



## Legislation Text

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Recommendation to respectfully request City Manager to assist the Long Beach Heritage Museum in finding storage for their collections in service to past, present and future residents of Long Beach; and request City Manager to also work with Long Beach Heritage Museum to find space where pieces of their collection could be put on display for the public.

The Long Beach Heritage Museum started in 1961 when Ken Larkey put on a photo display of the 1933 earthquake at the Long Beach Recreation Department hobby show. The exhibit was so popular, Ken decided to find a “permanent” home where people could see his collection of Long Beach memorabilia.

In February of 1971, Long Beach’s first History Museum was open at the northwest corner of First Street and Linden Avenue, then called the Queen of the Beaches Museum. After a few years, the museum moved to Third and Elm, just east of the main post office downtown. It was then renamed the Long Beach Heritage Museum. Among the many activities at the Museum was the presentation of historical movies, slide shows and exhibits of historical documents and other memorabilia found in the collection. In 1994, the Museum’s 1917 building on Third Street was declared as substandard by the city building safety department and was demolished. The Museum was forced to move its collections into storage, denying residents of and visitors to Long Beach an opportunity to learn firsthand from this page of our history.

Among its collections, the Long Beach Heritage Museum has the only roller coaster car left from the famous Pike Cyclone Racer, the last drug store soda fountain from the Harriman Jones drug store on Broadway and Cherry, an eleven-foot long, solid redwood surfboard used by Long Beach lifeguards in the 1930’s, chandeliers from the Pacific Coast Club, church pews, City Hall files, an old wooden public telephone booth, household furniture & kitchen appliances, silverware from the famous Hotel Virginia dining room and thousands of photos, rare photographs, and historic documents donated by residents capturing life in Long Beach during several eras.

Ken Larkey has been affectionately called Long Beach’s original “Dumpster Diver” by friend and current President/Curator, Marshall Pumphrey. Ken began collecting Long Beach memorabilia at the age of 9 when he rescued a 1906 panorama of Long Beach from a garbage can. Over the next 60 years, he collected an amazing assortment of artifacts. According to an excerpt from Judy Belshe-Toernblom of the Signal Tribune, “Ken Larkey is the largely unrecognized historian of Long Beach...Ken’s passion and love for this city has caused him to pay from his own pocket for thousands of items. He’s visited buildings set for demolition and collected artifacts for future generations that otherwise would have been dust... In our exquisite city of Long Beach that is packed with history, there is no museum.” Unfortunately, Ken passed away in April 2011, without reaching his goal of finding a permanent location for his expansive collection. Since then, a passionate group of residents led by Marshall Pumphrey has curated the collection and remained dedicated to Ken’s vision.

After moving the collection and storing additional memorabilia in the garages of family and friends, the Long Beach Heritage Museum must relocate its collection once more. Fortunately, documents and photos from the collection have found a semi-permanent home with willing volunteers at the Long Beach Senior Center on Fourth Street and Seaside Printing. However, there is still a need to unite the collection under one roof in a new location and complete an inventory of artifacts.

The City of Long Beach has a vested interest in seeing Ken Larkey's vision become a reality and Long Beach Heritage Museum move its collection to a safe and secure location. The memorabilia in the collection provides residents and visitors with a peek into our city's mindset and way of life, inspiring a deeper sense of community. To allow a one-of-a-kind collection to wither and degrade for lack of storage would be a tragedy. We hope the City can at least provide temporary storage for the site until a more suitable, permanent location can be found.

No fiscal impact is anticipated.

Approve recommendation.

VICE MAYOR SUJA LOWENTHAL  
COUNCILMEMBER, SECOND DISTRICT

COUNCILMEMBER ROBERT GARCIA