



Visionaries Gather in Long Beach for 2023 Unexpected Connections Conference: Catalyzing the Creative Economy

Emceed by Rolling Stone's Tim Chan and featuring speakers such as president and CEO of Long Beach Economic Partnership Leah Gould-Haws, the event will bring together placemakers, creative brands and entrepreneurs committed to the creative economy of Long Beach

LONG BEACH, Calif. – Sept. 27, 2023 – For the past two decades, Unexpected Connections, an event series based in Long Beach, has been uniting forward-thinking individuals from diverse industries to drive positive change in global communities through elevated conversations on planning, creative culture, public art and economic viability. This year's signature event, put on by Intertrend Labs and the Long Beach Economic Partnership, is themed "Catalyzing the Creative Economy" and will take place at the Long Beach Convention Center on Oct. 5. [Register here](#) to experience the event in person, and meet influential speakers, urban planners, designers, architects and placemakers who will share inspiration and guidance to propel the creative economy and ensure the long-term vitality of Long Beach well into the future.

Chief Investment Officer of Long Beach-based creative agency [Intertrend Communications](#), co-organizer of the event with Creative Class Collective, Tanya Raukko, said, "We know the fundamental role creative industries play in economic growth. Long Beach is more than your average port city along California's coast – it has the potential to become a true destination with unprecedented cultural tourism that attracts not only visitors but new residents and businesses."

During the event, the vision for the future of Long Beach will be shared, which includes a \$25 million venture fund that Mayor Richardson and Sunstone Management announced earlier this year to bring 100 tech startups to the city within five years. [Imprint Venture Lab](#), Intertrend's business incubator, is one of nine local organizations committed to the venture fund campaign and has been entrusted to help manage up to \$5 million earmarked for tech-enabled creative startups.

The creative economy is a significant driver of economic growth in California. According to the [Otis College 2023 Report on the Creative Economy](#), this sector contributes approximately 14.9% to the state's gross regional product and 7.6% of the state's jobs.

"The data shows that creative industries are one of the fastest-growing sectors and when nurtured, can be a powerful source of economic transformation, socioeconomic progress and quality of life," said Mayor Rex Richardson. "Connecting like-minded people with a passion for placemaking and economic development can lead to thriving collaborations and partnerships that catalyze positive change for our community."

Attendees of the Unexpected Connections event will learn from a new economic study unveiled by Intertrend, Long Beach Economic Partnership and California State University, Long Beach on how the creative industry can serve as an accelerator of economic growth. They will also hear from nationally recognized companies that have successfully used creativity to build their communities, including [Meow Wolf](#), a collective of artists building culture through its immersive experiential art and [Shinola](#), an

American lifestyle brand that came to Detroit ten years ago after it recognized the raw potential of the city's culture.

Unexpected Connections will be emceed by Tim Chan, associate vice president of editorial and commerce at Rolling Stone.

Speakers include:

- **John Bela**, principal of Bela Urbanism
- **Joresa Blount**, founder of GoFlyy
- **Zach Brooks**, general manager of Smorgasburg LA
- **Leah Goold-Haws**, president and CEO of Long Beach Economic Partnership
- **Julia Huang**, CEO and founder of Intertrend Communications
- **John Keisler**, CEO and managing partner of Sunstone Management
- **Robert Kleinhenz**, director of the Long Beach State Office of Economic Research
- **David Malmuth**, founder of I.D.E.A. District
- **Phil Pirkovic**, director of brand and partnerships at Shinola
- **Alan Pullman**, partner and founder of Studio One Eleven
- **Rex Richardson**, mayor, City of Long Beach (scheduled)
- **Han Santana-Sayles**, director of artist collaboration for Meow Wolf
- **Madeleine Spencer**, Placemaking US
- **Seiji Steimetz**, associate dean, College of Liberal Arts, Cal State Long Beach

Organizers hope that these conversations and special initiatives will influence future policy decisions, leading to a more vibrant arts community in Long Beach. Major supporters include Sunstone Management, the City of Long Beach, and the Long Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau.

For the full schedule and to purchase tickets, please visit www.unexpectedconnectionsevent.com.

Unexpected Connections

Unexpected Connections is an initiative of Intertrend Lab and its nonprofit affiliate, Creative Class Collective, that brings together the highest-level creative minds across diverse fields including art, design, technology, business, and food. Intimate conversations will drive new perspectives over a series of one-on-one conversations. These connections will serve as the catalyst for ideas that will propel creative culture to new heights. For more information, please visit unexpectedconnectionsevent.com.

About Creative Class Collective

Creative Class Collective is a 501(c)3 supported by Intertrend Communications to foster innovative ideas in the arts and culture realm with the goal of elevating the community and increasing economic viability for creative individuals. Creative Class Collective makes spaces for collaboration, with the belief that connection fuels creation. Learn more at creativeclasscollective.org.

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