

## BEACHCOMBING

By Jay Beeler

I have a confession to make: I'm a weekend warrior.

Most recently I installed a new hood above our new cook top and built some new kitchen cabinets. It's great exercise for a desk jockey and you really get a sense of accomplishment doing things yourself.

This activity also involves frequent trips to stores like Lowe's, Long Beach Plywood, Ace Hardware, Coastal Paint or – as a last resort because the tax dollars don't come to Long Beach – Home Depot in Signal Hill.

This is why I find certain University Park Estates (UPE) residents' opposition to a Home Depot Design Center on Studebaker Road – in the center of a blighted industrial area – amazingly short sighted.

The truth of the matter is that our homes are our most prized possession. Americans are spending hundreds of billions of dollars each year on home improvements and have skyrocketed companies like Home Depot to the second-largest retailer nationwide (after Wal-Mart) with \$81.5 billion in sales last year.

With just half the number of stores as Home Depot, Lowe's recently released an earnings report stating a 37 percent sales surge with \$43.2 billion in 2005 sales.

The UPE opposition cites increased traffic concerns, day laborers, site contamination, inappropriate land use and a variety of other reasons to say no to Home Depot. But if you look at the Lowe's on Bellflower Blvd., you don't see traffic issues or day laborers, because they don't live in East Long Beach, and the newer Design Centers are less contractor-oriented, contain more exhibit space, and are geared to the homeowner.

The only site contamination is from a small amount of petroleum-based material at the base of existing fuel tanks, about one-foot deep and two-feet wide, from prior treatment of tank exteriors to prevent corrosion and rusting. It'll be easily removed in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

What the Design Center will bring to Long Beach is 389 new jobs, \$650,000-plus annually for the city's general fund (according to a recent economic study), removal of a blighted

tank farm in the middle of an area zoned general industrial, as well as convenient shops, a restaurant and a home improvement center that's currently lacking in Southeast Long Beach.

The company has already committed to invest \$5 million in traffic improvements, sewer upgrades, new parkland, site improvements, and everything possible in their effort to be a good neighbor.

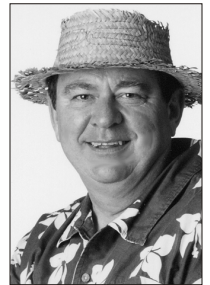
The opposition by local residents and certain politicians is inappropriate and unfounded. I'm reminded of the roadblocks decades ago put in the path of the automobile dealers and other large retailers to locate in Long Beach, thus driving them into Signal Hill.

Candidates seeking votes from the UPE homeowners claim "we need more time" to study the traffic issues, especially with the Lennar project being proposed at PCH and 2nd St. Yes, that project will make the PCH/2nd St. situation worse if Studebaker Road is not built between 2nd St. and Pacific Coast Hwy. No, the Design Center will not have the same impacts, as evidenced by the traffic volume at Lowe's on Bellflower.

So all of my fellow like-minded weekend warriors who'd like to see the tank farm removed, new jobs created in Long Beach, and more tax dollars stay in the community should visit the recently launched website at [www.designcenter4lb.com](http://www.designcenter4lb.com) or call (562) 597-0509.

This website is part an information campaign backed by local residents who support the project and want to separate the fiction from fact in the hopes that those opposing it will quit looking this gift horse in the mouth. Government Solutions, Home Depot's local community relations firm, has agreed to reimburse my PR firm, Beeler & Associates, for assembling the website, mailers and other public education materials, so your personal endorsement is all that's needed.

Together, we can do what's in the best interests of the entire city, not just the very vocal minority. I look forward to hearing from you.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Beeler".