

The Ten Most Powerful People In Long Beach Are...

by Ryan ZumMallen

In putting together our third annual Most Powerful People In Long Beach list, we examined dozens of people from all walks of life in Long Beach. The city is full of people who use their abilities and influence to change the way we live each and every day. That made our decision very, very difficult.

The list we are unveiling is full of people who have gained notoriety for the decisions they have made, the actions they have taken, and their leadership throughout Long Beach to produce results. We also looked for "the ones to watch" who will continue to have influence in the future.

Thanks to an overwhelming response from you, our readers, we received over 200 nominations. We wish we could have included each and every person, and surely some of the people you nominated will continue to expand their influence and appear on our future lists.

But for now, we look to the people today who use their power to shape our community so that Long Beach continues to be the best city in the world.

1: Skip Keesal

The founder and CEO of Long Beach's most influential law firm makes the top of the list thanks to his efforts both inside and outside the courtroom - his office is decorated with photos of him with everyone from President Barack Obama to Senator Dianne Feinstein to Former President George Bush.

Local and national politicians seek his advice, and his behind-the-scenes work with a slew of local charities keeps their operations running smoothly. He has recently hosted receptions in his office for Attorney General and Gubernatorial Candidate Jerry Brown and Lt. Governor John Garamendi.

His influence also reaches far beyond the courtroom and into the lives of everyday Long Beach residents. Whether it is his role on the Board of Governors at CSULB, the Board of Trustees with the Boys and Girls Club, or his involvement with the Long Beach Police Foundation. He is also a shrewd businessman with major development assets in Downtown Long Beach, including a proposal for a new multi-tower development on Ocean Blvd.

People come to Skip because he has his finger on the pulse of the city. It's the highest of compliments to say that Keesal did not make this list because his law firm is one of the city's largest and most influential; it is because he's used his local notoriety to benefit the lives of others. Skip Keesal is our most powerful person in Long Beach.





2: Mayor Bob Foster and Chief of Staff Becki Ames

As Mayor Foster creeps closer to his re-election campaign next summer, he is building a massive campaign war-chest, and he continues to make major impacts in Long Beach.

He guided a difficult budget process this year, and has been leading regional efforts to green the Port of Long Beach and the clean the air. It has been his leadership with the Clean Trucks Program that has changed the culture of operations at the nation's busiest seaport.

While we still wait for initial figures on resulting air quality, no one can deny the impact made by the program's success in replacing 80% of trucks with models that produce cleaner emissions. He is also the dominating force in Long Beach politics and rules much of the Council with an iron fist. Many will still remember the unsuccessful infrastructure parcel tax proposed by the Mayor, but more will remember his signature issues of air quality and greening the port.

From behind the scenes, his Chief of Staff Becki Ames is a major power player, lobbying with local officials and statewide legislators alike to change policy and life in Long Beach. She is his right hand, and has been empowered by the Mayor to represent him on important policy issues. When she speaks, she speaks for the Mayor.

3: Dick Steinke

The Port of Long Beach faces difficult times as cargo traffic continues to decline due to the tough economy, but Steinke and his team have already begun planning for the future with the massive approval of the Middle Harbor complex and a possible renewal of most of the Port's rail system next year.

Steinke and Port officials are building now to ensure that they'll be able to handle demand when it picks back up. He leads the biggest and most important economic engine in the region, and the green port policy continues to make a global impact. Energy efficient solutions to decades of problems will determine the success of his tenure and ultimately, the health and air quality of the South Bay region.

Under his leadership, the Harbor Commission and Mayor Foster, the Green Port Policy is already gaining international attention. Steinke is number three on the list.



4: The Education Trio

With the Long Beach Unified School District's \$250,000 award for winning a Broad Prize nomination this year, California State University, Long Beach's continual migration deeper into the heart of the Long Beach community and Long Beach City College's leadership on the College Promise and student success, the leaders of Long Beach's education systems hold more influence than ever.

Chris Steinhauser, Eloy Ortiz Oakley and F. King Alexander impact the direction of our city, region and state every day by educating our youth, young adults and returning adult students. The Long Beach College Promise, a new pact between all three institutions, will increase college access and seamless education in Long Beach.



When all three convened in April to draw attention to progression of the proposed Kroc Center, the message was clear: this facility will provide resources to our city's children that will significantly improve their opportunity to learn and

grow. For these reasons and more, Chris Steinhauser, Eloy Oakley and F. King Alexander continue to mold not only young minds but the very way that public education works in our nation.

5: Mario, John, Martha, Michelle and Janet Molina (*Janet not pictured*)

Long Beach based Molina Healthcare has been continually noted as one of the nation's best systems since being founded in 1980, and is now run by brothers Mario and John. Since taking the reigns when their father passed away in 1996 - Mario as President & CEO, John as CFO - the company has flourished and become a prominent healthcare enterprise serving the city's vulnerable populations.



One of Long Beach's most visible power couples, John and Michelle Molina are constantly exercising their power in the realms of healthcare, charity, development, media and much more throughout the city. As CFO of Molina Healthcare, John has been on the forefront of providing affordable, quality healthcare to millions of patients as the business has grown to now encompass seven states.

Michelle is one of Long Beach's most tireless charity advocates, since creating **PeacePartners** - now a national organization providing learning environments for children across the country - in 2003. Since the two began running Long Beach Magazine a few years ago, it has become one of the most comprehensive representations of life in the city.

In addition to Michelle's work with young children, Janet Molina Watt has broken new ground with her Little Owl Preschool in North Long Beach, the first privately-owned LEED (Leader in Energy and Environmental Design) certified building in the city - just one more example of the changing face of education, thanks to the Molina crew.

Lastly, Martha Molina Bernadett has taken a proactive role with the ever-expanding Molina Foundation, taking profits made through investments and reinvesting them back into the community through various local charities. It's truly an all-encompassing effort from the extended Molina family.

6: Rich Archbold & the staff of the Press-Telegram



The Press-Telegram may have its critics, but they are still by far the most read news publication in Long Beach. Executive Editor Rich Archbold, and Opinion Page Editor Larry Allison, leads a team of dedicated and hard-working news and opinion writers. They include Paul Eakins, John Canalis, Kevin Butler, Chris Berry, Kelly Puente, Harold Glicken and many others.

Their stories and commentary reach over 280,000 people daily in print, and nearly 100,000 people daily online. If it gets reported on the front page of the Press-Telegram, Long Beach is going to talk about it. Even as they adapt to major changes, they still dominate the news coverage in Long Beach.

7: Councilmembers Gary DeLong & Gerrie Schipske

Seeing Councilmembers Gary DeLong and Gerrie Schipske mentioned in the same breath may come as a surprise, because they really could not be any more different. DeLong's a Republican, Schipske's a Democrat. Schipske's fearlessly independent, DeLong likes to build coalitions with the Mayor, Schipske has led the charge against the Wetlands transaction, DeLong has supported. And the list goes on, and on.



Yet, in their constant roles as polar opposites, DeLong and Schipske have become guiding forces on the Council. DeLong, more than any other Councilmember deserves credit for his role in crafting the city budget. Schipske has taken a lead in many reforms and has taken up the cause for many community activists. However, they often take the same side of an issue - take for instance, the issue of employee pensions within the City budget. While taking two different stances, these two Councilmembers have managed to each assume a leading role. Schipske has called for open, public negotiations on City pension contracts and DeLong was the only "No" vote on the

proposed Police contract a few weeks ago. Both are seeking re-election in the coming months, it will be interesting to see what their future political ambitions may be. Councilmembers DeLong and Schipske are seventh on our list.

8: Deputy Chief Robert Luna and Commander Jorge Cisneros



Two of the top candidates to replace Anthony Batts as Chief of the Long Beach Police Department are also the force's two highest-ranking Latino officers, Deputy Chief Robert Luna and Commander Jorge Cisneros. Boasting a combined 42 years of service with the LBPd, both Luna and Cisneros have served as two of Batts' top aides for several years, and look primed to be promoted to the top spot at the Department.

It is well known that both Luna (who often handled duties in Batts' absence and regularly addressed the media) and Cisneros (Batts' Chief of Staff and chief advisor) want the job. Both are highly-decorated with a long history of police work in Long Beach. They also represent the growing influence that Latinos are beginning to have in the City.

9: Justin Rudd

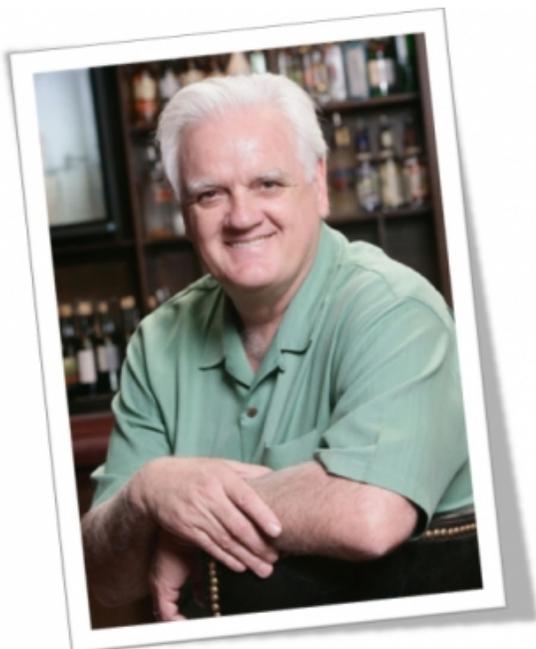
You know the name, you know the events, and you even know his dog, Rosie. After nearly a decade of community activism in Long Beach, Justin Rudd continues to exercise and expand his power as a citizen simply by willing his events into success.

With the 9th annual Howl'oween dog parade fast approaching, and 123 consecutive months of beach cleanup events under his belt, Rudd has proven the power of community as these events and more regularly draw hundreds of residents to volunteerism. The larger parades number in the thousands of spectators. His fitness boot camps and weight-loss challenges are the root of some of the city's most inspirational tales.

Why does he do it all? Probably because he can, and the message behind Justin Rudd's activism is that anyone can inspire a community if they really want to.



10: John Morris



A Long Beach legend, John Morris has his hands in a little bit of everything. Morris has played a pivotal role in reintroducing street events to Pine Avenue that drew thousands on New Year's Eve and throughout the summer. In the past, Morris has lobbied for more accountability from the Port on water and air quality, and has been a tireless advocate of revitalizing the downtown business district.

He is considered the pioneer of Pine Avenue and uses his influence and network to promote the Downtown and local businesses. From his table at Smooth's Sports Grille, Morris is also the go-to-guy for information. Want to know the latest city gossip, call John Morris. Need help with a development or a project, call John Morris. He has also recently teamed up with the wildly-popular Bouchee's Bistro to integrate their restaurant and brand at Smooths. He knows where all of Long Beach's skeletons are buried - and that's powerful.

Ones To Watch

Bud Johnson



The retired engineer conducted his own study of the breakwater before the City Council even began to commission their own report, and all he ever asked was that his findings be considered.

It was better than that - Johnson's study results were included in the City-commissioned breakwater report that will be examined by the US Army Corps of Engineers to consider whether or not to modify the structure, proving that any determined citizen can have a significant impact on a local and even federal scale.

Johnson constantly warns that the fight for modification is far from over, and recently hinted that the same can be said for his work. Time will tell.

Craig Beck

The economy has hit development in Long Beach hard, but its recovery will largely depend on one man - Craig Beck. Beck is the person holding the development purse-strings as the city's Director of Planning & Building as well as Executive Director of the Redevelopment Agency. He gives the green light to projects, and has enormous influence over the RDA board and planning staff. Many criticize the power he has been given by city management over projects and funding - but right or wrong, he has it and uses it. He also sits on the Downtown Long Beach Associates (DLBA) and has started pulling his weight in that organization.



Blair Cohn



Born and raised in Long Beach, Cohn is tirelessly involved with organizations throughout the city, currently serving as executive director of the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association. Since taking the lead of the BKIA, he has made drastic and welcomed changes to Bixby Knolls. He has created new programs, recruited new businesses and has infused a new energy and life into one of Long Beach's most vital communities.

Cohn is gaining a huge following for his success and is certainly one to watch. Grumbling and rumors have already begun circulating about his next move, we will have to wait and see.

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