

Bell Gardens Today

SPRING 2016



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Everything you need for SPRING - Complete recreation program information inside.

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CITY MANAGER

Welcome to the Spring Edition of Bell Gardens Today. Inside, you'll find stories about growing businesses, exemplary law enforcement, resources for natural disasters, recognizing some inspirational youth and exciting news about the future of our municipal golf course.

Over the last two years, things have been bustling at the corner of Florence and the I-710 freeway and in November, Governor Jerry Brown came to help cut the ribbon at The Bicycle Hotel and Casino, a project that created hundreds of jobs and will attract visitors from all over the globe. The Casino is a valuable asset in our community, as a profitable business, major employer, and a supporter of many community groups through the works of its charitable contributions.

While the California drought remains a concern, a strong El Niño system is expected to bring heavy rains to all of Southern California. The City of Bell Gardens is working with Los Angeles County to make sure we are storm-ready. Remember, even this downpour will not end the drought, so continue to save water when you can.

The City Council works hard to make sure that residents have the help they need when it comes to jobs, education,



child, family and senior care. That is why the Resource Center near City Hall is home to two agencies that help in those areas. Speaking of public service, meet the 2015-16 Miss Bell Gardens Court, four inspiring young women who will represent our city in the community.

And 2016 promises to deliver great things for golfers at Bell Gardens Golf Course in Ford Park. Learn all about the improvements and opportunities for young golfers, peruse the recreation schedule and pick a class to help you get healthy in the New Year and let us know if there's anything you'd like to see in the next issue of Bell Gardens Today. We'd love to hear from you at www.bellgardens.org.

Philip Wagner

CITY MANAGER

CASINO UPDATES

BICYCLE CASINO BEFORE AND AFTER



Over the last two years, a former parking lot of the Bicycle Casino has been transformed into a seven-story luxury hotel. The newly-branded Bicycle Hotel & Casino opened to the public on December 1, 2015, after a gala ribbon-cutting ceremony on

November 18. Now visitors will be able to enjoy gaming and world-class accommodations, including 29 luxury suites, a gastropub, cocktail lounge, spa and cabana-lined pool. For more on the Bicycle Hotel & Casino, see the story on page 4.



CITY OFFICIALS

Bell Gardens City Council

Jennifer Rodriguez, Mayor
Pedro Aceituno, Mayor Pro Tem
Priscilla Flores, Councilmember
Jose J. Mendoza, Councilmember
Maria Pulido, Councilmember

Philip Wagner, City Manager
John Oropeza, Assistant City Manager

The public is welcome at all city meetings, which are held in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 7100 Garfield Avenue, Bell Gardens:

CITY COUNCIL

2nd and 4th Monday of the month at 6 p.m.
Notice of Special City Council Meetings will be posted at City Hall and City facilities.

EDUCATION COMMISSION

2nd Thursday of the month at 5 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION

3rd Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m.

RECREATION, CULTURAL AND YOUTH COMMISSION

3rd Thursday of the month at 6 p.m.

SENIOR CITIZEN COMMISSION

2nd Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m.

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION

1st Tuesday of the month at 5:30 p.m.

WATER SAVINGS HELP CITY WATER FUND

The City of Bell Gardens and its residents have not only been able to conserve water during the current drought, but have also been able to help surrounding communities by leasing pumping rights for the surplus to the Golden State Water Company, garnering \$230,000 for the City's Water Fund.

The City has 1,914 acre-feet of groundwater pumping rights in the Central Groundwater Basin's Water Well #1. Bell Gardens has been able to service all of its customers by only using half of that allotment, leaving a 1,000 acre-feet surplus that has been leased for 2015-2016.

Should the needs of Bell Gardens' system be met in the same amount for 2016, the lease agreement will continue with Golden State Water Company, for the additional revenue of \$200,000 for fiscal 2016-2017.

On the Cover:
Bicycle Hotel and Casino

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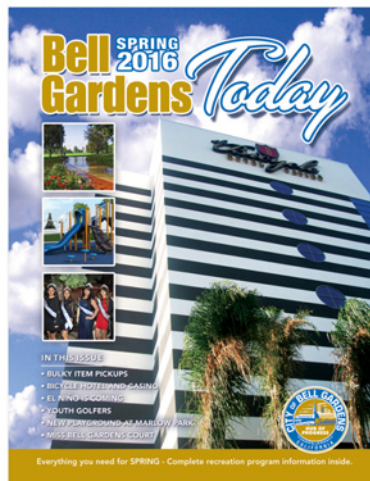
BULKY ITEM PICKUPS

Are you moving, remodeling or simply making some changes around your home? Single-family residences are offered an UNLIMITED number of scheduled "bulky-item" pick-ups every year. These pick-ups can include a variety of items, such as large and small household appliances, electronics, furniture, carpets, mattresses, white goods, oversized yard waste such as tree trunks and large branches no larger than two (2) feet in diameter and four (4) feet in length, and similar large discarded items.

Before scheduling a bulky-item pick-up, consider donating your usable goods to charity. To donate items, call **Goodwill Industries at (800) GOODWILL** or the **Salvation Army at (800) 95-TRUCK** for more information.



To schedule a pick-up contact **Athens Services at (888) 336-6100**, at least 24 hours prior to your regular collection day. Make sure the bulky item is not out for more than 24 hours prior to pick up.



Bell Gardens Today is published quarterly by the City of Bell Gardens to provide information to the community about the City's programs, services and activities.

Visit us at **www.bellgardens.org** for updated city information.

Go to **www.bgrecreation.org** for recreation programs and events. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

HOTEL AND CASINO COMBO HITS JACKPOT

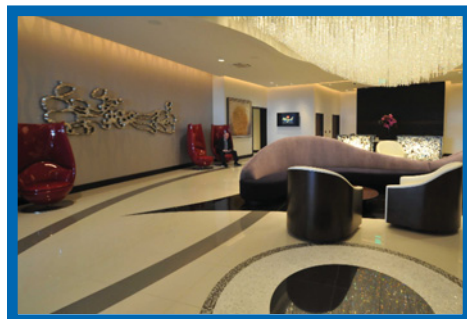
for Bell Gardens



The Bicycle Hotel and Casino, a project 10 years in the making, opened to the public December 1, revealing a four-star luxury experience for guests, and bringing hundreds of hospitality-focused jobs and increased tax revenue to Bell Gardens.

California Governor Jerry Brown, who was present at the hotel's groundbreaking in October 2013, was at a ribbon-cutting ceremony November 18, where he expressed support for the growth opportunities offered by the project's completion. "Bell Gardens is friendly and vibrant and this hotel puts it on the map," the Governor said.

"Economic development...takes people on the ground taking risks, doing things, having determination and having partners".



"This is important for the City, for Southern California and is also an affirmation that our system really works," he continued. "It's creating local jobs for local people and giving real pride and economic enthusiasm to the entire neighborhood." Hashem Minai, the managing partner and CEO of The Bicycle Hotel and Casino, credited a partnership with the City as part of the project's success, a sentiment echoed by City administrators.



"For 30 years, the Casino has had a positive economic impact on the community of Bell Gardens," said City Manager Philip Wagner. "Not only is the Casino the largest employer in our city, but as a major source of tax revenue, they have also contributed greatly to the city's growth and stability."

Built by R.D. Olsen Construction, with architecture by Lee & Sakahara Architects and interior design by Hager Design International, Inc., the \$50 million, seven-story, privately financed hotel features 99 elegantly appointed rooms and signature suites. Suites range from the Classic (648 sq. ft. of deluxe amenities) to the Presidential (2,007 sq. ft. that includes two bedrooms, a formal living room and a Jacuzzi tub). The complex also features a full resort spa, elevated outdoor pool deck with private cabanas, 9,000 square feet of multipurpose event and meeting spaces and a VIP gaming area with private rooms. Guests don't have to leave the gaming resort for great food and drink; The Bike



addition to the recreational component, the Casino is a major source of tax revenue and one of the largest employers in Southeast Los Angeles County." Tax revenue from the Casino provides about 40 percent of the Bell Gardens General Fund budget. In addition, it is estimated

that the new hotel will generate an additional \$160,000 in Transient Occupancy Tax (also known as "bed tax").



Brewery and the Asian-fusion Phoenix Café offer an innovative dining experience and 28 micro-brews on tap, including "The Bike Brew," a blonde ale brewed by Golden Road Brewery exclusively for The Bicycle Hotel and Casino.

In the Casino's 100,000 square-foot gaming area are 185 tables for poker and card games, including Texas Hold 'Em, Omaha, 7-Card Stud, Pai Gow Poker, Baccarat and Blackjack to name just a few. The Bicycle Casino is a featured host of the largest poker tournaments in Southern California, including the World Series of Poker Circuit Event and World Poker Tour.

In the last decade, the Bicycle Casino Foundation has supported many local charities and established scholarships for Bell Gardens High School students. They have sponsored youth events and civic celebrations, such as the Miss Bell Gardens pageant, and have recently invested in public safety and sports projects, including the completion of the Futsal court at Veteran's Park.

During the construction of the hotel, the Casino was responsible for creating 300 building-related jobs. The hotel opening created 160 new permanent hospitality jobs. "Casinos, like a large retailer or manufacturer, can have a great impact on the local economy, especially in a small community. In Bell Gardens, The Bicycle Hotel and Casino contributes greatly to the many different facets of the City's economic growth," Wagner said. "In

To learn more about The Bicycle Hotel and Casino, visit their website at www.TheBike.com or check them out on Facebook at /BicycleCasino, on Twitter @BicycleCasino and Instagram @BicycleCasino.



ARE YOU READY FOR THE RAIN? EL NIÑO IS COMING SOON



Heavy rainfall is expected from January through March due to an “El Niño” system in the Pacific Ocean and Southern California is expected to receive almost 70 percent more rain than normal during this period. The City of Bell Gardens has partnered with Los Angeles County to provide resources to help residents be safe and minimize damage.

These rains can cause flooding, downed power lines and outages, mudslides and fallen trees. City and County crews have cleared the storm drains and flood channels, but the amounts of rain forecast with this El Niño may create extremely dangerous conditions on streets and in neighborhoods.

Follow the National Weather Service on social media and the web as well as weather warnings on TV and radio. If you hear a flood or evacuation warning, **follow all instructions given**.

Create an emergency kit for your home and your car.

You may find yourself stranded away from home by sudden storms; make sure it is safe to shelter in place. If you already have kits prepared, make sure the contents are up to date. A basic emergency kit should include:

- ☼ Water, canned or nonperishable food (and a non-electric can opener)
- ☼ Cell phone and charger
- ☼ Battery- or solar-powered radio
- ☼ Flashlights, with extra batteries
- ☼ Whistle
- ☼ First aid kit
- ☼ Extra set of clothes for each member of the family
- ☼ Blankets
- ☼ Prescription and over-the-counter medications
- ☼ Copies of important family documents
- ☼ If you have pets, don't forget their food and leashes/carriers

Check your car - Make sure your car's **tires** have good tread and that your **windshield wipers** work well. Your **headlights** should always be on in the rain.



Check your house - Clear outside **drains and gutters** of any leaves, dirt or debris. Secure **trash, recycling bins, outdoor furniture** and any other items that could blow or float away. Make sure **trees** are sturdy enough to withstand storm winds.

Sandbags are useful to help protect your home and property by keeping water from flowing into structures and flooding them. **Free** sandbags are available from the Bell Gardens **Public Works Department** at 8327 Garfield Avenue and from **L.A. County Fire Station 39** at 7000 South Garfield Avenue. Fill and place them before the storm to minimize damage.

Don't take chances with your life - During significant storm events, avoid
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waterways, flood control channels and the ocean, which can all rapidly swell and become extremely dangerous. NO place outside is safe when lightning is in the area.

Flash flooding is a risk everywhere. If you find yourself approaching a flooded street or intersection, no matter how shallow it may seem, be prepared to "Turn Around and Don't Drown."

Use your cell phone for information and help -

Download "The Works," LA County's free app for iPhone and Android to report storm-related problems. Have emergency alerts sent to your mobile phone and email - register at lacounty.gov/emergency or search "Alert LA County" on the web.

Whether it's El Nino or earthquakes or fires, the way to handle disasters is to be prepared. Talk to your neighbors. Get together - at work, school, in a neighbor's garage or simply over a cup of coffee. Share online resources, assemble emergency kits, and make shelter or evacuation plans. For more information, visit the City's website at www.bellgardens.org

IMPORTANT NUMBERS:

Life-threatening emergencies: **911**

Bell Gardens City Hall **(562) 806-7700**

Bell Gardens Public Works (report fallen trees, mudslides, flooded streets) **(562) 806-7770**

Bell Gardens Police (accidents, road closures, broken street/traffic lights) **(562) 806-7600**

Fire Department **(562) 927-1211**

LA County Public Works (storm drains, flood channels) **(562) 806-7770**

Southern California Edison **(800) 684-8123**

SoCal Gas **(800) 427-2200**

American Red Cross **(562) 595-6341**

PUBLIC SAFETY BRIEFS

BRINGING IN THE STOLEN CARS

Officers in the Bell Gardens Police Department are setting the bar for stolen vehicle recoveries, something that the California Highway Patrol recognizes with their 10851 Award. Receiving their award pins at an October City Council meeting were Officers Robert Lopez and Victor Ruiz. We're proud of their hard work and dedication to the residents of Bell Gardens.

SALUTING A RECENT RETIREE

After nearly 27 years with the Bell Gardens Police Department, Senior Officer Bob Acosta retired from the police force on November 12, 2015. Officer Acosta had worked patrol, general investigations, special investigations, traffic and the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program. He also oversaw the Police Explorer post for several years. We'd like to thank Sr. Ofcr. Acosta for his many years of dedicated service and wish him well in his retirement.



TWO NEW FACES

The Bell Gardens Police Department recently welcomed a new police officer and a new dispatcher to the staff.



Officer Eduardo Garcia is a graduate of the Rio Hondo Police Academy and received his badge during swearing-in ceremonies attended by City officials and family members in October. He is now patrolling the streets and keeping them safe for all.

Dispatcher Stacey Escobedo

started at about the same time and all accounts say she's doing a great job.



Welcome and good luck to both on their new careers!

CITY PARTNERSHIP SCORES BIG FOR YOUTH GOLFERS

For the last 11 years, the City of Bell Gardens has been managing one of the city's hidden treasures, the Bell Gardens Golf Course in Ford Park. Big changes are underway, as the City partners with GolfLinks, which took over operations of the course in January, a move sure to bring about positive changes.

Golfers will notice some subtle changes right away such as new uniforms for the staff. Gradual course additions will include sand traps, a driving net, expanded greens and a full liquor license for the concession area. The improvements will liven up the 9-hole executive course and make it more challenging. Greens expansion will also improve accessibility for cyclists and hikers on the Rio Hondo trail.

"Bikers ride the trail for exercise, but there aren't a lot of places to stop," said Chris Daste, the

City's Director of Recreation and Community Services. "Now there will be a gate and signs welcoming them in to take a rest and get a bite to eat."

GolfLinks is also an advocate for youth golfers, offering free course time and establishing a Junior Instructional Program sanctioned by the Southern California Golf Association. The SCGA also offers scholarships that members can apply for in their junior year of high school.



MARLOW PARK TO SET THE NEW BAR(S) FOR HEALTHY PLAY

Thanks to a grant from the California Parks and Recreation Society, children in Bell Gardens will be able to enjoy a brand new play structure in Marlow Park starting in March. The brightly colored equipment, which will be installed atop an impact-absorbing rubber surface, will replace aging apparatus and is designed to encourage physical activity and fitness through active play.



"The play structure had become too old and we had to remove parts to keep it safe," explained Director of Recreation and Community Services Chris Daste. "This is state-of-the-art. It should be a magnet for kids in the community."

The equipment designed by grant partner PlayCore, was developed after extensive research, and fosters activities such as spinning, jumping, swinging and climbing, all part of healthy play.



In early October 2015, Bell Gardens applied to CPRS for a competitive Healthy Play Matching Grant to make the needed improvements at Marlow Park. They were selected as a 100% matching grant recipient and national demonstration site. The project will also utilize cooperative purchasing provisions that ensure the lowest competitive price that could save the city more than \$21,000. In addition, using this process allows the city to procure and install the playground equipment sooner.



INTRODUCING THE 2015-16 MISS BELL GARDENS ROYAL COURT

Four inspiring young women will represent Bell Gardens at community events as members of the 2015-16 Miss Bell Gardens Royal Court. The four women are:



Adriana Lara, who aspires to become a lawyer and is on the Principal's Honor Roll at Bell Gardens High School. She enjoys working out, painting and reading, is a member of TELACU, Upward Bound and College Bound and was named class representative of Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID).

Vanessa Perez, who currently attends UC Irvine and is studying Environmental Engineering. She speaks French and was a member of "La Table Francais Club" and has received

California Scholarship Federation, AVID and Honor Roll awards. She is looking forward to working and hopes to purchase a home for her mother.

Monique Morales, who hopes to study chemical engineering at UCLA, has been on the Honor Roll for three years, is a member of both the National Honor Society and CSF and was named Most Improved Soccer Player in 2013. She enjoys dancing, playing soccer and going to the beach.

Beatrice Sosa, a political science major at Rio Hondo Community College, plans to transfer to Cal State LA and eventually achieve her lifelong goal of becoming a veterinarian. She enjoys running, swimming and hiking and is a member of the French Club, ICARE and We Love Paws Organization.

The competition began several months ago with contestants participating in writing and public speaking workshops as well as familiarizing themselves with some of the event's past participants. Work, school and family commitments forced some of the original contestants to leave the group and with only four contestants left, it was decided to put aside the traditional pageant. The Royal Court was celebrated at a festive City Hall event November 9. All four women will receive scholarship stipends and, as a group, will be the face of the City at many community events.

RESOURCES? WE'VE GOT THEM RIGHT HERE

Around the corner from Bell Gardens City Hall is a building bustling with activity and services for Bell Gardens residents. The Resource Center at 6423 Florence Place, originally the vision of the City Council, is home to two non-profit agencies – the Human Services Association and the Southeast Community Development Corporation.

The Human Services Association provides social services and support to provide families with compassionate and comprehensive care to promote wellness and build strong communities. Services offered cover residents of all ages, from youth services such as Head Start, health enrollment services, Partnerships for Families (child abuse prevention) and Choose Health to family preservation guidance and domestic violence support services. To learn more about HSA's services, call (562) 806-5400 or visit www.hsala.org

The Southeast Community Development Corporation is primarily an employment support center ready to help

people get and keep a job. Bell Gardens residents can receive assistance in resume preparation, job search techniques and interview skills. The center maintains a computer lab to train job candidates on various programs and offers low-cost computers and affordable Internet service to its clients.

In addition, the SCDC also provides youth/student development services, with classes on coding and robotics and co-sponsors two important events: a college recruiting conference that also offers financial aid information and, with the Bell Gardens Chamber of Commerce, job fairs that are open to the public.

The center's hours are from 1 to 4 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays; 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Appointments for job seekers are available by calling (323) 585-4579. To learn more about SCDC, visit www.scdcorp.org.