

BAYSIDE

BEAT

DOWNTOWN SANTA MONICA &
THIRD STREET PROMENADE

Signing On

The drive to create a new assessment district Downtown got off to a good start last month with nearly half of the property owners needed signing a petition to take the plan to a vote.

The equivalent of 20 percent of the property owners who would bankroll the plan – or half of the 40 percent needed – had already signed on before petitions were mailed to the majority of the 360 property owners on April 18, Bayside officials said.

With the signatures weighed according to the assessed value of a property, the drive was given an early boost by Macerich Company, which, as the owner of Santa Monica Place, represents 7 percent of the vote. The City, which represents 10 percent, agreed to sign on to the plan in March.

“Many, many of the Promenade property owners have signed on,” said Kathleen Rawson, executive director of the Bayside District. “There’s a lot of people talking to a lot of people right now. Lots of property owners are calling other property owners to get their support.”

Among those signing on, Rawson said, are owners of residential buildings and some office building owners.

Downtown’s largest residential landlord, JSM Capital, which owns residential buildings along 5th, 6th and 7th streets, backs the plan.

“What’s exciting is it’s an opportunity to re-energize and reposition the Bayside District for the next 20 years,” said Allen Freeman, the company’s chief operating officer.

“It provides a stream of revenue for Downtown that makes it more livable for residents, workers and visitors. It also gives property owners a better opportunity to oversee how their money is spent.”

If the necessary signatures are gathered, the Downtown property owners would then vote on a plan that would change the way the entire Downtown is managed for the first time since the wildly successful Third Street Promenade was launched two decades ago.

The plan – which was approved by the City Council – would revamp the Bayside Board and the way it is chosen and pump an additional \$3.6 million in new assessments to boost maintenance, enhance marketing efforts and create an “ambassador program” to inform visitors and help keep the streets safe.

“It’s an investment, and an insurance policy,” Rawson said. “It’s not charity. The property owners realize they’re getting something for it and that the purchasing power of the collective is much greater than any individual.”

Under the proposed plan, assessments would be based on the property’s size, type of use and location in an expanded district divided into three zones – one comprised by the Promenade, another along 2nd and 4th streets and Ocean Avenue and a third between 5th and 7th streets.

A property on the Promenade would pay the most at 76¢ a square foot, properties on neighboring 2nd and 4th streets and Ocean Avenue would pay 34¢, while those on 5th to 7th streets would pay 19¢.

A building on the Promenade with retail and office use, for example, might pay \$16,500 a year, while a large office building could pay as much as \$45,000, Bayside consultants said. While a hotel might pay \$20,000, a non-profit could pay as little as \$1,500 per year.

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Chills, Thrills Downtown



It's been a thrilling, and sometimes chilling, ride for Downtown Santa Monica in the seven years since the *Bayside Beat* published its first issue in May 2001.

The early years had more of a chill, while the later years have been more of a thrill.

Little could anyone anticipate the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and the severe economic impact on the nation and Santa Monica.

Fortunately, Downtown weathered the storm better than many other areas. It showed great resiliency and eventually recovered and prospered.

Through it all, some challenges just didn't seem to want to go away, although progress has been made.

A few of them: growth-related problems of parking shortages and traffic; construction disruptions; the homeless; and the need to keep Downtown competitive and well-managed to sustain its widely recognized success.

New issues keep cropping up, but there is good cause for optimism for Downtown because the area has already come through tough times and seems intent on avoiding complacency.

In my first column in May 2001, I commented that, based on past history, "Downtown must continue to be attentive to keeping itself attractive and marketing effectively because it faces new competition."

Today, a new management plan and assessment district for Downtown to help do that has received the support of the City Council and petitions are being circulated to property owners.

Another big issue addressed in that first column was parking, and it has remained so all these years. Although it took a long time, plans to increase public parking Downtown are now being implemented.

The first issue of "Bayside Beat" carried a cover story headline "Life in the Trenches," referring to streets and sidewalks being torn out for construction of the transit mall, with accompanying traffic disruptions.

Fast forward to today, with Colorado Avenue disrupted by a public works project and Santa Monica Place getting underway on a major remodeling that will affect traffic flow.

A look back at some of the headlines and articles in "Bayside Beat" shows the sometimes rocky path Downtown has taken over the past seven years.

The August 2001 issue reported that a hot retail leasing market was slowing down in the face of weakening growth nationally.

Then came 9/11 and the October 2001 issue carried the headline "Terrorism Deals Blow to Tourism Downtown." In January 2002, it was reported that hotels were slashing room rates to boost business in the wake of 9/11.

The March issue mentioned the homeless issue and reported a big slump in the office leasing market.

Later that year it was reported that Santa Monica hotels had their worst time in years in 2001, with the occupancy rate down 10.8 percent to about 70 percent, and the average room rate down 1 percent to about \$200.

Retail sales declined Downtown in 2001.

The July 2002 issue reported that Santa Monica Place had unveiled a conceptual plan to tear down the indoor mall and build a mixed-use project that would include retail, housing, office space and increased parking.

It would take a long time, and some drastic plan changes, before Santa Monica Place finally settled on its current plan to extensively remodel the existing mall as a retail complex only.

By early 2003 signs of economic improvement were showing up.

The May 2003 issue reported record taxable sales for the Third Street Promenade in 2002. By January 2004, it was reported that hotels were hopeful because of an expanding economy, and in March signs of improvements in the office market were noted.

Articles over subsequent months and years generally reported improved business, to a point that it became very strong for both the retail and tourism industries, as well as the office and retail leasing markets.

Mid-2005 issues reported strong retail results Downtown and a boost for the Downtown economy thanks to the tourism comeback.

The April 2006 issue reported that the Bayside District Corp. board was looking at ways to fund improvements Downtown. That ultimately led to the plan for which petitions are currently being circulated.


The January 2007 issue reported "Economic Forecast Cloudy" but good prospects for the tourism industry. By March, it was reported that hotel occupancy was a strong 81.5 percent in 2006. That would rise to 81.7 percent in 2007, when the average room rate was \$274.17, according to PKF Consulting.

In the May/June 2007 issue, it was reported: "Parking Plan Falling Into Place."

The October 2007 issue reported that hot button issues Downtown included homelessness, parking, traffic and development. Sound familiar?

The January 2008 issue reflected the fact that good times aren't guaranteed, with the headline: "Bracing For Hard Times."

All the more important that the March issue reported that the new management plan and assessment district for Downtown were moving forward.

Downtown was looking to the future while mindful of the past. 

Promenade Ringmaster

Stephen Bradford is part good cop, disciplinarian, artistic advisor and sometime promoter for the colorful circus of life that unfolds every night in Downtown Santa Monica.

The three-block stage Bradford patrols has a strong man act, a few magicians and mimes, a performance monkey, a couple of break dance crews and plenty of musicians looking for their big break.

As the Bayside District's venue manager, Bradford is in charge of monitoring street performers on the Third Street Promenade, ensuring that they abide by the City Street Performance Ordinance, and on this balmy spring night he is patrolling the strip manned with a clipboard, decibel reader and rolling "measure meter" making sure everything goes according to plan.

Of the nearly 1,000 performers who are issued a \$37 permit by the City every year, some 50 are regulars on the Promenade, and on this Sunday night, several dozen have shown up.

"I'm the manager of any public activity on the Promenade," Bradford explains as he strolls the thinly crowded street. "A huge part of it is to monitor the entertainers. There's a whole set of rules the performers have to follow."

It's 8 p.m. and, according to the rules, some of the street performers have just finished their shifts. Those who began at 6 must move to new spot or get a friendly warning from Bradford, who must make sure they move every two hours at least 120 feet and are no closer than 40 feet from another performer and ten feet from store doorways and vending carts.

Bradford checks the maps of each block color-coded in red, blue and green ink to help him track the movements of the performers with names like the Kryptonknights and Mr. Automatic, or code names like "monkey man" and "Sasan the violinist."

"I've got to keep track of where Omar (the magician) was earlier, because he can't come back to that spot for six hours," Bradford says, citing yet another rule he must keep track of.

Omar has set up a small table near the entrance to Borders Books, a favorite spot, he says, because many motorists park in the structures at Santa Monica Place and

STEPHEN BRADFORD CHATS
WITH A PERFORMER.



work their way north. According to Bradford's clipboard, Omar is okay.

"If you break the rules and don't realize it, he'll come by and let you know," Omar says. "He's one of the nicest people. He never causes any problems."

Like Omar, most street performers have their favorite spots. Many like being near the food court and movie theaters, but there are some, Bradford says, who will never go between Arizona and Wilshire.

"Certain people prefer certain spots and think there are certain spots that are better," Bradford says. "Sometimes it's personal preference or superstition. But talent wins out. If you're talented, you'll make money on any spot on the Promenade."

Martin Etcheverry, one of the Argentine brothers in the Flamenco duo Seis Cuerdas, one of the Promenade's most successful acts, agrees.

"I don't think that there's such a thing as the best spot," he says.

"We try to play the same spot," says his brother Ezekiel. "We know how it sounds. People there like us."

John Rushton, who sings original songs accompanied by his guitar, prefers less trafficked areas, such as the north end of the Promenade, or in front of the benches just off the strip.

"I try to get a spot where people sit down to hear my music," Rushton says as he sets up on Santa Monica Boulevard just west of the Promenade. He also likes to play near Barnes and Noble on the northern end where "it's quieter, a more chill atmosphere."

Bradford begins working his way north, where a small crowd has gathered around Nasan, an Asian boy playing an amplified violin. The sound seems a bit loud, and Bradford pulls out his decibel meter.

Sure enough, from 25 feet away, the young violinist has reached 88 decibels, three more than the 85 allowed at that distance by code. Bradford calls the boy's father aside and politely asks him to tell his son to turn the volume down. The man complies and Bradford resumes his walk.

Some successful acts, he says, have been discovered right here on the Promenade. A pair of twin tap dancers that drew large crowds have appeared in videos and movies and now have a billboard on Sunset Strip.

"We're living in the entertainment capital of the world and a lot of people who make decisions in that world live on the Westside and know the Promenade," Bradford says.

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Where There's Smoke

Smoking and development were the big issues making headlines at City Hall last month, with the City Council approving an ordinance adding teeth to Santa Monica's smoking ban and residents wrapping up a petition drive to take a measure that caps commercial development to the voters.

On April 22, the council voted unanimously to strengthen enforcement of its most recent smoking law by making business owners liable who "knowingly or intentionally" allow patrons to smoke in outdoor dining areas. The ordinance requires businesses to prominently post no-smoking signs "sufficient to apprise all diners of the law."

The council also extended Santa Monica's smoking ban to all public library grounds and lowered the fines for first-time violations to \$100 from \$250, putting it in line with other cities – such as Calabasas, Burbank and Beverly Hills – that have similar smoking bans.

The law will go into effect on July 21 to give drinking and dining establishments 90 days, as opposed to the usual 30, to comply and to coincide with the roll-out of the City's upcoming public outreach and education campaign.

The action came after the council heard evidence last December that restaurant and bar owners were not enforcing the ordinance. Between January and August of last year, police issued 19 citations to restaurant patrons caught smoking outdoors.

Under the new law, City staff, and not the police, will conduct "periodic undercover inspections" at outdoor dining areas. Bar and restaurant owners will be responsible for enforcing the ordinance, as long as it doesn't put them in harm's way.

"This law does not require the physical ejection of any person from the business or the taking of steps to prevent smoking under circumstances that would involve a significant risk of physical harm," the ordinance states.

Tourism officials asked the City to launch a campaign in several languages to inform visitors about the ban.

"THE CAMPAIGN SHOULD CONVEY THAT THIS IS PART OF OUR HEALTHY LIFESTYLE"

MISTI KERNS

"We have a lot of international visitors and only have (information in) one language, Spanish, to hand out," said Misti Kerns, who heads the Convention and Visitors Bureau. "The campaign should convey that this is part of our healthy lifestyle."

The City has awarded a \$150,000 contract to a consultant who will help create an outreach campaign, City officials said.

The new law also imposes a ban on smoking on library grounds, including all ramps, walkways, and other common areas.

April also saw the Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City (SMCLC) submit nearly 9,000 signatures on a petition to place an ordinance on the November ballot that would limit new commercial development to 75,000 square feet of floor area a year.

The Coalition contends the "Residents' Initiative to Fight Traffic" (RIFT) will slow development, "allowing Santa Monica's public transportation system and infrastructure time to catch up with local growth."

The measure – which requires the valid signatures of 5,957 registered voters – also will halt the exodus of small businesses driven out by chains forcing up real estate prices, Diana Gordon, the group's co chair wrote in a letter to local business owners.

"The consolidation of parcels, demolition, and intensified uses of commercial properties throughout downtown, the industrial lands and major boulevards, will force neighborhood-serving businesses to relocate or close," Gordon wrote.

"This alarming trend would also drive up rents and result in chain stores and regional commercial developments pushing out our local businesses."

The Chamber Board last month voted to oppose the measure, which would be in place for 15 years, saying it could stymie much-needed projects and is based on a premise that has not been proven and may in fact be faulty – that curbing commercial development relieves traffic congestion.

"The definition of commercial development is extremely broad," said Chamber Board Chair Tom Larmore. "This goes far beyond office development. The commercial development definition includes a whole raft of things."

Among the developments capped by the proposed initiative are hotels, which generate little or no additional traffic; medical facilities that complement the two major hospitals, and movie theaters to replace the outdated venues Downtown, Larmore said.

SANTA MONICA IS LAUNCHING
A CAMPAIGN TO INFORM
VISITORS ABOUT THE LAW.



“It is important not to discourage these,” Larmore said, “but they don’t fit in with the professed goal of the initiative, which is to reduce traffic.”

In addition to curbing potentially beneficial projects, the initiative could discourage building the workforce housing its sponsors support, said Larmore, who is a real estate attorney. Because such housing cannot be deed restricted, it will most likely have to be subsidized by commercial development on site.

The City Council, which must vote either to adopt the measure or place it on the ballot, will likely have to define such terms as “workforce housing” and “neighborhood serving uses,” which are exempt under the proposed initiative.

Sponsors of the measure quickly reacted to the chamber board’s decision, saying it does not reflect the concerns of chamber members who “have repeatedly cited parking and traffic congestion as major problems which need to be redressed.

“RIFT would reduce and control future commercial development and the increased traffic congestion it would bring,” coalition officials wrote in a response to the chamber’s action. “As anyone who lives or operates a business in Santa Monica knows, we don’t have the capacity to handle a lot more traffic.” 🌊

MORE PROMENADE...

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“People have been plucked off the street to do parties or get parts in films. Universal City Walk recruits people from our programs.”

Bradford sometimes dispenses advice to new performers. Take Constant, who was born in West Africa without the use of his legs, and does strongman acts on the Promenade.

The golden outfit he is wearing as he stands on one hand and plays the harmonica with the other was the result of a suggestion from Bradford.

“He used to perform in street clothes,” Bradford says. “I encouraged him to wear a tribal chieftain outfit, but he wouldn’t go for it. But the gold outfit works.”

It’s nearing 8 p.m. and Bradford spots a young man suspiciously looking around before reaching behind the easel of an artist who has stepped away to seek a new spot. Bradford runs after him, chasing him through a passageway into the 4th Street alley.

But it’s too late, the man has escaped with the stolen drawing. Bradford rushes back to tell the artist, who says he had been working on the custom drawing for the past hour.

“I’ve been here six days a week for seven years,” the artist says, staring at the empty pad on his easel, “and it’s the first time I’ve been ripped off.”

As Bradford makes his way north for a final stroll before heading home, he fields a call from a street performer who wants to know if one of her favorite spots is open, then stops to chat with a performer.

Following a trend that has developed over the past six months, the street performers have started earlier than usual and are also leaving earlier. Bradford guesses it may be the sluggish economy or the unseasonably cool weather that has kept the usual crowds away.

Martin, one of the brothers in Seis Cuerdas, agrees that business has been slow as he packs up for the night. The duo has scaled back its hours, playing just four hours on this Sunday night. But Martin believes every day on the Promenade is different.

“I believe the Promenade has its own soul,” he says. “It’s like a human being. Sometimes you wake up happy, sometimes not.

“Sometimes, you step on the street and feel it if it’s going to be a good day, or if it’s going to be crazy.” 🌊

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Under the plan, the streets would reap benefits proportional to the assessments paid by their property owners.

The assessments would help tackle some of the longstanding problems facing a thriving strip that must retain its edge in the face of increased competition from new venues, such as the Grove in the Fairfax District and Hollywood and Highland, Bayside officials said.

The new assessments would bankroll \$1.3 million in enhanced maintenance of Downtown streets, which are showing the wear and tear of millions of visitors a year and add \$400,000 in marketing.

The money also would launch a \$1.23 million ambassador program that would provide a concierge service for visitors, act as a “neighborhood watch” by adding extra eyes and ears to help keep the streets safe, as well as serve as witnesses to help charge individuals that commit nuisance crimes. The plan also would include money to put attendants in public restrooms 15 hours a day, seven days a week.


In addition to the new assessment, the plan dramatically overhauls the way the Bayside is managed, giving property owners more power over who makes policy decisions. Under the plan, the existing 11-member Bayside Board currently appointed by the council would be replaced with a 13-member board, six of whose members would be appointed by the council, six by the property owners and one by the City Manager.

Although the board’s makeup would not be prescribed, the members would come from the three proposed zones in the district, which stretches from the east side of Ocean Avenue to the east side of 7th Street and from the north side of Wilshire Boulevard to the 10 Freeway.

The proposed assessment district would have a 20-year limit, with property owners voting after ten years to determine if it should continue.

The council already has given the plan – which has been in the works for two years – an enthusiastic thumbs up, noting that the details can be hammered out if it receives a majority vote in support from the property owners, based on their assessments when the concept comes to the final ballot.

“I think it’s a terrific idea and a plan . . . to make the Downtown a better area . . . and a more inviting atmosphere,” Council member Bob Holbrook said when the plan was presented to the council in February.

“I think this is really good,” Council member Ken Genser said in March, when the council directed the City Manager to sign on. “There’s general consensus now. We’re clearly moving forward on this.” 

PBAD Timeline

Summer 2006: Beginning of the PBAD process

May 13, 2008: Petitions due & presented to City Council

July 2008 (Date TBD): Ballots disseminated to Property Owners

January 2009: Implementation of new Bayside PBAD

PBAD Supporters

Alan Mont, *Property Owner*

Allen Freeman, *JSM Capital, LLC*

Barbara Bryan, *Interactive Café*

Barbara Tenzer, *Tenzer Commercial Brokerage*

Bill Tucker, *Tucker Investment Group*

Bruria Finkle, *Artist & Santa Monica Resident*

Chris Harding, *Harding, Larmore, Mullen, Jakle, Kutcher & Kozal, LLD*

Chris Jones, *Holiday Inn at the Pier*

David Khedr, *Khedr Management Group*

Ellis O’Connor, *Fairmont Miramar Hotel*

Eric & Crystin, *Sedman Property Owner*

Ernie Kaplan, *Century Commercial*

Isaac Levy, *Property Owner*

Jan Sweetnam, *Federal Realty*

Janet Morris, *Property Owner & Greater Promenade Association President*

Jennifer Hranilovich, *Resident & BDC Vice Chair*

Johannes VanTilburg, *VanTilburg, Banvard & Soderbergh, AIA*

John Warfel, *Metropolitan Pacific*

Judy Abdo, *Resident & Former Mayor*

Kelley Wallace, *Above the Fold Newsstand*

LaRae Mardesic, *Bechmann Chrysalis*

Larry Brooks, *Property Owner*

Lawry Meister, *Steaven Jones Development*

Michael Farzam, *Ocean View Hotel, Travelodge & Pacific Sands Motel*

Randy Brant, *Macerich*

Rick Stoff, *Resident & Chrysalis*

Rob Rader, *Resident & BDC Boardmember*

Steaven Jones, *Steaven Jones Development*

Thomas Landau, *Property Owner*

Tom Larmore, *Chamber of Commerce President &*

Harding, Larmore, Mullen, Jakle, Kutcher & Kozal, LLD

Todd Flora, *Resident & BDC Boardmember*

Wally Marks Jr., *Walter Marks Realty*

West Hooker, *Locanda del Lago Restaurant*

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PBAD Working Group

Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce

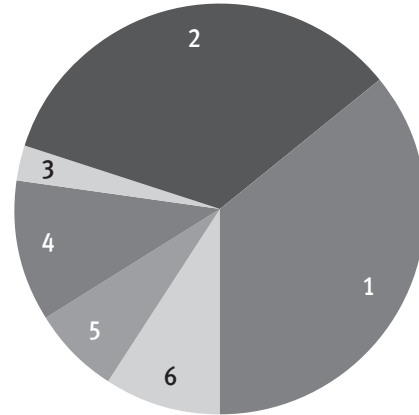
**For more information, log onto
www.baysidePBAD.com**

**"MANY, MANY OF THE PROMENADE
PROPERTY OWNERS HAVE SIGNED ON."**

KATHLEEN RAWSON

PBAD Proposed Budget

Activity	Annual Budget	% of Total
1. MAINTENANCE	\$1,289,000	35.9%
2. AMBASSADORS	\$1,228,000	34.2%
3. HOMELESS OUTREACH	\$100,000	2.8%
4. MARKETING	\$400,000	11.1%
5. SPECIAL PROJECTS	\$250,000	7.0%
6. ADMINISTRATION	\$326,700	9.1%
<i>(10% OF PROGRAMS)</i>		
TOTAL	\$3,593,700	100%



Easing the Parking Woes

Bayside officials are hoping that new lower parking rates at the Main Library and Civic Center will help ease the Downtown parking crunch by luring long-term daily parkers away from busy Downtown structures.

Under the new rates, which went into effect in January, motorists can park their cars all day for \$3 at the library structure on weekends and holidays and at the Civic Center structure on non-event weekends and holidays.

The new rates reduce the amount patrons of the library would pay if they stay for more than three hours on a weekend, and provides cheap parking for retail employees who drive to work, relieving pressure on Downtown parking structures during busy weekend periods.

Opened in January 2006, the structure provided parking for hourly visitors, library staff and former monthly parkers. Over the past year, the City increased the number of monthly permits sold to 350 per month by marketing them to people on the Downtown structure waiting list and to nearby merchants.

The City hopes to boost the number to between 400 and 425 monthly permits for the structure, which is included as a stop on the holiday parking shuttle route, and is served by the new Mini Blue Tide Ride that also serves the Downtown area.

The Civic Center structure will provide parking for the Downtown when the area's older facilities are torn down and rebuilt under an ambitious plan to add 1,700 new spaces over the next decade. Ultimately, the structure will be needed to serve Civic Center demand.

Beginning in January, staff shifted 278 Santa Monica Place employees from parking in Structure 5 on weekends to parking in the Civic Center structure. 🌊

For more about Downtown...

downtownsm.com

For more news ... surfsantamonica.com



BAYSIDE BEAT

1351 Third Street Promenade, Suite 201
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MAY
2008

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MISSION STATEMENT

On behalf of the City of Santa Monica, to promote economic stability, growth and community life within the Bayside District through responsible planning, development, management, and coordination of programs, projects and services designed to benefit the community as a whole; which includes the District's businesses, property owners, visitors and residents.

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Monday, April 14th marked the 80th anniversary for Big Blue Bus. A community celebration honoring the bus system was held on Third Street Promenade, which included a miniature Big Blue Bus cake engineered by the culinary students at the Art Institute of California, Los Angeles and Stephanie Negriff, Director of Transportation paid tribute to long-time bus employees. Ken Johnson (40 years), Marva Cobb (30 years), Tim Giroux (33 years), Ed Anderson (30 years), Robert Gomez (32 years), Jackie Ward (30 years), Manny Gonzalez (30 years).