

first time I saw a round of businesses go out. It crushed me to see people's dreams end and I thought I'd like to do something to help save them," Smolar said. "After that I got involved in the politics of downtown and I've mostly hung in there, bouncing between the ecstasy of making a positive change and the grueling displeasure of seeing a good idea die or a business go under."

Over the years the East Village has seen many changes. During the 1940s, the U.S. was in the middle of World War II and Long Beach became a home to war veterans. With visitors supporting the veterans, the East Village was in high demand with the construction of new hotels and accommodations for travelers.

In the 1950s, there was another boost for the Village with the revival of the economy. It was during this time that the film industry was booming. Just around the corner from the East Village was Balboa Studios. This onset of movie

and film production in the area brought the wealthy to the city and business thrived.

Today, business is unstable and the natives of the area are working hard to maintain the vision that Downs-Chitterly and Appleby devoted their life work to.

"It goes up and down with the seasons. The area has failed to gain critical mass because half the shop spaces are usually vacant because of inflated rents," Smolar said. "It's devastating to watch businesses go out but it's amazing to see how quickly new and exciting ones spring up. I think I've probably seen 40 businesses come and go in five years."

Another attempt to draw attention to the area is University by the Sea. U-Sea is a public event on the streets of downtown Long Beach that combines local music, art, and food to the public for free. What is spent putting on U-Sea typically outweighs the profits from the event, but the attention it draws to the area is para-

mount. "U-Sea is a marketing event. We spend \$50,000 and make \$25,000 back. We do this because we want to re-invigorate downtown and we feel that's going to take an investment on our part," Smolar said. "When we throw U-Sea,

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Ryan Smolar

we want to provide folks with free parking, free bike valet service, free entertainment, cheap tickets and (ax, what the heck) even free jet cream! Even though U-Sea has gained incredible recognition and has achieved amazing things, a worsening economy and failure to convince our fenders that the event is worth-

while has put forth serious questions whether the event will happen again in Long Beach."

As far as the future of the East Village, no one can say exactly how long this historic section of Long Beach will remain in business. In the meantime, enthusiasts encourage people to come visit and will continue to host various types of events that draw people in and keep them involved in their community. The East Village always has something new on its agenda.

"I hope to see more investment in the local community and a greater connection between the arts and other activities in the city. I think it's a mistake to characterize the arts as a separate thing because they're more powerful (and better sustained) when we include them in every aspect of city-building and urban life," Smolar said.

