to gain the skills they need to obtain a good job. A key focus of my work at PGWIN is to ensure that our investments in training are aligned with industry needs and what relevant labor market information is telling us in terms of future job growth. Our partnership with CCPE helps us do that,” he added.

Most recently, CCPE and PGWIN developed a training program to equip jobseekers with computer and customer service skills. To meet the demand, CCPE was able to create a customized training program, hire the instructors, schedule the training, and partner with LBCAP to use their classroom and lab within a month, noted CCPE Professional Programs Director, Regina Cash.

“Being able to create an offer rigorous and relevant training that provides the knowledge and skills needed to secure meaningful employment is something we strive for on a daily basis,” Cash added.

Currently in the developmental stage, CCPE, in partnership with PGWIN, is in the process of preparing a Workforce Development Academy in late 2015.

The relationship between Goodwill SOLAC and CCPE developed organically upon discovering they were both offering classes in Medical Billing and Coding, a complex set of skills required in every health care operation. Janet McCarthy, President and CEO of Goodwill SOLAC, met with Cash to discuss partnership opportunities.

The result was a collaborative four-week course that prepares students to keep records, calculate patient charges, and review files in a medical setting. Goodwill SOLAC provides a classroom and current software, while CCPE provides the instructor and curriculum. Eligible participants also have access to Goodwill’s career services, which can include resume and interview guidance, externships, job placement, and assistance with course fees.

“We’ve had folks who have come to us homeless who are now making upwards of $42,000 a year,” McCarthy said. “When they’re out of poverty, so are the children in their family.”

Students who successfully complete the program receive a certificate from CSULB and will be eligible to sit for the National Healthcareer Association Certified Billing and Coding Specialist exam. If externships are available, students are matched with health care organizations to gain experience in the field. Goodwill SOLAC also holds recruitment fairs.

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Port Sees Strongest May in Nine Years

Improving retail market propels continued Long Beach growth

Cargo rose at the Port of Long Beach by 6 percent in May, the third consecutive month of growth, the busiest month since October 2007, and the busiest May since 2006.

A total of 635,250 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of containerized cargo were moved through the Port in May. Imports numbered 327,317 TEUs, a 4.8 percent increase from the same month last year. Exports decreased 7.4 percent to 135,855 TEUs. Empty containers rose 22.6 percent to 172,078 TEUs. With imports exceeding exports, empty containers are sent overseas to be refilled with goods.

Cargo volume is up partly due to a stronger retail market. The Port is also attracting new services in order to boost cargo growth. Through the first five months of 2015, cargo is up 1.1 percent overall.

With an ongoing $4 billion program to modernize its facilities, the Port of Long Beach continues to invest in long-term, environmentally sustainable growth.

For more details on the cargo numbers, please visit www.polb.com/stats.
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Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach: A Fixture on Southern California’s Sports Landscape

The Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach, entering its 42nd year, endures as the longest-running street race in North America and a fixture on Southern California’s sports landscape.

Recently voted by fans among the world’s 10 best motorsports races in an online poll conducted by USA TODAY and 10best.com, the Toyota Grand Prix is the region’s largest paid spectator special event, attracting more than 180,000 people annually.

Running on a 1.97-mile, 11-turn race course through the streets of downtown Long Beach encompassing the Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, the Aquarium of the Pacific and The Pike Outlets, the Grand Prix showcases the unique attributes of the city to its spectators and a national and international television audience while putting on world-class racing.

The event continues to benefit from title sponsorship by Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A. and the Southern California Toyota Dealers Association (SCTDA), believed to be the longest continuously running sponsorship of a major event in the U.S.

“The reason for the enduring success of the event starts with an extraordinary relationship with our host, the City of Long Beach,” said Jim Michaelian, president and CEO of the Grand Prix Association of Long Beach. “They have been supportive of our efforts from the very beginning and have helped to create a most welcoming environment for all of our race attendees over the years. Thanks also to our array of sponsors, especially Toyota and the SCTDA who have now partnered with us since we began in 1975.”

The Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach has featured racing from Formula 1, CART, Champ Car and IndyCar over the course of its long history, not to mention dozens of support events ranging from sports cars to motorcycles to bicycle and foot races.

The list of feature-race winners reads like a list of racing royalty, among them Al Unser Jr. (six wins), Mario Andretti (four), Paul Tracy (four), Michael Andretti (two), Alex Zanardi (two), Will Power (two), Dario Franchitti, Jimmy Vasser, Danny Sullivan, Gilles Villeneuve and Juan Montoya.

The 2016 Grand Prix will run April 15-17 and feature the Verizon IndyCar Series, Tudor United SportsCar Championship and the 40th Anniversary Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race, the annual fan-favorite race pitting stars from stage, screen and sports against professional drivers in a 10-lap shootout for charity.

Over the years, the prestigious race has seen the likes of Tim Allen, Adrien Brody, James Brolin, Josh Brolin, Bryan Cranston, Patrick Dempsey, Cameron Diaz, Clint Eastwood, John Elway, Gene Hackman, Jay Leno, Joe Montana, Keanu Reeves, William Shatner and Patrick Stewart behind the wheel.

Tickets will go on sale Oct. 19 at gpplb.com or by calling the toll-free ticket hotline, (888) 827-7333. The official website also has the latest Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach news, racetrack information, photos and ongoing announcements of special activities.

A wide variety of Hospitality Suite and Club packages are also available for 2016, including locations overlooking pit lane and the back straightaway, as well as the incomparable views of the Vista Club located high atop the Hyatt Regency Long Beach.

Fans can also follow the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach on Facebook at GrandPrixLB, Twitter @ToyotaGPLB, Instagram at ToyotaGP_LIB and Snapchat at ToyotaGPLB.
Certificate programs include:
- Human Resources Management
- Global Logistics Specialist Professional Designation
- Meeting and Event Planning
- Medical Billing and Coding

Master’s degrees include:
- MBA (Accelerated)
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California State University, Long Beach
College of Continuing and Professional Education
Long Beach has Lowest Natural Gas Bills in State — Lower than 15 Years Ago

Conserving energy pays off.
Residential customers of Long Beach’s gas utility have the lowest natural gas bills in the State of California, thanks mainly to conservation efforts that have seen the average household natural gas usage reduce by more than 70 percent since the early 1970s.

“I am proud that we are able to provide the lowest gas bills in the State, and I am proud that Long Beach residents have been leaders in energy conservation,” said Mayor Robert Garcia. “Not only does that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help improve air quality, it means lower utility bills for our customers.”

A recent survey of the five other utilities that provide natural gas in California confirmed that Long Beach utility customers had the lowest average gas bills last year. In addition to continuing conservation efforts, other contributing factors include improved energy efficiency standards for buildings and appliances, and gas supply contracts that have taken advantage of low commodity prices.

In 2014, the average monthly residential gas bill from Long Beach’s gas utility was $29.59, which is 15 percent lower than what the average gas bill with similar gas usage would have been from the following utilities: Southwest Gas, $41.99; City of Palo Alto, $15.37; San Diego Gas & Electric, $33.95; Pacific Gas and Electric $31.57; and Southern California Gas Company, $30.43. Furthermore, due to the lower trend of current commodity prices, the average Long Beach residential gas bill in 2015 is projected to be only $26.08, a 42 percent decrease from 2000, when the average Long Beach residential gas bill was $44.66.

“Our customers have done their part by making the effort to conserve energy and are saving real dollars every month by doing so,” said Chris Garner, Director of Long Beach Gas and Oil. “It is our job to continue to work hard to provide our customers with natural gas in an affordable and reliable manner at the lowest possible price. We have been providing natural gas to Long Beach and Signal Hill for over 90 years now and our goal is to continue to be the very best utility in California.”

Almost 90 percent of today’s residential customers’ usage of natural gas is for space heating and heating water (shower, clothes washer, dishwashers), with the remaining used for cooking, clothes dryers, and pool/cpa. Water conservation efforts in Long Beach have reduced the natural gas required for heating water, and the mild winters of the past few years have tempered the use of natural gas for space heating.

LBGO’s rates for gas service to its customers are set by the Long Beach City Council, which allows for direct responsiveness to the needs of our community, whereas rates for private gas utilities are set by politically appointed Commissioners at the California Public Utilities Commission in San Francisco. The City Charter requires that LBGO’s gas rates be market-based rather than cost-based. This is a significant provision as LBGO’s gas utility is not allowed to simply pass through increasing operational costs to its customers as LBGO’s rates are effectively “capped” by the rates being charged by the surrounding private gas utilities. This incentivizes LBGO to minimize its costs in providing service so as to remain competitive.

The fixed, minimum charge for LBGO’s residential gas service has remained unchanged for over 20 years now and is, in fact, lower than it was nearly 30 years ago. In addition, LBGO long ago implemented tiered rates so that efficient users who conserve the use of natural gas are financially “rewarded” through lower applicable gas rates.

Fifteen years ago, natural gas supplies were declining, commodity prices were rising, and it was expensive to transport these commodity hundreds of miles over pipelines from other states and Canada (California must import about 85 percent of its needed supplies from other regions). Up until about 2006, the nation’s production of natural gas was declining to the extent the United States was actively pursuing the expensive import of natural gas from other countries overseas. Gas commodity prices rose due to the shrinking supply. Since that time, natural gas production has increased substantially due to technological improvements in exploration and drilling techniques. The growth in supply of domestic natural gas has significantly lowered the commodity prices since 2006. LBGO procures its natural gas supplies for its customers on the open, competitive national market. Fortunately, LBGO has negotiated supply contracts that provide both long-term supply reliability along with very favorable price terms. These supply contracts take full advantage of low commodity prices currently available. Long Beach and Signal Hill residents realize the full financial benefits of these lower prices as LBGO passes through the monthly commodity price directly to its customers.

However, unforeseen circumstances can quickly disrupt the market and result in higher prices. In a proactive manner, LBGO has also entered into financial hedge agreements that provide customers protection against the chance of unexpected high prices.

To further assist customers in their attempts to conserve energy and control their utility charges, LBGO will soon be initiating the first phase of installing a state-of-the-art Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) program of “smart meters” for LBGO’s entire system of 150,000 natural gas meters.

Once fully implemented, customers will be able to access their individual gas pattern information via a near real-time basis from their home computers or smart phones. This will allow all of LBGO’s gas customers to better understand when and how they are consuming natural gas so that they can further adjust their usage as needed.

Long Beach and Signal Hill residents should proudly recognize the financial and environmental benefits that they have achieved through their ongoing natural gas conservation efforts. Likewise, LBGO is proud of its role in helping to facilitate these efforts on behalf of its customers by continuing to safely provide essential natural gas services at the lowest reasonable prices possible.

Information provided by the City of Long Beach.

City of Long Beach Taps into Growing Brewery Industry

The brewery business is bubbling and booming in Long Beach. To further the industry’s thriving potential as a lucrative business and economic driver, the City has created a business-friendly initiative that will be able to participate.

“Craft breweries fuel local jobs and community involvement, which are integral to generating lasting growth,” said Mayor Robert Garcia. “It’s not secret that this pro-gressive, business-friendly initiative will have a solid economic impact on our economy.”

In April, the City Council adopted a zoning code amendment permitting craft breweries, wineries and distilleries with tasting rooms to open shop throughout the City.

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In the City’s zoning code, the craft brewing industry has experienced tremendous growth over the past 30 years, both in volume of production and market share. Prior to the City’s zoning change, the Long Beach Municipal Code allowed for similar uses in specific zoning districts, such as the manufacturing of beverages in certain industrial zones, and brewpubs in the Downtown Plan area.

City staff collaborated with the Long Beach Police Department and the City Attorney’s Office to establish development standards in relation to the zoning change, including facility size and volume of production capacities, hours of operations, and stipulations that an alcohol manufacturing business and accessory tasting room may not be located within 500 feet of a preschool or K-12 school.

As the nation’s top producer of wine and craft beer, and with more breweries and wineries than any other state in California leads the country’s craft brewing culture. There are currently more than 560 breweries in Southern California.

The brewpub is the best date and location for the businesses and youth in Long Beach.

City of Long Beach and Microsoft form a ‘Digital Alliance’

The Long Beach City Council recently agreed to collaborate with the Microsoft Corporation to bring Digital Alliance programs to the City and its residents. Partnering with local governments, Microsoft provides staff expertise and capacity building workshops designed to inspire young people as well as entrepreneurs.

“This partnership is part of our commitment to creating a tech culture and economy in Long Beach,” said Mayor Robert Garcia. “Microsoft is a global leader in innovation and I’m excited that they are going to leverage their expertise and talent to support workshop to economic and development programs for local residents and students.”

Currently, two types of events are proposed in Long Beach: Digi Camps and a BizSpark session. Digi Camps, which offer separate sessions for girls and boys, give kids a chance to take on technology challenges through small-group work, interact with Microsoft executives, and learn more about technology-related careers.

The BizSpark session will serve local entrepreneurs and demonstrate how technology can simplify everyday tasks, increase their productivity, reduce business operations costs, and grow their business workshops.

The City and Microsoft will determine the best dates and events. Once planned, up to 100 girls, 100 boys, and 200 local business owners will be able to participate.
**6th and 7th Streets Will Allow Two-Way Traffic Between Alamitos and Atlantic Avenues**

Construction began last month on a dramatically improved intersection in Downtown Long Beach, followed by a new park, near the intersection of Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) and Alamitos Avenues, and 6th and 7th Streets.

“We’ve been working on this project for several years, and it’s extremely exciting to see it coming to fruition,” said Mayor Robert Garcia. “Not only are we adding needed green space to this dense neighborhood, we’re making one of our busiest intersections much safer. It’s a huge win for this community.”

The following street improvements will occur:

- 6th and 7th Streets will be reconfigured to allow two-way traffic between Alamitos and Atlantic Avenues.
- MLK will be closed to vehicular traffic between 6th and 7th Streets, where the new park will be built.
- The southern terminus of MLK will end at 7th Street.
- Traffic on 6th Street will be allowed to cross Alamitos Avenue in both directions (and continue to turn north and south).

“We are very excited to improve traffic flow and make it safer and easier for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians to get around,” said Councilwoman Lena Gonzalez. “The new park will improve the quality of life for approximately 32,000 residents who live within a half-mile radius of the intersection.”

The 36,590 square-foot neighborhood park will be called Robert Gumbiner Park, and will include a performance area, children’s play areas, skate plaza, shade structures, gathering spaces and public art pieces donated by the nearby Museum of Latin American Art (MoLAA) and Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum.

The park also incorporates sustainability design features that include reuse of recycled pavement, natural stormwater retention and filtration system, large canopied trees and a new green space in a fully built-out area.

The improvements will also incorporate additional landscaping, improved drainage system, new bus stops, and new sidewalks that meet current disabled access regulations.

The street project is expected to be completed by the end of 2015, and the new park is expected to be completed by the end of 2016.

During construction, street sweeping enforcement will be temporarily suspended on adjacent side streets. Lane closures will be required, and while the roads will stay open during working hours, motorists can expect some traffic delays. Therefore, motorists are encouraged to use alternate routes during construction.

In 2010, the City applied for and was awarded a $900,000 federal grant from Caltrans through their Highway Safety Improvement Program to improve traffic circulation in the area. In 2011, the City applied for the Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Program and was awarded $2.83 million to develop the park.

On June 9, 2015, the Long Beach City Council agreed with recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Housing and Neighborhoods Committee, and voted unanimously to name the park in honor of Dr. Robert Gumbiner, a health care pioneer and philanthropist who opened the nearby Museum of Latin American Art (MoLAA) in 1996. Mayor Garcia sponsored the original City Council agenda item.

As a doctor and an administrator, Dr. Gumbiner guided the growth of his small medical practice into one of the largest HMOs in the country, FHP International. Despite his success, Dr. Gumbiner insisted that his business “provide the most care to the most people for the least amount of money.”

Dr. Gumbiner made additional contributions to Long Beach’s cultural and artistic legacy by founding the Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum, which opened in October 2010, 21 months after he died in January 2009 at the age of 85.

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