



## CITY OF MONTCLAIR

Montclair Civic Center  
5111 Benito Street  
Montclair, CA 91763

April 4, 2013

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Edward C. Starr, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** CITY MANAGER'S WEEKLY REPORT: March 29-April 4, 2013

---

➤ **CITY MANAGER/ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DEPARTMENTS**

- Two weeks ago, Mayor Eaton, Council Member Dutrey, Office Specialist Fuentes, and I attended the 29th Annual City/County Conference, hosted by the County of San Bernardino, San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG), and South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). This annual conference offers a forum for elected officials, managers, and staff from San Bernardino County's 24 incorporated cities and county offices to come together and discuss topics of mutual interest.

The two-day summit focused on "Turning the Corner" in the economy, transportation, and regulatory policies. Guest speakers included Dr. Richard Green, Director and Chair of the USC Lusk Center for Real Estate; Ray Wolfe, SANBAG Executive Director; Sharon Neely, Chief Deputy Executive Director of Southern California Associated Governments (SCAG); Pete Aguilar, President of the League of California Cities: Inland Empire Division; Dr. Barry Wallenstein, SCAQMD Executive Director; and several other representatives from throughout Southern California. They offered their perspectives on the economy, transportation, and regulatory policies. They also discussed how cities and the County could improve collaborations.

Various topics included "Turning the Corner in Real Estate; Lessons Learned, Future Trends"; "San Bernardino County as a Business Friendly Region"; and "Economic Development in a Post-RDA World." Legislative updates by the League of California Cities, SANBAG, and SCAG were also presented.

## **Real Estate**

Housing prices have continued to rebound since the Great Recession of 2007-2009, when the price of homes fell dramatically throughout the nation. Cities throughout the Inland Empire were hit the hardest, given the explosive growth in home building in the region. Recently, many cities in California, particularly in Southern California, have seen double-digit increases on a year-to-year basis. The rapid increase in home prices throughout the State have caused many to predict the beginnings of another housing bubble; however, many real estate experts and economists are quick to dispel such beliefs—they note all available data indicates the current increase in home prices is reflective of the continuing growth in the economy, as well as the increase in demand for homes.

While home values have not fully recovered from their peak levels just prior to the collapse of the housing market, home prices remain about 34.8 percent below their peak values. Home prices are in line with income for all but the most expensive coastal markets in the region.

Rental costs, particularly in San Bernardino County, continue to be high relative to the costs of owning a home. As such, households that are able to secure a down payment and meet current income and credit requirements are likely to discover that it is less expensive to purchase a home than to continue to rent.

## **Business Friendliness/Economic Climate**

Low commercial real estate rents, affordable housing, and a lower overall cost of doing business have given San Bernardino County a very competitive edge for attracting and retaining business when compared to neighboring counties. Along with newer facilities at lower lease rates, superior transportation, and access to a market of 23 million people within three hours of driving, San Bernardino County has become a viable destination for businesses to relocate.

San Bernardino County was ranked the third highest business-friendly county in the region, according to Forbes magazine's "2012 Best Places for Business" regional rankings. The Forbes ranking compares metropolitan regions by cost of doing business, projected economic growth, number of highly ranked colleges, cost of living, crime rate, cultural and recreational opportunities, educational attainment, income growth, job growth, and net migration.

The economic outlook is also strong for San Bernardino County, as the economy continues to recover from the Great Recession. The County has experienced a slow but steady decline in unemployment. In 2011, the County added nearly 2,500 jobs to the local economy with significant activity in manufacturing and logistics. With the workforce driving corporate

relocations and expansions, the County is well-positioned with a labor pool of 900,000 and a residential population in excess of 2 million.

## **Education**

San Bernardino County is continuing to see improvements in academic performance scores and the overall high school drop-out rate. Unfortunately, there have been no gains seen in students' college readiness, and economically disadvantaged students continue to lag behind in English and math proficiency. While there is a close match between the number of college degrees granted and jobs requiring degrees, most projected job openings in the County are geared primarily toward experience and/or on-the-job training.

## **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Reform**

CEQA reform has become a major topic as California continues to struggle with a slow economic recovery and the loss of businesses to other states. The CEQA statute, passed in 1970, institutes a statewide policy of environmental protection. CEQA does not directly regulate land uses, but instead requires state and local agencies within California to follow a protocol of analysis and public disclosure of environmental impacts of proposed projects and adopt all feasible measures to mitigate those impacts. CEQA makes environmental protection a mandatory part of every California state and local agency's decision-making process; and, as such, has also become the basis for numerous lawsuits concerning public and private projects.

California's high unemployment, systemic budget deficits, and slow economic recovery from the Great Recession is now inspiring the state's political leaders to name CEQA reform as a top priority.

CEQA's basic purposes are to:

1. Inform governmental decision makers and the public about the potentially significant environmental effects of proposed activities; identify ways environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced
2. Require changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures when feasible
3. Disclose to the public the reasons why a project was approved if significant environmental effects are involved.

In practice, CEQA makes it too easy to challenge new projects—even those that already have passed extensive local, state, and federal environmental review. The law has been a boon to anti-growth environmental groups,

which can easily file lawsuits to delay or even stop projects in their neighborhoods. Unions have often used the threat of CEQA suits to extract labor concessions from contractors. Even businesses sometimes use the law to block or impose extra costs on competitors.

As with public pensions, CEQA reform probably will not occur without resistance.

Desperate to boost the state's tax revenues and improve a grim jobs outlook, the Legislature is exploring various ways to reform regulations that hinder business, including CEQA. Proposals cover a range of ideas, such as:

1. Limit the ability of plaintiffs to recover attorneys' fees from defendant cities and project applicants
2. Limit standing to bring CEQA lawsuits to designated entities
3. Streamline CEQA review for development projects consistent with regional plans
4. Strengthen the ability of agencies to use Mitigated Negative Declarations when approving certain projects
5. Eliminate review in a project's CEQA document of environmental impacts that are addressed by permitting regulations of other environmental agencies

➤ **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

- Last Saturday, Mayor Pro Tem Bill Ruh, Council Member John Dutrey, and I joined approximately 500 members of the community at the City's Easter "Eggstravaganza" and Pancake Breakfast. The event included games and activities at the Starlite Patio for children who won candy-filled eggs as prizes. The Easter Bunny arrived in a Montclair fire engine and posed for pictures. Photos were sponsored by the Montclair-Ontario Junior Women's Club.

More than 250 breakfasts of pancakes, sausage, orange juice, and coffee were cooked and provided by the Montclair Kiwanis Club.

Special thanks go to the following:

The Information Technology Division for setting up the bunny photos

The Fire Department for delivering the Easter Bunny

The Montclair Fire Fighters and Police Officers Associations for donating and presenting the children's opportunity gift baskets

Members of the Montclair Kiwanis Club, Montclair Ontario Junior Women's Club, and many community volunteers for their tireless work during the event

The Human Services Division for coordinating the event.

➤ **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

- On December 20, 2012, the Montclair Police Department received a call for service regarding threats made by an adult Montclair resident. During the investigation, it was determined the resident had threatened the lives of his family and friends.

As a result of the investigation, a search warrant was served at the subject's residence, which led to the seizure of a large amount of weapons, including illegal assault rifles. Also, a vehicle registered to the subject, with additional firearms inside, was towed from the front of his residence. As a result of the investigation, a \$350,000 warrant was issued for the suspect's arrest. He eluded capture for over three months even though the Detective Bureau, assisted by a State Fugitive Task Force, worked diligently to locate him.

During the early hours of March 29, however, the suspect's luck came to an end when Officer Rod Godoy, while conducting an area check for burglary suspects in an unrelated case, came upon a person whom he recognized as possibly the wanted person. The suspect provided an identification card (belonging to his twin brother) and was adamant he was not the suspect in this case. Sergeant Brian Ventura and Officer Godoy did not believe him and opted to check his fingerprints with a portable identification device. Although the device positively identified the suspect, he was belligerent and still adamant the officers had the wrong person. This false impersonation as his twin brother earned him an additional felony charge.

The suspect was booked at West Valley Detention Center for felony false impersonation, felony possession of illegal assault rifles, possession of a silencer, possession of metal knuckles, and child endangerment. While the suspect was a fugitive, he caused major concerns for schools in Montclair and Ontario because he threatened to harm his own children who attend various schools in both cities. Because of this, some schools hired extra security, fearing not only for the safety of the suspect's children, but for all of the students on campus.

The Detective Bureau and Patrol worked diligently in locating the suspect. A special "thank you" to Officer Godoy and Sergeant Ventura for taking the extra steps in identifying the suspect!

- On Saturday, March 30, Reserve Officer Nicholas Lopez and Reserve Sergeant Frank Fonseca attended a "Celebrate the Children 2013" fundraising event hosted by Prime Time Realty & Associates. The event took place in the parking lot of Bienvenidos Foster Care Services, which is located at the northwest corner of Benito Street and Central Avenue.

Our Reserve Officers spent four hours taking several pictures with families and giving children "tours" of a Montclair Police cruiser.

Over \$1,000 was raised for clothing, toys, and other necessities for the children at Bienvenidos. Prime Time Realty staff commended our Officers for their professionalism and presence.

### ➤ **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

- Last month, Firefighter/Paramedics Ben Garcia and Carlos Becerril and Firefighters Mike Matheson, Jim Colby, and Brian Ciszek attended Emergency Vehicle Operation Center (EVOC) training conducted by the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. Personnel were trained in maneuvering vehicles during emergencies and various road conditions.
- On March 30, 2013, Captain Chris Younggren, Firefighter/Paramedic Carlos Becerril, and Engineer John VanFossen also participated in "Celebrate the Children" at Bienvenidos. They brought a fire engine to the event and let the children explore the engine and equipment.
- Deputy Fire Marshal/Administrative Supervisor Mike Donley retired from the City on March 28. Mike began his career in 1980 as a Montclair Police Officer. He transferred to the Fire Department in 1999 and held several administrative positions.

Mike was a loyal and dedicated employee for over 30 years. He is looking forward to finally working on long put-off projects around the house, and around his mom's house as well.

Best wishes, Mike, for a long and happy retirement.

### **PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

- Over the past few months, the Public Works Department has been plagued with calls from residents and Montclair Little League representatives regarding beehives in various trees and bushes around the City and in the walls and ceilings of the Saratoga Park snack bar.

There are generally three options when it comes to bees:

1. Let them be. Sometimes the bees are just resting while looking for a place to start a hive. If this is the case, they are usually gone within a few days. In most cases, however, the bees have chosen a place to rest that poses a danger to residents and they must be removed.
2. Use a pesticide on the hive, essentially killing the bees.
3. Relocate the hive—this is the City's method. The City utilizes a company that actually catches the bees by removing as much of the colony as possible. The beekeeper locates the queen bee within the hive and removes most of the hive with the queen and other bees attached. With no queen, lingering bees leave the area within a few days.

➤ **SUCCESSOR REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY/MONTCLAIR HOUSING CORPORATION**

- On Wednesday, March 27, representatives from the Montclair business community and the City of Montclair attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony held to welcome Auto Hobby as the newest member of the Chamber of Commerce. Several dignitaries attended the Chamber-hosted event and presented certificates of recognition to business owner Aaron Fidak. Dignitaries included Council Member Carolyn Raft; Wendy Medina of Congresswoman's Gloria Negrete McLeod's Office; and Chamber of Commerce Board Chair Henry Anchondo. Lunch was provided by Gourmet Gourmet Catering Inc.

Auto Hobby, a "Do-It-Yourself Garage," is located at 5512 Arrow Highway, Suite B. This brand new Montclair business provides auto enthusiasts with a clean workplace in which to maintain, repair, and improve their automobiles. Whether it is a simple oil change or brake job, to piecing together a brand new custom off-road machine, it can be done at Auto Hobby.

The City of Montclair proudly welcomes Auto Hobby to its growing small business community.

ECS:spa

*"A citizen of America will cross the ocean to fight for democracy, but won't cross the street to vote in a national election."*

*~ Bill Vaughan*

# APRIL 2013



06	Reserve Officers Awards Recognition Ceremony and Reception Police Department Atrium	3:00 p.m.
08	Planning Commission Meeting - <b>Canceled</b>	
09	City Manager's Staff Meeting City Hall Conference Room	9:00 a.m.
10	Oversight Board Meeting Council Chambers	6:00 p.m.
15	Code Enforcement Committee Meeting City Hall Conference Room	6:00 p.m.
15	Volunteer of the Year Awards Reception City Hall West Lobby	6:00 p.m.
15	City Council Meeting Council Chambers	7:00 p.m.
18	Safety Committee Meeting City Hall Conference Room	9:00 a.m.
18	Public Works Committee Meeting City Hall Conference Room	2:00 p.m.
21	National Volunteer Week – April 21-27, 2013	
22	Planning Commission Meeting Council Chambers	7:00 p.m.
23	Human Services Division's 32nd Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner, Montclair Community Center	5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
30	City Manager's Staff Meeting City Hall Conference Room	9:00 a.m.