



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Farmers & Merchants Bank Donates \$11,000 to Long Beach Neighborhood Association

Long Beach, Calif., February 16, 2011 — Farmers & Merchants Bank (F&M) donated \$11,000 to the Willmore City Heritage Association (WCHA) in early February. When funds were scarce for the 7th and Maine Beautification Project, F&M Chief Executive Officer Henry Walker stepped in to fund a large portion of the next phase.

“How do you thank somebody in a time of peril,” said Jim Danno, Community Outreach Coordinator of WCHA. “Through his kindness, he made our dream a reality.” The donation was invested in removing a large expanse of asphalt and grading the project site. This step was critical to setting the foundation for the entire venture. The original estimate for this portion of the undertaking was valued at \$33,000. However, Walker reached out to his network base to reduce the cost to \$11,000.

The 7th and Maine Beautification Project is a community based program focusing on cleaning up, landscaping and beautifying an abandoned area located directly north of the intersection of West 7th Street and Maine Avenue, at the north bound 710 Freeway on-ramp in Long Beach, California. Not only is this area seen by all who leave the City of Long Beach, it will also be a gateway to the Drake/Chavez Park expansion that is currently undergoing an EIR.

“This was a neglected area with abandoned shopping carts, tumbleweeds and a collection of trash & debris. This venture has beautified our neighborhood and created a real sense of pride within the community,” said Danno.

In order to accomplish realistic goals, the WCHA volunteer committee divided the project into three phases. Phase 1 of the project was completed within five months last May. The dilapidated Maine Avenue barricades were replaced with 14 concrete planters filled with colored succulents and a seating area, creating a visually appealing and functional cul-de-sac for the residents of Maine Avenue. The local community assisted with the cleanup and planting. Proud of their new garden, the neighbors have made certain that the plants are watered and maintained, and that the area is kept clean and graffiti free.

With the generous donation from Farmers & Merchants Bank, WCHA was able to commence Phase 2. There will be a new, low water use landscape installed with a state-of-the-art inline drip irrigation system. Blue Gecko Design is creating an urban garden oasis from the neglected and blighted exit from the City.

There will be a planting and ribbon cutting celebration for completing Phase 2 on Saturday, March 5, 2011 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/phase2-7th-MaineBeautification> for additional information and to RSVP.

WCHA is grateful for the significant \$11,000 Farmers & Merchants Bank donation and wonderful evidence of its commitment to the Willmore City Historic District and the City of Long Beach. Other individuals and entities involved in this project were:

- Councilman Robert Garcia and Field Officer Lena Gonzalez – *1st District Council Office*
- Mike Conway, Art Cox and Mike Sickles – *City of Long Beach, Dept of Public Works*
- Theresa Maceyka and Cory Forrester – *City of Long Beach, Dept of Parks, Rec and Marine*
- Larry Rich – *City of Long Beach, Office of Sustainability*
- David White – *City of Long Beach, Redevelopment Agency*
- Kraig Kojian – *Downtown Long Beach Business Associates*
- *Wal-Mart*
- Ty Hall – *Kelloggs Garden Products*
- Joe Brosius – *Magic Growers*
- *Bamboo Pipeline*
- James Minnich – *Ewing Irrigation*
- Mark Hall – *Netafilm USA*
- Rick Roseman – *Enviro Engineering*
- Mitch Kalamian – *Solena Landscape*
- Kathleen Irvine – *Blue Gecko Design*
- Emily Kiwa Tanaka – *F.O.A.M.*
- Gildardo Ramos Alvarez

Willmore City Heritage Association

The Willmore City Heritage Association is the oldest historic preservation association in the City of Long Beach. It was formed with the stated goals of the preservation, protection, and improvement of the physical environment and quality of life in the Willmore City/Drake Park neighborhood.

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