

"Together we have clout!"

★ **LIVE COMMUNITY MEETING – NEW LOCATION** ★

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 2023 - 7:15 PM

SHERMAN OAKS EAST VALLEY ADULT CENTER • 5056 VAN NUYS BLVD, 91403

ALSO STREAMED ON ZOOM

HOW WILL COUNCILMEMBER RAMAN FIX HOMELESSNESS, PUBLIC SAFETY AND LAPD STAFFING, CITY SERVICES, AND UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING?

Councilmember Nithya Raman is an urban planner, mother of twin first-graders, and an immigrant to America. She has prioritized people-centered and effective services for people experiencing homelessness. With the largest homelessness



team in city hall, her office has brought more than 300 people indoors via encampment-to-home projects, including at many sites in Sherman Oaks, especially under freeways. She has raised millions of dollars for the district from state and federal partners, making hundreds of new beds available to get people off the streets.

Her office has also taken a proactive and vigorous approach to constituent services, responding to incoming requests and proactively informing constituents about vaccinations, rent relief, fire safety, and more. She is Chair of the City Council Housing and Homelessness Committee, Vice Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Governance Reform, member of the Transportation, Energy and Environment, and Public Works Committees, and member of the Governing Board of the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Email your questions for her to SOHAZoomMtg@gmail.com by Tuesday April 18th. This is a live meeting, but we will also stream it via Zoom. We email the link to our members, and you can always find it at SOHA914.com. The Zoom ID is 830 4944 7243 with passcode SOHA914. Streaming starts at 7:15 pm.

RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH

BONEYARD BISTRO

by Jules Feir, Community Liaison Chair

SOHA is happy to announce that Boneyard Bistro – one of LA’s most consistent BBQ restaurants and a Sherman Oaks favorite – is April’s Restaurant of the Month. Located at 13539 Ventura Boulevard, they feature slow-cooked bistro fare with a delicious menu featuring such favorites as baby back and beef ribs, tri tip, wonderful hamburgers, and a great beer and wine selection. We thank owner Aaron Robins for supporting SOHA and our community, and all look forward to enjoying a special taste of their delicious food during our Dinner/Social Hour starting at 6:15 pm.



Don't Miss Our Dedicated Homelessness Round Table at SOHA's May 17th Meeting

Experts from the offices of our mayor, supervisor, and councilmember, LAPD, and others will discuss what we can do about homelessness and those who refuse shelter and represent a danger to themselves and others.

MENTAL ILLNESS, HOMELESSNESS, AND THE LAW

by Larry Slade, Housing Committee Chair

I remember the day when our councilmembers primarily focused on fixing potholes. Today, issues of rampant homelessness exacerbated by a mental health crisis have replaced simple issues like potholes. Our community is more threatened by homelessness and the mental health crisis than any other issues in recent memory.

We have more homeless in California than in any other state – approximately 160,000. Of the approximately 60,000 homeless in LA, we do not know how many of them suffer from mental illness. But we do know that just being homeless has a deleterious impact on a person’s mental health. The longer a person is homeless, the more likely they are to suffer from mental illness. Put simply – being homeless challenges a person’s grip on reality and feeds the mental health crisis. So ... what can we do about it?

Last week, Governor Newsom began a campaign for a bond measure that would raise \$3 billion to fund and “construct mental health campuses, residential settings and permanent supportive housing.” He plans to redirect another billion dollars in taxes on top earners to operate the facilities. This is very encouraging.

We have been here before. We have voted repeatedly to issue bonds that address important aspects of homelessness like adding affordable housing. The measures often pass, and the bonds are issued, making the money available. But despite everyone’s best intentions, the city is unable to spend the funds which are mired in regulations so thick that very little housing is ever built, and the money sits largely unused. Bond funds were allocated to build 10,000 units of affordable housing. Five years since the measure passed, fewer than 1,200 units have been built, though more than 4,000 units are currently under construction. These numbers are not encouraging.

We often hear the common lament: housing is the only thing that can solve homelessness. But even if we build all the housing that we have allocated funds for, that will still leave tens of thousands on the streets. And the segment of the homeless population that suffer from significant mental illness generally refuse to be housed. We can build as many affordable housing units as we can – and should – but those units cannot and will not force those homeless with significant mental illness inside.

In fact, part of the problem is that we cannot “force” anyone into treatment, into housing, or onto medication for anything longer than 72 hours. That window is clearly insufficient to have an impact on the problem. According to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in the case of *Martin v. City of Boise*, laws that seek to punish the homeless with criminal penalties just for being homeless cannot be enforced if the homeless have no alternative options such as beds available for them. This decision has gone a long way to gut laws designed to prevent people from sleeping on the street and has handcuffed many jurisdictions who want the homeless off their streets.

We will explore this case and its impact on Sherman Oaks’ homeless problem in next month’s SOHA Newsletter. Please join us for our Roundtable Discussion on these issues at the May 17th SOHA Community Meeting.

PLEASE GET INVOLVED AND AFFECT CHANGE

by Tom Glick, Planning and Land Use Committee Co-Chair

In my time with the LA Planning Department, I worked on several big land use projects which went through rigorous reviews with a lot of public input. We sent out hundreds – even thousands – of public notices for a project and advertised in local newspapers. In the end, once construction began, many would ask “Why is this happening?” and “Why didn’t I know about this project?” I would always explain that the project was not done in secret and there were many opportunities for public input – but this was never enough.

Fortunately, we live in a democratic society that allows people to get involved in public discourse but also permits them not to as well. This is not unique to planning decisions. In the 2022 midterm elections, LA County voter turnout was an abysmal 35 percent. People need to take advantage of their right to voice concerns at public hearings or vote in an election – if not, they lose their ability to affect change.

There is an opportunity now to get our community involved in our Southeast Valley Community Plan Update process. The city will be proposing land use changes in Sherman Oaks which could up-zone many neighborhoods. Some up-zoning may be appropriate such as commercial corridors and under-utilized residential corridors. But some may not, such as in stable single-family neighborhoods. The LA Planning Department held several community meetings about this prior to the pandemic but has since been relatively quiet. But have no doubt that they have used the pandemic years to concentrate on our community's zoning and it is up to us all to get involved when they come back with proposed zoning changes. We need to stand up and fight against any zoning changes that affect our single-family neighborhoods. We need to make it crystal clear to Councilmember Raman that our single-family neighborhoods cannot be messed with. Our community must stand together and oppose any up-zoning that negatively affects our homes and homeowners.

HOW THE HOUSING ELEMENT CAN AFFECT YOU

by Maria Pavlou Kalban, Legislative Committee Chair

The city is preparing a state-required "Housing Element" that must show how they will build about 480,000 state-mandated housing units over the next eight years. According to the Planning Department, LA has enough areas currently zoned for housing to build half these units and the rest must come by up-zoning our communities. The Housing Element becomes the blueprint through which Community Plan Updates are used to up-zone communities.

We must pay attention to how this up-zoning is done. Our Sherman Oaks community groups know it can be done with no up-zoning of our single- and multi-family neighborhoods. The Valley and much of LA was built on a half-mile major street grid, and we have a huge opportunity to provide more housing and revitalize our communities by building along these streets. If our city officials had used the grid to promote better transit, buses could run up and down these grid streets – our commercial corridors – and all of us would be within a half mile of a bus with access to the entire Valley. But that never happened.

Now as we must accommodate more housing, we think of these commercial corridors as perfect places to build. And if we support this type of development, we could work to make more housing units affordable for the people who work here and for our children who want to remain in the communities they grew up in.

What's the problem? The city doesn't always do what makes perfect sense. If we don't stand up and insist that housing be built on these commercial corridors, we will see our old multi-family apartments up-zoned for higher density – and many demolished for new apartments. And our single-family areas that already allow three housing units per lot will be up-zoned for even more units. Every year, the state makes more density mandatory.

We need to say "YES" to affordable housing on our commercial corridors and "NO" to densifying our multi- and single-family neighborhoods. SOHA's Legislative Committee and SONC's Vision Committee are working together and meeting with many city officials to make sure that the Sherman Oaks of the future is one we want to live in. We hope by continuing to work collaboratively with Councilmember Raman, the LA Planning Department, and the mayor's office, our efforts will be successful.

BEL AIR SUES METRO FOR WITHHOLDING INFO - GREAT!

by Bob Anderson, Transportation Committee Chair

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority – Metro for short – is short on integrity, short on honesty, short on transparency, and short on fiscal responsibility. They don't know what they're doing, don't tell the public anything, and don't have the funding to build what they plan. Last November, Keep Bel-Air Beautiful, a nonprofit corporation representing Bel Air homeowners, requested hundreds of documents about the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project through the California Public Records Act. SOHA worked closely with them to ensure they get all needed information.

Metro should have delivered the documents in 14 days. Instead, on March 21 – 115 days later – after Metro gave itself five unilateral extensions and delivered only a few documents – Keep Bel-Air Beautiful filed a lawsuit to obtain them. As noted in the lawsuit: "Bel-Air believes that the records responsive to its request will uncover: (a) Metro's total lack of transparency and intentional exclusion of the public from its decision-making process; (b) Metro's failure to consider other, more feasible options besides tunneling under Bel-Air and Sherman Oaks through the Sepulveda Pass; (c) Metro's willful ignorance of the very real safety concerns inherent in its proposal for the Project; and (d) Metro's enormous cost, budget and scheduling overruns."

SOHA overwhelmingly supports Bel Air's lawsuit which they are fully self-funding. The SOHA Board passed a motion to join the lawsuit if this can be legally arranged. We want to know what Metro is doing and we want an affordable Sepulveda Pass transit project that can be built within available funding as fast as possible – without unacceptable community impacts. This simply means monorail – which has higher passenger capacity than subway and can be built at least twice as fast for about one-third the cost.

This is more than a lawsuit for documents – it's a line in the sand against an out-of-control Metro that ignores the public, does what it wants – not what the public needs – and does it badly. An organization mired in past technology, incapable of inspiration and innovation, and blind to basic fiscal responsibility. When the Sepulveda Pass project began eight years ago, Metro never bothered to ask the Sherman Oaks and Bel Air communities about our needs and concerns. Instead, they drew routes without any community input – subways under hillside homes and noisy elevated trains above Sepulveda Blvd in the Valley – subways that are completely unaffordable and will never be built. No matter how much we complained, Metro never listened. Even worse, they withheld information from the public – causing massive confusion. Metro directed – even threatened – project contactors not to communicate with residents of the impacted communities.

The result is a mishmash of confusing alternatives that few understand – and the likelihood of a \$20+ billion budget overrun should Metro idiotically select a subway alternative. Parenthetically – Metro has never built any major project on time and on budget in the last 25 years. Why would anyone believe any information they report. We need to get this project and Metro under control now – before it's too late for LA County. Today's Metro is not the organization that should be planning the future of our transit!

One further point – Metro has hired outside counsel to respond to the lawsuit – which is fascinating because this request is ministerial, not adversarial – and this raises the following questions. What are Metro's in-house attorneys doing? Why are they being paid? Why is Metro wasting more public funds in hiring outside lawyers? Bel Air's counsel spoke with Metro's three outside attorneys – ring up that cash register – who agreed to begin providing the documents in early April.

AIRPORT UPDATE

by Nancy Sogioan and Jay Weitzler, Airport Committee Co-Chairs

As many are aware, Van Nuys Airport is the busiest general aviation airport in the nation – fourth busiest for private jet flights – but flight expansion efforts are underway which would bring even more noise and pollution. SOHA's Airport Committee is working to determine the scope and status of proposed flight expansions, including charter companies operating regular flights to other cities despite our understanding that no commercial airlines are permitted to fly regularly scheduled routes from Van Nuys.



The Bonseph Helinet proposal to rebuild about 4.5 acres of an older hanger area is concerning. It would modernize the site and build new hangars (but not increase the airport's current footprint). BUT it would almost certainly result in adding jets and increased helicopter flights with more noise and pollution. The current use of helicopters for vital medical needs and TV news should continue. However, in current form, Bonseph Helinet's proposal is a no-go. SOHA's Airport Committee is working to protect our community and will provide periodic updates.



THANKS FOR MAKING SHERMAN OAKS BEAUTIFUL

by Jules Feir, Community Liaison Chair

Has anyone noticed the beautiful new window display at Mark's Garden in Sherman Oaks? They decorate for each season and it's a treat that brightens up our community for everyone. SOHA thanks them for their displays and hopes more of our local businesses see their example and help brighten our days.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMINGS AND GOINGS

by Matt Epstein, President

A unique new store has opened at Westfield's Fashion Square. Located near Macy's first floor, The Memorabilia Network (MTN) offers a full-service concierge for collectors and their collections, with an emphasis on sports-related and Hollywood memorabilia. Whether you're interested in buying or selling memorabilia, MTN has you covered. They offer appraisal services with numerous qualified experts on hand, or they can arrange for a private sale of your collection. MTN will also evaluate and manage collections within your portfolio.

MTN's CEO/President, Harlan Werner, has years of experience in the industry, having consulted or handled the sale of many pieces of iconic pop culture memorabilia. Muhammad Ali and his wife entrusted Harlan to help market and reintroduce Ali to the corporate marketplace. They became such great friends that Harlan Werner was a pallbearer at Ali's funeral. He also was the executive producer of the movie "Tyson". His expertise and passion for memorabilia make MTN an excellent destination for collectors and enthusiasts alike.



Another recent addition to Sherman Oaks is a new EXER care facility, located in the old Marie Callendar's location at 14743 Ventura Blvd west of Kester. It's great to know that there's more convenient medical care available in the area.

Singer-songwriter Leona Lewis, along with her two partners, will be bringing a second COFFEE AND PLANTS to Studio City later this month in the old Color Camp location at 12334 Ventura Boulevard. The trio's first shop opened in Pasadena in 2019 and is known for its beautiful plant-filled setting, fully vegan menu, and amazing display of plants. The shop's focus is on sustainable and plant-based products, and they aim to help the world move away from dairy consumption. They have a goal to plant a tree with the National Forest Foundation for every hundred cups of coffee sold, and they also donate to the Hopefield Animal Sanctuary. COFFEE AND PLANTS is an excellent destination for those looking for a delicious and sustainable coffee experience.

Panini Kabob Grill is opening soon at Westfield's Fashion Square. This is their seventh location, and a testament to the quality of their food and service. The restaurant is known for its delicious Mediterranean cuisine, including grilled kabobs, sandwiches, salads, and more. Enjoy ...

FRIENDLY MEMBERSHIP REMINDERS

by Nancy Sogolian, Membership Chair

Happy Spring, Neighbors! If you're a SOHA member and are not receiving our occasional updates by email, we don't have your email address. Please go to SOHA914.com, click on Contact Us and send your name, street address and email address. OR, simply email your name, street address and email to: SOHA914@gmail.com and note "Email Update".

If you've received a membership renewal notice but haven't yet renewed, please do so without delay to keep your membership current and our Newsletters coming! If you live in or near Sherman Oaks and are not a member, JOIN NOW to support our good work and get monthly updates on important issues of concern to our community!

SOHA is the ONLY member-supported, volunteer-run, nonprofit community organization created to preserve and improve the quality of life in Sherman Oaks. We work to obtain the best outcomes for our community, including the best mass transit solutions, housing legislation that protects our neighborhoods, safety, beautification – and so much more! Thanks to our members, SOHA is free from county or city influence – a critical component in protecting Sherman Oaks. Please remember to share this Newsletter every month with a neighbor and encourage them to become a member. Let's keep Sherman Oaks and SOHA strong! Thank you!

**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO HELP KEEP SOHA STRONG!
VISIT SOHA914.COM TO BECOME A MEMBER AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

SHERMAN OAKS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

The **ONLY** member-supported,
volunteer-run, non-profit
community organization
dedicated to preserving and protecting
the quality of life here in Sherman Oaks.

★ **BECOME A MEMBER** — 💡 **STAY INFORMED** — ❤️ **MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

IT'S EASY! SIMPLY GO TO www.SOHA914.com AND CLICK "JOIN SOHA"



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