



# THE HEIGHTS

## NEWS FROM THE CALIFORNIA HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

November/December 2025 | Vol.31, Issue 3

*Promoting Public Knowledge and Preservation of Historic and Architectural Resources in the California Heights Historic District*

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## California Heights Home and Garden Tour Returns May 31, 2026

by Tara Riggi

Every two years, our community comes together to celebrate the charm, craftsmanship and one-of-a-kind character that make California Heights so special. In 2026, we will once again open our doors, garden gates and historic pathways for the Cal Heights Home and Gardens Tour on May 31. This beloved tradition remains one of the most meaningful ways we honor the neighborhood's past while supporting its future, and we could not be more excited to begin planning for another memorable event.

The tour invites residents and visitors alike to step inside some of the most thoughtfully preserved and beautifully designed homes and outdoor spaces in our historic district. From classic period details to creative modern updates, each stop on the tour tells a story about our neighborhood's evolution and the pride our residents take in caring for these remarkable properties. This event is more than a day of inspiration. It is a celebration of the heart and soul of Cal Heights!

We are currently seeking residents who would like to participate in the 2026 tour. Opening your home or garden is a generous act of community spirit. It allows neighbors and guests to appreciate the architecture, landscape design and personal stewardship that make our district shine. Your participation directly fuels the success of the tour and helps bring together a diverse mix of homes and outdoor spaces that reflect the richness of Cal Heights.

Most important, taking part in the tour provides meaningful support for programs that keep our neighborhood thriving year-round. Proceeds from the event benefit ongoing initiatives including our Clean Streets Program, lamppost maintenance and the annual community block party. These efforts depend on the funds raised through the tour, making each participating home and garden a valuable contribution to the continued vitality of our neighborhood.

We are also looking for friendly and enthusiastic docents to help on tour day. Docents greet guests, answer questions and help create a smooth, welcoming experience for everyone who attends.

As we look ahead to May 31, 2026, we invite you to consider being part of this treasured event. If you would like to showcase your home or garden or volunteer as a docent, please reach out at [president@calheights.org](mailto:president@calheights.org). Together, we will create another unforgettable tour that honors our heritage and strengthens the community we are proud to call home. 🏡

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## President's Message

Dear California Heights Neighbors,

As we head into the close of the year, I want to thank each of you for the energy, care and pride you bring to California Heights. Our neighborhood feels especially warm during the holidays, with homes glowing, neighbors gathering and our community spirit shining a little brighter. Your involvement is what keeps this historic district strong and connected.

I am especially looking forward to the F8 Cal Heights Tree Lighting on December 4. It is one of the season's highlights and a wonderful chance to celebrate together. I hope you will join us, bring your family and enjoy an evening that always reminds me how lucky we are to call this neighborhood home.

As you plan your holiday shopping, I encourage you to support our local businesses. Every cup of coffee, thoughtful gift and service purchased close to home strengthens the community we love. Shopping small makes a real difference for the people who invest in our neighborhood year-round. On behalf of the California Heights Neighborhood Association, I wish you a safe, happy and healthy holiday season. Thank you for your continued support and for helping keep Cal Heights such a special place.

With gratitude, Tara Riggi

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, this year's **Long Beach Gives** campaign was a great success. We raised \$8,000 to support programs that keep Cal Heights beautiful, welcoming, and connected.

These funds help us with valuable efforts like our Clean Streets program. They support neighborhood beautification projects such as lamppost repairs, curb painting, and improvements to our kiosk. They fund our outreach efforts, so you stay informed through our bi-monthly newsletters and through community events that make sure your voices are heard. They allow us to foster a sense of community through events like our annual 100-years party. All together, these efforts help to preserve the charm and character that make Cal Heights so special.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who donated, spread the word, or just cheered us on. Your contributions make a real difference and show how much our community cares. Thank you for helping us keep Cal Heights a neighborhood we can all be proud of.



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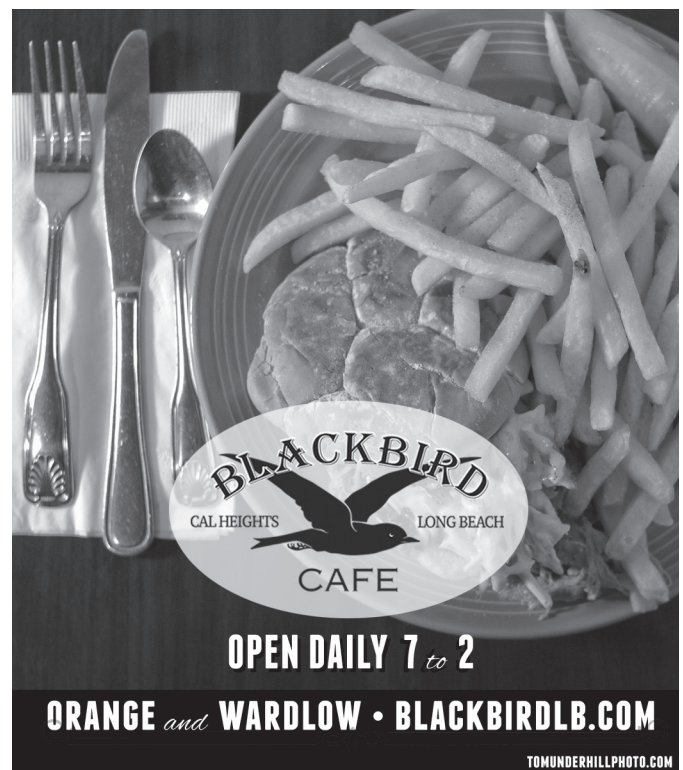
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## Smog City Heights to Open Soon

by Marion Saffery

Well, readers, it's happening again. A Long Beach legend is opening a new spot in our neighborhood: Say hello to Smog City Heights.

Cal Heights-ers may be familiar with Smog City Brewing, a Torrance-based brewery with four taprooms, including the one at SteelCraft, the "urban eatery" on the corner of Long Beach Boulevard and East Bixby Road.

Now, owners/operators Laurie and Jonathan Porter are in the process of moving from SteelCraft to their new digs in Cal Heights. But now, in addition to offering their selection of famous craft beers, Smog City is adding food to the mix, with a menu developed by executive chef Jeff Lustre.

"We call it upscale fast-casual, or innovative fast-casual," Laurie said. "Burgers, chicken wings, fries, crispy Brussels sprouts, and some sandwiches and salads, but all made just a little elevated. We're also going to offer 'noshing' bar foods, like pickled vegetables and pickled eggs."

Laurie emphasized the overall experience Smog City will give its customers.

"We're taking things that we're really good at, and we're putting them all in here," she said. "Making sure that we're creating the best, warmest, most welcoming and safe environment for our customers that we possibly can, in every experience."

As of this writing, Laurie says Smog City will serve lunch and dinner—with plans for breakfast burritos in the future—and of course, their famous beers.

"It's really important that people who see we're moving know that we're not moving because we want to move, but we are doing something special here, and we're really excited about this next chapter," she said.

Smog City Heights will be at 1106 E. Wardlow Road (formerly Babe's Kitchen) in Cal Heights. For more information, call (562) 253-0853, visit [smogcitybrewing.com](http://smogcitybrewing.com), or follow them at [@smogcitybeer\\_LB](https://www.instagram.com/smogcitybeer_LB) on Instagram. 🍺





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## From the 5<sup>th</sup> District

Councilwoman Megan Kerr



Hello Cal Heights Neighbors,

As we enter into the end-of-year holiday season, it's hard to believe how quickly this year has flown by. Despite the changes in weather, I hope your days are filled with the warmth of connections this season brings, as we gather with loved ones and remember all we have to be grateful for.

I look forward to kicking off the holiday season with you at the 3rd Annual Cal Heights Christmas Tree Lighting on December 4th, at the corner of Orange & Bixby. I am honored and proud to be a part of this local tradition as it continues to grow. Thank you to f/8 Studios and Cal Heights Market for hosting this celebration of community connection and holiday joy. The fun starts at 4:30pm; I also heard that Santa and reindeer will be there!

While we all may celebrate the holiday season in different ways, prioritizing safety is as important as ever. Be sure to keep flammable décor like Christmas trees away from heat sources or open flames, add water regularly to keep them from drying out, and turn off string lights before leaving them unattended. To prevent package theft, bring items in as soon as they arrive, request special delivery instructions to keep them out of view, or consider installing motion-activated lights or cameras. Remember, if you see something, say something! Call 9-1-1 for emergencies or (562) 435-6711 for Non-Emergency situations. You can also email [LBPDNorth@longbeach.gov](mailto:LBPDNorth@longbeach.gov) for all other reports and inquiries.

At the time of writing, the record-length federal government shutdown has just come to an end. However, we know there are many Long Beach families still impacted by the closure. Those in need of food assistance can find resources under the "Healthy Living" tab at [longbeach.gov/health](http://longbeach.gov/health). Thank you to all who have been able and willing to volunteer and donate to local food banks and food drives to support fellow neighbors in need.

As always, I appreciate your continued engagement with me and my office. Please continue to share any questions, concerns, and ideas with me at (562)570-5555 or [district5@longbeach.gov](mailto:district5@longbeach.gov). 🐾



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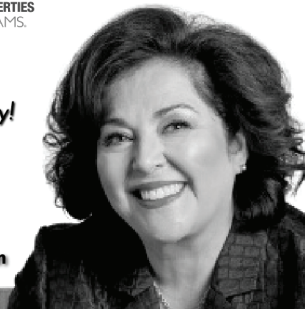
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All images by Tom Underhill







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## Long Beach Heritage invites you to celebrate the season with them!

The Bembridge House, a 119-year-old Queen Anne Victorian home under the care of Long Beach Heritage, is a City of Long Beach landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historic Resources.

The Bembridge House, built in 1906, is a magnificent and highly ornate example of late Victorian architecture. It is the single most important example of this style of architecture remaining in Long Beach today and is considered by many to be the most significant residential historic landmark structure in the city. Amazingly, the house is in almost pristine condition, and contains many of the original furnishings dating from the early 1900's.

Each year to celebrate the Spirit of Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanza the home, inside and out, is dressed up with traditional sparkle, splendor and beauty. Each room is decorated by volunteers according to a theme and for 2025 the grand lady will be decked out in an "Enchanted Toyland" theme.

### Daytime Tours:

**Tuesdays:** December 2, December 9, December 16 & December 23. All daytime tours are from 1:30-3:30 PM, no entrance after 3:00 PM.

### Adults-only Nighttime Tours:

**Mondays:** December 15 & December 22

**Wednesdays:** December 3 & December 10

All nighttime tours are from 6:00-8:00 PM, no entrance after 7:30.

Parking can be a challenge near the Bembridge House. Walking, biking or use of a Rideshare is encouraged. 935 N Park Circle, Long Beach, 90813.

Regular tours are available after the holidays if you miss out in December.

More information is available by visiting [thebembridgehouse.org](http://thebembridgehouse.org), calling 562-493-7019, or checking out their social media on Facebook and Instagram. 📱





## IN THE KNOW'LLS

### What's New? What's Happening?

by Blair Cohn, Executive Director BKBIA

November gets warm and fuzzy for me. Thanksgiving is all things tradition that I can hold onto and brings all the childhood memories back. More importantly in November, we will be celebrating my father's 93rd birthday. We count our lucky stars for his health and lust for life. We should all be so lucky.

So, neighbors, 'tis the season for my annual "Thankful for" list. I am thankful for:

- Alissa Cohn, a real tough cookie filled with compassion and generosity, who has supported 17 years of late nights and multiple events against an already booked schedule... and for making our two beautiful children.
- For the two beautiful children and heart-bursting joy they provide.
- My parents for repeating their "Seize the Day!" mantra.
- My family, near and far, for always being cheerleaders.
- Myra and Alana, the BKBIA staff, for making magic each day.
- Tom Underhill, Chief Superhero, for always coming through and coming to the rescue.
- Magerly, our incredible intern who immediately fit into the sisterhood of the BKBIA.
- BKBIA Board of Directors, for steering the ship to the Promised Land.
- BK Community Foundation Board of Directors for unbridled enthusiasm.
- All the business owners, for their hearts, souls, blood, sweat, and tears.
- Skinner Family, for always being the ultimate champions.
- Clarks, Swanks, Sullivans, Odas, Fasnachts, Porters,

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 A photograph of the storefront of Wille's Tin Shop Distillery. The sign above the door reads "WILLE'S TIN SHOP" in large, bold letters, with "DISTILLERY" underneath. To the right of the door is a wooden fence.
 

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 A photograph of the outdoor patio of Roxanne's. The patio is covered with a large umbrella and has several tables set up with chairs. People are sitting at the tables, and there are palm trees in the background.
 

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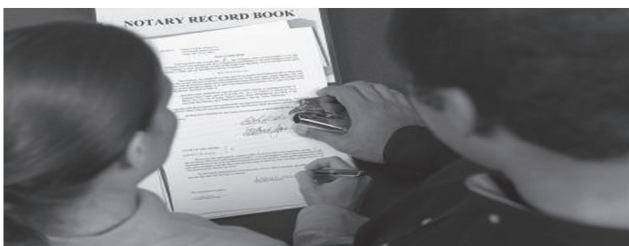
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- Stuart Galloway for that darn mustache, his stiff upper lip, and his cold Boddington.
- Dick Barnes for being the Bee Guy.
- Kelli Johnson for being Farmer Kelli, and for her farmer's market.
- The crossing guards at Longfellow Elementary.
- The Longfellow PTA.
- Phil Trani, for tenacity and tenure.
- Pat Murphy, the biggest heart with an open-door policy.
- Kelly Bray, our scout and eyes on the street, for loving the neighborhood so much.
- Coutin Family, for the great sense of humor and even greater annual pancake breakfast.
- Starr Bunch for her persistence.
- Luis and Brenda for being our go-to and always being at the ready.
- Robb Smith for dropping everything at a moment's notice and rushing right over.
- Bjoern Risse for his triple investment.
- Jeff Beasley for the hustle.
- f/8 Studios for being so darned creative!
- California Heights Neighborhood Association for carrying the torch.
- Los Cerritos Neighborhood Association for furthering the entertainment.
- The Watt Family, incredible ongoing kindness, generosity, and hospitality.
- 7:30am every Saturday morning and for those who show up.
- 213 sessions with the Literary Society.
- The level of joy at our parking lot concerts.
- The Blair Tea, the O'Marley, and the Bixby Burrito.
- Megan Kerr, for living and breathing it every day.
- Duke Givens, for answering his calling and making a difference.
- Pixie Toys, the bastion for good and kindness.
- George's 50s Diner for nostalgic sweetness.
- Ernie Henson for "spilling the wine" into thirsty glasses.
- Team Fasnacht for incredible generosity and hospitality.
- All the incredible donors and sponsors!
- Jane Nadeau, for setting the example, and her sly smile.
- DRIVER for carting everyone around at events.
- A Dream Come True Tea & Party Room for incredible hospitality.
- CSI Patrol Service, Dennis Cook and his team, for loving and protecting the neighborhood.



- Cal Heights Clean Streets, Los Cerritos/Bixby Knolls Clean Team, Ridgewood Heights Clean Team, and Bixby Highlands Clean Team for making a world of difference for our small hamlet.
- "Pizza Jason" Van Fleet for his zest.
- Holly and Rachel, our bartenders with the most flair.
- All the Solid Gold Dancers at our parking lot concerts.
- KUBO, African American Cultural Center of Long Beach, and Semillitas for adding flavor to the neighborhood cultural crock pot.
- Our legacy businesses for being there and enduring the ups and downs.
- The Bixby Knolls National Park, Donut Rock, and Finger Pointe.
- Fei Family, for being great Park Rangers.
- Gary Hamrick, for the cool, calm guidance.
- Bob Gill, for passionate leadership and enthusiasm.
- Mariah Cool for carrying the tradition of the 4th of July un-parade.
- The many, many artists, performers, poets, and DJs that have enriched the district.
- Melvin & team, for always working overtime for us.
- For the beauty you'll find on Cedar, Chestnut, La Dera, Myrtle, Andrews, Devon Pl., Cameron, Olive, 35th and 37th.
- Los Cerritos Park, Rancho Los Cerritos, Helen Borgers Theatre, Historical Society of Long Beach, Gibbs Studios.
- The magic intersection of Del Mar & Del Mar.
- Yitzi, Yanki, and tradition.
- Rabbi Newman and his congregation.
- Rabbi Perelmutter for his kindness.
- Bixby Knolls Vampire Crew, because the night.
- DJ Dave, DJ Dennis, and Beachwood Brewing for keeping the music playing.
- Julia Huang for raising the bar across the board.
- For anyone and anything I left off this list, I'll make it up to you with a beer, ramen, gumbo, or coffee.

In the meantime, here is your reminder: **SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY! NOVEMBER 29.** Plan to spend money in the district and supporting as many of **YOUR** local businesses as possible!

I hope you all have a wonderful Thanksgiving. The BKBIA is truly thankful for all of you and your ongoing participation and support. And don't forget to invite us over for leftovers.

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