

City of Long Beach
Many Unique Neighborhoods
One Great City



Dr. Suja Lowenthal
Vice Mayor
Council District 2

Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council June 2, 2015

From: Lena Gonzalez, First District *LG*
 Suja Lowenthal, Second District *SL*

Subject: Activating the Southeast Corner of Pine Avenue & Ocean Boulevard

REQUESTED ACTION:

Request the City Manager work with Downtown Long Beach Associates (DLBA) to identify methods and estimated costs for activating the section of Victory Park adjacent to the former Jergins Building Property, including but not limited to temporary pop-up retail, tourist, wayfinding, historical and arts-based installations.

Request the City Manager also explore ideas and estimated costs of activating the parking lot at Seaside Way and Pine Avenue (100 East Ocean Blvd.) with DLBA.

DISCUSSION:

The intersection of Pine Avenue and Ocean Boulevard plays an important role in the Downtown core, serving as the linchpin between upper and lower Pine Avenue. It is the convergence point for Long Beach's unofficial main street and its most well known scenic drive. Unfortunately, the steep slope and lack of development or activity on the southeast side of the intersection has created a visual and psychological barrier to conventioners, tourists and workers. Sheer walls of the building bordering the south west side of Pine Avenue compound this condition

As with the rest of Ocean Boulevard in Downtown, park space occupies the southeast corner of this intersection. However, this portion of Victory Park has been behind a wall with painted murals for several years; its dilapidated concrete surface and weed-covered turf areas faintly resembling its stately past as the arched entryway to the Markwell Building, later known as the Jergins Trust Building.

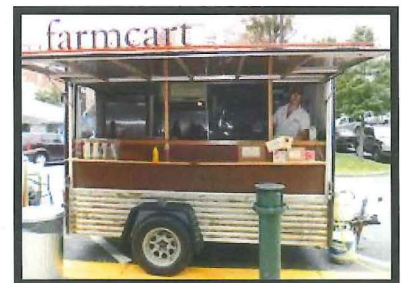


Late last summer, the city-owned parking lot at Seaside Way & Pine Ave, along with this portion of Victory Park, were among the topics of discussion at an Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) commissioned by the Downtown Long Beach Associates. The purpose of the TAP, "to conduct a study of criteria and recommendations that could guide the improvement of connections between the Downtown core and the waterfront, generally considered to be the area located south of Ocean Boulevard."

The takeaway from the TAP was that spaces such as the southeast corner and the surface parking lot at Seaside Way could be used on a temporary basis for activation through pop up retail, mobile kiosks, art installations, tourist or cultural related activities.

Long Beach can learn from cities such as New York, San Francisco and San Diego who have activated pocket parks and small open spaces. As such, we believe there is an opportunity to activate this area with a temporary use that draws the pedestrian in and serves as a calling card for the city. Pushing back the mural walls to reveal a portion of Victory Park would enable the City, DLBA and other partners to transform the hard corner with a temporary use that bridges upper and lower Pine while breathing life into a key Downtown intersection.

Examples of pop up retail



BACKGROUND:

The area of Victory Park behind decorative boards at the southeast corner of Pine Avenue and Ocean Boulevard was once part of a bustling section of downtown in the early 20th Century filled with streetcars, thousands of pedestrians and vehicles drawn to the many attractions found at The Pike amusement zone, also known as the "Coney Island of the West".



Although part of Victory Park, the space served as an arched driveway for the Markwell Building, later known as the Jergins Trust Building. Originally a 4-story structure built in 1917 and expanded 3 stories in 1929, it served as an office building hosting a theater (on the first floor), several stores, municipal and superior courts, law offices and departments of municipal and county governments over the years until it was demolished in 1988 to make room for a condominium project that never came to fruition.

Underneath this portion of Victory Park, one can also find the Jergins Pedestrian Subway Tunnel. Originally constructed in 1927 and opened in 1928, the Tunnel connected Ocean Boulevard and upper Pine Avenue with the Jergins Trust Building arcade filled with specialty shops leading to the Pike entrance. The Tunnel remains closed to the public until the parcel below Victory Park is sold as part of the Long Beach Property Management Plan recently approved the State of California. Protections exist to ensure that it is adaptively reused.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact. Estimated costs will be shared with Council and DLBA before any decisions are made on the project.