

A Double-wide Taj Mahal  
Anna Christensen

The Healthy Communities Policy of the City of Long Beach acknowledges that “many of our neighborhoods developed throughout the 20th Century have created more barriers than opportunities to health, wellness, and safety” and recommended “prioritizing health equity,” because “where a person lives has the greatest impact on their long-term health” and “the built environment, including the ..distribution of public parks... has a direct impact on community health.” The 103.7 million dollar question is: does the Belmont Plaza Pool Revitalization Project prioritize health equity? Short answer - absolutely not.

The expanding needs of community access to public swimming facilities are cited as a major factor in the decision to build two Olympic pools with amenities on the former site of the Belmont Plaza Olympic Pool. Once called the “Taj Mahal” of swim stadiums, the original structure was found to be seismically unsafe and razed in 2014. Long Beach has only two other public swimming pools, Silverado in District 7 and King in District 6, neither of which is Olympic size. The city has failed to build public pools in six of its nine city council districts, including District 9 with both high poverty and the city's largest African American population. Noting that “swimming skills can be lifesaving,” the CDC reported in 2010 that black youths age 10-14 are ten times more likely to drown in pools than their caucasian peers, Hispanic and Asian American youth are also more at risk. Evidence supports an inverse relationship between fewer opportunities to take swimming lessons and higher minority drowning rates. Nevertheless, the Belmont Pool Revitalization Project, which more than doubles the capacity of the demolished facility, is to be located in the city's whitest, wealthiest, least populated District 3. Not included in the Draft EIR for the project is any consideration of the city's demographics re population density, racial disparities in drowning, or equal access to public pools (race/income/transportation); nor is there any reference to the city's Healthy Communities Policy.

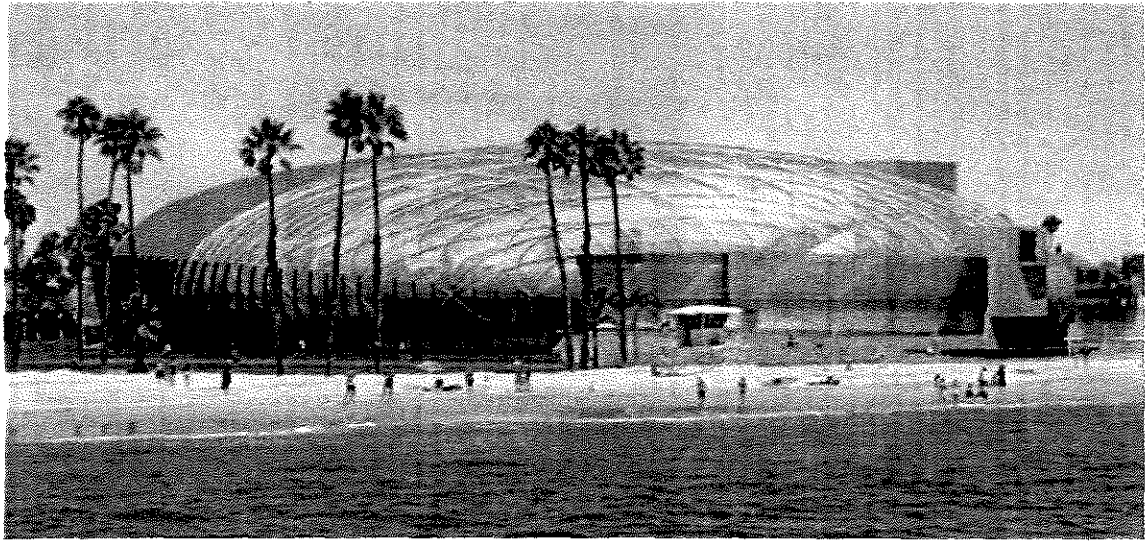
The decision to fund the project with income from oil revenues that must be used in tidelands areas precludes construction in seven council districts and severely limits available public lands in Districts 2 and 3. In District 2 (more people, less white, less rich), "alternative" sites are being rejected for questionable reasons (can't have two "iconic" buildings next to each other, Jehovah's Witnesses uses the land for parking once a year). Nor has consideration been given to revising (splitting) the project footprint by building on two sites instead of one. One of the two Olympic pools (the outdoor one) could be built in Harry Bridges Memorial Park, which must be used for outdoor recreation; thereby providing the 2nd District with a much needed facility while also reducing the travel time for residents in other underserved districts. A downtown site would be more suitable for large competitions and more profitable as well. Falling oil revenues have reduced available tidelands funds to half of the estimated total cost of the pool expansion, and monies being held in reserve for the project now include those previously designated for much needed improvements to other public facilities.

As it stands, the Belmont Plaza Pool Revitalization Project favors the most entitled at the expense of the most vulnerable, thus privilege becomes prophecy. The stated project objective to “better meet the needs of the local community, region and state's recreational and competitive swimmers.... due to the tremendous demand for these services in the local community, region,

and state” is in conflict with both the project objective of redeveloping “the City-owned site of the former Belmont Pool” and the project objective seeking to “locate the pool in an area that serves existing users.” From its conception, and continuing through a “de facto” review process, certain constituencies are valued over others. The subtext of “community” is skewed to mean only 3rd District residents and members of the existing “aquatics community.” Both the site choice and the focus on competitive swim programs now appear to have been foregone conclusions, with validation provided by a Stakeholders Advisory Committee dominated by local aquatics professionals and a single community meeting held in the 3rd district (even citizen comments from that meeting include numerous objections to the project noting bias and lack of public input). If city council members behave as horse traders, they will fail to represent their constituents’ best interests. While Long Beach may want to become an “aquatics capital,” we must first be a healthy city where every resident can acquire life saving habits and skills. Instead of merely serving “existing users,” we must identify and reverse inequities, building swimming pools, parks, and playgrounds where they are most needed. The real future of aquatics includes growing champions in those communities denied an equal opportunity to compete.

Finally, since the chosen site is within its jurisdiction, the California Coastal Commission will review it. The current commissioners have expressed great concern for racial and social justice re equal access to the beach. Certainly this includes equal access to public pools in coastal communities where learning to swim is not just a fun recreational activity, but a life saving skill - one that insures that an increasingly diverse public will survive their dip in the Pacific.

# Where is Long Beach oil \$\$\$ going?



**Does Long Beach need this \$103.7 million pool on the beach or should we build public pools in underserved neighborhoods?**

USA Swimming reports that 70% of black children, 65% of Asian American and Native American children, 60% of Hispanic children, and 40% of white children cannot swim. Noting that “swimming skills can be lifesaving,” the Center for Disease Control reported in 2010 that black youths age 10-14 are ten times more likely to drown in pools than their white peers. Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American youth are also more at risk.

**Long Beach has no public pools in 6 of its 9 city council districts. Why is the city now planning to build *two* Olympic-size pools in the affluent 3rd District when districts with higher population density, and more low-income and minority children have no public pools at all?** The 103.7 million dollar Belmont Pool Revitalization Project favors the most entitled at the expense of the most vulnerable. It violates the city’s own Healthy Communities Policy which recommends “prioritizing health equity” especially in neighborhoods with historic barriers to “health, wellness, and safety.”

Ask Mayor Garcia and the city council to rethink the Belmont Pool Revitalization Project - put families first, build public pools where they are most needed and provide free swimming lessons to all Long Beach children. The real future of aquatics includes growing champions in those communities long denied an equal opportunity to participate.

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# Where does Long Beach oil \$\$ come from?



The Los Cerritos Wetlands is threatened by a land trade between the LCWA, the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority and Beach Oil Mineral Partners (Synergy Oil partner) which will result in

Prioritizing oil company profits over environmental and cultural concerns

Putting further at risk the village of Motuucheynga, where burials have been removed

Ignoring the will of the Tongva, Acjachemen and other tribal peoples to protect the wetlands ecosystem and honor the ancestors of Puvugna and Motuucheynga

Bulldozing channels to connect ancient healthy wetlands with polluted ponds and soils contaminated from years of oil operations on the property

Drilling 120 new wells diagonally under the wetlands while continuing to operate old oil wells in the wetlands

Drilling new wells on both sides of an earthquake fault and building a connecting pipe to transport oil over the fault

Exposing the entire Alamitos Bay to massive pollution from oil and water contaminated by injection drilling

Ignoring LCWA's mandate to be stewards of the wetlands ecosystem and violating the LCWA Wetlands Restoration Plan which states that the ancient living wetlands will not be altered in the restoration process

Ignoring current SEADIP and proposed SEASIP zoning

Violating the Public Trust Doctrine, a legal principle holding that certain natural resources, including tidelands and waterways, cannot be monopolized by private parties and cannot be bought and sold like other state-owned lands, including filled lands formerly under water that serve a public purpose.

Trading land that was acquired in a settlement from Southern California Edison specifically for the purpose of restoring the Los Cerritos Wetlands

**STOP THE SWAP!** Visit Save the Los Cerritos Wetlands on Facebook  
Contact the LCWA, [mstanley@rmc.ca.gov](mailto:mstanley@rmc.ca.gov) and Long Beach City Councilmembers Suzie Price [district3@longbeach.gov](mailto:district3@longbeach.gov) (562) 570 6300, and Roberto Uranga [district7@longbeach.gov](mailto:district7@longbeach.gov) (562) 570 7777 (both are LCWA boardmembers)