

'Carson Is On The Move'

Despite Challenges, Mayor Robles Believes New Charter And Developments Are Setting The City Up For Success

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Editor

It is a time of change for the City of Carson. With a number of new developments planned and underway, a significant drop in crime rates and the establishment of a charter-run government, the outlook for the city is bright, according to its mayor, Albert Robles.

"The state of the city is fantastic," Robles said in an interview at his office in Carson City Hall. "We have done things over the last few years to position the city to be receptive and open for business, and the business community is responding by choosing to come to Carson now," he said. "And that's demonstrated by the significant development that we have going on in the city now." There are 12 developments under construction, according to city staff.

Part 1 crime rates in the city dropped by about 19.4% between 2017 and 2018, according to data presented by the sheriff's department to the Carson City Council. Part 1 crimes include homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, larceny theft and arson. Over the 10-year period from 2007 to 2017, part 1 crimes decreased 17.5%. "Carson is safer now than it ever has been before," Robles said.

Robles noted that the city is home to a diverse array of businesses – retailers, automotive dealerships, warehousing and logistics firms, oil companies and others – which provide a diversified stream of sales tax revenue. "We are positioned to withstand any anticipated recession that may be coming because we're so diversified," he said.

The City of Carson has about \$24 million in fiscal reserves. About \$7 million was recently re-allocated into the city's reserve fund after the federal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals sided with Carson in a lawsuit related to a rent-controlled mobile home park, Colony Cove. "We lost a trial at the federal court about two years ago, and it was a verdict against the city for over \$7 million," Robles said. As the case was appealed, the funds were taken out of the city's reserves, but have now been freed up by the final court decision. "Any other city that can claim to have a quarter of their budget as reserve is in a fantastic financial position, and that's where we are here in Carson," Robles said.

The city is still contending with an ongoing structural deficit to its budget, but Robles is hoping that will be resolved once the city council selects a new city manager and city finance director – positions vacated at the end of last year. City staff are also working on proposals and re-examining certain revenue streams to address the issue.

While prior city managers were recommended by subcommittees of the city council, this time the hiring process has involved all councilmembers from the beginning, according to Robles. "The other thing we did, which is very unique, is each councilmember completed a survey, and we gave input as to what we thought was important in a new city manager, what characteristics we wanted the new city manager to have, what we wanted the city manager's focus to be," he said. As the pool of candidates is narrowed down, finalists answer questions based on the survey. Robles said he hoped to have a new city manager selected within 30 to 60 days.

The council recently voted to rotate the position of acting city manager every 30 days amongst



Carson Mayor Albert Robles believes his city is well-positioned to withstand the potential financial challenge of another recession due to its diversified tax revenue stream and strong fiscal reserves. With several developments planned in the city, including a new outlet mall fronting the 405 Freeway, the future of the city is bright, in his estimation. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

Carson By The Numbers

Population	95,324
White (23.1%)	22,036
Black (22.6%)	21,515
American Indian (0.5%)	515
Asian (27.0%)	25,762
Pacific Islander (2.6%)	2,442
Some Other Race (19.1%)	18,221
Two or More Races (5.1%)	4,832
Hispanic Origin (39.4%)	37,531
Households	26,230
Avg Household Size	3.58
Owner Occupied Units (72.7%)	19,608
Renter Occupied Units (24.5%)	6,622
Vacant Units (2.8%)	748
Median Age	38.7
Median Male Age	36.9
Median Female Age	40.4
Median Household Income	\$78,187
Total Businesses	3,403
Total Employees	50,567
Source: City of Carson	

Carson's Elected Officials

Mayor Albert Robles
Mayor Pro Tempore Cedric Hicks
Councilmember Lula Davis-Holmes
Councilmember Jawane Hilton
Councilmember Jim Dear
City Clerk Donesia L. Gause Aldana
City Treasurer Monica Cooper



Focus On Carson

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three staff members. Saied Naaseh, the city’s community development director, served as acting city manager after Ken Farfaring vacated the position in late fall. John Raymond, assistant city manager of economic development, became acting city manager on January 21. If a manager is not selected within 30 days from that date, Assistant City Manager of Administrative Services David Roberts would take on the position, according to Naaseh. “If we hire somebody, all of us go back to our respective positions,” he noted.

The city has begun its budgeting process for the next fiscal year, which begins on July 1, Naaseh said. Another structural deficit is anticipated. “It has been going on for I think eight of the last 11 years. The city revenues are not enough to cover all the expenses that are involved in running a city,” he said. Carson’s contract with the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department is its largest expenditure at about \$24 million per year, Naaseh said.

The city’s approved budget for the current fiscal year (FY 18-19) projected a deficit of about \$4.6 million. However, if the \$2.3 million sale of land located at Victoria Street and Cedarbluff Way is factored in, the deficit is actually about \$2.31 million, according to the budget document.

One way to address a deficit is to increase taxes, which requires voter approval, Naaseh said. In 2017, the city proposed, and voters approved, a ballot initiative establishing a business license tax on oil companies. “We thought we would get about \$24 million but we are getting right around \$4 million,” Naaseh said of the new tax. “We’re looking at that to see if the oil companies are paying what they are supposed to be paying.”

City staff members are currently working on a proposal to create a development impact fee for new real estate projects in the city, according to Naaseh. This revenue stream would be dedicated to community projects meant to offset the impacts of developments, he noted. “We expect that to go to council in the next couple of months, hopefully,” he said.

Robles believed that the city government would be in a better position to create improvements in Carson now that voters have approved becoming a charter city. Last spring, the city council voted 3-2 to place a proposal to become a charter city on the November ballot. A charter commission was formed and held 11 meetings to craft the city’s new gov-

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Source: City of Carson

Important Phone Numbers

California State University, Dominguez Hills

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www.csudh.edu • 310/243-3696 • University Theater: 310/243-3588

Carson Chamber of Commerce

530 East Del Amo Boulevard, Carson 90746 • www.carsonchamber.com • 310/217-4590

Carson City Hall

701 East Carson Street, Carson 90745 • ci.carson.ca.us • 310/830-7600
Community Development Department 310/952-1773

Carson Event Center

801 East Carson Street, Carson 90745 • www.carsoncenter.com • 310/835-0212

Dignity Health Sports Park

18400 Avalon Boulevard, Carson 90746 • www.dignityhealthsportsark.com • 310/630-2000

Dominguez Rancho Adobe Museum

18127 South Alameda Street, Rancho Dominguez 90220
www.dominguezrancho.org • 310/603-0088

Doubletree By Hilton

2 Civic Plaza Drive, Carson 90745 • doubletree3.hilton.com • 310/830-9200

SouthBay Pavilion

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315 West Torrance Boulevard, Carson 90745 • www.printmuseum.org • 310/515-7166

erning document. The council made some changes, and voters ultimately approved it. “As a charter city we now have newfound tools available to us to help increase and promote economic development throughout the entire city,” Robles said.

Moving forward, Robles said he would like to see Carson attract more entertainment-based businesses and venues so that residents can spend their discretionary dollars within the city, rather than going to nearby Downtown Long Beach or other cities.

“I would just like to emphasize that Carson is on the move,” Robles said in closing. “We continue to move forward. And with our development coming in to the city, other than Long Beach, I don’t think there is another city in the entire South Bay area that has as much going for it in terms of development opportunities than Carson. And my hope is that forward momentum continues and accelerates this year and next year.” ■



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Carson ‘Well Positioned’ For Business Success In 2019

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
STAFF WRITER

Businesses in the City of Carson reported that 2018 was a successful year, and 2019 looks just as bright. “Carson is well positioned,” Mayor Albert Robles told the Business Journal. “We’ve done many great things in the city. We have been fiscally responsible. We’ve put our city resources where they’re needed not only for the benefit of the residents but for the benefit of the business community.”

Robles’ optimism was echoed by John Wogan, president of the Carson Chamber of Commerce. Wogan told the Business Journal that outside investments are changing the city from a bedroom community into a destination in its own right. “I’ve been with the Carson Chamber for almost 23 years, and I really think Carson is starting to come into its own,” he said.

The city’s director of community development, Saied Naaseh, said that the economy in Carson is doing great. In 2019, Naaseh said the city council hopes to continue approving new development projects and build a community that is “head and shoulders above everybody else.” He summed up the vision as, “A city that is great to live in, great to do business in and great to play in.”

Around town, representatives from the major business sectors said their experience is largely on par with that vision.

Automotive Dealerships

The automotive and transportation sector continues to be the biggest sales tax generator for the City of Carson, according to Naaseh, comprising 24% of revenue. Kia of Carson, which was purchased by Trophy Automotive Dealer Group in August 2018, has projected 15,000 car sales for the year. “Since we took over the store, business has been good for us. We are growing every month,” General Sales Manager Khaldon Elbatsh told the Business Journal.

Kia of Carson has been the highest volume Kia dealership in the United States since 2016, according to dealership advisory firm Kerrigan Advisors. Elbatsh praised the former owner of the dealership, Car Pros Automotive Group, for building strong bonds with the community and helping to generate more jobs and revenue for the city. “We’re expecting it to be a good year, and we’re preparing for it,” he said.

Robert Cavenah, the general manager of SoCal Honda Powersports, said 2018 was a great year for his dealership, which is hiring new employees to keep up with the growth. Honda’s broad line of products enables the dealer to appeal to many segments of consumers, from the agricultural sector to law enforcement agencies, retirees and the young, Cavenah said.

At the moment, Cavenah said there is particular interest in miniature motorcycles, or “minimotos,” among college students living in congested coastline areas. “Having Long Beach City College and Long Beach State, as well as [California State University]

Dominguez Hills in the general vicinity, these are young people very much in tune to riding motorcycles,” he explained.

Health Care

The Kaiser Permanente Carson Medical Offices serve over 260,000 members in the South Bay area, 50% of whom are located within a 15-minute drive, according to Chief Administrative Officer Ozzie Martinez. Kaiser plans to expand the site’s services with more than 90,000-square-foot of space in the fall of this year. “This expansion is really going to make our specialty services more accessible and much more centralized for our South Bay service area,” Martinez said.

The expansion at the facility, which while located in Gardena also serves Carson residents, includes six operating rooms and five procedural areas. The renovated third floor will offer specialty services in general surgery, pain management, podiatry, head and neck, ophthalmology, urology, rheumatology, genetics, and obstetrics and gynecology. It will also include a dedicated women’s center. “The women’s center is meant to be a place where women can truly feel that their unique health needs are being met,” Martinez said. The design of the area integrates several women’s services into one space that is private and protected from the rest of the center, he explained.

Furthering the goal of centralizing service for nearby members, remodeling taking place on the first floor is making room for a behavioral health center. “Currently, these patients will go to either Lomita for these services or Signal Hill or to Long Beach,” Martinez said. “Being able to be in Carson with behavioral health reduces the stigma and provides convenience for our patients.”

Even the check-in experience is being revamped, Martinez said. South Bay patients will soon be able to make express check-ins and pay for services with mobile tablets provided by staff. “We want to get rid of lines,” Martinez said. “It’s similar to if you



Khaldon Elbatsh, general sales manager of Kia of Carson, said the relationship between Carson residents and his dealership has been excellent. “Carson people are very friendly,” he said. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)



The Kaiser Permanente Carson Medical Offices is poised for a major expansion of its services. “We’re excited,” Chief Administrative Officer Ozzie Martinez said. “It’s going to provide an opportunity for our patients to be much more centrally located for their needs.” Pictured from left: Ada Onyeagocha, physician in charge; Kevin Wolcott, department administrator; Ryan Velasco, assistant department administrator. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

Carson Companies

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The Carson DoubleTree by Hilton was a 2018 recipient of the hotel's Travel With Purpose Award, a brand hospitality award that recognizes sustainable energy management and volunteer goals. Pictured: Edward Apodoca, general manager of DoubleTree by Hilton. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

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walk into Apple. There's someone with a tablet connecting with you, personalizing that interaction, and then telling you where you need to go next." The waiting area will be much more open, Martinez said, and include a café and a community area.

Hospitality & Tourism

After a somewhat slow start in the first quarter of 2018, the DoubleTree by Hilton Carson experienced a significant uptick in occupancy from both corporate and leisure visitors, according to General Manager Edward Apodoca. "It certainly picked up by the end of the year," Apodoca said. He pointed specifically to the auto dealers, aerospace manufacturers and oil firms as major drivers of local business. On the leisure side, he highlighted the range of events held at the Dignity Health Sports Park bringing tourism to the area.

"They don't just do Charger football," he said. "It's the L.A. Galaxy, youth soccer,

tennis, cycling at the velodrome, [and] there's boxing coming up here in February."

The DoubleTree offers 225 guest rooms, meeting space, an outdoor pool and whirlpool, and the 4,500-square-foot Scoreboard Sports Bar and Lounge. Renovations to the sports bar were completed in January 2018, and Apodoca said it provides a lively space for not only hotel guests and corporate customers but the community as well. "I get to know people that come here every day just because it's a great sports bar that they love hanging out at," he said.

There are plans to renovate the hotel's guest rooms, public space and Refinery restaurant in late 2019, with completion slated for early 2020. Apodoca said he expects occupancy to stay steady through the year.

Manufacturing & Warehousing

Industrial property for manufacturing and warehousing operations is in high demand in Carson, which is conveniently located near LAX and Long Beach Airport, highways and one of the busiest container ports in the world. "Business is good," Doug Groves, chief financial officer of Ducommun, told the Business Journal.

A manufacturer of parts for aerospace, defense and industrial markets, Ducommun has dubbed itself "the oldest company in California." It was founded in Los Angeles in 1849 as a hardware supply store during the California Gold

Rush. Today, its Carson facility primarily manufactures what Groves calls "human-machine interface products," such as display panels and push button switches found in the cockpit of an aircraft. The company also builds radio frequency products used in police radar guns, and sophisticated resolvers and motors for heavy-duty applications. "These are motors for extremely harsh environments," Groves said. "They would go in things like downhole drilling rigs for the oil and gas industry, satellites, so very rugged kinds of things."

With domestic defense spending on the rise and global air traffic growing by 5% to 7%, Groves said that the demand for Ducommun's products is also increasing. "We've seen nice growth in that business, probably a little above mid-single digit [percent growth], and expect the same as we head into 2019." He added that the company has been in Carson for many years "and looks forward to many more."

Logistics company Mainfreight opened its facility in Carson about two and a half



The Mainfreight logistics team is pictured inside the company's Carson warehouse. "We're a business that's definitely focused on growth, especially here in L.A.," Branch Manager Matt Friedman told the Business Journal. "The reality of us expanding in 2019 is quite definite." (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

years ago, according to Branch Manager Matt Friedman. The company leases 183,000-square-feet of space from Watson Land Company. Friedman believes that 2019 will be a year of expansion in Carson. “We’ve grown dramatically,” he said. “About a year and a half ago we had about 10 people. We’re about to hit 40 now.”

Its proximity to the port and heavy container corridor makes Carson an ideal location for Mainfreight, Friedman said. “Watson does a fantastic job with the buildings and properties they manage,” he said. “I think overall it’s a city that’s well managed, well run.”

Oil Industry

At 930 acres, the Marathon Los Angeles Refinery is the largest refinery on the West Coast. Operated by the Marathon Petroleum Corporation, it was created by integrating and updating the company’s Wilmington and Carson facilities. The Los Angeles Refinery is able to process 363,000 barrels of crude oil per day and employs 1,450 full-time employees, according to a company fact sheet about the facility.

Marathon has set a goal to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by 53% by 2022 and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 70,000 metric tonnes over the next three years by modernizing equipment.

Shell Oil decommissioned its Carson refinery in 1992 and uses the 400-acre site as a distribution facility for transporting fuels throughout Southern California. Cia Wu, who handles external relations for Shell in the region, likened the Carson complex to a cardiovascular system. “Essentially, we pump product in and we distribute product out,” she explained. Shell’s distribution network includes its Carson location, the Mormon Island Marine Terminal at the Port of Los Angeles, the Van Nuys Terminal and the Signal Hill Terminal.

Though Shell no longer refines oil in Carson, Wu said the company remains active in the local community. Last year, it donated funds to upgrade the science labs at Carson Street Elementary School and Stephen M. White Middle School, and plans to donate again this year. “We also sponsor STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Math] education programs through the local Boys & Girls Club at the elementary level,” she said.

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Marathon’s Los Angeles Refinery processes heavy crude oil from California’s San Joaquin Valley and Los Angeles Basin, as well as from Alaska, South America, West Africa and other international sources. (Photograph courtesy of Marathon Petroleum Corporation)

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"The strong support of the local community is what has made SouthBay Pavilion successful," General Manager Cheryl Roberts said. Pictured from left: Lupe Vigil, bookkeeper; Sofia Escobedo, administrative assistant; Roberts; Sweeney Montinola, marketing director; Breanna Whittiker, project coordinator; and Jesse Ceja, operations director. The mall is adjacent to the 405 Freeway at the Avalon Boulevard exit. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

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Retail & Restaurants

Carson's SouthBay Pavilion experienced a lively 2018, according to General Manager Cheryl Roberts. The opening of Burlington Coat Factory increased traffic and sales at the north end of the mall in "perfect timing for the holidays," Roberts said. The Cinemark was in the top 10 of the theater chain's overall sales for the opening of the hit action film "Black Panther." NORMS Restaurant opened in November and exceeded its sales goal for its opening weekend. And Target, after completing a major interior remodeling, has also reported an uptick in sales, she noted.

The Carson IKEA had a positive year for sales in 2018, according to Store Manager Briana Lehman. "We did see an increase in visitors that came into the store and we're continuing to see that going into this year," Lehman said. The store, which celebrated its 25th anniversary last November, is also a supporter of the local Boys & Girls Club. "We're actually going to be remodeling one of their teen rooms in the next few months here to help them have a better place for all the teens to go and hang out," she said. IKEA prides itself on being part of Carson and giving local donations, she explained. "We really put together a plan every year where we can reach out and support in different places throughout the community."

With new residential and mixed-use developments under construction throughout the city, Lehman said her company is excited to see other retailers join the business community.

"It's a great time for new businesses in the City of Carson, especially inside Southbay Pavilion," Roberts said. "Unlike many malls in the area and nationwide that have numerous vacancies due to many national retailers closing, Southbay Pavilion is nearly fully occupied." Ross is anticipated to open in spring 2019 and will occupy a portion of the first floor vacated by Sears. Restaurants in the mall that are equipped with televisions are also highly visited during football season, Roberts added, and carry-out restaurants are also seeing more activity.

At Evan Angelo's Gelateria and Coffee Bar, located near the corner of East Dominguez Street and Bonita Street, Chef Manager Jahmal Gillespie is preparing for Super Bowl Sunday. Gillespie joined the restaurant just three months ago but is already transforming the menu with unique foodie treats like garlic bread puffs, chicken and waffle sliders, and lobster pizza. "It's popular," Gillespie said of the pizza. "The people that try it, there's definitely repeats."

The chef said that his main focus at the moment is informing the community that Evan Angelo's offers much more than gelato and coffee –

but those items are still made fresh right on site. "We roast all our own coffee beans from scratch, so we get them green from all over the different places of the world. We do all our gelato from scratch, which requires a different license. Our sorbet is [made] from scratch," he said. "We even make our own ketchup."

While Carson is not yet known as a foodie haven, Gillespie said that the city is "a hidden gem." It doesn't take long for word to get out when something new comes along, he explained. "Ticket prices have jumped considerably," he said of his restaurant. "Probably 75% of every ticket are all new menu items." ■

Real Estate And Development Climate Strong In Carson

■ By **PIERCE NAHIGYAN**
STAFF WRITER

A healthy economy, convenient location and business-friendly environment have made the City of Carson a prime place for development, according to city staff. Situated between the San Pedro Bay ports and the Alameda Corridor, multiple freeways and several airports, Carson offers "great potential" for residents and businesses alike, Director of Community Development Saied Naaseh told the Business Journal.

"We've never said no to new development," Naaseh said. "The word gets out in the development community, and they like to go places that they're welcome." The city's industrial space continues to be in high demand, Naaseh said, and residential and commercial projects are on the rise.

One such project is Veterans Village, a 51-unit mixed-use building on the corner of Carson Street and Figueroa Street being developed by Thomas Safran & Associates. The development includes affordable housing for veterans as well as commercial space. Mayor Albert Robles said it would be "one of the few veterans' housing developments . . . anywhere in the entire South Bay right here in Carson." It is slated to open in fall 2019.

Across from Carson City Hall, the massive mixed-use complex Union South Bay is currently under construction. When finished, it will include 357 multi-family units, 32,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, an exercise path and gated dog park, and 10,000 square feet of common recreational amenities, including swimming pools, a community garden and a fitness center.

The largest development on the horizon is the Los Angeles



Jahmal Gillespie is the chef manager at Evan Angelo's Gelateria and Coffee Bar, 930 E. Dominguez St. in Carson. Gillespie said the combination of new menu items and word-of-mouth has raised Evan Angelo's profile in the City of Carson. "The wings right now are definitely a big hit around this little town," he said. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)



Planned by a joint venture between two of the nation's leading owners and developers of retail properties, Macerich and Simon, the L.A. Premium Outlets will feature 2,500 feet of frontage on the 405 Freeway, where an estimated 300,000 cars pass by each day. "The L.A. Premium Outlets is going to be huge," President of the Carson Chamber of Commerce John Wogan said. "It's going to be a destination." (Image courtesy of Macerich)

Premium Outlets, a joint venture between Macerich and Simon Property Group, two major real estate investment trusts. Their plan involves converting a portion of an empty 157-acre landfill into a 566,000-square-foot shopping center on East Del Amo Boulevard facing the 405 freeway. The city would be responsible for reclaiming the land and preparing it for construction, which could begin as soon as this time next year, John Raymond, acting city manager and assistant city manager of economic development, said.

The landfill's remaining acres are split into four parcels, one of which has been approved for development by a small firm from Los Angeles. Raymond said that the city has given that firm an option to develop a plan for the other three parcels as well.

A Great Year For Industrial Property Holders

The two largest industrial property management firms in the city, Watson Land Company and The Carson Companies, reported that 2018 was a banner year.

"We had record occupancy within our portfolio," Watson President and CEO Jeffrey Jennison told the Business Journal. "For a several-month stretch during the year, we were actually at full occupancy. One-hundred percent for us in a portfolio of almost 21 million square feet is hard to do because you always have somebody transitional moving in or moving out."

Jennison said that Carson's industrial market experienced "very healthy conditions" throughout 2018, which enabled Watson to pick and choose from a long list of potential tenants. "We always try to find a user that's going to be best for the community, who's going to have the most jobs, who's going to be a good corporate contributor to the things that are important to us [and] that are important to the city," Jennison said.

He added that applicants who plan to merge a corporate headquarters with distribution operations are highly preferred, as those colocated services are likely to create more jobs and result in more money spent in the local economy. Such a company is also more likely to participate in charitable causes or civic issues, Jennison noted.

"It was a record year for us on most of the metrics we follow, which include occupancy

... [and] revenue growth," Jim Flynn, president of The Carson Companies, said. Flynn added that occupancy and rental rates in Carson are more competitive than other major markets the company operates in, such as Houston. "Rental rates for Class A logistics-style buildings in the Carson area are approximately 90 cents a square foot," Flynn said. By comparison, Flynn said some areas of Houston are only half of that.

However, Flynn noted that the cost of doing business in California is comparatively higher due to taxes and regulations. Whereas a Carson property might expect a 5% return on investment, similar properties in Pennsylvania or Houston might return 6% to 7%, he said.

Still, Flynn said California remains an attractive market to invest in. "The vacancy rate in Carson and the entire South Bay is about 1%," he said. The last 10 years have been very strong, he noted, and the advent of e-commerce is raising demand for warehouses. Jennison also reported a boost from e-commerce sales. "It's exponential," he said. ■

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The Watson Land Company holds over 12 million square feet of land in Carson. "We had a handful of properties that turned over throughout the year and most of them leased really quickly," Jeffrey Jennison, president and CEO of Watson Land Company, told the Business Journal. "We're projecting a pretty high occupancy year for us throughout 2019." (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)



The Dignity Health Sports Park, which is located right next to the California State University, Dominguez Hills campus, features a large stadium used for football and soccer matches as well as a tennis stadium, a track and field facility and a velodrome. (Image courtesy of Dignity Health Sports Park)

Rebranded Dignity Health Sports Park To Host New Football Team After Chargers Depart

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
STAFF WRITER

The Chargers, one of Los Angeles County’s two National Football League teams, is playing an additional, last season in Carson before moving into its new stadium in Inglewood. The move was initially scheduled to take place before the 2019 NFL season, which starts on September 5. Following the Charg-

ers’ departure, the newly rebranded Dignity Health Sports Park will welcome one of the revived XFL league’s first eight teams in February 2020.

Other cities to host inaugural XFL football teams – official team names have not been released yet – include Houston, Seattle, Washington D.C., Tampa and St. Louis. “Dignity Sports Park is the only venue in L.A. that will have an XFL team,” the sports park’s general manager, Katie Pandolfo, told the Business Journal.

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complex, located on California State University, Dominguez Hills' campus, on January 1. The nonprofit, which runs 39 hospitals and over 400 care sites across the Southwest, is represented in Southern California through locations in Glendale, San Bernardino, Northridge and Downtown L.A. Locally, it operates St. Mary Medical Center in Long Beach. The 125-acre sports park features an 8,000-seat tennis stadium, a 27,167-seat soccer stadium, a track-and-field facility and an indoor velodrome.

Julie Sprengel, Dignity Health's senior vice president of operations, said she started looking for a sports venue to partner with right after she joined Dignity Health Southern California a little more than two years ago. "We really wanted to change our relationship with our communities," Sprengel said. "We want to get into the hearts and minds in our communities when they're well." After meeting with representatives of several sports venues, the company decided that the former StubHub Center, home to the L.A. Galaxy, was the best fit.

"Soccer is truly the world's sport. The communities that we serve are extremely diverse and soccer resonates with them," Sprengel explained. "I actually found out that even our two hospitals in the Inland Empire had a huge L.A. Galaxy following." The soccer team's community engagement efforts also played a significant role in forging the health care provider's partnership with the sports venue. "We were truly looking for someone who wanted to get out into the community with us," Sprengel added.

As part of the sponsorship, Dignity Health is planning to support the sports park's existing youth programs, donations to food banks and community outreach events to increase local residents' awareness of the services offered by its hospitals and care centers. "We set aside funds for those [programs] every year and support them ourselves," Sprengel said. "Whether it's by nationality, by gender, by socio-economic class: we take care of all."

As for the name change, Pandolfo hoped all signage would be changed by March 2, opening day for the L.A. Galaxy, but said updates to the freeway signage, managed by the California Highway Patrol, might take longer. "That's the biggest immediate transition that we'll be seeing over the next month or two," Pandolfo said.

Pandolfo feels positive about the partnership with Dignity Health. "I think that Dignity Health is looked at, in this community, and in this area, in this state, as a really positive brand, and them partnering with us gives us a lot more notoriety and exposure," Pandolfo said. "It was the right move at the right time." ■

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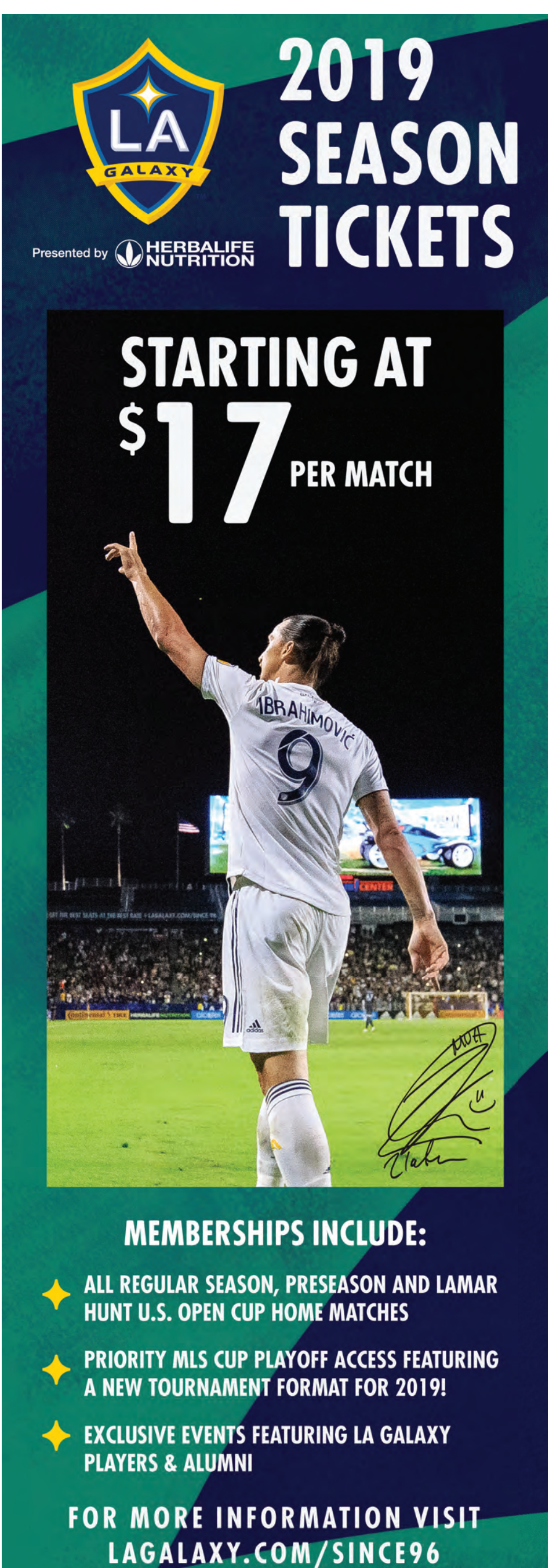
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CSU Dominguez Hills President Dr. Thomas Parham Wants His School To Be ‘A Destination, Not A Default’

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
STAFF WRITER

California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) has added a number of new programs with a focus on communications for the current academic year, which started in October 2018. The new bachelor's degree offerings include: film, television and media; advertising and public relations; and journalism. The school is also adding a master's program in cyber security. These additional programs ring in the first academic year under the university's new president, Dr. Thomas Parham.

Parham received a bachelor's degree in social ecology from the University of California, Irvine (UCI), where he later served as vice chancellor of student affairs before joining CSUDH. As a former student of the California State University system – he started his academic career at the Long Beach campus before transferring to UCI – Parham felt connected to CSUDH's mission of inclusion and accessibility.

“There is so much of higher education that's good at replicating privilege,” Parham, who earned his doctorate in counseling psychology from Southern Illinois University, said. “Institutions are very good at touting their pride factors.” This focus on “pride factors” such as high numbers of applicants, excellent student GPAs and test scores causes schools to prioritize an already privileged group of applicants, Parham explained. “Pride factors get you into institutions like this, but human factors get you through institutions like this,” the president told the Business Journal.

CSUDH's focus on serving diverse students was a deciding factor in his decision to accept the presidential nomination in 2018, Parham said. “People conceptualized that an educational institution should be a gateway and a door of opportunity for the residents of the urban core of South Central Los Angeles,” he summarized as the school's mission. “There's a broader swath of the state citizenry that this university is committed to educating.”

As a Los Angeles native, Parham greeted the opportunity to come back to L.A. County. “L.A. is home to me,” Parham said. His upbringing in the city also informed his academic choices, he explained. After several encounters with the Los Angeles Police Department in his youth, “just for walking while being black,” Parham said he felt motivated to become an agent of change in his community, an objective that lines up closely with CSUDH's mission. The school's campus was moved to Carson from Rancho Palos Verdes in response to the civil unrest that followed the arrest of a young black motorist in the Watts section of Los Angeles in 1965, often referred to as the “Watts Riots.”

“My mom used to always say: ‘Son, you shouldn't criticize something unless you're willing to put something better in its place,’” Parham remembered, adding that his mother's advice initially inspired him to study social ecology at CSU Long Beach. “I thought, growing up a young, black male, there are two ways to work in life. One is you can try and work outside the system, or [you can] try to work within the system to change it. I chose the latter.” Parham decided to pursue an academic career. “There is no greater blessing in life, next to being a parent, than being entrusted with the personal and intellectual growth and development of young people,” Parham said.

In addition to the university's focus on social justice and the opportunity to impact the lives of a diverse group of students, Parham said it was the educators and the staff who got him excited about the position. “I was impressed by the sense of commitment and dedication that people had here to students. I was impressed by the passion that people had,” he said.

While acknowledging the school's many strengths, Parham said he's aware there is much to be done in order for it to become the first-class institution he envisions. “This is a campus that's resource-constrained,” he pointed out. “We have an infrastructure here that's crumbling.” The school's new science building, which broke ground in October 2017, is the first new academic building financed by public funds on the Dominguez Hills campus in 25 years, according to Parham. “That's too big a gap to me,” he said, adding that one of his priorities as president will be to advocate for more state funds to be invested on campus.

The lack of tenured staff, an issue included in the school's strategic plan since 2014, is



Dr. Thomas Parham, a Los Angeles native who earned his doctorate in counseling psychology at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, took over as California State University, Dominguez Hills president in June 2018. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

another matter Parham is focusing on. “Our tenure [to student] density ratio is out of whack,” he said. While Parham said he greatly appreciates the contributions of part-time staff to the academic development of their students, their limited hours make it impossible for them to provide the same holistic educational environment as tenured faculty.

“If you have full-time faculty around and they're around all day, then they have the possibility and the opportunity to work with students who need mentoring, who need guidance, who want to work on their research,” Parham explained. Part-time faculty, he said, are “not here as much as you'd like them to be here, even though they work their tails off and they give their heart and soul to the place.” Fittingly, CSUDH is

considering adding a new master's program in school leadership.

As the school's attendance numbers continue to grow – the current year boasts a cohort of 16,265 students – Parham said he's hoping to make his campus a destination rather than a default school. “Dominguez Hills is not a little place anymore,” Parham said. “This campus has so much potential, but I don't want us to be the best-kept secret any longer.” ■

Hands-On And Up-Close: Carson Cultural Events Are Becoming More Interactive

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
STAFF WRITER

The new year brings a number of expanded cultural offerings to the City of Carson. Between the International Printing Museum, the arts and theater departments of California State University, Dominguez Hills, the historic Rancho Dominguez Adobe Museum and the city's parks, Carson residents and visitors can look forward to a number of shows, events and exhibitions in 2019.

In addition to some of its well-established events, The International Printing Museum plans to host its first-ever Wayzgoose, a traditional celebration dating back to the early days of the printing press, this year.

“Printers have always used that as an excuse to come together and celebrate the art of printing, which is what we'll be doing,” Mark Barbour, the museum's founding curator and director told the Business Journal. The International Printing Museum in Carson will



Luis Fernandez, executive director of the Rancho Dominguez Adobe Museum, said every year in his tenure, the museum has tried something new. This year, the museum is holding a celebration of Juan Jose Dominguez' first arrival to California as part of the Portola expedition. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

be hosting its first Wayzgoose on Saturday, August 24, and the museum is planning to turn it into an annual event. "This is a very fun, artistic event of bringing the letterpress artists and printers together here at the museum to print on the presses and to introduce letterpress as an artform," Barbour explained.

In another hands-on project, California State University, Dominguez Hills' (CSUDH) Praxis Studio is coming to Carson parks this spring, offering after-school arts classes to young students. The studio, which has received funding from the California Arts Council, the Pasadena Arts Alliance and the City of Carson since its inception in late 2016, recently expanded off-campus through a pilot after-school program at Del Amo Park. There, students participated in two visual arts workshops per week, led by undergraduate CSUDH art students and local artist Ruby Osario.

"We want them to know that the things they make are important, and that the artists from here are important," Devon Tsuno, assistant professor of studio art at CSUDH, told the Business Journal. Parents may learn more about the program and upcoming workshops during Family Arts Day, which takes place at Stevenson Park on Saturday, February 9, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Carson residents of all ages looking to spend some time outdoors can visit the Rancho Dominguez Adobe Museum for a new series of docent-led walks in the museum's diverse garden, parts of which were planted by Gregorio Del Amo, husband of Susana Dominguez, in the 1930s, according to the museum's website. Streets and schools have been named



"Undocumented," a play written by Elaine Romero and directed by California State University, Dominguez Hills Professor Bill DeLuca, is among the three theatrical shows performed by CSUDH theatre students this season and focuses on the conflict faced by a school superintendent pressured to expose an undocumented worker at her school. (CSUDH photograph by Nate Lubben)

after the city's first families, but for many locals it's a visit to the museum that sheds light on their significance, Executive Director Luis Fernandez explained. "They make those connections to the history here."

The museum will continue to host its Dia de Los Muertos celebration in November, during which visitors may set up altars called ofrendas for loved ones who have passed. The museum is also reviving its rendition of the traditional pastorela Christmas play, which was first performed last year, in December.

The CSUDH Theatre Arts and Dance Department has faced some challenges this season after its largest performance space was abruptly shut down for renovations, requiring a schedule readjustment for a performance of "Undocumented," a play by Elaine Romero.

Students will perform the play in the school's 65-seat Edison Studio Theatre, where the audience will sit on two sides of the stage, close to the actors. "It's almost like you're watching a tennis match," Theatre Arts Professor Bill DeLuca described the experience. "I think it's kind of a unique theatrical event, when you have the audience there in the space with you," he added. "It becomes much more of an intimate connection with the actors now." ■

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