Go Big or Go Home: Remembering Mark Bixby and His Legacy

“Go big or go home.”

This was Mark Bixby’s attitude, an endearing slogan on how he lived his life. While many of us have adopted this phrase, few can enjoy it with the same zeal as Mark lived it.

True to his core beliefs, he possessed an unconditional love for his family, friends and community. March 16 will commemorate the fifth anniversary of Mark’s untimely and tragic death, one that an entire community felt, immediately grieved, and continues to feel the loss. Not a day goes by that I don’t think about him or the lessons he shared with me. This guy was special.

Fearless but humble, Mark was arguably one of the strongest forces for bicycling in Long Beach: from participating in the creation of Long Beach’s award-winning Bicycle Master Plan to a founding father of DLBAs Bike Festival, the city’s largest event dedicated to two-wheeled culture, he wanted to achieve greatness.

It’s for these reasons that I find it both poignant and appropriate that on March 19, Beach Streets Downtown is launched, where large stretches of the street are closed off to cars and activated by and for people. A celebration on many levels and Mark enjoyed demonstrating success. Like many biking advocates, Mark was an ardent proponent for dramatic infrastructure and organized bicycling policies. He served as a champion for protected bike lanes and wide and far connections in all directions, including the bike lane that is now named after him on the new Gerald Desmond Bridge. He supported the concept and practice of re-orientating the
street back to people. It is with pride and honor that DLBA continues to live Mark’s dream to become the most bicycle friendly city in the country and we’re doing our best to make him proud of our efforts.

So on March 19 from 10AM to 5PM, the DLBA is partnering with the City of Long Beach to co-produce Beach Streets Downtown. The four-mile closed route stretches along Broadway from Belmont Heights to Alamitos Beach and into the Downtown. There will be family-friendly programming at various locations throughout the area including Retro Row, Bixby Park and DTLB.

Once in Downtown, DLBA will activate various neighborhoods re-creating a series of signature events that we’ve previously produced that are specific to DTLB.

We had long advocated for a ciclovía to be part of DTLB and this partnership, where we work as a community for a community, is truly a reflection of Mark’s belief that something as pertinent as getting around—despite what form it is in, by foot or bike or car or transit—is a communal effort that needs to include everyone.

Just as important is the idea that we must revere and respect the rebels with the torn dress and big ideas—even if those ideas are not instantly achievable or liked by the masses. Mark’s work wasn’t always met with a resounding, ‘Yes!’ because it was hard for many Southern Californians to wrap their head around creating infrastructure for bicycling—let alone giving away precious street space to a person pedaling. Visionaries never really fit in contemporarily; they are always a bit ahead, a bit beyond the reach of everyone else and it is for this reason that Mark will always be sorely missed and just as equally respected. He continually demanded more from us, from our City, from our ability to create a better life for the people sharing living space with us.

That, Long Beach, is no easy task and Mark’s legacy is a
living example that you should always go big or go home.

-Kraig Kojian, DLBA President and CEO