

World Trade Center Steel To Be Used For New Memorial In Long Beach



The city of Long Beach completed a new memorial created from World Trade Center 9/11 steel on Dec. 31, 2014. Photo Credit: Newsday / Audrey C. Tiernan

By John Asbury

Long Beach is using World Trade Center steel to erect a new memorial to victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and war veterans.

The city added a 2-foot-by-4-foot piece of steel beam last month to the center median on West Park Avenue, just east of Grand Boulevard. The city plans to add a memorial plaque and four benches around the steel piece and will incorporate this project with an existing Veterans of Foreign Wars memorial on the same site in time for a spring dedication.

"I think it's a privilege for us to have it," Long Beach Council president Anthony Eramo said. "People will be able to reflect and not only think of first responders, but what it [9/11] meant as changing point for a lot of folks."

The city is utilizing the steel for the first time since 2002 when it was donated by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

The City of Long Beach used \$20,000 of community development funds to erect the monument, adding the steel piece by using heavy equipment. City planners wanted the steel to face toward lower Manhattan and the new Freedom Tower.

The memorial was designed by the city and included plans to refurbish concrete around the existing VFW memorial. Along with the four benches to be included with the memorial, six additional benches and plantings will also be added to the plaza.

City officials said the prior administration may have been waiting for funding, but they did not know why the steel was not previously displayed.

Long Beach received three pieces of steel from the mayor's office in 2002, including a 3-foot and a 5-foot piece of I-beam. One of the three beams was cut into six 11-inch pieces and donated to Long Beach's four elementary schools, middle school and high school.

However, city officials said when the current administration took office in 2012, there was only one piece of steel in storage. They said they do not know the fate of the second piece, or if it existed at all.

"This is the only steel we've ever seen," Long Beach City Manager Jack Schnirman said.

The city has no written record of exactly how much steel the city received, Deputy City Manager Michael Robinson said. He said if there was a second piece of steel, it would probably be too heavy to move by a person or washed away during superstorm Sandy.

"We have no inherent record of two pieces," Robinson said. "The problem is, I can't see anyone moving it on their own. We have what we have and we're moving forward with it."

Long Beach Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander Dan MacPhee said he is glad to see the World Trade Center steel finally being utilized and recognized for veterans and lives lost during 9/11.

MacPhee said one piece may have disappeared, but it doesn't take away from the memorial.

"Our big concern is someone thinks it was garbage and tossed it out," MacPhee said. "We have the other piece. It's not a matter of how many pieces. We don't know what happened, but this piece is still representative of the attacks that day."

He said Long Beach was home to many police and firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty.