Industry leaders and experts attended VICA’s 29th Annual Business Forecast Conference (BFC) on Friday, October 20, for an economic forecast breakfast, panels on a variety of topics impacting businesses, and a luncheon with Larry Freedman, Executive Vice President and Chief Business Officer of the Los Angeles Football Club (LAFC). The event, presented by the Southern California Gas Company and Wells Fargo, brought business leaders together to discuss important issues.

**ECONOMIC FORECAST BREAKFAST**

Attendees began their day with an economic forecast breakfast, sponsored by Hilton Universal City and U.S. Bank and moderated by Patrick Nygren (Wells Fargo). Eugenio Aleman, Director & Senior Economist at Wells Fargo, began the discussion by providing an overview of where the economy is going on a national level, and discussing the type of impact tax reform could have on the economy. Next, Jeffrey Kravetz, Regional Investment Director for The Private Client Reserve of U.S. Bank, spoke about California’s economy, including the unemployment rate, job growth, and rate of construction. Fernando J. Guerra, Ph.D., Director of The Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles at Loyola Marymount University rounded out the discussion with a look at the Los Angeles economy, and how the outlook in the San Fernando Valley compares regionally.

**KEYNOTE LUNCHEON**

Larry Freedman (LAFC) spoke about the exciting preparations for their first season next year. “We all come together for the community through soccer,” said Freedman as he shared insight about the new Los Angeles stadium. The Banc of California Stadium will be located in Exposition Park, and will...
seat 23,000 fans. Freedman outlined highlights of the stadium including premium spaces and he noted that the stadium was designed as a bowl with steep seats so that the experience is intimate and energetic, with all fans close to the field. Freedman also spoke about efforts to engage local residents and fans, for example by creating a standing-section with a bar in the stadium. The luncheon was sponsored by Albertsons, Vons & Pavilions and The Walt Disney Co.

**TRACK ONE, PANEL ONE: Voyage to La-La-Land**

Our panel of tourism industry experts considered the impacts of the 2028 Summer Games, the new Rams stadium, and other exciting new developments in Los Angeles. Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Krekorian, Ranjan Goswami (Delta Air Lines), Patti MacJennett (L.A. Tourism and Convention Board), and Dr. Sarah Fischbach (California Lutheran University) discussed the importance of meeting capacity needs for transit, building more hotels, and ensuring the safety of tourists when they visit Los Angeles. Councilmember Krekorian said, “Hospitality and tourism is the key factor of economic success.” The panel was moderated by Mark Davis (Hilton Universal City) and sponsored by the Los Angeles Rams. The panel was part of the ‘Lost at Sea’ track, which was sponsored by California Lutheran University and Woodbury University.

**TRACK ONE, PANEL TWO: Learning the Ropes**

*California State University, Northridge* President Dianne Harrison moderated this panel featuring education and industry leaders discussing the challenges and opportunities in preparing students for the workforce of today — and tomorrow. Dr. Frances Gipson (LAUSD) spoke about the school district’s progress in graduating students who are college-prepared and career-ready. Adrian Wilson (Microsoft) and Dr. Paul Witman (California Lutheran University) discussed workforce pipeline issues in the science, technology, engineering and math sectors. Nicole Rice (California Manufacturers & Technology Association) spoke about efforts to maintain, grow and fill jobs in California’s manufacturing industry. The panel was sponsored by UCLA Extension and was part of the ‘Lost at Sea’ track, sponsored by California Lutheran University and Woodbury University.
**TRACK TWO, PANEL ONE:**

**Finding the Best Route**

As cities compete for economic opportunities, panelists discussed best practices for cities to attract and retain business. Santa Clarita Mayor Cameron Smyth and Glendale City Manager Scott Ochoa both lead cities which have won awards for being business-friendly, and they contributed their insights along with Dr. Michael Shires (Pepperdine School of Public Policy) and Harlan Levy (McDonald’s USA). The panelists mentioned the importance of a transparent government in order to effectively engage with the people they represent. They also pointed to businesses being the backbone of cities, but being driven out by high costs and regulations. The panel was moderated by Mark Vetter (Aerojet Rocketdyne), and was sponsored by Aerojet Rocketdyne. The panel was part of the ‘Fork in the Path’ track, sponsored by Clear Channel Outdoor and the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power.

**TRACK TWO, PANEL TWO:**

**Getting off Track**

A lively discussion on some of the worst ideas to come out of Sacramento was moderated by Ruben Gonzalez (Gonzalez Strategic Affairs). California Assemblymember Vince Fong joined veteran journalist Dan Walters (CALmatters), columnist Susan Shelley (Los Angeles Daily News), and Marc Joffe (Reason Foundation) for the panel, which concluded that bad policy is driving up the costs in our daily lives. Topics ranged from minimum wage, immigration policy, and the housing crisis affecting Californians. The panel was sponsored by Gonzalez Strategic Affairs and was part of the ‘Fork in the Path’ track, sponsored by Clear Channel Outdoor and the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power.

**TRACK THREE, PANEL ONE:**

**Breaking Ground**

California’s growing housing crisis was the main topic of this panel moderated by Joseph Bernstein (Sapphire). The panel discussed recently enacted legislation aimed at easing restrictions on developers for the construction of new and affordable housing, where they noted that “politics is the art of compromise.” The panel noted that current regulations, especially in Los Angeles, hinder rather than spur new development. The panel was sponsored by Bank of America/Merrill Lynch and Sapphire. The panelists were Jennifer Hernandez (Holland & Knight), Megan Kirkeby (California Department of Housing and Community Development), and Dr. Nicholas Marantz (University of California, Irvine). This panel was part of the ‘X Marks the Spot’ track, which was sponsored by Metro and Parsons.

**TRACK THREE, PANEL TWO:**

**The Lost City of Angels**

Panelists from the transportation sector predicted the impact of new tax revenue and technological innovation on transforming mobility and how public transit agencies can harness these new tools. CEO Phil Washington (Metro) discussed how Measure M projects can be expedited in time for the 2028 Los Angeles Summer Olympics, saying that “Metro is looking to provide a curb-to-curb service, like Uber, like Lyft, known as microtransit.” Opportunities to mitigate the transportation sector’s impact on the environment with new funds and technology was discussed by George Minter (Southern California Gas Company) and Rebecca Schenker (BYD America). Elissa Konove (Metrolink) talked about efforts to increase rail ridership and reduce congestion by improving partnerships with local transit providers. ‘The Lost City of Angels’ was moderated by David Warner (Parsons) and sponsored by BYD America. This panel was part of the ‘X Marks the Spot’ track, which was sponsored by Metro and Parsons.
**TRACK FOUR, PANEL ONE:**

**Unearthing New Ways to Practice Medicine**

As healthcare becomes a bigger issue in California and the nation, our panelists discussed technological innovations and best practices for healthcare delivery, including wearable technology, virtual reality, and robotics during surgical procedures. Although technology is progressing, patients are reluctant that it will work. Dr. Spiegel revealed, “Cedars invited 86,000 patients to participate in using wearable technology, and only 0.7% participated.” However, Dr. Rott noted that “By using wearables after a heart attack, there was a 30% decrease seen in the number of deaths.” Moderator Carol Kim (*Health Net*) led a discussion with panelists Jeff Allport (*Valley Presbyterian Hospital*), Dr. Erik Dutson (*UCLA*), Dr. John Rott (*Kaiser Permanente*), and Dr. Brennan Spiegel (*Cedars-Sinai Health System*). ‘Unearthing New Ways to Practice Medicine’ was sponsored by the *Leavitt Group* and *Valley Presbyterian Hospital*. This panel was part of the track ‘Finding the Treasure’, sponsored by *The Garland* and *Kaiser Permanente*.

**TRACK FOUR, PANEL TWO:**

**Lights Camera (Phone), Action!**

Los Angeles’ most famous industry has an impact on our whole economy, and a panel moderated by Sarah Walsh (*Motion Picture Assoc. of America*) discussed what the future of filming looks like. Panelists Michelle Kempner (Buzzfeed), Amy Lemisch (California Film Commission), Kevin James (City of Los Angeles) and Tom Lynch (Tom Lynch Company) noted the changes and abundance in content such as short ‘webisodes’ are transforming the industry. However, Tom Lynch noted, “Content is part of the global experience. Therefore, there is no such thing as too much content.” They also discussed how the workforce pipeline has migrated from traditional film schools to self-study and on the job training. The panel was sponsored by *AT&T* and was part of the ‘Finding the Treasure’ track, sponsored by *The Garland* and *Kaiser Permanente*.