

A Pivotal Year



Downtown Santa Monica celebrated its official brand launch on Wednesday, July 6, 2011.
Photo by Brandon Wise

"This is our
city's living
room."

- Mayor Richard Bloom

2011 will be remembered as a turning point for Downtown Santa Monica, a year when ideas left the planning stages and took real shape.

It was the year Bayside District shed its two-decade-old name and became "everyone's downtown," and the year the Expo Light Rail Line switched gears and became a concrete project with a groundbreaking ceremony and pre-construction crews hard at work.

2011 was the year when the City's long-awaited bag ban went into effect, when the first affordable hotel built in two decades opened its doors and the nation's largest full-service bike center rolled into Downtown.

It was also a year to celebrate accomplishments that allowed the City and its Downtown to weather the greatest economic slump since the Great Depression and plan for a future that will make it easier and more enjoyable to get around the heart of the city.

GOODBYE BAYSIDE, HELLO DOWNTOWN

July 6, 2011 marked the dawning of a new era, and the donning of a new name, for the old Bayside District with the official launch of Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. (DTSM).

The new brand introduced Downtown and its popular Third Street Promenade as a vibrant choice for both residents and tourists, a destination that invites an egalitarian mix of families, singles, visitors, merchants and artists to celebrate the commercial center for its inherent fun.

"It's not just for shopping and dining out, it's for living," Mayor Richard Bloom told the crowd gathered at the official launch. "This is our city's living room."



Outlook Good for Tourism

Coming off a year that beat expectations, Santa Monica's visitor industry expects further improvement in 2012. Increases, however, may not match the gains of 2011, which were driven by an upturn in leisure travel and better corporate business.

Barring a major economic meltdown, the outlook remains positive for Santa Monica's \$1 billion-plus visitor industry, said Misti Kerns, president and CEO of the Santa Monica Convention & Visitor Bureau (SMCVB).

"Our targeted segments, of the high-end leisure and business traveler, have not slowed down, which is a very positive sign," Kerns said. International visitors also continue to come. Kerns expects a modest increase in hotel occupancy and room rates for 2012.

On the national level, the U.S. Travel Association expects a 3.2 percent increase in travel expenditures in the United States in 2012 compared with an estimated 7.5 percent jump in 2011.

During 2011 Santa Monica continued to be one of the strongest hotel markets in Los Angeles County. For the first 10 months of the year, Santa Monica had the highest hotel occupancy rate among submarkets in the county tracked by PKF. Santa Monica's occupancy rate through October was 86.1 percent, up 3.2 percent from a year earlier. The average room rate jumped 8.7 percent to \$275.81.

Downtown hotels were major beneficiaries.

"It was better than expected," said Wolfgang Jonas, general manager of the 302-room Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows, which had a double-digit increase in revenues. "People were eager to travel. We had a very strong summer."

Business also improved at the 84-room Georgian Hotel, coming in a little better than expected, reported General Manager Juan Viramontes. "The reputation of our city is pretty good," he said. "We get a lot of repeat business."

Said Kerns, "Over the past several months we have had a very definite sense of optimism in Santa Monica," even in the face of fierce competition with other areas for the travel dollar. In addition to a very strong hotel performance "we are hearing good results from our restaurants and taxi companies," she said.

That holds promise for 2012.

PKF Consulting estimated in November that Santa Monica would post an increase of 4.9 percent in occupied hotel rooms in 2011 and forecast an increase of 4 percent for 2012. The occupancy rate percentage may dip slightly in 2012 because the opening of the 164-room Shore Hotel in Downtown in October 2011 added more hotel rooms to the market. The average room rate is forecast to rise 5 percent in 2012 compared to an estimated 7.9 percent in 2011.

Jonas expects another double-digit increase in revenues at the Fairmont Miramar in 2012 if Europe can move toward solving its financial and economic problems. "We are cautiously optimistic," Jonas said. "Everybody is keeping an eye on Europe."

Viramontes doesn't expect as big an increase in 2012 as in 2011, anticipating a gain of 3-5 percent in revenues for The Georgian.

Both hotels are capitalizing on their restaurants. Based on the success of FIG, which gets almost 85 percent of its customers from outside the hotel, the Fairmont Miramar has launched a FIG catering operation. The Georgian has expanded its Veranda restaurant to three meals a day every day.

In the face of stiff competition, Santa Monica has several advantages competing for the travel dollar.

"Its waterfront location and vibrant atmosphere assisted in making this market one of the strongest in the county," according to PKF. "The stability of the market can be attributed to the presence of a stable commercial segment combined with high end group and leisure business."

Downtown is playing a key role in strengthening the city's appeal to visitors. Kerns noted that the 42,000-square-foot event and meeting space now available at Santa Monica Place could be an important asset in selling group business. Meanwhile, the new Shore Hotel "is a clear demonstration of Santa Monica's reputation as an innovative and eco-friendly destination," Kerns said.

Santa Monica continues to benefit from events held during the normal off seasons for the visitor industry, Kerns noted. They include the Rose Bowl tour groups and pep rallies, Los Angeles Marathon and American Film Market, which saw attendance rise 4 percent to 7,988. In addition, Cirque du Soleil will return January 20 to March 25 adjacent to the Santa Monica Pier.

Santa Monica also hopes to capitalize on the big Pow Wow travel industry trade show that will be held in Los Angeles in April. The SMCVB will partner with Downtown Santa Monica, Inc., and Santa Monica Place with hopes of hosting some of the influential travel buyers attending this international trade show sponsored by the U.S. Travel Association.

Looking beyond 2012, Santa Monica received great news in December that AFM will remain at the Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel through 2017. The city had been in danger of losing AFM to Downtown Los Angeles in 2013.

One Long, Beautiful Run

One of Downtown's longest-running family businesses closed its doors last month. Willie and Gloria's Beauty Shop, on the street-level of Parking Structure 6 on 2nd Street, unclipped its last roller Christmas Eve, signaling the end of more than just an era of changing hair styles.

When brother and sister Willie Gonzalez and Gloria Rodriguez opened their beauty shop 28 years ago, girls' hair was crimped to huge proportions and guys sported cringe-inducing mullets. But Willie and Gloria didn't have to adapt all their techniques to accommodate modern-day Brazilian blowouts and hair dyed bright fuchsia, à la Katy Perry.

"Most of our customers, from the very beginning, only wanted these for their styling," Willie said, holding up a box of curlers and shiny metallic clips two weeks before closing shop.

"I've had the same customers come to me for 28 years and each week, this is what they want, with a half hour under the dryer and a comb out," Willie said.

Willie and Gloria's Beauty Shop was a throw back to the "Happy Days" era. There were two hair wash stations, some worn American classic chairs and a sofa that had seen better days. On one side of the square room, six hooded hair dryer chairs were lined up under a window looking out onto the parking structure exit. On the other were Willie's and Gloria's work stations with vintage vanity tables painted red and pink with vases of pink silk roses. A huge jar of miniature chocolate bars yawned invitingly at the register desk.

Gloria had already been a hairdresser for 20 years, working at a salon on the Promenade when the shop space became available. She convinced her brother to join her in the business together.

"It seemed like destiny," Willie said. "My father was a contractor and helped build this parking structure."

The Gonzalez family came to Santa Monica from Mexico City in 1954. The five boys and Gloria did well for themselves, working hard and starting their own businesses around the city. Brother Pepy opened Pepy's Galley at

the bowling alley on Pico Boulevard near Main Street, and it remains a favorite breakfast spot for Santa Monica police officers. Their father went into landscaping.

"Even our Mom worked here for awhile as a cashier," Gloria said. "She didn't last too long, though."

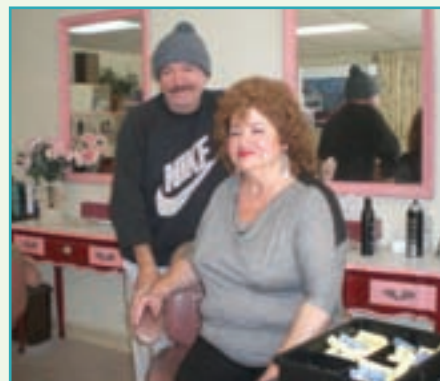
Willie had studied architecture at Santa Monica College and designed the salon when they leased the space from the City. He hired a contractor to build it, then took the guy on as a customer.

Willie's had a lot of luck with customers. He met his wife when she came in for an appointment 31 years ago. They went out for two months, and he asked her to marry him.

"Our customers, they've been coming to us for so long because we make them feel at home," Gloria said. "The longest customer I had was Mrs. Gatlin for 37 years, till she passed away."

"Mine is Mrs. Ricardo for 37 years," Willie said. Though she moved to the Valley, she still came in twice a month. "Most of our customers over the years either retired or have gone to heaven."

In fact, daughters ended up taking their mother's places in the faded pink styling



Willie and Gloria

chairs. Gloria said that she started out doing "up-dos or French twists" and that she still does a lot of them. They dismiss the younger generation of stylists.

"No one knows how to set hair anymore," Willie said. "We can do a set in 10 minutes."

Incredibly, both declare that they have never had a falling out in 28 years of working together.

"Gloria's the best sister in the world," Willie declared. "My brothers and my parents and us, we always get along. We don't need vacations. We like to get together and cook nice dinners. It's a great way to live."

They acknowledge that it was sad to close up shop ("My customers have been crying," Gloria said), but the two are ready to move on to the next stage of their lives. Willie is thinking of following his father into landscape gardening. Gloria is contemplating starting a housecleaning service. Both plan on spending a lot of time taking care of their parents who are nearly 90 years old.

"We'll miss this a lot," Willie said. "My sister and I are the only people I know who look forward to work every day. We love what we do. But it's like I told Gloria, God has plans for us."

"Our customers,
they've been coming
to us for so long
because we make
them feel at home."

- Gloria Rodriguez

Strolling into the Future

Come 2015, a dramatic influx of visitors will stream into Downtown Santa Monica on a new rail line, and City officials are making sure they can easily access the heart of the city.

The Colorado Esplanade and the Palisades Garden Walk across from City Hall are currently being designed, with plenty of community input, to help the beachside city accommodate the large increase in pedestrian traffic expected with Downtown's arrival of the Expo Line.

Once completed in 2013 and 2015, respectively, the projects will be part of "a necklace of open spaces" that will "knit the city back together," said Karen Ginsberg, the City's Director of Community and Cultural Services.

In late October, residents had a chance to walk the site of the future Esplanade with staff and offer feedback on what they thought would be needed to accommodate pedestrians, motorists and bicyclists along the stretch from the future Expo station at 5th Street to the entrance of the Pier.

"There will be a lot more pedestrians than there are today," said Francie Stefan, the City's Strategic Planning Manager.

Staff estimates that there could be as many as 400 passengers getting off the train every five minutes during peak hours and heading into Downtown Santa Monica.

The Esplanade's design will focus on providing good connections and orienting visitors toward all parts of Downtown, Stefan said. The project will feature widened sidewalks, bike lanes and room for motorists.

"We have enough space to balance all those needs," Stefan said.

Since the Metro line will remove at least two traffic lanes on Colorado Avenue between 4th and 5th streets, traffic would be either westbound-only from 6th Street or one lane in each direction, with left-hand turns at the major intersections.

"Colorado is a pretty critical link in the



Preliminary rendering of proposed Colorado Esplanade. Rendering provided by City of Santa Monica.

roadway network," Stefan said. "We still need to serve cars."

A key goal of the Esplanade is to direct foot traffic toward the major destinations Downtown. For example, city planners are making sure that the stairs leading from the Expo station to the Esplanade are oriented directly north on 4th Street. They also want to make sure that when commuters step off the train, one of the first things they see is the famous Santa Monica Pier sign.

"Some of the best design uses subtle cues to tell you where you are," Stefan said.

Staff is still hammering out the details of the design, but within the next few months, they hope to move from the conceptual phase to drafting plans.

"We want to make sure that opening day [of the Expo line], all the facilities are in place," Stefan said.

If the public spaces form a necklace in the Downtown area, then the Palisades Garden Walk, designed by renown landscape architect James Corner, is the prize jewel.

The six-acre park across the street from City Hall will be located directly

south of the Esplanade, offering pedestrians out for a stroll a place to explore, sightsee and even stop for a picnic.

The design, which was approved by the City Council October 25, includes four undulating hills and three overlook structures where visitors can take in panoramic views of the city and its world-famous coastline, as well as enjoy the shade of tree groves or relax in open gathering spaces.

Meandering paths would crisscross the six-acre lot, connecting to the new Town Square in front of City Hall to the east and to the Esplanade to the northwest.

The Town Square design is a miniature reflection of the Garden Walk, with raised topography, a small grove of trees and a water feature where rose bushes now stand. Corner's design was opposed by the Landmarks Commission last summer, but won the final approval of the council.

"The last time this came to us, we turned to Mr. Corner and said, 'Please come back with something more bold.' And I think you did," Council member Kevin McKeown told the architect.

AFM Stays in Santa Monica

Santa Monica got some great news as 2011 drew to a close: the American Film Market (AFM) will stay in the beachside city for at least another five years, bringing in an anticipated \$100 million in direct spending. And Downtown Santa Monica, AFM officials said, had a lot to do with the decision.

Staving off a bid by Downtown Los Angeles, Santa Monica sold itself on major improvements, many of them Downtown. They included the addition of affordable lodgings at the new Shore Hotel, the proposed AMC Entertainment cinema complex that will replace parking Structure 3 on 4th Street and the arrival of the Expo Light Rail line.

Film market officials said in a statement issued December 8 that they chose the much smaller city because it "is centralized and efficient, making it the easiest market to meet and do business."

"Our stated goal from the start of this process has been to provide the best environment, resources and value for the world's buyers and sellers," said Jean

Prewitt President-CEO of the Independent Film & Television Alliance (IFTA), which sponsors the yearly event. "And, after long and careful deliberations, we believe remaining in Santa Monica will achieve all of those goals."

Misti Kerns, President and CEO of the Santa Monica Convention and Business Bureau, who spearheaded the effort to retain the AFM, said Los Angeles offered lower hotel rates and longer terms.

"It comes down to the quality experience" Santa Monica has to offer, Kerns said. "The future plans were a big part of it. They know it's going to get better."

Under the contract agreement with the Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel, the AFM will remain in Santa Monica through

2017. The push to retain the film market – which was sought by not only LA, but by Long Beach and Las Vegas – took teamwork, local officials said.

"It was definitely a combined effort," said Kathleen Rawson, CEO of Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. (DTSM). "AFM belongs here, and I'm glad that it stayed."

The AFM, which was held during eight days in November brought people from more than 70 countries, an estimated \$16 million or more in direct spending and more than \$700,000 in tax revenue for the city.

The event will be held October 31 - November 7, 2012.

Downtown Santa Monica Makes "Best of" List

Forbes Magazine has named Downtown Santa Monica one of the nation's "most alluring" downtowns, citing its scenic beauty, high concentration of shops and restaurants and "lively mix of people." Santa Monica was the only California city that made the top 100 Downtowns List.

The magazine singled out the beachside city, devoting several paragraphs explaining its success, which it attributes to "a lively downtown" and "the luck of being located in a beautiful setting."

"Located on one of the most enviable stretches of the California coastline, Santa

Monica has a strong concentration of high-end shops and inventive restaurants that help lure residents and visitors away from shore.

"But it's not just the rich and famous that can enjoy Santa Monica's downtown – there are enough single-family homes and apartments spread out through the area to ensure that a lively mix of people can live and work near the downtown area."

Forbes considered a "wide variety of factors including attractiveness, accessibility, diversity of offerings, shops, restaurants, proximity of parks and cultural options."



Forbes chose the "country's most alluring downtowns" with the help of travel experts from Frommer's and Livability, a travel and analysis site that focuses on mid-sized or smaller towns.

"All of Santa Monica is pretty walkable and compact," says Jason Clampet, senior online editor for Frommers.com. "And it has some of the best views in the Los Angeles area of the ocean."



Crews at Work

Downtown Santa Monica is poised to undergo a dramatic facelift, and City officials are making sure residents, visitors and business owners stay informed about the construction to keep things flowing smoothly.

The projects include the construction of the Expo Light Rail line and station, the makeover of Colorado Avenue to accommodate the Esplanade, a town square and new garden walk at the Civic Center and the demolition and rebuilding of Parking Structure 6 on 2nd Street.

But City officials say the ongoing construction work is no reason to interrupt business as usual in the bustling commercial district.

"Santa Monica is fortunate to have a range of public improvement projects... that will really enhance Santa Monica as a community," said Kate Vernez, the City's Deputy City Manager for Special Projects. "We want to get the projects done and minimize the disruption."

To those ends, the City launched the Be Excited! Be Prepared! Campaign in September that was designed with plenty of input from Downtown stakeholders to help focus efforts to insure that the area remains successful and accessible, Vernez said.

The campaign combines "high-tech and high-touch" tools. The "high-touch" portion involves getting out into the community, since the campaign is as much a dialogue as it is an information system, according to Vernez.

"We provide numerous and diverse opportunities to the public to stay informed and provide us feedback," Vernez said.

Community Relations Manager Sarah Johnson, whose position was created specifically for the task at hand, is the human face of the Be Excited! Be Prepared! Campaign. "I'm the first point of contact," Johnson said.

"The City team is committed to soliciting feedback on the information and outreach campaign, and making ongoing improvements accordingly," she said.

Johnson's job is to facilitate discussion between stakeholders and project managers and to help the public better understand how current construction projects affect them. In addition to the project managers, "a very deep management structure" has been put in place that includes nine City department heads and non-city partners such as the Expo Construction Authority, Vernez said.

"We go out as a team and brief people on what to expect with the construction," she said.

Aside from person-to-person outreach, the City has launched a new web site – smconstructs.org – that features a

comprehensive list of current, upcoming and completed projects. Clicking on any of the project names directs users to a page that provides background about the project, a timeline and a "know before you go" section that features any street closures or traffic redirection that visitors should know about.

The site also features an interactive map that allows visitors to click on a part of the city and get a short update, including when a project is slated to start – or be completed – and links to more detailed information.

Eventually, the site will also feature live video feeds of certain construction sites, Vernez said. "People love to see dirt move," she said. "It's one of those fun things."

The public can also use the Government Outreach (GO) System to ask questions or share concerns 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

Johnson and Vernez are optimistic that the campaign will help minimize the disruption caused by the construction.

"I hope that by proactively providing information to the community about the array of projects, they will know where to go when they have questions about construction," Johnson said.

AMBASSADORS

Congratulations to these Downtown Santa Monica Ambassador employees for their outstanding service.



Nick Stein • Hospitality Ambassador of the Quarter

Nick has been with the Ambassador Program since July 2009. He loves to talk and has a positive attitude. He is always willing to go above and beyond because he cares about people and his Downtown.

Anthony Goosby • Maintenance Ambassador of the Quarter

Anthony is the main operator of our M30 Sweeper/ Scrubber machine for the Overnight Maintenance Team. He keeps the parking structures clean, and he has a can-do attitude and is always willing to help.



New Downtown Bike Center Encourages Commuters to Ride

It's become a lot easier and safer to leave your car at home and ride your bike into Downtown Santa Monica, which is fast becoming one of the premier biking destinations in Southern California.

On November 18, the largest full-service bike center in the country opened at Parking Structures 7 and 8 at the newly redeveloped Santa Monica Place, and in its first three weeks, 25 commuters signed up for full membership. Center officials are optimistic it will draw many more riders over the next few months.

"I'd love to have 100 or 200 members by spring time," said Ron Durgin, the bike center's general manager.

Strategically placed at 2nd and Colorado Avenue and 4th Street and Broadway, the center offers more than 350 secure bike parking spaces, showers and lockers, rentals, guided tours, bike repairs and bike safety and maintenance classes.

"I think it's really good for Downtown commuters to use," said Lucy Dyke, the City's Director of Special Projects and one of the architects of Santa Monica's new Bike Action Plan adopted by the City Council November 22.

Not only did Dyke help design the plan to encourage commuters to pedal around the city, she's one of the cyclists who is taking advantage of the new state-of-the-art center. "It's good to have a place to park [my bike] where I feel comfortable," she said.

The majority of the nearly 400 bike parking spaces are behind secure doors and are accessible 24-hours a day, but only to those who have a membership, which runs between \$15 and \$50 a month depending on the package.

But the facility, which is staffed from 6:30 a.m. until 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday and until midnight on Friday and Saturday, also offers two-hour free parking to non-member commuters. After the first two hours, it costs \$1 an hour with a daily maximum of \$5, compared to \$1 every thirty minutes after the first two hours for vehicles, with a \$9 daily maximum.



City and business officials cut the ribbon on the new Downtown bike center on November 18.

"The City has requirements to get people out of their cars," said Durgin, referring to the goal of the recently adopted Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) to add no new car trips. "We're a solution to that problem."

Will Ashe, a 34-year old employee of Bloomingdale's, was among the first members to sign up.

"I bike everywhere," Ashe said. He has worked at Bloomingdale's for six months and rides his bike to work everyday from his home on Euclid Avenue, just north of Wilshire Boulevard, a 15-block ride.

It didn't take much to sell the avid cyclist, who had one of his tires stolen when he parked outdoors. "I just roll up to [the center] now, slide my key card, and I don't have to worry about my bike," he said.

For those who don't own a bike, the center offers a bike-sharing program for Downtown employees. For \$45 a year, you can borrow a bike "to run errands, go shopping, ride to a meeting, or get in a little exercise during your lunch break," according to the center's brochure.

The center plans to reach out to Downtown businesses, inform them about the benefits of the services and urge them to encourage employers to commute to work by bike, Durgin said. The center is also reaching out to hotels in the area to encourage tourists to explore Santa Monica by bike instead of a rental car.

The Downtown Bike Center is a key component of the City's Bike Action Plan, which was unanimously approved by the council after more than a year of planning and numerous community meetings.

The 300-page document lays out a comprehensive outline of educational and infrastructure improvements that will be made over the next two years with \$2.5 million set aside by the council for bike projects. The plan includes new bike lanes, bicycle parking facilities and programs to encourage employees to pedal to work.

"This process and the ultimate product is a real testament to the community," said Mayor Richard Bloom.

2011

Holiday Memories



*I*t was Winterlit in Downtown Santa Monica once again as ice skaters took to the rink and performers took to the stage. The 8,000-square-foot ice skating rink kicked off its fifth year on Tuesday, November 15 at an opening ceremony that included professional ice skating performances. On November 26, recording artist Andy Grammer performed during the Winterlit holiday celebration concert.

continued from page 1



Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. Board of Directors, Mayor Richard Bloom, city officials and fire and police representatives were among the many who turned out to enjoy "Everyone's downtown.SM"
Photo by Brandon Wise

The new brand name was approved by the old Bayside Board on January 27, after officials considered a number of options to maintain and strengthen the district's reputation, identity and overall appeal and ensure its continued success. In the end, the marketing team decided that more could be said with less.

"We really focused on simplicity," said Debbie Lee, Vice President of DTSM. "We went a little more modern and moved away from pure nostalgia."

"We're looking to change our perceived image of a shopping mall focusing only on Third Street and Santa Monica Place to a more urban community that really does define our true Downtown," said Kathleen Rawson, CEO of DTSM.

REASON TO CELEBRATE

It was a good year for Downtown Santa Monica. In addition to getting an image makeover, the district won kudos from area stakeholders, with 59 percent saying they were "very optimistic" about the future, despite a recession-battered economy nationwide.



DTSM's Annual Meeting held at the Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club.
Photo by Brandon Wise

The results of the survey conducted earlier in the year were unveiled at DTSM's annual meeting August 18 at the Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club. And there was reason to feel upbeat. Santa Monica's hotel occupancy rates and room rates were up over last year, retail sales jumped and city revenues increased, allowing continued funding for homeless support and special projects, according to City officials.

The study, prepared by CIC Research, Inc., asked business owners and managers, and commercial and residential property owners to rate community characteristics, including overall appearance, cleanliness, availability of parking and the condition of the homeless. The results indicate that the overall positive rating has improved—significantly in some areas—over a similar 2010 study.

"DTSM's challenges over the next few years will be addressing serious issues related to circulation, access and parking in Downtown," Rawson said.

HUB FOR WHEELS

Downtown Santa Monica pedaled into the future in 2011 with the opening of the largest full-service bike center in the country. Located in Parking Structures 7 and 8 at Santa Monica Place, the center offers secure parking, showers and lockers, repairs and classes. (see story on page7)

The center is a key component of a strategy to ease the traffic crunch Downtown by encouraging commuters to take alternative forms of transportation to work. It is also part of a comprehensive Bike Action Plan that includes new bike lanes, bicycle parking facilities, guided tours and programs.

The hope is that all of these offerings will encourage Santa Monicans to give cycling a try by making it a reliable and comfortable alternative to driving, said Lucy Dyke, the City's Deputy Director of Special Projects and one of the chief architects of the Bike Action Plan. "Some people need a locker, some need a shower, [and] a lot of people just need to try it," she said.



Bikers have plenty of good news to shout about.
Photo by Brandon Wise

Santa Monica still faces the challenge of making cycling safer and more convenient Downtown. Though the details are still being worked out, the bicycle plan sets a general framework for working with businesses to boost the number of people riding to work.

PARKING SOLUTIONS

While Downtown and City officials are urging commuters to bicycle to work, they acknowledge that for many, the option is impractical. To ease the parking crunch motorists face when they enter the city's main shopping district, a number of major projects are underway.

The Downtown Interim Parking Plan, created in collaboration with DTSM and approved by City Council on March 8, provides a multi-faceted approach to making the best use of Downtown's parking options to alleviate the stress of finding a space while two of the public parking structures are taken offline.

Parking Structure 6 on 2nd Street, slated to be demolished and rebuilt starting in early 2012, will take 342 spaces offline until late-2013. When the new Structure 6 is completed, it will double its current capacity to more than 700 spaces. Downtown will lose another 339 spaces as early as April 2013, when Structure 3 on 4th Street goes down to make way for a new AMC movie theater.

continued on page 10

continued from page 9

The parking plan calls for relocating monthly parkers to a centralized location and providing free shuttle service, creating a Downtown valet parking program and exploring interim parking locations. It also calls for working with Downtown tenants who have major leases in the City owned parking structures to release unused spaces for public use.



The Civic Center parking structure will accommodate Downtown motorists during construction of Parking Structure 6.

"Each of the key elements will have a strategic plan and an implementation timeline to ensure that these things get done," Rawson said. "The good news is that the bulk of the construction is happening in 2012, so we are not late in the implementation plan. We're right on schedule."

TRAIN ON TRACK

After years of debate and planning, by the middle of 2011 there were visible signs that the \$1.5-billion Expo Light Rail project connecting Culver City to Santa Monica was on track and headed Downtown for its scheduled 2015 arrival.

In June, work crews began what Expo officials called "pre-construction" on and under the city's streets. And City Council approved nearly \$2.5 million in contracts to design an esplanade that will connect the future Light Rail Station at the former Sears Automotive site to the various gateways of Downtown and the Pier. (see story on page 4)

Then came the clearest signal yet that there was nothing to stop the project, which had been opposed by a group of residents in West LA. On September 12, a "Who's Who" of state, local and regional

government dignitaries assembled on a hastily constructed dais for a groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the proposed terminal station at 5th and Colorado Avenue.

The following day, council got down to the nuts and bolts, directing staff to get the project up and running in cooperation with the Expo Metro Line Authority, while negotiating for the kinds of design and construction details they said the people of Santa Monica wanted.

"We have been striving for decades to move this project forward and it is simply amazing to be at this point," said Mayor Richard Bloom. "We really can begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel."

HOME SHOPPING

March 19 marked Santa Monica's first Buy Local Day, giving residents a chance to do something City leaders are encouraging them to do year-round – get out and support local businesses while enjoying food, music and fun.

Sponsored by the City of Santa Monica and the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce, the celebrations were held throughout the city, though Third Street Promenade was the epicenter of the festivities.



Downtown Santa Monica, Chamber and City officials celebrated at the Buy Local Expo 2011.

As shoppers strolled the famous walk street, they were treated to free concerts and encouraging words from local officials stressing the importance of buying local during tough economic times. Buying local, they said, builds community ties, brings in sales taxes that support

the city's schools and services, pays the wages of local employees and helps shoppers reduce their carbon footprint.

"Supporting our world-class business community isn't just fun and convenient, it's also responsible," said Chamber President Laurel Rosen. "Every local purchase is an investment in our schools and other public services."

AFFORDABLE AND GREEN

It's steps from the beach and the Pier and the city's busiest shopping district, but just as important for those looking to stay the night in Santa Monica, it's also affordable and green.



The Shore Hotel
Photo by Ben Rothstein

The 164-room Shore Hotel, which opened its doors in September at the site of the old Pacific Sands and Travelodge hotels on Ocean Avenue, combines Southern California chic with Santa Monica's environmentally responsible ethos, having been designated a Silver LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)-certified property.

The low-key, inviting design incorporates roof-mounted solar panels, a storm-water management plan, native landscaping and high-efficiency plumbing fixtures, along with guest-friendly amenities. All the room balconies have ocean views, there's plenty of access to parking and state-of-the-art special event planning, and a fitness center and outdoor pool.

The new 90,000-square-foot hotel also boasts 4,600 square feet of commercial space, including a restaurant on Ocean Avenue and a four-level subterranean parking garage with 294 spaces.

BIRTHDAY PLACE

Those who thought Santa Monica Place would only add some high-end retail and dining Downtown were in for a pleasant surprise as the redeveloped mall celebrated its one-year anniversary in August. In addition to a custom-designed Bloomingdale's, a new Nordstrom, a collection of A-list retail stores and a dining deck, the mall unveiled some unique offerings.

Already an upscale dining destination, Santa Monica Place's Dining Deck offered a "groundbreaking new concept." with the grand opening May 20 of The Market, a collection of purveyors of organic, artisan and gourmet foods. New venues offered everything from wines and chocolates to cheeses and scones.

During spring, the mall – which was transformed from an indoor space into an open-air venue – launched Movies on the Deck, a film series that screened "E.T: The Extra-Terrestrial," "Shrek," "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" under the stars.



The Market at Santa Monica Place on May 20, 2011. Photo courtesy of Macerich.

And for those who planned to stay late and enjoy the outdoor breezes with a drink in hand, the Planning Commission made that possible, too, when it voted on June 15 to allow some restaurants on the top floor of the mall to serve alcohol outside until 1:30 a.m.

SAMO'S GOT A BRAND NEW BAG

On September 1, Santa Monica began enforcing its plastic bag ban, and it seems that by now most shoppers who

are not from out of town know they should bring their tote bags or pay a dime a piece for paper bags.

The ban only applies to plastic bags that are less than 2.25 millimeters thick, such as those typically given out by grocers and pharmacies. Not included in the ban are light-weight "product bags", such as those found in produce sections at grocery stores. Also exempt are heavier plastic bags commonly used by retail shops, as well as bags used by carryout food businesses, since hot liquid seeping through a paper bag could cause injuries.



Bag ban will help curb beach pollution. Photo courtesy Heal the Bay.

By and large, the ban seemed to go smoothly after the City's environmental officials spent six months educating consumers and reaching out to merchants.

"We haven't had so many complaints," Joey Posada, a store manager at Whole Foods Downtown, said during the first weekend the ban was enforced. "People understand how important using these bags is to the environment."

Thin plastic bags are difficult to recycle and get blown about by the wind, littering streets and beaches, according to environmental officials. Eventually they wind up in the ocean, causing damage to marine life.

MONEY BACK

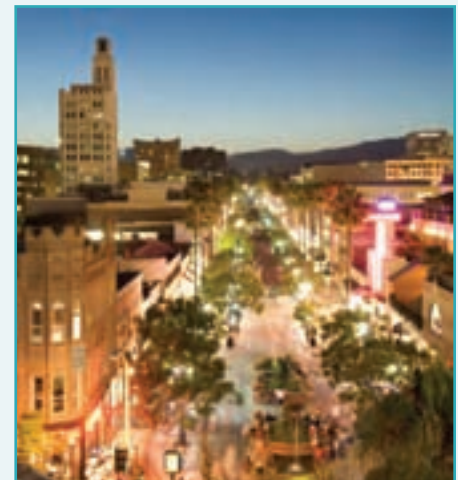
Downtown real estate and business owners got good news this fall after Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. (DTSM) announced that they will send a onetime rebate for assessment fees collected throughout the district. The rebate will

be issued on accrued operating funds from the Property Based Assessment District's (PBAD) inception in 2008.

The assessments first appeared on tax bills in October 2008 and the money had to wind its way through a series of government agencies, including the county tax assessor and the City of Santa Monica, before reaching Downtown coffers.

Approximately \$2 million in assessments were collected before a services agreement with the City was finalized and a new 13-member board that sets policy for the expanded district was seated. By applying the money that built up during that period to upcoming expenses, in the current fiscal year DTSM only needed about \$1.4 million more in revenue to meet its \$3.4 million annual assessment budget.

"As we all know, in these economic times any relief is welcome," said Bill Tucker, DTSM board chairman. "The important thing is that we have these funds available, so we are able to issue a rebate without any reduction in services."



New assessments have paid for enhanced maintenance and the Ambassador program Downtown.





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BEAT

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WINTER 2012

Year in Review1
Tourism Holds Steady2
Going Out in Style3
Colorado Gateway4
AFM Still at Home5
California's Top Downtown ..5
Preparing for Construction .6
Bike Center Rolls Along7

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MISSION STATEMENT

On behalf of the City of Santa Monica, to promote economic stability, growth and community life within Downtown Santa Monica 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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Santa Monica Police Chief Timothy Jackman



Photo courtesy of City of Santa Monica.

DTSM, Inc. would like to give special thanks to Chief Timothy Jackman for his five years of outstanding service in Santa Monica. Congratulations on your retirement!