

# Bell <sup>SUMMER</sup> 2017 Gardens

# Today

IT'S BEEN A BUSY  
YEAR FOR THE  
CITY OF  
BELL GARDENS



## CITY HALL

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



## MESSAGE FROM YOUR CITY MANAGER

**It's been a busy year** for the City of Bell Gardens and during a recent State of the City luncheon, we had the opportunity to review some of our many accomplishments. It was good to recognize the hard work of City staff and the support of the City Council and our residents as we move forward. We celebrated the opening of the beautiful 4-star hotel at the Bicycle Casino, the many grant-funded projects that contribute to public safety, new healthy recreational opportunities, energy conservation and an improvement in the quality of life in our community.

And our forward progress continues. In this issue of Bell Gardens Today, you can learn about City Hall's new agenda management system, which saves staff time and office resources; the growing success of our Passport Saturday program and the recognition received by the City for its financial stability, transparency and accountability.

In an effort to improve the appearance of Eastern Avenue, there are new parking restrictions to accommodate street sweepers. The City's emergency preparedness and response resources have increased with the deployment of a police supervisor vehicle newly-equipped to serve as a mobile command post. And we are very proud of the Bell Gardens Police Explorers being named Post of the Year, under the supervision of Sgt. Paul Camacho, who was named Advisor of the Year.

This summer will call for some creativity in keeping cool, as we've had to make the difficult decision of keeping the Ford Park pool closed until infrastructure and safety improvements



can be made. Look for new specials at the Bell Gardens Golf Course, as renovations continue, and make sure to check out the new playground equipment at Gallant Park. Another familiar recreational spot in Veterans Park, remodeled and reborn as the Bell Gardens Boys and Girls Club, is welcoming back children and families for a wide array of programs.

Bell Gardens' youth took center stage at our annual Student Government Day held on April 4, when high school seniors shadowed City staff to learn about job opportunities, higher education, career planning and municipal government. This event always inspires us, seeing young people curious about how the City is run and eager to step in. They are, after all, the future of our City.

As always, your input is welcome on any City issue or concern. Get in touch with City Hall, we'd love to hear from you. Give us a call at (562) 806-7700 or visit us at [www.bellgardens.org](http://www.bellgardens.org).

*Philip Wagner*

CITY MANAGER

## SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

### AUTOMATED AGENDA PROCESS SAVES TIME AND RESOURCES

The City of Bell Gardens went live with the new agenda management system NovusAgenda on February 28, 2017. This system automates the review of agenda reports and agenda packets, saving a significant amount of staff time and conserving City resources such as paper and copy machine costs. Before the introduction of NovusAgenda, staff used a time-consuming email and paper-based process to schedule items for upcoming meetings, prepare reports and attachments, review and revise those reports and prepare the Council agenda and packet.

The system was developed by Novusolutions, a company with 14 years of experience working with schools, special districts, and municipalities across the country. Agenda packets will soon be archived online and allow increased access to City staff.

Once the City's new website goes live, which is anticipated later this year, the public will also experience the benefits of this easy-to-search web portal for full agenda packets and meeting minutes that will be viewable on any type of device, computer, tablet or phone.



## CITY OFFICIALS

### Bell Gardens City Council

Jose J. Mendoza, *Mayor*

Priscilla Flores, *Mayor Pro Tem*

Pedro Aceituno, *Councilmember*

Maria Pulido, *Councilmember*

Jennifer Rodriguez, *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.

## PARKING RESTRICTIONS MAKE FOR CLEANER EASTERN AVENUE

Cleaner streets are the goal of the City as it implements a new street sweeping schedule on Eastern Avenue. Effective June 1, 2017, parking on Eastern Avenue between the north city limit and the south city limit will be limited on Monday and Friday mornings, when sweepers will clean the streets and gutters.

This will involve some parking changes: There will be NO parking on the west side of Eastern Avenue from 6 to 8 a.m. Mondays and NO parking on the east side of Eastern Avenue from 6 to 8 a.m. on Fridays.

The street sweeping will achieve the City's goals of keeping trash out of the system and avoiding disciplinary action from the Environmental Protection Agency. Cities can be fined for offenses such as garbage, soil, rocks, debris or pollutants going down storm drains.

While the parking restrictions and sweeping will begin June 1, the month of June will be an "education period" and violators will receive a warning. Parking enforcement, in the form of ticketing, begins July 1, 2017.

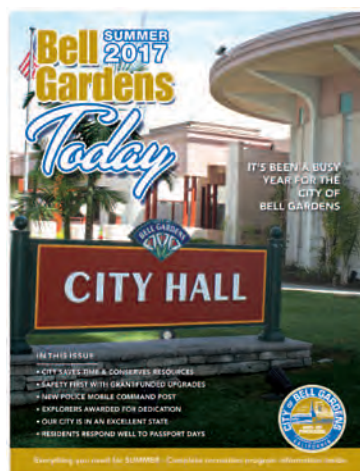
For questions or concerns about the new street sweeping and parking schedule, contact the **City of Bell Gardens Department of Public Works** at (562) 806-7770.

**On the Cover:**  
*It's been a busy year for Bell Gardens City Hall.*

## POLICE SUPERVISOR VEHICLE NOW A MOBILE COMMAND POST

The vehicle force for the Bell Gardens Police Department just got stronger with the addition of specialized electronics in the vehicle used by the patrol field supervisor. The City Council allocated the funding for this upgrade in December, and the 2016 Chevrolet Tahoe is now equipped with emergency lights, siren, light controls, interior prisoner cage, window barriers, locking weapon rack, cargo equipment and a Mobile Digital Computer.

In addition, because this vehicle may also serve as a command post in critical incidents, the field supervisor's vehicle must have the capability of communicating with any law enforcement agency, regardless of that agency's radio network, which requires the installation of three different radio systems. This vehicle is now in service.



**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](http://www.bellgardens.org) for updated City information.

Go to [www.bgrecreation.org](http://www.bgrecreation.org) for recreation programs and events. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram.



## EXPLORERS AWARDED FOR DEDICATION AND SERVICE

March was a stellar month for the Bell Gardens Police Department Explorers, as their advisor, Sgt. Paul Camacho, was named Advisor of the Year and Post 673 was honored as Explorer Post of the Year.

Currently, the program includes 22 Explorers and 8 applicants. Law Enforcement Exploring provides young adults personal awareness of the criminal justice system through training, practical experience, competition and other activities.



"I was happy to be recognized for all of the hard work we put into the program and it was nice that Learning for Life recognized such a small department as Bell Gardens. I really believe we have one of the best programs in Los Angeles County," Camacho said proudly.

Although the recognition is appreciated, Camacho feels that the rewards of being an advisor are many. He said he came from a background familiar to those in the program; where drugs, gangs and the lack of mentors are a daily challenge.

"It's paying it forward, to work with the youth of Bell Gardens, to inspire them and share things that I did as a young man and tell them that life is a roller coaster – there are good times and bad times – but if you have the passion, the desire and are willing to put in the hard work, you will fulfill your goals."

"Under his leadership, I have seen remarkable changes in so many of the young men and women," wrote Bell Gardens Police Chief Robert Barnes in his recommendation letter. "I have seen once shy and timid kids become very confident and self-assured after time in the program, with noticeable positive change in their attitude and demeanor. This



positive change to our Post has evolved through structure, mentoring, training and education, and a dedicated program of community involvement."

Explorers support many of the community efforts of police officers, helping at DUI checkpoints, training in weapons tactics with the Special Operations Team and learning CPR. Under Camacho's direction, they have also focused on continuing education and participate in several community outreach programs, including fire prevention campaigns, National Night Out, Bicycle Rodeo, LA County Homeless Count, Blue Mass, fishing derby, Tour de Sewer bicycle event, annual breakfast for seniors and Neighbors for Neighbors.



## BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB REOPENS

There's a new Club in town and the excitement is evident. Parents and kids who used to frequent the Rio Hondo Boys and Girls Club at Veterans Park have been anxiously waiting since the old club closed in 2015 for renovations and their patience has paid off.

The facility, which takes up 18,550 square feet of the park building, has been completely overhauled. New surfaces were applied to both outside walls and inside walls, asbestos was removed, rooms were painted, storage and administrative offices built as well as a completely new gymnasium and dance room.

Perhaps the best change is that the name of the club now reflects its home community – Bell Gardens Boys and Girls Club.

"The Boys and Girls Club offers amenities and programs that augment the activities that we provide," said Chris Dasté, Bell Gardens Director of Recreation and Community Services. "Their afterschool programs are going to provide tremendous opportunities for the youth of Bell Gardens in a safe and positive atmosphere."

Calvin Lyons, President and CEO of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Los Angeles, said that he believes that having a club in the neighborhood not only changes



lives, it saves them." "We make sure that there is a high quality of programming," Lyons said. "It's all about the kids."

The new Bell Gardens Boys and Girls Club operates at Veterans Park with a subsidy from the City of Bell Gardens.

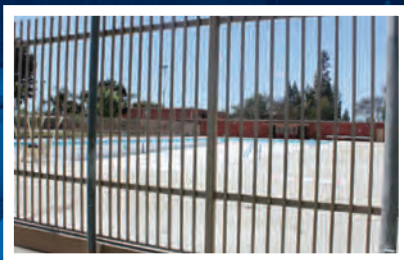
"The City does an amazing job serving the community," said Kimberly Washington, VP of Resource Development at BGCMLA. "We are able to provide extra help to serve the kids and parents. We have programs on literacy, health and wellness, organized sports, tutoring and mentoring for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

"The kids have missed it," she continued. "The Club builds character and gives its members a chance to give back to the community. By giving back, it gives members a sense of pride and local ownership."

## FORD PARK POOL CLOSED FOR REPAIRS THROUGHOUT SUMMER

Although temperatures are predicted to be "hot as usual," a significant number of required repairs have forced City officials to make the difficult decision of not opening the pool at Ford Park this summer.

City Manager Philip Wagner said that public safety is the City's priority and the aging pool needs some serious upgrades to make it safe for residents to enjoy.



"It's an old pool," Wagner said. "It's just things that need to be fixed after being used for so many years. There are issues with the filters and the stability of the

pool itself, so we're having engineers and staff look at it and come up with a plan."

The pool was part of a series of projects in a Five-Year Capital Improvement Master Plan recently presented to the City Council. Many City buildings need attention, including the pool and other buildings at Ford Park as well as several other locations around the city.

Because the pool will be closed, Recreation staff is considering some alternative programs, such as a possible beach bus or water play activities to keep park patrons cool during the summer months. Check for updates at [bgrecreation.org](http://bgrecreation.org).



## OUR CITY IS IN AN EXCELLENT STATE

During a recent gathering hosted by the Bell Gardens Chamber of Commerce, the City of Bell Gardens had the opportunity to present the State of the City, an overview of its accomplishments in the areas of public safety, development, fiscal stability, programming and civic interaction.

The report provided a brief summary of many of the City's recent accomplishments and provided those in attendance a snapshot of the highlights. While the accomplishments are many, staff stressed that there is always more work to be done and vowed to continue to raise the bar of excellence.

Despite the recent "Great Recession" and the statewide dissolution of redevelopment agencies, prudent budget reductions and spending controls ensured no interruptions in public services.

The City of Bell Gardens is a model for the original legislative intent for redevelopment. Before Ross, Marshalls, Starbucks and Petco opened their doors, the area around Florence and Eastern was a collection of vacant lots and rundown buildings. Drugs, crime and pornography were prevalent in the area, but redevelopment money paid for improvements that have not only provided jobs, but also revenue for City services.

Without redevelopment funding from the state, the City is now actively recruiting developers to privately fund projects to continue this successful retail venture.



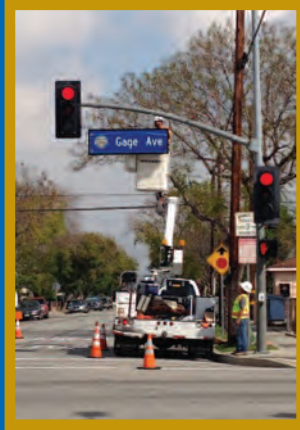
The City continues to make steady progress towards financial stability. Recently, the City Council received the results of an independent financial audit showing absolutely no accounting discrepancies and proving the strength and security of City finances.

To augment the City's budget, staff actively sought and obtained more than \$11 million in grants. Some of the grant-funded projects include:

- *Improvements at the intersections of Eastern and Florence*
- *Shared bike lanes and disability-compliant access ramps at intersections*
- *Upgraded turn signals at the intersection of Florence at Jaboneria*
- *A 12-month campaign by Bell Gardens Police Department to prevent traffic-related injuries and deaths*
- *Safety improvements in the intersections at Eastern at Lubec and Garfield at Loveland, funded by the Caltrans Highways Safety Improvement Program*
- *Installation of computerized traffic controls that will allow police, fire and paramedics to turn red lights to green at six major intersections to speed their response to emergencies*
- *A new grant from the Storm Water Grant Program will fund the first phase of a reservoir project at Ford Park, with an estimated completion date in July 2020.*

Other upgrades and changes implemented by the City vary greatly:

- *New, illuminated street signs were installed in 37 intersections; the signs use LED technology, which makes them brighter and more energy-efficient.*
- *Active Neighborhood Watch and Business Watch programs make crime prevention a top priority.*
- *A full-time abatement program targets the problem of graffiti.*
- *Cameras in public places around City Hall and other public areas allow Bell Gardens Police to view activity in real time.*
- *License plate reader cameras can detect stolen vehicles and technology has helped increase the recovery of stolen vehicles.*
- *The Bell Gardens Golf Course at Ford Park received a four-star rating on golfink.com and has recently had improvements made to the clubhouse and course itself.*
- *The City of Bell Gardens became one of the first Southern California cities to achieve a 75% recycling rate after putting into practice a "no*



*sort” practice before trash collection. In cooperation with Athens Services, all residential trash collected is now taken to a material recovery facility where the process more than doubles the materials actually recycled and decreases the amount of trash being dumped into landfills.*

- *Bell Gardens was one of the first cities in Los Angeles County to install AEDs (Automatic External Defibrillators) in City buildings and police patrol vehicles. Most of the employees at City Hall and all sworn police personnel at the Police Department have been trained in CPR and use of the life-saving devices. And all full-time civilian employees of the City recently received disaster training focusing on surviving an earthquake or active shooter incident.*
- *The City’s website is in the process of being redesigned to become more informative, along with its presence on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, and a new phone app for the Bell Gardens Police Department was introduced last year.*
- *Being on the cutting edge of technology is one of the City’s goals and staff continues to make changes to improve the public’s ability to interact with staff, improve public safety and save tax dollars. From the City’s telephone system, emails and data that utilize the internet for communications to the computer-aided police dispatch center, Bell Gardens is truly “A Hub of Progress.”*



The State of the City report is just a summary of its successes and accomplishments. Financial challenges have been overcome and the result is stability, of which the City is very proud.

## AWARD-WINNING FINANCIAL PRACTICES

For the fifth consecutive year, the City of Bell Gardens received an Award of Excellence for its annual Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting. This shows accountability, transparency and the City’s financial security.

“While some egregious violations of the public trust have taken place in a few nearby cities and public agencies, those problems are not happening nor have they ever taken place in Bell Gardens. Our annual independent financial audits have proven that,” said Bell Gardens City Manager Philip Wagner.

“We are mindful that we have been placed in a position of great public trust and responsibility and the City of Bell Gardens takes that obligation seriously,” Wagner continued. “In fact, we are constantly evaluating our fiscal policies, procedures and spending practices, and taking aggressive steps to ensure maximum accountability and transparency to the taxpayers we serve. We can assure the community that we have a very stringent system in place of checks and balances to ensure the highest standards of financial security and we have internal controls in place to ensure that these safeguards can never be circumvented.”

The City is operating this year with a \$30 million unrestricted General Fund budget. The entire budget, which includes the General Fund, all special revenues, capital projects, enterprise funds and the Successor Agency totals nearly \$45 million. The City is always faced with the challenge of maximizing the effectiveness of resources and as a result, staff continuously seeks grant funds to supplement the budget.



## RESIDENTS RESPOND WELL TO CITY HALL PASSPORT DAYS

During a very successful Passport Day on March 25 a total of 47 passports were processed, prompting the City to schedule another special Passport Day on June 17, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at City Hall. Appointments are required for this event and may be scheduled by calling **(562) 806-7706**.

"We are continuously looking for ways to streamline and bring efficiencies to the passport acceptance program to be able to accommodate as many customers as possible," said Bell Gardens City Clerk Kristina Santana.

To apply for a passport, you must bring the following:

- ✦ **One recent passport-sized photo (2x2)**
- ✦ **Valid proof of identity (applicant or parents of minor) and copy of front and back of ID**
- ✦ **Completed application for a passport (use black ink only)**
- ✦ **Evidence of U.S. Citizenship (Certificate of Citizenship or certified copy of birth certificate) and copy. If you have had a name change (such as marriage or adoption), or special circumstances, additional documents may be required**
- ✦ **Passport fees, payable to the U.S. Department of State, in the form of check or money order only**
- ✦ **\$25 execution fee payable to City of Bell Gardens by cash, credit, check or money order**



## Passport fees:

- ✦ **Under 16 years of age: \$80 for passport book, \$15 for passport card**
- ✦ **Age 16 and over: \$110 for passport book, \$30 for passport card**

All forms are available at the City of Bell Gardens City Clerk's office or can be downloaded online from

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/forms.html>. Additional information is available on the website, or you may call the Department of State at **(877) 487-2778** or the City of Bell Gardens City Clerk's office at **(562) 806-7706**.

## PAY ATTENTION TO WHERE YOU PARK

Parking is a problem that concerns everyone and it is common knowledge that spaces are at a premium within the City limits. Drivers are reminded that it is illegal to block driveways and sidewalks, especially those with handicap access ramps.

Parking in these areas are violations of California Vehicle Code Section 22500, which states:



"A person shall not stop, park, or leave standing any vehicle whether attended or unattended, except when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic or in compliance with the directions of a peace officer or official traffic control device in any of the following places:

(e) (1) In front of a public or private driveway, except that a bus engaged as a common carrier, school bus, or a taxicab may stop to load or unload passengers when authorized by local authorities pursuant to an ordinance.

(f) On a portion of a sidewalk, or with the body of the vehicle extending over a portion of a sidewalk

(l) In front of or upon that portion of a curb that has been cut down, lowered or constructed to provide wheelchair accessibility to the sidewalk."

Drivers should be aware that the Bell Gardens Police Department is actively looking for these violations and will ticket offenders. Property owners and renters should also be aware that drivers parking in front of their residences, whether they live at that residence or not, are not in violation of any laws.



## GALLANT PARK NEW PLAYGROUND A POPULAR SPOT

The kids screamed with delight and parents happily watched them swarm over the new play equipment at Gallant Park in early April during ribbon-cutting ceremonies for the upgraded playground.



“The City has a goal of creating a healthy environment for kids and their families,” said Chris Dasté, Director of Recreation and Community Services. “Playgrounds like this make it easy for families to get outside and spend quality time together being active.”

The multi-leveled play structure features slides, spiral and ridge climbers and a loop ladder, as well as an adjacent swing set. The equipment vendor, GameTime, gave the City an \$8,828 grant to defray expenses and the balance of the project’s \$65,000 cost was covered through Public Works’

Operations and Capital Improvement Project accounts.



## STUDENT GOVERNMENT DAY



More than 100 students participated in the annual Job Shadowing Event held in April

## BELL GARDENS GOLF COURSE IS THE PLACE TO PLAY

Management of the Bell Gardens Golf Course at Ford Park has returned to the City’s Recreation staff after being run for the last year by GolfLinks, an outside contractor who made several improvements to the course.

In the last year, the clubhouse has been updated, four new TV screens have been added and there is beer on tap. On the course, four bunkers have been added and the greens and surrounding areas have been groomed for the best possible golfing experience.

Recent Yelp! reviews called the Bell Gardens Golf Course “beautiful,” called the tacos in the clubhouse “delicious” and complimented the staff for being “friendly and warm” and offering “reasonably low prices.”

The City is hoping to reestablish some of the favorite tournaments of its regular golfers, such as the Father’s Day event in June and a Mexican Independence Day Tournament in September.

Special promotions are being offered now and include: Early Bird Specials on Tuesdays: two rounds of golf for the price of one, with the second round beginning before 9 a.m. and Two-For-One Night Golf on Wednesdays from 6 to 10 p.m.; the second round must be started by 8:30 p.m.

Don’t have a set of clubs? No problem, Footgolf might be just the sport for you. It’s a soccer version of golf that is played with the feet and a soccer ball; the holes are larger and the course is adjacent to the golf greens. Footgolf can be played Tuesdays from 5 to 10 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 2 to 6 p.m., for a reduced fee of \$8.

