



Who's on 3rd? (Street, That Is...)

An OpEd by Theresa J. Marino

Who's on 3rd? Everyone and everything is on East 3rd Street now, especially lots of pedestrians and neighbors walking dogs and their children with strollers, scooters, and bikes. I've lived on the east end of the Bluff Heights Neighborhood on 3rd Street between Redondo and Coronado Avenues for 20 years. I also lived in Bluff Heights in the 1970s when I was a student at CSULB. I am a member of and Secretary of the Bluff Heights Neighborhood Association (BHNA) Board of Directors, and I joined the Board in 2019 in order to help keep our neighborhood thriving and safe. My main concern with the Bluff Heights Neighborhood has always been the unsafe conditions on 3rd Street.

One thing that I can tell you is that East 3rd Street is not the quiet thoroughfare it was when I bought my property in 2001, nor when I was in college. The east end of 3rd Street has become precarious in terms of noise, people on skateboards, bicycles, and scooters, and pedestrians going to 7-Eleven at all hours. Then there is the illegal parking of delivery trucks both for the store and for home-delivered items ordered by residents. As Broadway and Ocean Blvd. received improvements to calm traffic such as additional crosswalks, more signals, and four-way stops, many drivers of cars and trucks decided to use 3rd Street as a straight shot to Downtown Long Beach and the 710 Freeway. In addition to the increase of cars and big trucks using 3rd, large trash trucks from both the City of Long Beach and private vendors park these oversize trucks and street sweepers illegally in red zones as they leave their motors running and head to our neighborhood convenience store on their breaks or lunch hours.

During rush hours in the mornings and afternoons, cars, motorcycles, large pickup trucks, and SUVs use 3rd Street like it's the Long Beach Grand Prix speedway. Drivers speed up from the traffic light at the east side of Redondo to make it to the west side of Redondo before the light turns red. They continue to drive fast going westbound until they abruptly reach the four-way stop at Obispo Avenue and 3rd. And drivers speed eastbound from Obispo to make the light again at 3rd and Redondo. There have been serious accidents at the intersection of 3rd and Redondo from collisions of cars running red lights in all directions. All of this racing makes it impossible to back your car out of your 3rd Street driveway.

While recently walking the neighborhood distributing Bluff Heights Neighborhood Association postcards to residents, I had the chance to talk with folks who live on 3rd Street, Obispo, Winnipeg, Orizaba, and Colorado. In telling them that I serve on the Board, many told me their concerns about how unsafe 3rd Street has become and that they wanted to see traffic slowed. The intersection of 3rd and Coronado is another troublesome spot. The NE corner of Horace Mann Elementary School's playground is located here and the front entrances of

the school are located on Coronado. There are constant fender benders and near misses at this intersection. Horace Mann Principal Tracy Fiala commented on the unsafe intersection and how she would like to see a four-way crosswalk with stop signs to slow traffic, prevent accidents, and provide a safe route for students and parents. Principal Fiala has requested a traffic study by the City several times, but has yet to hear back.

One of the saddest comments was made by a neighbor who lives off 3rd Street on Winnipeg. She stated that perhaps the horrendous car accident and death of a beloved neighbor a few years ago at the intersection of 3rd and Temple, resulting from a high-speed chase and collision, might have been prevented. She wondered if 3rd Street had been calmed years ago with more four-way stops, crosswalks, speed bumps, or other means, the driver of the stolen van might have been stopped by the police. Remember that 3rd is a residential street, unlike Broadway and 4th Street, which are commercial corridors. The speed limit is 35 mph on 3rd and 25 mph for the school zone. Hardly anyone observes these speed limits!

In addition to increased traffic, commercial truck usage, and speeding on 3rd Street, bicyclists have increased on 3rd. Vista Street might be Bike Blvd., but 3rd from Junipero to Downtown Long Beach has bike lanes that stop abruptly on 3rd at Junipero eastbound. There is no connection for bike riders to Vista from Junipero. Vista dead ends eastbound at Temple, so cyclists use 3rd Street as their Bike Blvd. Some weekends, clusters of more than 100 bike riders will travel eastbound on 3rd Street.

There are many older adults living in the neighborhood, especially at Immanuel Senior Housing, so at any given hour, seniors are walking to get to and from their homes to the corner convenience store, the bus stops on both sides of Redondo, and elsewhere. This is another reason we need to increase safety, four-way stops, and crosswalks on 3rd.

As residents of the Bluff Heights Neighborhood, I hope that you will voice your opinion through our email at info@bluffheights.org and to our two City Council Representatives and the LBPD East Division Commander about increased traffic, speeding, and unsafe conditions on 3rd Street between Redondo on the east and Junipero on the west.

The Bluff Heights Neighborhood Association will host its quarterly neighborhood forum via Zoom on April 22. I am requesting that this issue of unsafe conditions on East 3rd Street be presented as an agenda item for discussion.

Theresa Marino, Retired Bureau Manager, City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services, sits on the Marine Advisory Commission and is the Founding Executive Director of Conservation Corps of Long Beach, where she is President of the Board. She was a community organizer from CSULB during the 1970s War on Poverty era. She lives in Bluff Heights with her house and gardening mate Mingo and their two cats.