

# The Shape of Things to (Maybe) Come

## Questions with no answers (yet) for the West OC

By Jim Tortolano  
Orange County Tribune

There are no reliable predictions about what will happen in our West Orange County cities in 2025.

All that are, are questions.

So here are the questions that may or may not be answered in 2025.

**Question:** Now that all local cities have passed anti-camping or public access ordinances aimed at curbing problems caused by homelessness, how will they be enforced and how effective will they be?

Three of the four cities – Garden Grove, Huntington Beach and Westminster – have “navigation centers,” or access to them, but how much of an impact will



**THE PROPOSED AURELA** project on Harbor Boulevard in Garden Grove would include a Kimpton and Le Meridien hotel, but no sticks are in the ground yet (File photo).

they have on what we see on the streets?

**Question:** Will long-delayed major projects be built?

In Garden Grove, there are three major hotels planned for Harbor Boulevard but there’s been no visible progress toward the start of construction. Additionally, two major developments – Brookhurst Place II and a nearby five-story mixed use building at Garden Grove Boulevard and Brookhurst Street remain vacant lots.

In Westminster, the replacement for Westminster Mall, now called Bolsa Pacific, have made progress on paper, but no changes are evident.

In Huntington Beach, the controversial Bolsa Chica Senior Care project has received approval from the city council, but there

are signs the new council majority may reverse itself.

**Question:** Who will be the winners – other, perhaps than the attorneys – in several ongoing or potential major lawsuits with the potential to affect Huntington Beach? Surf City is embroiled in a long-running legal battle over its refusal to submit a “housing element” accepting a responsibility to zone for over 13,000 new housing units. It’s also been sued



**SMOOTH SURFING** in court?

by the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, which is demanding that it abandon its at-large city council election system and go to a by-district model, which has been implemented by most cities and school districts in Orange County.

**Question:** With declining enrollment across the county, will local school systems start to consolidate and/or close school campuses? Ocean View School District has already begun the process and others may be forced to follow.

**Question:** Just how will be new situation in Washington – with Republicans controlling Congress and the White House – affect our cities? The federal government presently provides considerable

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**In The Trib**

**Prep hoops winds up pre-league season**

**SPORTS** Page 7

# Some questions for 2025

Continued from page 1

funding for transit, including the OCStreetcar connecting Garden Grove and Santa Ana.

With that change mean less of a chance for possible expansion of the light-rail line?

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# News & Views

## Mr. Nice Guy Carter doesn't fit the model

Jimmy Carter was not a great president. There remains considerable divided opinion on whether he was a good president.

But I don't think there's much question that he was a good man.

These days there's a feeling

that the peanut farmer from Plains, Georgia was too much of a nice guy, not the virile man – however fictionalized – that



**Retorts**  
Jim Tortolano

Americans seem to prefer in the White House.

But his “nice guy” persona was enough to keep him on the plus side of the public opinion polls until the 1979-80 Iranian hostage crisis came along. Iranian students, angry that the U.S. had allowed the deposed (and despised) Shah of Iran Mohammed Reza Pahlavi to come to America for cancer treatment, seized the U.S. Embassy on Nov. 4, 1979.

The students, supporters of the new radical Islamic government, wanted the Shah handed over to them for trial for crimes of which he was likely guilty. Initially, public opinion rallied around Carter, who demanded the quick and safe release of the 60-plus hostages. But as time went on and little progress was evident, the public mood soured.

A rescue attempt in April 1980 was a failure which historians blamed on a fierce dust storm and the decision not to send an extra helicopter – one was damaged at the landing site – as a backup.

Carter took responsibility for the disaster. When was the last



**JIMMY CARTER** in 2008. He died on Sunday at the age of 100 as the longest-living U.S president. Elected in 1976, he served in the White House from 1977-1981 (Shutterstock).

## Employees, students honored

The Westminster School District recently recognized its Classified School Employees of the Year. They are:

- Harold Dunkinsell, custodial, maintenance, operations and transportation at Johnson Middle School;
- Laura Costa, paraprofessional and instructional support at Meairs Elementary School;
- Ana Anguiano-Aguirre: health, support services and security at Land School;
- Thoa Nguyen, food and nutrition services at Hayden Elementary School;
- Lorena Salcedo, clerical, administrative services and technical support at the district office.

### Huntington Beach students honored

Jenna Gorden of Huntington Beach has been named to the 2024-2025 Fall Term President's List at the Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls.

Also honored was Trevor Shirley of Huntington Beach, named to the 2024-2025 dean's list at the school.

### News Briefs

OTI offers bachelor's, master's and a doctor of physical therapy degree.

### HBUHSD recognizes some top employees

Honored by the Huntington Beach Union High School District were:

- Cori Raina, family and consumer studies teacher at Fountain Valley High School;
- Kelly Prouty, community resource coordinator at Edison

High School.

- Glenn Peach, math teacher at Marina High School.

Raina and Prouty have 20 years of service with the district, while Peach has 30 years.

### Red Cross Blood Drive in Stanton Central Park

The American Red Cross will partner with the City of Stanton on Wednesday, Jan. 8 for a blood drive at the Stanton Central Park multi-purpose room from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

All donors will receive a free T-shirt. The park is located at 10680 Western Ave.

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# NewsUpdate

## Iran, Russian Groups Sanctioned

### Cyberwarfare aimed at shaping 2024 campaigns

Two groups connected to efforts by Russia and Iran to influence the 2024 elections have been sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department.

According to the Associated Press, the groups are accused of seeking to spark divisions in the voting public by using fake videos, news stories and posts on social media platforms.

In addition to creating fake websites intended to look like authentic news organizations and, in some cases, they paid U.S. companies to disseminate the



TREASURY DEPARTMENT taking action against cyber attacks (Shutterstock).

false information.

The Iranian—based group reportedly worked to encourage protests in the U.S. over Israel’s conflict with Hamas and hacked

into the personal accounts of Donald Trump’s election campaign staff.

The Russia-backed organization sought to persuade voters to

choose Trump, who has praised Russian President Vladimir Putin and suggested cutting assistance to Ukraine.

## Chief Justice Roberts issues warning about attacks on U.S. courts

In his year-end report on the federal judiciary, Chief Justice John Roberts warned about the status of the U.S. national court system.

The New York Times reports that Robert wrote, “Violence, intimidation and defiance directed at judges because of their work undermine our Republic, and are wholly unacceptable.”

He noted that violence is increasingly aimed at judges for their actions in court and that there has been a rise in the number of judges or their relatives killed because of rulings issued from the bench.



U.S. SUPREME COURT

Roberts also criticized proposals to expand the high court or place age or term limits on the service of Supreme Court justices and warned against the effects of elected officials defying court rulings.

### Great Thoughts

“America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms it will be because we destroyed ourselves.”

– Abraham Lincoln

## Much of Puerto Rico without electric power and not due to weather

An estimated 80 percent of the population of Puerto Rico is without electrical power in the face of an outage Monday and continuing into Tuesday.

United Press International is reporting that energy officials say that it may take 48 hours or more to restore electricity on the island.

Unlike previous blackouts, this loss of power doesn’t stem from the effects of hurricane weather.

One theory is there was a failure in an underground power line leading to a “cascade” of failures at other power plants.



ELECTRIC POWER IS OUT

Islanders are seeking to cope with the outage with the use of generators.

### Weather: Warmer, then cooler

If you like variety, you’ll be getting it this week in our West Orange County cities. Wednesday will be cooler with a daytime high of 65 and an overnight low of 48 under partly cloudy skies. Thursday will warm to 71 (49) with sunny skies, followed by a dive to 64 (50) on Friday with clouds. Saturday will be cooler still at 62 (48).

# Arts & Living

## Kidman Commands 'Babygirl'

Lead actors magnetic in sexy romance

By Jake Coyle  
AP Film Writer

The demands of achieving both one-day shipping and a satisfying orgasm collide in Halina Reijn's "Babygirl," a kinky and darkly comic erotic thriller about sex in the Amazon era.

Nicole Kidman stars as Romy Mathis, the chief executive of Tensile, a robotics business that pioneered automotive warehouses. In the movie's opening credits, a maze of conveyor belts and bots shuttle boxes this way and that without a human in sight.

Romy, too, is a little robotic. She intensely presides over the company. Her eyes are glued to her phone. She gets Botox injections, practices corporate-speak presentations ("Look up, smile and never show your weakness") and maintains a floor-through New York apartment, along with a mansion in the suburbs that she shares with her theater-director husband (Antonio Banderas) and two teenage daughters (Esther McGregor and Vaughan Reilly).

But the veneer of control is only that in "Babygirl," a sometimes campy, frequently entertaining modern update to the erotically charged movies of the 1990s, like "Basic Instinct" and "9 1/2 Weeks." Reijn, the Dutch director of "Bodies Bodies Bodies" has critically made her film from a more female point of view, resulting in ever-shifting gender and power dynamics that make "Babygirl" seldom predictable — even if the film is never quite as daring as it seems to think it is.

The opening moments of "Babygirl," which A24 releases Wednesday, are of Kidman in close-up and apparent climax.



NICOLE KIDMAN and Harris Dickinson in "Babygirl" (A24)

### Movie Review

But moments after she and her husband finish and say "I love you," she retreats down the hall to writhe on the floor while watching cheap, transgressive internet pornography. The breathy soundtrack, by the composer Cristobal Tapia de Veer, heaves and puffs along with the film's main character.

One day while walking into the office, Romy is taken by a scene on the street. A violent dog gets loose but a young man, with remarkable calmness, calls to the dog and settles it. She seems infatuated. The man turns out to be Samuel (Harris Dickinson), one of the interns just starting at Tensile.

When they meet inside the building, his manner with her is disarmingly frank. Samuel arranges for a brief meeting with Romy, during which he tells her, point blank, "I think you like to

be told what to do." She doesn't disagree.

Some of the same dynamic seen on the sidewalk, of animalistic urges and submission to them, ensues between Samuel and Romy. A great deal of the pleasure in "Babygirl" comes in watching Kidman, who so indelibly depicted uncompromised female desire in Stanley Kubrick's "Eyes Wide Shut," again wade into the mysteries of sexual hunger.

"Babygirl," which Reijn also wrote, is sometimes a bit much. (In one scene, Samuel feeds Romy saucers of milk while George Michael's "Father Figure" blares.) But its two lead actors are never anything but completely magnetic. Kidman deftly portrays Romy as a woman falling helplessly into an affair; she both knows what she's doing and doesn't.

Dickinson exudes a disarming intensity; his chemistry with Kidman, despite their quickly forgotten age gap, is visceral. As their

**Good: ★★★**

affair evolves, Samuel's sense of control expands and he begins to threaten a call to HR.

That he could destroy her doesn't necessarily make Romy any less interested in seeing him, though there are some delicious post-#MeToo ironies in their clandestine CEO-intern relationship. Also in the mix is Romy's executive assistant, Esme (Sophie Wilde, also very good), who's eager for her own promotion.

Where "Babygirl" heads from here, I won't say. But the movie is less interested in workplace politics than it is in acknowledging authentic desires, even if they're a little ludicrous. There's genuine tenderness in their meetings, no matter the games that are played. Late in the film, Samuel describes it as "two children playing."

As a kind of erotic parable of

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# TheSportsPages

## LeBron James vs. Father Time in the NBA

There's long been some friendly arguing among pro basketball fans about who is the greatest player ever. Some say Michael Jordan. Some say Kareem Abdul Jabbar or even Wilt Chamberlain.

I'm not forgetting LeBron James, but he's also in contention for another all-time honor:

the oldest pro basketball player ever.

In recent conversation with the sporting press, "Big Game James" mused on being a 40-year-old hoopster and suggested that



### Sports Retorts

Jim Tortolano

the best – or at least the creakiest – could be yet to come.

"To be honest, if I really wanted to, I could probably play this game at a high level probably for about another – it's weird that I might say this – but probably about another five to seven years, if I wanted to," James said. "But I'm not going to do that."

Oh, please don't. While LeBron is still playing at that high level – averaging 23.5 points a game, along with eight rebounds and nine assists – it is the cruel algebra of b-ball that knees give out before desire does.

Playing much past 40 isn't unheard of. Nat Hickey played until he was two days short of 46 years old, but that was from 1925 to 1948, finishing his career as a player-coach for the Providence Steamrollers (bring them back!).

The team finished 4-25 and Hickey was done, too.

We've all seen examples of stars who played beyond their peak. Babe Ruth hit .181 in his final season. Brett LeFavre in his 2010 season with the Minnesota Vikings threw

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# No Doubt About Rams Now

## Fourth division title in eight years with Sean

By Greg Beacham  
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Right when the Los Angeles Rams' offense has dropped into a disconcerting slump, their defense has held three straight opponents under 10 points for the first time in decades.

Although the Rams (10-6) have won the NFC West title and another playoff berth with a five-game winning streak, the way they're doing it makes their postseason prospects quite unpredictable.

The methodology has been strange, but the results are not: After holding off Arizona 13-9 on Saturday night, Los Angeles has won nine of 11 and claimed its fourth division title and sixth playoff berth in coach Sean McVay's eight seasons.

"I'm proud of this group and the way they battled back,"



SEAN McVAY has had much success with the Rams. They've won four NFC West titles, had six playoff berths and a Super Bowl title in his eight years at the helm (Brevin Townsell/Rams).

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## Chargers have 'more to do' in the postseason now

By Joe Reedy  
AP Sports Writer

Jim Harbaugh, Justin Herbert and the Los Angeles Chargers celebrated in the locker room Saturday after they wrapped up a playoff spot with a 40-7 victory over the New England Patriots.

But even as they realized one goal by making the postseason, Harbaugh tried to keep things focused on the road ahead by stressing: "There's more to do."

The Chargers (10-6) go into the regular-season finale at Las Vegas knowing they will be at least the AFC's sixth seed and avoid a

trip to Buffalo for the wild-card round.

Los Angeles currently is in line to face Baltimore in a Harbaugh Bowl rematch, but it has an outside shot at the fifth seed and a trip to Houston if Cincinnati beats Pittsburgh next weekend.

While Harbaugh credited his players for the turnaround from five wins last year to double-digit victories this season, Herbert gave most of it to Harbaugh and first-year general manager Joe Hortiz.

"They have done such a great job of getting the right guys here.

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## One of three isn't great for the local pros

Just one of three local LA-OC professional teams won their games on Tuesday night.

The Los Angeles Clippers (now 19-14) lost 122-86 to the San Antonio Spurs in NBA play.

The Los Angeles Lakers (18-14) also suffered defeat, falling 122-110 to the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Our Anaheim Ducks (15-17-4) fared better, beating the New Jersey Devils 3-2.

# Wrapping up the preseason for prep hoops

The flurry of high school basketball tournaments wrapped up on Monday and the attention will now turn to league play, which starts for most teams on Tuesday, Jan. 7 and Wednesday, Jan. 8.

Edison, which won a CIF-SS football title and a state crown, is fielding a strong boys' basketball team as well.

On Monday the Chargers took home a championship in the Tustin Classic, defeating Newport Harbor 64-53.

Jayden Dei led the green-and-gold with 27 points. Derrick Johnson added 19.

Garden Grove High's boys team is on a roll, having won five of six games, including a 70-44 win over Tarbut V'Torah on Saturday.

The Argonauts (11-8) were led by Neiman Quach with 14 points. Drue Anzai added 12 and Issac Campanzo had 10.

Grove will have a tough game next on Jan. 8, hosting the Kattella Knights (9-5), who are also hot, having won six games in a

row. The Pacifica boys' team could be strong as well. The Mariners are 12-6 after a 9-1 start.

## The County Line

The Orange County hoops rankings as published by the The Register gives little love to our West Orange County teams, as usual.

Edison (11-6) is ranked 19th and Marina (12-6) is 22nd among boys.

On the girls' side, Marina (9-7) is rated 25th.

## Our look at the top

We won't start our High 5 rankings until league play starts, but here's a quick look at the leaders so far, based on Max-Preps rankings.

Boys: Edison (11-6), Marina (12-6), Huntington Beach (9-8), Los Amigos (9-7), Santiago (12-4).

Girls: Marina (9-7), Huntington Beach (9-5), La Quinta (13-4), Los Amigos (8-5), Westminster (4-11).

## Prep Sport Spotlight



**SANTIAGO** (in white) is 12-4 so far this season (GGUSD photo).

## High School Basketball Scores

### MONDAY Boys

Edison 64, Newport Harbor 53  
Godinez 75, Magnolia 27  
Bolsa Grande 61, Santa Ana 49  
La Quinta 67, Saddleback 47  
Mark Keppel 55, Santiago 55  
Boulder City 82, Orange 29  
Hunt. Beach 59, Bosco Tech 51

### Girls

Hunt. Beach 63, United Chr. 47  
Pacifica 38, Mission Viejo 25  
Los Amigos 49, Ocean View 31  
La Habra 55, Orange 30  
Magnolia 33, Bolsa Grande 30

## Sports Retorts

Continued from page 6

11 touchdown passes and 19 interceptions.

You've still got some fuel left, LeBron. But keep an eye on the gas gauge.



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# There's no doubt about the Rams now

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Matthew Stafford said. "A lot of people doubted us, and a lot of people wrote us off at 1-4. To be able to sit here with our record what it is right now, I feel proud of this group."

The Rams hadn't held three straight opponents to single-digit scoring since 1975, but rookie coordinator Chris Shula's defense has done it with a strong front and a little luck on the back end, including the

last-minute interception by Ahkello Witherspoon on a pass that deflected off star Arizona tight end Trey McBride's head at the goal line. Kyler Murray threw it before McBride was probably ready because Shula had called a zero blitz on first down at the Los Angeles 5.

"I want to make more plays to make sure they don't have to do as much as they did (against Arizona), but I'm proud of them," Stafford said of the Rams' defense. "It's awesome to watch where they were in training camp to where they are now. Shula is doing a hell of a job. We all knew he would. Those guys are playing hard for him."

But the Rams have scored more than 21 points just once during their five-game winning streak, their longest since their Super Bowl championship season in 2021.

They've managed only three

touchdowns in their last three games while scoring fewer than 20 points each time out, although that stretch includes games played in the rain (San Francisco) and in subfreezing temperatures (New York Jets).

## Chargers 'more to do'

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You look in the locker room and everybody plays for each other," Herbert said. "(Harbaugh's) a competitor, and he wants to win no matter what it is. It definitely shows, and it's the way every-

one fights for him, wants to play for him, and respects him."

Harbaugh is the fifth coach in NFL history to win at least 10 games in his first season with two teams. He is also the eighth to make the playoffs in his first season with two teams.

## Movie review: 'Babygirl'

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control, "Babygirl" is also, either fittingly or ironically, shot in the very New York headquarters of its distributor, A24. For a studio that's sometimes been accused of having a "house style," here's a movie that goes one step further by literally moving in.

What about that automation stuff earlier? Well, our collective submission to digital overloads

might have been a compelling jumping-off point for the film, but along the way, not every thread gets unraveled in the easily distracted "Babygirl." Saucers of milk will do that.

"Babygirl," an A24 release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "strong sexual content, nudity and language." Running time: 114 minutes.

## Retorts: It's a goodbye to gentle Jimmy

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time you saw any politician take responsibility for anything?

When swept out of office by Ronald Reagan in November 1980, Carter returned to life as a private citizen. He spent years building houses – with his own hands – and teaching Sunday School classes back in Plains.

Despite his humiliation, he had no enemies's list. He was not interested in revenge or retribution. Perhaps if not for a dust storm 45 years ago, Americans would be admiring the soft-spoken and gentle sort of leader we seem to have left behind.



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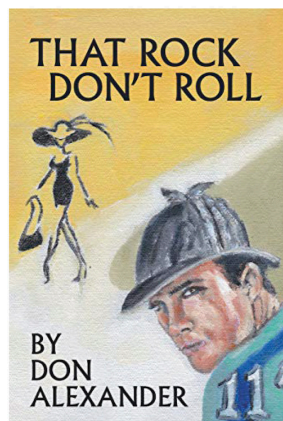
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