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Those Shopping Carts! Grrr... Pg 5

Long Beach BUSINESS JOURNAL

October 24-November 6, 2006

CITY HALL ROUNDUP

Charter Amendment Committee Eyes April 2007 Election

By JENNIFER WANG
Staff Writer

Charter reform is back, and, according to Mayor Bob Foster, discussions will be better than ever.

"There will be not only... testimony from other individuals, but also experts as well as groups or individuals [who] have put forth proposals for charter revision," Foster said of future Charter Amendment Committee meetings. "The goal here is to be very trans-

parent, very inclusive - there's a lot of work to be done in a very short time."

Earlier this year, the Long Beach City Council decided against placing any amendment measures on the ballot for the November statewide general election, but the committee - composed of the mayor and all nine councilmembers - recently began the deliberation process for the April 2007 election.

During an October 17 committee meeting, City Clerk Larry Herrera

presented recommendations from the 12-member 2004 Government Reform Task Force, as well as his findings from a Rand Corporation study on charter reform. "I'd like to ask this council to create a long-term vision for our local government," Herrera said, noting that reforms should reflect accountability while providing transparency and a framework for good government.

He proposed a series of meetings through the end of the year to address major topics of interest,

including measures to increase term limits for city leaders, strengthen the mayoral veto, create full-time council positions, change write-in election procedures, establish a compensation commission to set salaries for city officers and form a reapportionment commission to handle redistricting based on the decennial U.S. Census.

Getting community input on the front end is a priority, and Foster added that his intention was to establish a baseline of information

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Proposed Condo Fee Not Winning Many Converts

By CHAD GREENE
Managing Editor

The 1.5 percent condominium conversion fee the City of Long Beach has proposed as a funding mechanism for its affordable housing trust fund is, ironically, not winning many converts within the real estate and development community.

"Frankly, it's very unfriendly to business," Apartment Association, California Southern Cities President Geoff McIntosh says of the current proposal, which the Long Beach City Council voted last month to send back to staff for further study amid protests from affordable housing advocates that the fee should be set even higher.

"The Apartment Association's position, initially, was that we could survive a one percent fee; 1.5 percent felt like it was starting to push it a little bit. The latest proposal, which is five percent, would effectively stop condominium conversion in this city," says McIntosh, who is also the broker/co-owner of Main Street Realtors. "With the dramatic change that we've seen in the real estate market since this discussion started a

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Cambodia Town Proposal To Go Before City Council

By THYDA DUONG
Staff Writer

Long Beach is home to one of the largest populations of Cambodians residing outside of Cambodia, and due to the large concentration of ethnic businesses present in Central Long Beach, local leaders are proposing to formally designate

the Anaheim Street corridor between Junipero and Atlantic avenues as "Cambodia Town." The proposal will be on the agenda for tonight's (October 24) Long Beach City Council meeting.

Cambodia Town Inc. argues that the area would be a new landmark for the city, generating a new revenue base from tourism. "There are multiple

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Members of Cambodia Town Inc. have gathered nearly 4,000 signatures from the general public in support of the designation. Richer San, bottom left, says Cambodia Town would result in economic development and job creation without costing the city any money. Next to San are, from left, Sweetly Chap, Kundy Kol and Peter Long. Other members standing in front of the United Cambodian Community Center on Anaheim Street are, from left, Sakphan Kearn, Danny Vong, Edward Tan, Sithea San, Krithny Horn, Bunsong Tay, Borann Duong and Richard Nhim. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

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Cambodia Town

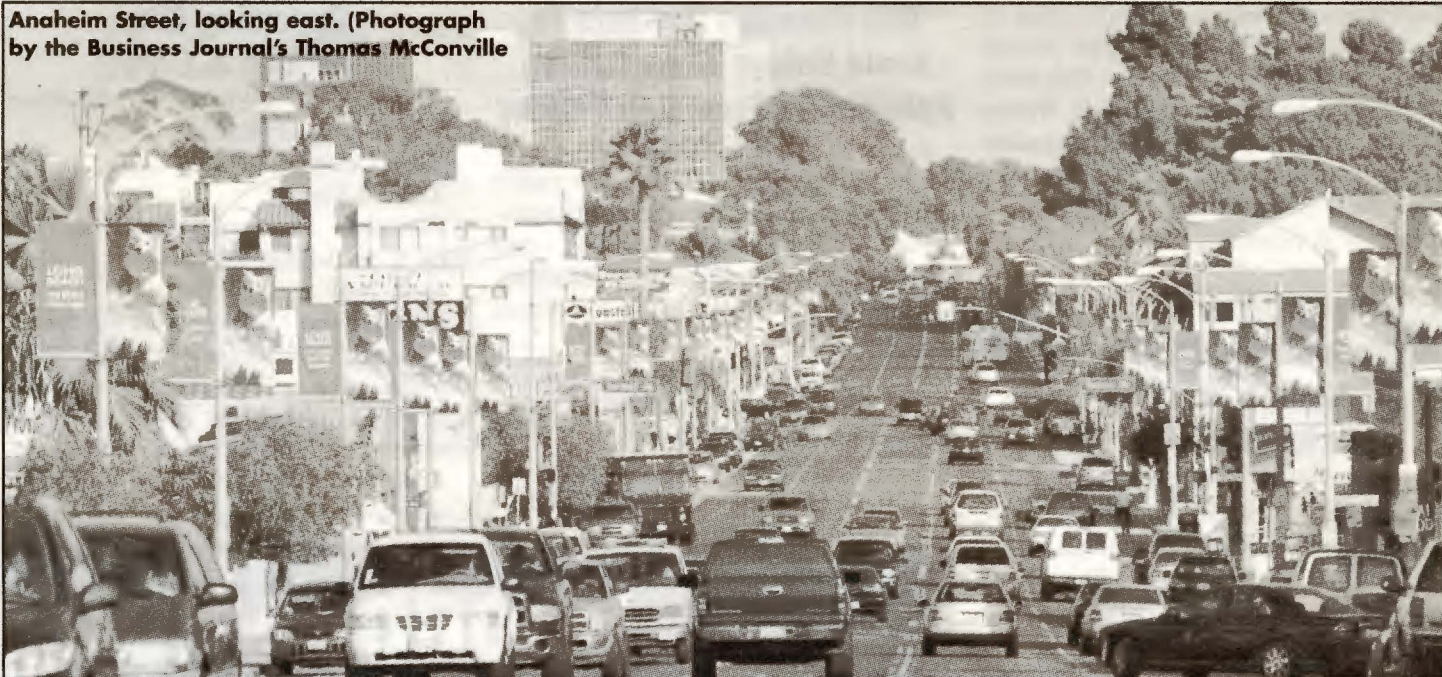
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cultural tourist destination spots throughout the State of California, but they are particularly very popular here in Southern California," says 6th District Councilmember Laura Richardson, a co-sponsor of the proposal. "We don't have one identified in [Long Beach], and it can benefit the city by attracting visitors from throughout the region and beyond the state."

Sithea San, chair of the Cambodia Town Inc. Board of Directors, points to the designation as an opportunity to boost the local economy. "The bottom line is economics," she says. "Chinatown, Little Saigon, Little India, Koreatown - they're all successful and business is booming. . . . Everyone who has a business in the designation zone will benefit."

Although the area is home to a diverse population, members of the organization say the proposal has received overwhelming support, and are quick to address concerns of potential conflict by maintaining that the label is a name-designation only. "Our team walked the streets for about a month collecting signatures from everybody, not just Cambodians," says Richer San, chairman of the Cambodia Town Inc. Advisory Council. "We have signatures from about 94 percent of businesses in that area, and we have a combined total of close to 4,000 signatures from the general public. So, we do believe we have very strong support to go ahead with the process."

Anaheim Street, looking east. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)



Sithea San agrees, adding, "It's not that we want to say, 'This is our territory and no one else can come and do anything.' It's not. The designation is going to be Cambodia Town, but Cambodia Town belongs to everyone in Long Beach."

The proposal also states that the designation will contribute to the goals of the Long Beach 2010 Strategic Plan to celebrate diversity and build a strong network of healthy neighborhoods. "We talk a lot about being a very diverse city, and this is an opportunity to celebrate and express a culture here in our community,"

Richardson says. "If you've ever had an opportunity to go to the [Cambodian New Year] parade the last two years, well over 10,000 people came out - not only local residents, but also people from up and down the state. So, I think this . . . will keep the community a vibrant force."

Also included in the proposal is the development of an architecturally unique and identifiable Cambodian Community and Cultural Center to serve as an anchor for the community, educating visitors about Cambodian culture and heritage. The proposed site of that development is the on

the vacant lot located at the corner of Anaheim Street and Walnut Avenue.

Members of Cambodia Town Inc. maintain that the designation wouldn't cost the city anything, as needed funds would be generated from local businesses and interested parties. "From the city's side, this is a great deal because we will be bringing in economic development and job creation to the community without costing the area any money," Richer San says.

(Editor's note: The Business Journal has been on record for more than two years supporting the formation of Cambodia Town.) ■

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