

# Garden Grows On Broadway Wall

By ASHLEIGH RUHL  
EDITOR

A bit of oasis along a busy business corridor, the finishing touches are being applied to Broadway's first vertical garden.

Literally a living wall, there will be a ribbon cutting this Friday to celebrate the successful installation of the On Broadway Business Association's first vertical garden at 1424 E. Broadway, near Falcon Avenue. The project was paid for with a \$5,000 grant from the Long Beach Neighborhood Partners Program.

"This is something to inspire people because hopefully we will

have more vertical gardens up and down Broadway... This is a pilot to show people what can be done," explained Nicoleta Simionescu, who owns the building on Broadway that now boasts a patterned, climbing garden on its facade. Simionescu, principal at AllWays Financial, occupies the building with retailer Richie's Toys & Gifts.

Earlier this week, as the project neared completion, Simionescu said the vertical garden has brought new life to walls that were in need of "some character." She said many people stop on the street to look and many have wan-

"I'm so excited about this opportunity to highlight Broadway in a new and unique way."

—Sidney Cramer

dered into Richie's Toys & Gifts, which just opened this year, to ask questions about the "green" wall.

Spanning the length of the building and composed of brightly colored flat panels as well as



—Gazette photo by Ashleigh Ruhl

**LIVING WALL.** A vertical garden, nearly complete, has been installed outside the AllWays Financial building on Broadway.

panels of overflowing succulents, the vertical garden took about six months to plan and then another six months to build. Simionescu said many people involved in the project — from contractor Bill Leisy to horticulturalist Shelby Batalla to architect Meg Beatrice — donated services when they could. AllWays Financial associate Randy Koenke wrote the grant for the project.

Inspired by a similar garden at Little Owl Preschool in Long Beach, Simionescu and other members of the On Broadway Merchants Association began talking last year about how business owners on the street could work together to build multiple, custom-designed vertical gardens that require minimum square footage and minimum upkeep.

Sidney Cramer, the president of the merchants association and the owner of Spa Sidney, said Simionescu took the lead on the vertical garden effort, and he believes she will pave the way for other busi-

ness owners to follow that lead.

"Vertical gardens are a great way to beautify Broadway," he said. "I hope others are able to duplicate what Nicoleta has done. We are looking for uniqueness but also some commonality along the street, and we think vertical garden installations could hopefully be some sort of feature for walking tours."

Already, a few other business owners already have approached Cramer for details about the project, he said.

"I'm so excited about this opportunity to highlight Broadway in a new and unique way," he said.

The ribbon cutting and celebration for the new vertical garden will take place between 2 and 5 p.m. on Friday (tomorrow), Nov. 22. There will be refreshments, snacks and opportunities to talk to some of the people who helped plan the project.

Ashleigh Ruhl can be reached at [aruhl@gazettes.com](mailto:aruhl@gazettes.com).