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# SUNDAY Press-Telegram

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## Welcome to Cambodia Town?

Leaders propose special designation for a stretch of Anaheim Street



Jeff Gritchen / Press-Telegram

**Sithea San** explains the idea of Cambodia Town to shop worker **Theary Lim** at the USA Market on Anaheim Street in Long Beach. Business and civic leaders are proposing designating the section of Anaheim Street between Atlantic Avenue and Junipero Avenue as Cambodia Town.

**By Mira Jang**  
Staff writer

LONG BEACH — For Vicky Tann, starting a business in an area known as Little Phnom Penh was an easy decision.

Two months ago, the 24-year-old Cambodian-American opened her Cambodian art gallery on Anaheim Street in the United Cambodian Community building.

"I wanted to be in the heart of our community," Tann said.

Cambodian business and civic leaders are hoping to encourage more people to do business in the area by creating a corridor officially named "Cambodia Town."

Their efforts trace back at least

five years, and they're hoping that the City Council this month will sanction the stretch of Anaheim Street between Atlantic Avenue and Junipero Avenue as Cambodia Town.

Councilwoman **Laura Richardson** of the 6th District, which includes most of the proposed area, plans to raise the matter with her colleagues, possibly as early as the Oct. 17 City Council meeting.

Council members **Bonnie**

Read P-T reporter **Greg Mellen's** blog about his Cambodia trip.

**Lowenthal, Suja Lowenthal, Rae Gabelich and Val Lerch** have expressed support.

At the upcoming meeting, the council will consider approving the project and possibly altering the boundaries.

"We want to designate an area where the largest concentration of Cambodian businesses are because that (a district) impacts other businesses in the area," **Richardson** said.

Community leaders initially proposed marking off an even larger portion of Anaheim Street, from Long Beach Boulevard to Temple Avenue, as Cambodia Town. But they figured the new proposal captured a denser Cambodian business



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community and would ease the political approval process.

The original proposal stalled when city officials asked the Cambodian community to talk to more business owners in the area to

PLEASE SEE **CAMBODIA / A10**

## Governor, Angelides square off in debate

**Politics:** Candidates' bout covers much of the mat but ultimately lacks punch.

**By Kate Folmar and Mike Zapler**  
Sacramento Bureau

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Treasurer **Phil Angelides** sparred over taxes and trust Saturday during their only meeting before the Nov. 7 election — but neither landed a direct hit during a debate devoid of defining moments.

Democrat **Angelides** trails by double digits in several polls and is scrounging for funds. Most analysts believed he needed desperately to make an impression on voters, many of whom only know the treasurer from Schwarzenegger ads.



Schwarzenegger

"This was no cataclysmic event," said **Tim Hodson**, executive director for the Center for California Studies at Cal State Sacramento. "Angelides didn't get what he needed. It was not a rare moment when a campaign can be turned around."

**Angelides** repeatedly invoked last year's partisan special election and asked whether Californians could trust a governor who has feigned centrism "for 60 days."

The governor's goal was to remain genial and avoid making any gaffes that **Angelides** could exploit. Republican **Schwarzenegger** continued to hammer home his campaign theme that **Angelides** is addicted to higher taxes.

"You have been so far for every single tax increase since you've been in office," **Schwarzenegger** said, rattling off every tax increase proposal **Angelides** has ever spoken of favorably, from sales taxes to higher taxes on farm equipment.

"My position is clear in this campaign: I'm going to cut taxes for people making under \$100,000," **Angelides** retorted. "I'm going to close corporate tax loopholes. I'm going to ask multi-millionaires" to help balance the budget.

**Schwarzenegger** ads alleging that **Angelides** wants to raise taxes further are "weapons of mass deception," the treasurer said. "When you speak like this, you sound just like Newt



Angelides

PLEASE SEE **DEBATE / A8**

# CAMBODIA: A sense of place

CONTINUED FROM A1

ensure this was a viable plan, said Richer San, an advisory council member to Cambodia Town Inc., the organizing force behind the proposal.

"There weren't any objections, but there were some concerns," Richardson said.

This time, San and supporters of the new plan are a step ahead. They have already met with almost all of the business owners in the proposed Cambodia Town and obtained about 160 signatures of support.

San said he and other volunteers planned to walk several blocks east of Junipero toward Redondo to gauge public support in the surrounding neighborhood, something that was suggested by Councilman Patrick O'Donnell. His 4th District includes a small portion of the proposed area.

"I do have questions about whether this is the best fit for Anaheim," O'Donnell said. "If there isn't buy-in, it's not going to be successful. I want to avoid a contentious battle."

Stretching about 20 blocks on both sides of Anaheim Street, the proposed Cambodia Town area comprises 70 percent Cambodian businesses, said San, whose full-time job is as a director of Golden Coast Bank. The bank, set to open late this year, would become the nation's first financial institution aimed at Cambodians.

Cambodia Town Inc.'s board is composed primarily of Cambodian immigrants in the business and civic sectors, but there are notable leaders from other groups.

Al Day is president of the Long Beach African American Chamber of Commerce. Evan Braude is an attorney and former Long Beach councilman. Leo Pandac is president of the Federation of the Pilipino American Association.

Board member Sandy Cajas, who is also president and CEO

of the Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, said the official creation of a Cambodia Town celebrates the city's racial diversity and helps the bottom line.

"It's all about inclusion. Being the most diverse city in the nation, everyone welcomes everything. We don't just look at ethnicity. We look at business as a whole, and it's a great opportunity for business," Cajas said.

## Idea's not new

Official ethnic towns are not a novelty. The city of Los Angeles is home to several, including Koreatown, Chinatown, Thai Town and Little Tokyo. Orange County has Little Saigon in Westminster and the Korean Business District in Garden Grove.

In Long Beach, city officials in 1992 issued a proclamation designating Santa Fe Avenue between 20th Street and Spring Street as Filipino Neighborhood. But the Filipino community didn't have the money to mark the site with signs, San said.

Although critics say such areas spur racial and ethnic tension, supporters laud them for creating a sense of place and ethnic pride for immigrant communities that are invisible to mainstream society.

"We went through some hard times, but we have a rich culture," Thomas Hong, 46, said.

A Cambodian immigrant, Hong has been running a dry cleaning business on Anaheim Street at Redondo Avenue for the past 16 years.

He said the first time his children, ages 11 and 17, asked him about his life in Cambodia was for a school assignment.

"Kids don't know their own culture, but it's important for young people to be proud," he said.

For the past two years, the community has sponsored a



Stephen Carr / Press-Telegram

**Vicky Tann, 24,** and her mother **Malicia Wann, 64,** of Ancient Khmer Art on Anaheim Street are in favor of designating a Cambodia Town in Long Beach. If the idea becomes a reality, organizers plan to put up signs welcoming tourists to the area.

Cambodian parade along Anaheim Street, showcasing the best of their heritage with active participation from the younger generation.

The formal designation of Cambodia Town is a natural next step toward crystallizing their vision of claiming their new homeland and sharing their culture with others, organizers say.

About 44,000 Cambodians live in Los Angeles County and most settle in Long Beach, according to a report prepared by Cambodia Town Inc. Many came to the United States as refugees after the extremist Communist group, the Khmer Rouge, took control in 1975.

Since then, Long Beach has become home to the largest population of Cambodians outside of Cambodia. Although the community is wrestling with high poverty rates, low employment rates and gang violence, it has also helped revitalize Anaheim Street with bustling economic activity and joined the colorful

ethnic tapestry of the city.

## Good for business?

Organizers predict that a Cambodia Town will attract new businesses and encourage existing ones to stay. Since it will be the first and only Cambodia Town in the country, they hope tourists from the region will make it a priority to visit.

The city is already spending millions for street improvements on Anaheim Street, and there's talk about creating a business improvement district and hiring security guards on bikes, akin to the ones in downtown Los Angeles.

There are plans to establish Latino and African American areas adjacent to the proposed Cambodia Town as part of a larger effort to create an international corridor, organizers say.

Rolando Orzco, 21, doesn't think that's a good idea. He works as a cashier at Panchito Carniceria on Anaheim Street just west of Junipero Street. He

said Latino business owners wouldn't feel comfortable if their stores were part of Cambodia Town.

"It's good the way it is now, just mixed," he said.

But Gillermina Damron, 42, who owns Vicky's Discoteca, a Latino music store on Anaheim Street, doesn't care what the area is called as long as the city improves the roads and puts more cops on the streets.

"I just want it to look more better and be safer. I've been robbed twice in two years," she said.

The crime and potholes didn't stop Tann from opening her ancient Khmer art store. She wants to build her business here and then expand it.

Although she was born and raised in the United States, Tann learned to speak Khmer from her immigrant mother and began visiting Cambodia in college.

"There are a lot of students who know that our parents strug-

gled and went through a lot. They should care for our culture and shouldn't lose it," she said.

Designating an area as Cambodia Town makes practical sense to Tann.

"If you go to L.A., you go to Chinatown because you know where it is. If we have a Cambodia Town, people can come to Long Beach and visit because they'll know where it is," she said.

Organizers plan to make sure visitors will know where to find Cambodia Town. They want to put up signs on Junipero Avenue and Atlantic Street welcoming tourists as they enter and thanking them for stopping by as they leave. They also want freeway signs on the Long Beach (710) and the San Diego (405) freeways directing traffic to Cambodia Town.

And they hope locals will drop by to see what they've been missing.

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