

Cerritos in the Future

by Avery Chen

The electric hum of the COW died down as I arrived at the South Street bus stop. I haven't been back to Cerritos since high school, about 20 years now. As I walked over to Cerritos Plaza South to be picked up, I noticed how all the buildings had climate-controlled transparent glass walls. I browsed the various stores, enjoying the serene environment and breathing in the fresh air.

My brother, Arch, met me not in the old 4Runner that we used to have, but in a gliding autonomous electric car. "Don't look so surprised," he chuckled, while the door opened for me. "There is a state park where the 91 Freeway used to be, which helps improve sustainability and reduce pollution. Besides a couple of roads, everyone shuttles from place to place in the air now."

As we arrived at Heritage Park, I recognized the old colonial-like play island. However, the wooden structures were now heat-resistant and used solar panels to generate power. I traced the many interconnected tubes that were recycling the city's water, and it eventually led to the pond. Inside was a biofiltration system supporting not only fish but all kinds of sea life, ranging from jellyfish to seahorses.

In the distance, I saw the Cerritos Library. After seeing the profound development of everything around me, I was surprised to see this had remained the same. "Actually, high-tech is integrated in those titanium walls, so you are able to order a book or search for anything in the library by simply talking to the wall! Many people like coming since the walls take in the surrounding CO₂, and filter it to produce cool oxygen, which creates an ideal place to relax or study." I walked inside and was shocked to see everything separated into cubes. Inside of them were students, some with their parents. The walls provided an interactive white board where they could work out different homework questions with the help of a live AI assistant.

I was most curious to see my old high school. The first thing I noticed was that the campus was no longer cramped in a small area but spread across the whole block. Excited to explore the expansive campus, we drove inside. Students rushed to classes on electric scooters, and even sixth graders were enrolled now. Walking through the hallways, I was taken aback when I saw the current principal. It was a classmate of mine when we were students here! Surprisingly, he still remembered me, and introduced me to their new locker system. Each locker was touchscreen, and students simply needed to select the notebook and textbook they needed for a certain class. Once unlocked through Face ID, the materials would be right there!

On the way to my childhood home, I couldn't help but marvel at the way Cerritos has advanced over the years. "Everything is just so organized and pristine," I remarked in wonder. "Yep, it's definitely nice over here," Arch replied. "Welcome home."