



THE HEIGHTS

NEWS FROM THE CALIFORNIA HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

September/October 2026 | Vol.32, Issue 2

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

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California Heights Comes Together for 3rd Annual Centennial Block Party

by Eniko Bolivar-Murphy

Our 3rd Annual Centennial Block Party, which took place on Saturday, September 19th, was our biggest and most successful celebration yet. It brought together neighbors for an unforgettable afternoon in the heart of California Heights. This annual celebration recognizes the homes that define California Heights and the people who make this neighborhood such a special place to live.

A heartfelt thank you goes to our event sponsors, whose support helped make the day possible: Fifth District Councilwoman Megan Kerr, Port of Long Beach, Tara Riggi Properties, and the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association. Their partnership reflects a shared commitment to building a stronger, more connected community. We're also grateful to the many businesses, both local and beyond, that generously donated raffle prizes. Your contributions added excitement to the day and helped make the event such a success.

A very special thank you goes to the Kelly Fitzgerald Trio for providing the soundtrack to our celebration. Their talent, energy, and positivity created the perfect atmosphere and made the afternoon even more memorable.

Most importantly, thank you to every resident, volunteer, sponsor, donor, and guest who joined us. Events like this remind us of what makes California Heights extraordinary: neighbors who care about one another and come together to celebrate community. Thank you for helping make our 3rd Annual Centennial Block Party an incredible success. 🌟



Councilwoman Megan Kerr and the CHNA Board at the 3rd Annual Centennial Block Party.

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President's Message

Dear Neighbors,

As we head into fall, I want to take a moment to thank everyone who helped make September such a memorable month for California Heights.

Our annual Block Party brought neighbors together for an incredible day of live music, local food, kids' activities, raffles, classic cars, and, most importantly, community! Events like this take months of planning and countless volunteer hours, and I am so grateful to our board members, volunteers, sponsors, local businesses, nonprofit partners, and everyone who came out to celebrate with us.

I especially want to recognize our incredible Vice President, Eniko Bolivar-Murphy, who leads the planning of our Block Party and takes on an enormous amount behind the scenes to make it all happen. From coordinating countless details to keeping all the moving pieces together, Eniko pours so much time, energy, and heart into this event and into CHNA throughout the year. Quite simply, we could not do it without her. Eniko, thank you for everything you do for our organization and our neighborhood!

We also wrapped up another successful Long Beach Gives campaign. Thank you to everyone who donated, shared our posts, and supported CHNA. Your contributions directly help us continue our work throughout the year, from neighborhood events and beautification projects to advocating for the preservation and protection of our historic district. That advocacy remains at the heart of our mission: Educating the present, preserving the past.

And we're not slowing down just yet!

Next up is one of my favorite California Heights traditions: our annual California Heights Tree Lighting! There is something special about seeing neighbors gather together during the holidays, and we're already looking forward to another festive evening with our community. Keep an eye on our website, social media, and upcoming communications for all the details.

As always, thank you for showing up, volunteering, donating, and caring about California Heights. Our neighborhood is special because of the people who call it home, and I am so incredibly grateful to be part of it!

Sincerely,

Tara Riggi

Interested in volunteering? We are looking for:

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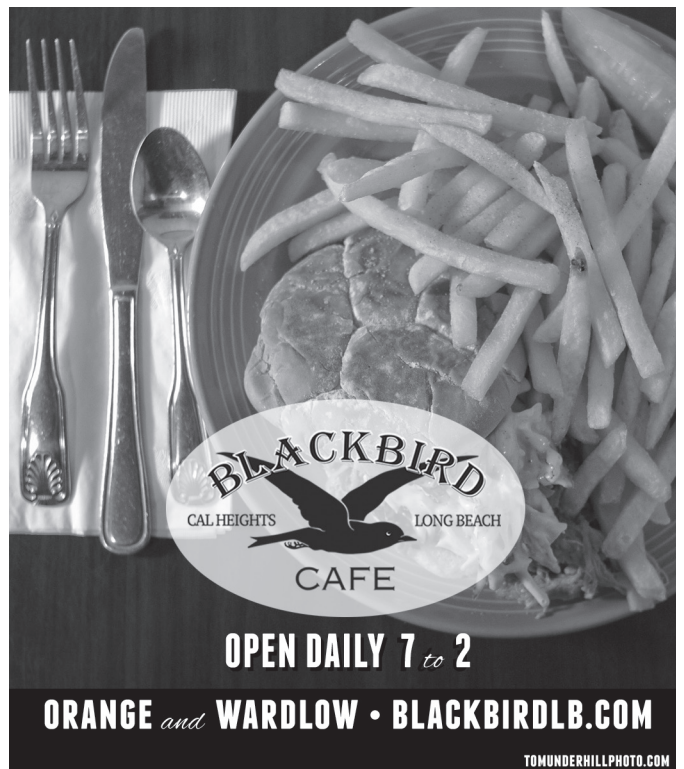
If you are looking to help the neighborhood, reach out at info@calheights.org!

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California Heights Resident Profile — Q&A with Kelli Johnson

by Tom Underhill

How long have you lived in Long Beach?

Most of my 65 years, with stints in Utah, Colorado and OC.

What are your favorite places?

Outside of the neighborhood, I love London and the English Countryside. Paris of course, which is one magical walking city. I also recently discovered the summer version of the Eastern Sierras, I had only been for the ski season.

What are your favorite local events?

I love events that bring together community: concerts in the park, First Fridays, 4th of July neighborhood festivities, and, of course, the Cal Heights Home Tour!

How do you spend your free time?

All things cooking and crafty! Reading cookbooks for inspiration. Lately, I added pottery (or clay therapy as I call it) to the maker roster. I always have a knitting project.

What are your favorite things in Cal Heights/Bixby Knolls?

Walking around the neighborhood, visiting the Rancho, hanging out at Los Cerritos Park. I love to walk up to Steelhead for a cappuccino and then down to Nonna or the shops.

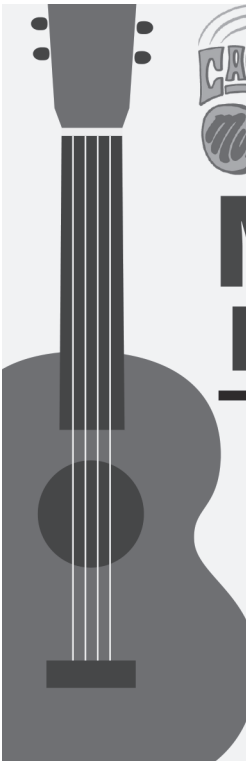
What are the things you love?

I love my people, near and far. Family and chosen family, of course. I love a field trip! I love a specialty grocery store, an estate sale, or a public garden. A perfect field trip could be the Arboretum and dumplings in Alhambra or the best sandwich shop in Whittier and their Antique Mall that goes on forever.

What are you most proud of?

Work-wise, I am very proud of the community farm at Spring Street and Long Beach Boulevard. The project really changed my life and the lives of so many young people. We used the farm as a vehicle for a jobs training program. Every cohort built something or grew something and then we made food. It was incredible to see the interns come in eating Cheetos and leave snacking on sun gold tomatoes they grew themselves. Also that incredible sense of accomplishment from creating an interactive community space.

It was a Zen garden for folks with family members getting treatment at Memorial. The chicken yard was a giant playpen for toddlers during Friday pop-up lunches, and the farm was a source of specialty produce for many chefs and households. We had many eagle scout projects and community tree planting days. We need community farms in every neighborhood! 🌱



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From the 5th District

Councilwoman Megan Kerr

Hello Cal Heights Neighbors,



It was great to see the neighborhood reconnect for the 3rd Annual Cal Heights Centennial Block Party! My office and I were happy to help sponsor this annual community event as the Centennial Presenting Sponsor and I am grateful for the hard work of the Cal Heights Neighborhood Association for making it all possible.

As September brings the end of the summer, it also brings the end of the City's annual budget development season. The Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) Budget was adopted on September 8th. As you may be aware, the FY27 Budget reflects our current financial challenges as the city worked to close its deficit caused by rising costs, loss of revenue, and federal grant funding. The adopted budget is balanced and reflects months of difficult conversations, thoughtful decisions, and input from residents across Long Beach. While we could not fund every program or service, I'm proud that we were able to protect and restore investments that residents rely on. That includes preserving neighborhood library hours, restoring Quality of Life Police Officers, and funding summer block parties and neighborhood activations that help neighbors connect and build community (like we saw earlier this month). This was a difficult budget year with real tradeoffs, but the final budget is balanced, invests in core services, and puts money back into the City's reserves. I encourage you to learn more at longbeach.gov/budget.

Thank you to all who attended my recent community meeting at Wardlow Park. Our next meeting will be on Thursday, October 29th, at 6:00pm at the Expo Arts Center. Keep an eye out for more information, including topics and guest speakers, on our website: longbeach.gov/district5. There, you can also sign up for my weekly digital newsletter, to receive the latest citywide and Fifth District updates right to your inbox.

As always, I appreciate your continued engagement. Please continue to share questions, concerns, and ideas by calling 562-570-5555 or emailing district5@longbeach.gov.

Sincerely,

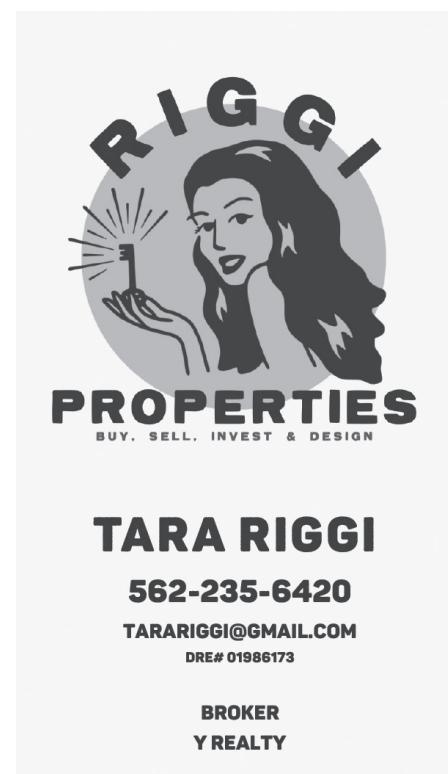
Councilwoman Megan Kerr



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- Thursdays: 12:00pm–7:00pm
- Fridays: 10:00am–5:00pm
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Cal Heights in Pictures

All images by Tom Underhill



1. Cal Heights resident Kelli Johnson, featured in our resident profile on page 4.
2. Cowboys (and girl) at the Black Cowboys: More Than A Myth exhibition located within the African American Cultural Center of Long Beach, which is located inside the EXPO Arts Center. The exhibition runs through October 24th.
3. Historic California Heights home along Cerritos Avenue.

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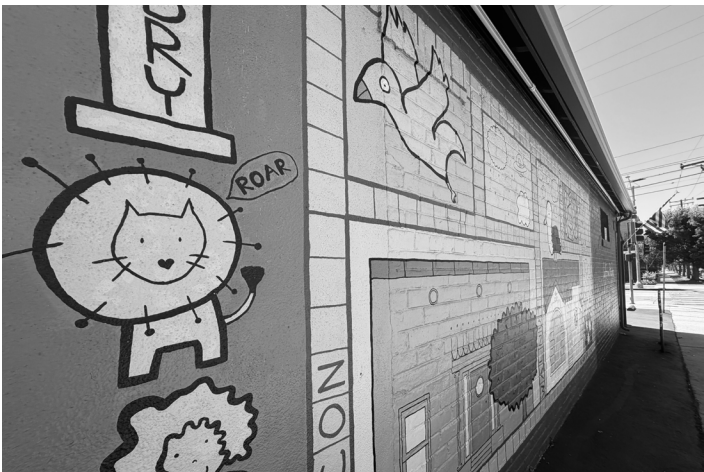
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4. Volunteers from the Cal Heights Clean Streets Team. Interested in keeping Cal Heights clean? Volunteer with the Clean Streets Team; they meet at 8:00am on Saturdays at the corner of Lime & Wardlow.
5. Close-up detail of the Cal Heights mural by Emily Kiwa Tanaka. The mural is located on the California Heights Market building, at the corner of Orange Avenue and Bixby Road.
6. The Kelly Fitzgerald Trio performing at the 3rd Annual Centennial Block Party.
7. Mannequin sporting gear from the 1984 Olympics. This and other memorabilia from the 1932 and 1984 Olympics can be viewed at the Historical Society of Long Beach's Olympics at the Golden Shore exhibition.
8. The Western Standard Time Ska Orchestra performing at Concerts in the Park(ing lot) on August 10th.
9. Bicyclists attend the Kidical Mass bike ride in Bixby Knolls on August 16, 2026. Visit bixbyknollsinfo.com/events/kidical-mass for upcoming dates.

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Snow, Santa, and Community Magic Return for the 4th Annual Cal Heights Tree Lighting

by Michael & Marni Farmer

The holidays are about to get a little more magical in Long Beach! The California Heights Neighborhood Association invites the community to celebrate the 4th Annual Cal Heights Tree Lighting on Thursday, December 3, 2026, from 4:30 to 7:00pm at the corner of Orange Avenue and Bixby Road.

What began as a neighborhood celebration has quickly become one of the area's most anticipated holiday traditions, with nearly 2,500 Cal Heights and Bixby Knolls neighbors and guests expected to attend this year's free community event.

Festivities begin at 4:30pm as community leaders kick off the evening before the spectacular Christmas tree comes to life. Then, keep your eyes open for a very special visitor from the North Pole!

Throughout the evening, guests can play in real snow behind California Heights Market, enjoy story time and photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus, and enjoy live entertainment.

Come hungry! Local favorites will serve up holiday-themed food and beverages. Guests can also explore holiday shopping, community booths, and more.

The celebration is made possible through generous support from Councilwoman Megan Kerr's office, Senator Lena Gonzalez, f/8 Studios, So Smitten Events, Trina Rufo Homes, CSI Private Security, the Bixby Knolls Community Foundation, Tempoe Entertainment DJs, Stephanie's Linens, California Heights Market, and additional community partners.

Admission is free, and guests are encouraged to bring a new, unwrapped toy for the holiday toy drive. Parking is limited, so neighbors are strongly encouraged to walk.

Come for the snow. Stay for Santa. Celebrate the season with the community that makes Cal Heights feel like home!



Celebrate 30 Years of Bringing the Dead Back to Life with the Historical Society of Long Beach

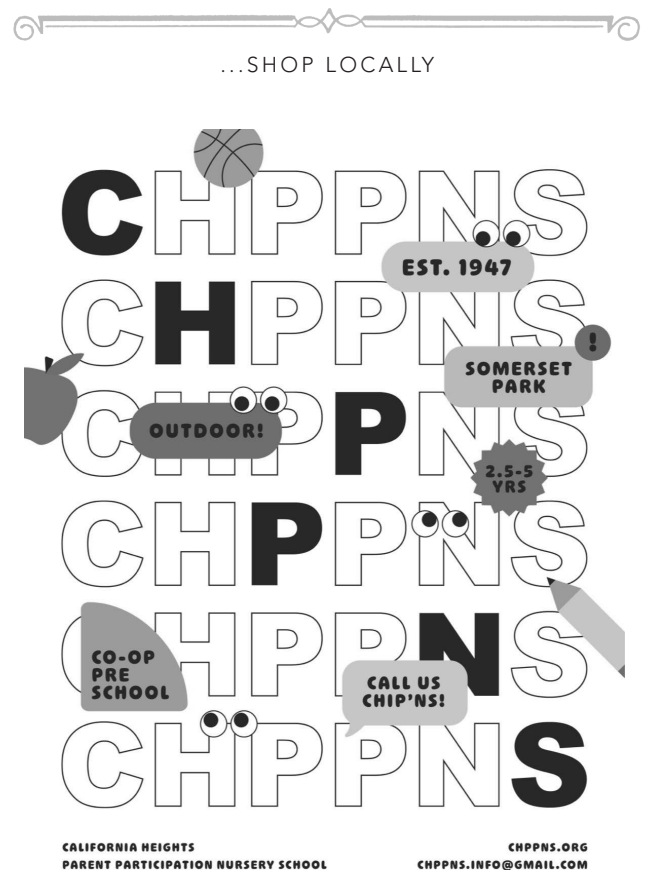
by Mary Dixon

When it began, Historical Society of Long Beach's Annual Historical Cemetery Tour was exactly that: a guided tour around Sunnyside and Municipal cemeteries, just a few blocks south of the Cal Heights neighborhood, hearing stories of some of the people who lived (and died) in Long Beach. A morning spent in a beautiful setting, learning local history that wasn't important enough to be in a book. But it became so much more.

The Historical Society of Long Beach (HSLB) is once again bringing the dead back to life for our 30th Annual Historical Cemetery Tour. This milestone is even more special because it will fall on Halloween this year. In addition to graveside performances by actors in period costumes, there will be presentations by local historians, cultural displays such as a Dia de los Muertos ofrenda, and authors signing books about Long Beach. Visitors can locate a long-lost ancestor through Find a Grave, speak with other community organizations, or simply take in the beauty of two of the City's oldest cemeteries. You are encouraged to bring a picnic to enjoy at the provided rest area or at a respectful distance from the attractions (be aware: Parks and Recreation rules apply to everyone).

This year's event is on October 31st from 9:00am to 3:00pm, so bring your Halloween spirit to 1095 & 1151 E. Willow Street for one of Long Beach's most unique experiences. Arrive by noon if you want to enjoy everything.

Pre-sale tickets are available at hslb.org for \$30 (\$25 for HSLB members). Prices will go up on October 26th, so buy now for the best value. Parking inside the gates is limited, for sedans or compact vehicles only; trucks and SUVs will be able to park outside the cemeteries. Please consider bicycling, rideshare, carpooling, or public transportation. If you have any questions, email Mary Dixon, the HSLB Outreach Coordinator, at outreach@hslb.org or call (562) 424-2220.



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IN THE KNOW'LLS

What's New? What's Happening?

by Blair Cohn, Executive Director BKBIA

"When witches go riding, and black cats are seen, the moon laughs and whispers, 'tis near Halloween."

— Unknown

Hey, neighbors:

Before I talk about the beautiful orange month of October, I want to share a quick anecdote of how grateful I am for many of the ongoing experiences I have in our neighborhood. The anticipation just prior to our Knights of the Round (Turn)Table sessions and our parking lot concerts just before the bands start, and every single Saturday morning with the Strollers keeps me motivated and energized. Plus, the scene of the Kidical Mass riders getting a donut at the drive-thru window at Angel Food Donuts puts a smile on my face.

But back to October for a minute. I always get a familiar feeling like I did when I was in 3rd grade or so as the weather starts to change. I think it's how the sun looks in the afternoon and the sunsets come earlier. It's the anticipation of Halloween and the hours spent on costume decisions and watching monster movies. I have never outgrown it.

Bigger stuff: At the time of this writing, the Bixby Knolls Community Foundation has written checks totaling \$50,000 in direct business support for a variety of grants thanks to Senator Lena Gonzalez. We have issued our first grant cycle with over 80 business applying, including businesses in other districts across the city. And not only did we already issue the first \$50,000 in support, but we have also just launched the second grant cycle for more support. These grants go to facade improvements, security camera systems, events planned by the businesses, and reimbursement to businesses who had suffered any

vandalism. Once applications are approved, then we issue a check and the work is done. AND, the state grant funds are helping to add more security patrol hours in the district (Shout Out to CSI Patrol Service), more Clean Team hours (shout out to Tom Underhill and Care Closet LBC) and other district beautification projects.

New things: Coming soon are more businesses. Now, that's kind of a dull or incomplete news alert but I am not at liberty to say who or what just yet. But soon. How soon? Very soon.

Looking ahead, we want to remind all of you about Small Business Saturday, November 28th is one of the most important days of the year for your business district. We beg and plead with you to be out spending money and supporting YOUR local businesses. Then in December you can be jolly at our 3rd Annual SantaCon event.

So, if you like what you see, if you love your neighborhood, and if you want to see our hamlet continue to be attractive and thriving, please consider making a donation to the Bixby Knolls Community Foundation. We'll love you for it, and you'll feel good about contributing to the success of your own neighborhood.

Business Spotlight: Willmore Wine Bar, 3848 Atlantic. Stop in to visit Ernie Henson and you will get firsthand Ernie's years of expertise with all things wine. Ernie will walk you through a tasting, make recommendations, offer you snacks, provide some music, and tell you about the upcoming road trips for all Willmore's wine friends. And Ernie is just an overall good guy.

And while you are at it and thinking ahead to Small Business Saturday, here are some examples of where you can throw some support for:

Trani's
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Bundts on Melrose
Orozco's Auto Service
Bamboo Teri House
George's 50s Diner...and to all your favorite places.

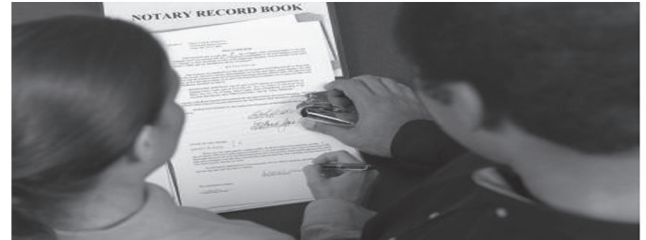
That's it for now. I'm heading to a meeting with my kids to brainstorm Halloween costumes and haunted house tours.

Craving white peaches but eating caramel apples,
Blair

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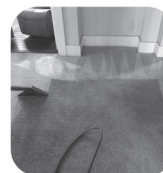


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First Friday of each Month: First Fridays in Bixby Knolls.
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Every Second and Fourth Saturday: Hazardous Waste Collection at EDCO, 9:00am to 2:00pm. longbeachrecycles.org



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Josh Lowenthal, 69th Assembly District
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Lena Gonzalez, State Senate 33rd District
562-256-7921

Gavin Newsom, Governor
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Nanette Diaz Barragán, 44th House District
310-831-1799

Alex Padilla, Senator
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Adam Schiff, Senator
schiff.senate.gov/contact

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Dana Branch Library
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Fire Department
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Garage Sale Hotline
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