THE HEIGHTS
NEWS FROM THE CALIFORNIA HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
November/December 2026 | Vol.32, Issue 3
Promoting Public Knowledge and Preservation of Historic and Architectural Resources in the California Heights Historic District

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Cal Heights Tree-Lighting Celebration Comes December 3rd

by Marion Saffery

For the first time, the California Heights Neighborhood Association will partner with our own f/8 Studios to host the fourth annual Cal Heights Tree-Lighting celebration, taking place Thursday, December 3rd, at the corner of Orange Avenue and Bixby Road.

The free experience will feature 10 tons of "real" snow, family-friendly activities, children's holiday choirs, special merchandise, more than a dozen local food vendors, and an appearance from Santa, who will mingle with event guests.

According to Michael Farmer (AKA "The Long Beach Santa"), who co-owns and operates f/8 Studios with his wife, Marni, the event has grown in popularity every year since its inception, more than doubling in attendance each time. "It told me people around here needed that kind of thing," he said. "They wanted that sense of community, so every year I like to add a little bit of magic."

The celebration runs from 4:30pm to 7:00pm, with the actual tree lighting at sundown. New surprises will be unveiled this year, including a most unusual 20-foot tree with a custom Cal Heights topper, which will be lit by Santa himself. "Santa makes the magic happen," Michael said.

Another first this year is a special-edition light-up ornament—available for sale only at the event—depicting the crowning glass globe of our own antique street lamps.

After all of that fun, attendees are invited to an afterparty at Beechwood Brewing & Distilling, one of the event's partners, where children will be welcome until 9:00pm.

"The tree lighting is our gift back to the community," Michael said. "Cal Heights is community-oriented, and that's why it's such a great team-up."

To see photos and video of past Cal Heights tree lightings, along with complete lists of this year's partnering businesses and organizations, vendors, and more, visit fatestudioslongbeach.com.

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President's Message

Dear Cal Heights Neighbors,

I hope you'll join us on Thursday, December 3rd for our annual Tree Lighting at f/8 Studios. It's one of my favorite nights in Cal Heights. I love seeing the kids play in the snow we bring in and neighbors catch up with friends they haven't seen in a while. Thank you to the volunteers and neighbors who help make this tradition possible!

I also want to thank Eniko Bolivar, who recently stepped down from the CHNA Board. I'm grateful for the time she gave to our neighborhood and for all the work she did behind the scenes. On behalf of the Board, thank you, Eniko, for serving our community.

Looking ahead, I'm excited that we finally have a date for our next CHNA Community Meeting. Please join us on Wednesday, January 27th, at 6:00pm at the Expo Arts Center on Atlantic Avenue. We'll share what CHNA is working on and hear what's on your mind as we head into the new year.

Wishing you and your loved ones a happy holiday season and a wonderful start to the new year!

Warmly,

Tara Riggi



SAVE THE DATE!

California Heights Home & Garden Tour

May 2, 2027

Homes & Gardens Needed!

Email info@calheights.org if interested in participating or volunteering

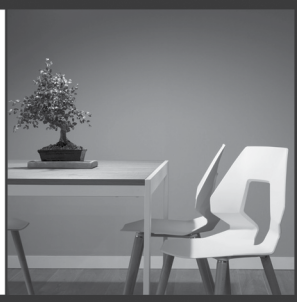
Interested in volunteering? We are looking for:

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- **Home Tour Coordinator**
- **Social Media Guru**

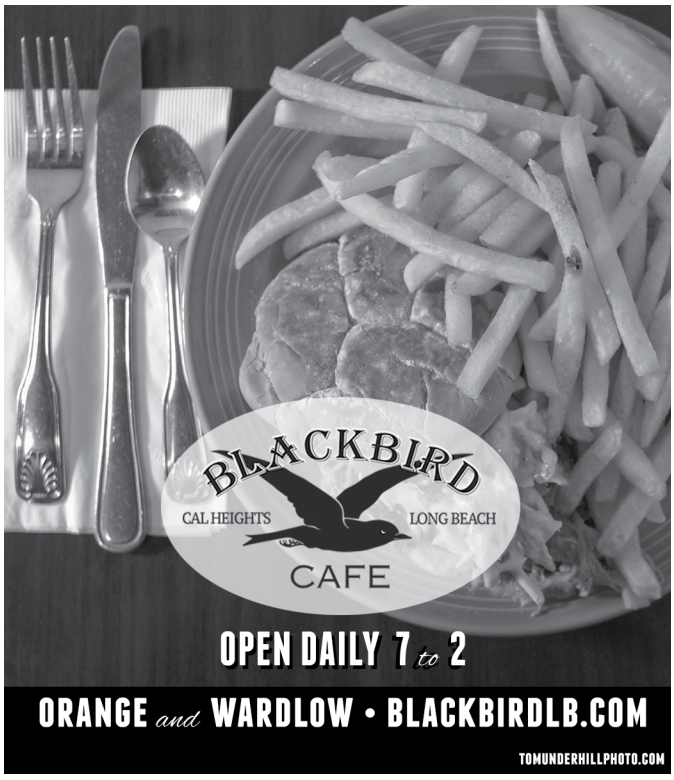
If you are looking to help the neighborhood, reach out at info@calheights.org!

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Holiday Happenings

by Kerrie Weaver

Heritage Holidays Tours at the Bembridge House

Each December, the Historic Bembridge House comes alive with twinkling lights, vintage décor, and the magic of the season. Join them for their annual Holiday Tour, where every room is beautifully dressed in holiday charm and cheer.

This year's theme is "Vintage Sparkle," and the joys of Christmas, Hanukkah, Winter Solstice, and Kwanzaa will be celebrated in displays throughout the property.

All tours include Chef Alan's famous cookies and light beverages. Space is limited, so reservations are highly suggested. You can make reservations for the tours at the Bembridge House website (www.thebembridgehouse.org). Tickets will be $15 per adult, children accompanied by an adult are free.

You'll be amazed by all the delightful creativity shown by the volunteer decorator teams and individuals! You can't help but marvel and enjoy the beauty of the Bembridge House during Heritage Holidays!!

2026 Heritage Holidays tour dates:

- Daytime tours are from 1:30pm to 3:00pm on December 1st, December 8th, and December 13th
- Nighttime tours are from 6:00pm to 7:30pm on December 11th and December 13th

Rancho Los Cerritos– World of Holidays

Rancho Los Cerritos invites you to celebrate the holiday season at World of Holidays, where stories of the past and present come to life through the lens of the holidays. The historic adobe and grounds will come alive with candlelit rooms, costumed docents, hands-on crafts, and informational booths all designed to showcase the evolving holiday customs of different eras and cultures from both historic and contemporary Long Beach.

Guests can explore the historic gardens, enjoy holiday music, and shop for one-of-a-kind holiday gifts at the museum shop. They hope you can join them for an enchanting evening of tradition, community, and seasonal cheer.

World of Holidays is on Friday, December 11th, from 4:00pm to 8:00pm and is free to attend, though donations are welcome to support the preservation and educational programs of Rancho Los Cerritos.

From the 5th District

by Councilwoman Megan Kerr

Hello Cal Heights Neighbors,



Happy Thanksgiving! As we approach the end of November and enter the end-of-year holiday season, I hope all of your celebrations are merry, bright, and meaningful. The winter holiday season is marked with a spirit of giving, whether that be to friends, loved ones, or the greater community. I am proud that we live in a city where people care for one another, where food drives, toy drives, and donation events abound every year. My office is supporting LBPD's Annual Toy Patrol Toy Drive with a donation box at our Wardlow Park Field Office (3457 Stanbridge Avenue). I encourage any who can contribute to stop by and donate from 1:00pm to 5:00pm on Mondays, Wednesdays, or Fridays.

As gift shopping begins, I also hope you'll consider participating in Small Business Saturday on November 28th! Tucked between Black Friday and Cyber Monday, Small Business Saturday celebrates the contributions of small businesses and promotes the benefits of shopping locally, including supporting neighbors, reducing environmental impacts, and increasing investment into our own communities. We're lucky to have a plethora of small businesses across the Fifth District, particularly here in the Cal Heights/Bixby Knolls area. I encourage you to show them your support and help them thrive this holiday season.

I invite everyone to the citywide Christmas Tree Lighting at the Terrace Theater Plaza on Monday, December 7th, in addition to the local Cal Heights Tree Lighting on Thursday, December 3rd! These local traditions continue to grow year after year and add to what makes Long Beach special. I'm grateful to the hosts, sponsors, and community members who make these community-building events possible!

Lastly, the City declared a State of Emergency in preparation for the upcoming El Niño storm season. Prepare for impacts of heavy rain, and stay informed of timely updates by subscribing to my office's digital newsletter at longbeach.gov/district5.

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

Happy Holidays,
Councilwoman Megan Kerr

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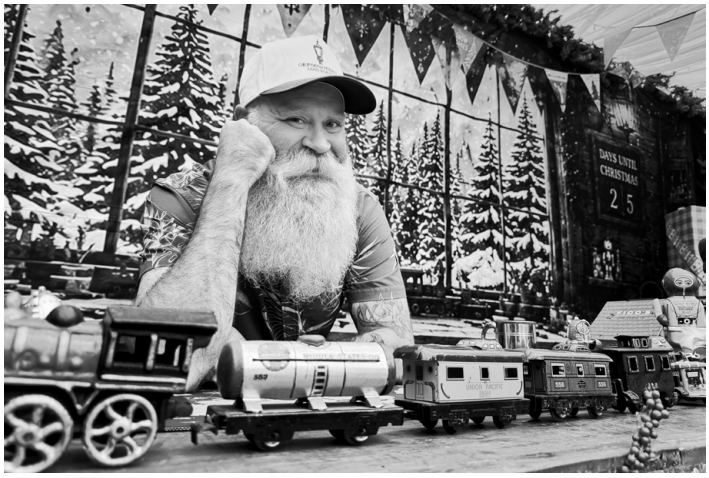
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Cal Heights in Pictures

All images by Tom Underhill







1. Michael Farmer of f/8 Studios prepping the shop for the holidays and the Cal Heights Tree-Lighting celebration. The celebration will be held on Thursday, December 3rd starting at 4:30pm.

2. Catherine Tolentino outside the future Gemmae Bakery located at the former Fire Station No. 9 at 3917 Long Beach Boulevard.

3. Speaking of fire stations, Councilwoman Megan Kerr and Fire Chief Dennis Buchanan at the grand opening of the new Fire Station No. 9 on October 20th.

SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES







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 Avenue and Wardlow Road.

5. Actors Amanda Karr and Charlie Rodriguez at the 30th Annual Historical Cemetery Tour held on Halloween.

6. Catrinas at an ofrenda during the most recent Bixby Knolls First Fridays, celebrating Día de los Muertos.

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- Thursdays: 12:00pm–7:00pm
- Fridays: 10:00am–5:00pm
- Saturdays: 10:00am–5:00pm

Weekly Programs:
- Thursdays: Teen Program @ 2:30pm
- Saturdays: Family Storytime @ 10:30am

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- Other Events

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California Heights Neighborhood Association Invites Neighbors to January Community Meeting

by TJ Bard

The California Heights Neighborhood Association invites all residents and neighbors to join us for a community meeting on Wednesday, January 27th, at 6:00pm at the Expo Arts Center, located at 4321 Atlantic Avenue.

As we begin a new year, this gathering provides an opportunity for neighbors to come together, stay informed, and take part in meaningful conversations about the issues that matter most to our community. The meeting will focus on local matters impacting the California Heights, along with updates from the CHNA Board on ongoing initiatives, neighborhood improvement efforts, and upcoming community events.

From preserving the historic character of our neighborhood to supporting community engagement and addressing local concerns, CHNA remains committed to protecting and enhancing the qualities that make California Heights such a special place to call home. The meeting will also provide an opportunity for residents to hear directly from Board members about the Association's priorities and ongoing efforts, ask questions, share ideas, and learn more about how they can get involved. Open communication and participation are essential to ensuring that CHNA's efforts continue to reflect the needs and interests of the neighborhood.

Whether you've called California Heights home for decades or recently joined our neighborhood, your voice and participation are important to the continued success of our community. These community meetings offer a valuable opportunity to connect with fellow neighbors, better understand the issues affecting our neighborhood, and contribute to the conversations that help guide its future. Our neighborhood thrives because of the people who care about it.

We encourage everyone to attend and be part of the conversations helping shape the future of California Heights.

Mark your calendars for Wednesday, January 27th, at 6:00pm at the Expo Arts Center. We look forward to seeing you there!

CHNA Takes Formal Action on Wardlow/ Cerritos Development

by Tara Riggi

CHNA has taken formal action regarding the proposed 73-unit, 68-foot-tall development at Wardlow Road and Cerritos Avenue. CHNA retained Channel Law Group, LLP, and historic preservation expert Debi Howell-Ardila to independently review the City's Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). On October 2, 2026, our legal counsel submitted a comprehensive response identifying significant concerns about the project's potential impacts on our neighborhood.

A portion of the proposed development extends into the legally designated California Heights Historic District. The project would require rezoning residential property within the district, merging parcels, and eliminating part of an existing public alley. Beyond this individual project, these decisions could set a precedent for how historic preservation protections are interpreted and applied throughout Long Beach.

Our independent review raised several important issues:

- Historic Preservation: Compatibility of a five-story building with the surrounding historic neighborhood.
- Construction Impacts: Potential damage to neighboring homes from approximately 24 feet of excavation and nearly 27,000 cubic yards of soil removal.
- Traffic and Access: Vehicle circulation and emergency access concerns involving 86 underground parking spaces accessed through a narrow alley.
- Environmental Analysis: Inconsistent project information, insufficient evaluation of shading and solar impacts, and concerns about proposed mitigation measures.

Based on these findings, CHNA has formally requested that the City revise and recirculate the Draft EIR for additional public review. We recognize the need for affordable housing, but believe responsible development and historic preservation should go hand in hand.

CHNA has invested approximately $20,000 in legal representation and independent professional consulting services to ensure our neighborhood's concerns receive a thorough review. As a volunteer-led nonprofit, we rely on community support to continue this important advocacy. Please consider donating at CHNA.org.

You can read our complete October 2nd legal response and independent historic preservation review on our Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/calheights. Thank you for helping preserve the character and history of California Heights Historic District.

...SHOP LOCALLY





IN THE KNOW'LLS
What's New? What's Happening?
by Blair Cohn, Executive Director BKBIA

Hey neighbors,
November is the time I usually write a big "thank you" list to all of those in our universe who contribute greatly to the vitality and well, fun, of our hamlet. I wanted to do something a little different this year and share other very special things that I am thankful for and grateful for. There are so many people to thank and so many subtle things that I spent a few weeks making a mental list to share before the Thanksgiving holiday. But I do want to start with shout-outs for some exceptional folks:



- Alissa Cohn, one tough cookie with an extra-large heart ready to help a friend or stranger at any moment. Her critical eye adds the special frosting to all things we bake in Bixby Knolls. She is the incredible support behind the scenes. And her sense of adventure keeps us always looking forward to new discoveries.
- My two beautiful children. Everything else was just the opening act before they arrived.
- My 94-year-old father who taught us what Carpe Diem meant and continues this creed with his desire to read and learn everything there is in the world.
- Myra and Alana, the BKBIA's dynamic duo, who are creative powerhouses that sweat all the details and take our organizations to higher levels (all while with lots of laughs, music, and coffee.)
- Tom Underhill, who takes ownership of the streets as if he paved them himself. He approaches all tasks with enthusiasm and a smile on his face.
- Kelly Bray, the devoted scout whose ears and eyes are open overtime to serve and protect the neighborhood.
- To Dodie, our newest team member, who put the ducks back in a row and cleared the haze for us so we can see the horizon more clearly.
- To Magerly and her work ethic and incredible design skills.
- To Joel, intern extraordinaire, and his easy way greasing the wheels.
- Our board(s) of directors, donors, givers, and doers in the neighborhood.

And as I mentioned, I have meditated on all the things that are the nearest and dearest:

- The place where my family lives and how cozy it can be (even if I must step on Legos in the middle of the night).
- A big vat of buttery and salty mashed potatoes.
- Dole Whip, from the special location at the O.C. Fair.
- USC football season.
- Holding hands with the kids.
- My dad's house with all the ghosts and echoes of laughter.
- For the VCR at my dad's house and all those tapes of Thanksgivings past so we can watch and remember all my mom's best moments.
- My music collection.
- 7:30am each Saturday morning when the BK Strollers set sail on their route.
- Knights of the Round (Turn)Table sessions each month, and the preparation that goes into it.

- First Fridays and talking to neighbors and friends along the street.
- Walks on Myrtle Avenue.
- Donut Rock and the Bixby Bear Claws.
- The reverence of the Bixby Knolls National Park.
- The long steady parade of Kidical Mass bike riders along Pacific Avenue.
- The Cool Family's special art gallery tour.
- The fresh bread at Nonna Mercato first thing in the morning.
- The Blair Tea at Bixby Joe.
- The mini trolley at The Merchant.
- Santacon.
- The cultural mix of the neighborhood and the architectural mix, too.
- The Fasnachts' Pool Club.
- Puddle jumping on Burlinghall, Andrews, and Tehachapi on rainy days.
- The Allery during First Fridays.
- St. Joseph, Michigan, where our past and present collide in a diner breakfast and fresh ice cream along the bluff.
- Gluten free pizza from Thunderbolt.
- The goth scenesters at Eclipsed Emporium on First Fridays.
- Run Club at Longfellow Elementary.
- The friendly staff at See's Candies.
- Reggae music on Sundays, especially at Kidical Mass.
- Those people with genuine kind hearts, which is the most punk rock thing around these days.
- Michael Kirk and his Trojan heart.
- Sitting at the counter at Bake & Broil.
- Bringing home pumpkin pie from Polly's to surprise the family.
- The multiple "Good Morning" greetings when you walk into F&M Bank.
- Ray from Deluxe Parlor for giving Hendrix his first ever haircut.
- My friends from the Terminal Islanders Association who welcomed me in and taught me about their history and their resilience.
- Our annual pass to Knott's Berry Farm and the ability to turn off my cluttered mind and just enjoy the scenery.
- Apples and peanut butter.
- Pulling into a new port while on a cruise.
- Hallmark movies, Halloween movies, and costume planning.

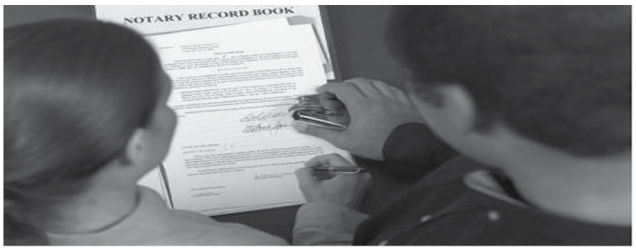
I am thankful for this neighborhood and for all of you. I hope you have a very Happy Thanksgiving.

Blair

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Saturdays: Clean Streets Litter Abatement - 8:00am to 9:00am Meet at the corner of Lime & Wardlow for neighborhood and freeway cleanup.

First Friday of each Month: First Fridays in Bixby Knolls. firstfridayslongbeach.com

Every Second and Fourth Saturday: Hazardous Waste Collection at EDCO, 9:00am to 2:00pm. longbeachrecycles.org



Thank you to all the volunteers who make Cal Heights the best in the west!



IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Megan Kerr, 5th District Council
562-570-5555 email: district5@longbeach.gov

Rex Richardson, Mayor
562-570-6801

Josh Lowenthal, 69th Assembly District
562-429-0470

Lena Gonzalez, State Senate 33rd District
562-256-7921

Gavin Newsom, Governor
916-445-2841

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

Alex Padilla, Senator
916-448-2787

Adam Schiff, Senator
schiff.senate.gov/contact

Animal Control
562-570-PETS (7387)

Airport Noise
562-570-2665 / 570-2600

Building Department
562-570-6651

Code Enforcement
Monday thru Friday: 562-570-2633
Saturday: 562-570-0000 www.lbcode.org

Community Watch North Division
562-570-9825 or 562-570-9827

Dana Branch Library
562-570-1042

Fire Department
562-570-2500

Garage Sale Hotline
562-570-YARD (9273)

Neighborhood Preservation Information
562-570-6194

Parkway Tree Trimming
562-570-2700

Police Department Dispatch
562-435-6711 or Emergency 911

Senior Check-In
562-570-7212

Special Garbage Pickup (2 free per year)
562-570-2876

Street Potholes
562-570-3259