

"Together we have clout!"

★ **COMMUNITY MEETING & FRAUD PANEL** ★

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2024 - 7:15 PM — SOCIAL HOUR/DINNER - 6:15 PM

SHERMAN OAKS EAST VALLEY ADULT CENTER • 5056 VAN NUYS BLVD

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM BECOMING A FRAUD VICTIM

OUR EXPERT PANEL WILL TELL YOU HOW TO BE STREET SAVVY IN THE NEW DIGITAL-AI AGE

Larry Slade, Panel Chair



Larry honed his legal skills as Student Assistant District Attorney in Manhattan and Assistant State Attorney in Florida's Miami-Dade County. His Slade Law firm specializes in business law and litigation. He has lived in Sherman Oaks for 28 years and chairs SOHA's Homelessness Committee.

Captain Alejandro Vargas



Captain Vargas is Commanding Officer of Valley Division and a 30-year LAPD veteran. His command experience includes Special Operations and Central Patrol Divisions, where he fostered community engagement. He knows what is happening in Sherman Oaks and how to not become a victim.

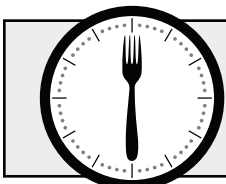
Antonia Villaseñor



Antonia is a lifelong Angelino and Fraud Education and Outreach Specialist with 13+ years fraud experience at the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation. She uses her fraud prevention knowledge and expertise to help potential fraud and crime victims across LA County.

- How to avoid internet scams • How to recognize Artificial Intelligence scams •
- Techniques to protect yourself from fraud • Understanding how fraudsters manipulate you • Identifying weapons scammers use against seniors •

OTHER PANELISTS TO BE ANNOUNCED. Email questions for the panel to SOHAZoomMtg@gmail.com by noon Tuesday April 16. Streaming starts at 7:15. Zoom ID is 854 7291 2681 with passcode SOHA914. Zoom link is on our website at SOHA914.com and we email it to members. You can listen to the meeting via phone at (669) 444-9171 or (669) 900-9128 by entering the Zoom ID and Passcode. Meeting video is available a day after the meeting – search [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) for “SOHA Community Meeting” or go to our “ShermanOaksHomeownersAssociation914” YouTube Channel.



RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH - HOMESTATE
FIND OUT MORE ON PAGE 4 - SOHA SOCIAL HOUR @ 6:15 PM

WE LIVE IN A DIFFERENT WORLD NOW

by Larry Slade, Homelessness Committee Chair

Everyone knows that there are plenty of people in the world who are okay with stealing from others. I am not talking about breaking into your home to steal your possessions or many other examples of typical “theft”. I’m talking about theft through scam. This is a wholly different kind of crime. It’s not a violent crime. No weapons are used. And it’s not even a crime that its victims see coming.

We live in a world now that is smaller and much more deeply connected than ever before in history. While we still need to worry about car theft from our own driveways, we also need to focus on crimes that are committed right under our noses – ones that we didn’t see coming. Each year, there are hundreds of thousands of people who are defrauded, manipulated one way or another, and end up the victim of a “scammer”. They’re all over the place and coming at us from all directions.

Phone scams, IRS scams, home repair scams, counterfeit scams, and now Artificial Intelligence scams. But it’s not only about how people are scammed, it’s about who are their targets. It’s not random. Victims of scams are “targeted”. Thanks in part to social media, scammers can discover some very personal information about each of us that can be used to manipulate and steal from us. The name of your grandchild and a panicked call which uses an AI-generated voice to convince you that “It’s me, grandma, Jessica.” She is panicked and begging for immediate help. This is a whole other level of scam. But wait, more are coming.

People around the world are “scammed” out of literally hundreds of billions of dollars each year.

The weapons used are common: the computer or smart phone (emails, texts, websites, social media, targeted ads), the telephone (landline or cell phone), skimmers or card readers, malware or ransomware, fake documentation, Ponzi or multi-level marketing (MLM) schemes, and investment fraud.

The targets are anyone with a phone, anyone online, senior citizens, ethical and honest people (using their desire to “do the right thing” against them), anyone that wants to be helpful, anyone that needs money (get rich quick, work from home and earn lots of dollars), anyone with ambition (to be a model, actor, or performer, to get into a specific industry), pretty much anyone.

At this month’s SOHA Community Meeting, I will be hosting a roundtable where a panel of experts will explore the types of scams commonly occurring in our area and tell you about specific steps that you can take to avoid being victimized by a scam. Please join us.

DENSITY DOESN’T HAVE TO BE A BAD WORD

by Maria Pavlou Kalban, Legislative Committee Chair

The goal of Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association and United Neighbors is to protect our single-family and sensitive multi-family neighborhoods while supporting the city’s plan to add more density in our community. We shouldn’t fear density if it is added responsibly and with the needs of both longtime and new residents in mind.

The city has many ways to rezone communities for more density. The Housing Element is one. The Housing Element takes the big picture view of the city, identifying where more housing density should go. The Planning Department is responsible for the Housing Element and is currently focusing their efforts to add more density in areas considered High Resource. By offering more incentives to developers to build in these areas, the city hopes to become more equitable in offering affordable housing throughout LA. Early on, we fought the Housing Element proposals not because they target Sherman Oaks as High Resource but because they considered allowing large apartment buildings in our single-family neighborhoods as well as other neighborhoods throughout the city. By the city’s own data, we showed them that there was more than enough capacity to add the density needed in each of our communities without densifying existing single-family or multi-family neighborhoods. We fought the city and created maps showing where individual communities could add more housing in each of their High Resource areas. We won that battle and single-family neighborhoods in the newly released Housing Element were left untouched citywide.

Executive Directive 1 (ED1), the mayor's directive that fast tracks 100%-affordable housing, is another tool that could rezone neighborhoods. Shortly after the mayor's directive was put in affect, many developers proposed 7-story apartment buildings in single-family zones. Realizing this as an error, the mayor amended ED1 and exempted single-family neighborhoods from consideration. Currently we are working with the mayor's office to create guidelines for ED1 because the city is moving to make this directive a permanent ordinance. Our guidelines will continue to protect single-family neighborhoods and also protect areas sensitive to more density such as high-fire zones, substandard streets, areas far from transit, historically significant neighborhoods in many low resource areas, and our environment. We've discussed our guidelines with the mayor's office, and hopefully they will be adopted by the City Council and supported by our councilmember.

Finally, we have Community Plans that take the micro view of our city and rezone individual streets in our neighborhoods. We are currently waiting to see the plans for Sherman Oaks that should be released in May. The North Sherman Oaks Plan that rezones a small area of Sherman Oaks (Burbank to Oxnard) has been released and will be discussed at the Vision Committee meeting, 6:30 pm April 4th at the Sherman Oaks library. Join us for the discussion.

Many of us regret the loss of low-density Valley communities. For many of us, it was the more relaxed environment that attracted us to the Valley. We can't stop the city's need to add more density. But if we do this right, the density we get will be density we can live with. That is why we at SOHA, along with United Neighbors and SONC, remain engaged in all the different processes and hope you all take an interest in the future of Sherman Oaks.

Be part of the discussion when the Community Plan for Sherman Oaks is released in May. Details to follow.

METRO SENDS NON-ANSWERS TO 20 SOHA QUESTIONS ABOUT SEPULVEDA PASS TRANSIT

by Bob Anderson, Transportation Committee Chair

SOHA has been working on Metro's Sepulveda Pass Transit project since before voters approved Measure M in 2016. We've reviewed concepts, made comments, asked questions, attended public meetings, and met with elected officials and with Metro. We know effective rapid transit is critical to LA's and the Valley's future and our imminent increased density. The Valley has never received its fair share of Metro's rail transit – today the Valley has only two rail transit stops out of almost 90 stops countywide.

The Sepulveda Pass Transit project is the biggest and costliest of Measure M's 40 transit and transportation projects. It's got to be done right, affordably, and on a timely schedule. Sadly, Metro has not been telling the public all they should know about the project – especially its capabilities, probable costs, construction times, and potential eminent domain impacts. Metro has also been silent on the dreaded subway Alternative 4, which is not a subway at all in the Valley, but noisy elevated trains above Sepulveda Blvd for five miles. This alternative has no redeeming value other than being less costly for Metro to build – and will preclude much needed higher housing density along the Sepulveda Blvd corridor.

Last month, I reported that SOHA demanded Metro CEO Stephanie Wiggins answer 20 reasonable questions about the Sepulveda Pass Transit project. Stephanie replied by our 15-day deadline and her email said: "Fortunately, we were able to confirm that the vast majority of the questions have already been answered publicly. The rest are based on misinformation, so we appreciate the opportunity to correct the record." We were surprised by her comments because our questions may have been reasonable, but they weren't easy to answer, weren't answered before, and didn't deserve being unceremoniously dismissed in this way.

After carefully studying Metro's supposed answers, we formally replied to Stephanie and said: "We critically reviewed your responses to our 20 questions about the project and found only one of them acceptable, one marginal, and 18 unacceptable ..." Our letter carefully explained why Metro's answers were unacceptable. It basically showed that Metro answers were non-answers that never addressed our actual question or were irrelevant. We even called one answer dishonest. Our letter was covered by the LA Daily News and Valley Current. You can read it on the SOHA website at www.SOHA914.com at "Click Here to Read Letter to Metro".

A week later, Stephanie emailed and bluntly said: "The information provided in our earlier correspondence remains current and accurate." What a sad ending. Once again, Metro abruptly shut down a potential opportunity for the public to learn vital information about the Sepulveda Pass project – information that a trusted and transparent steward of the project would be more than willing to share. What are they hiding and why? We're going to find out.

RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH

HOMESTATE

By Jane Kaplan, Restaurant Chair – Get ready to tantalize your taste buds at this month's SOHA meeting because we're bringing you a culinary sensation straight from the heart of Texas, right here in sunny Southern California! Brace yourselves for a Texan fiesta at none other than HomeState, where every dish is a savory celebration of true Texan flavors and genuine hospitality. They are located at 13424 Ventura Blvd on the corner of Greenbush and Ventura. www.myhomestate.com/shermanoaks/



Imagine sinking your teeth into mouthwatering breakfast tacos, ooey-goey queso, tender brisket, and homemade flour tortillas crafted with love and tradition. It's a symphony of flavors that'll transport you straight to the Lone Star State, courtesy of Briana Valdez, the visionary founder and mastermind behind HomeState. Born to first-generation Mexican American parents and raised in the heart of Texas, Briana's culinary journey began with a longing for the beloved breakfast tacos and queso of her childhood.

Armed with a business degree and a passion for authentic Texan cuisine, Briana honed her skills in the world of hospitality, learning from the best, including the legendary Thomas Keller at Bouchon. With determination and a dream, she set out to create HomeState – a culinary haven where she could share her rich cultural heritage through food.

Since its inception in 2013, HomeState has been a labor of love, with Briana's mom proudly serving as her first investor. The result? An unparalleled dining experience that's as soulful as it is delicious. From the heavenly tortillas to the mouth-watering brisket tacos and heavenly queso, every bite at HomeState is a testament to Briana's culinary prowess and dedication to her roots.

And now, the good news is closer than ever because HomeState has planted its flag right here in Sherman Oaks on Ventura Boulevard. With eight locations across California, HomeState has become a beacon of Texan culinary excellence, drawing in crowds of hungry patrons eager to savor every last bite.

So, don't miss out on this opportunity to indulge in a true Texas treat! Join us this month and experience the magic of HomeState for yourself. Trust us, once you've tasted their tantalizing creations, you'll understand why HomeState is the talk of the town, and why every visit feels like coming home.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMINGS AND GOINGS

by Matt Epstein, President

Get ready to indulge in the latest culinary craze that's taking the world by storm! Charcuterie isn't just a platter of meats and cheeses—it's a work of art, a symphony of flavors that brings people together for a truly unforgettable dining experience. And right here in Sherman Oaks, we're proud to welcome Charcuterie LA, a vibrant new establishment dedicated to crafting the most exquisite charcuterie boards you've ever laid eyes on, located at 14545 Ventura Blvd, just west of Van Nuys Blvd. www.charcuteriela.com



Charcuterie LA isn't just about food – it's about community, sustainability, and supporting local farmers and producers. Owned and operated by a group of passionate women, this charming spot is a true reflection of the culinary landscape of Sherman Oaks. With boards that are as gorgeous as they are fresh, Charcuterie LA is the go-to destination for anyone looking to elevate their dining experience.

VOLUNTEER TO SUPPORT SOHA AND SHERMAN OAKS

CONTACT US AT SOHA914@gmail.com or (818) 377-4590
Tell us your name, how you could help, and how to contact you. Thank you!

Transitioning into the realm of recreation and learning, Sherman Oaks is the newest location for the Water Wings Swim School, filling the void left by Joanne's Fabric Store in the strip mall at 13333 Riverside Drive near Rite Aid. This is the fifth Water Wings location in the Valley, expanding the brand's footprint in California. Since 2003 Water Wings has been operating in Idaho, Nevada, and California – and soon they'll be in Texas. The Water Wings Swim School is renowned for its comprehensive swim programs catering to various skill levels. These large and small indoor pools with viewing areas are great for kids to learn how to swim, and for parents to be able to watch them do it. The state-of-the-art facilities including specially designed pools for infants as well as a huge pool for older children and adults is a great place to take your kids to learn how to swim. Water Wings is committed helping keep your children safe around a pool. There are private, semi-private, and group lessons. I was very impressed by this swim school and recommend that you check it out! www.waterwingswimschool.com/sherman-oaks%2C-ca

There's a news sports bar opening on Ventura Blvd near Woodman called the Game Changer Brewhouse. At the Game Changer Brewhouse, they've created a space where sports enthusiasts and friends can come together to celebrate sports victories, create memories, and savor everyday moments. The Brewhouse is filled with high-def screens to watch your favorite games. They serve brunch, lunch, and dinner along with a huge list of amazing beers. They serve salads, pizzas, burgers, chicken, and meats. This new sports bar looks like a great place to go with friends to hang out, drink a few beers, watch a few games, and just have a great time. The Game Changer Brewhouse is taking over the former Bluebird Brasserie space and should be open very soon. 13730 Ventura Blvd. <https://gamechangerbrewhouse.com>



But perhaps the most exciting news of all is our upcoming June SOHA meeting where we'll be heading to the Valley Relics Museum in Lake Balboa for an unforgettable stroll down memory lane. From hearing from historians to exploring the exhibits showcasing the rich history of the valley, this is one meeting you won't want to miss. Plus, we've got a special restaurant of the month lined up to serve up delicious eats right at the museum – so stay tuned for more details! <https://valleyrelicsmuseum.org>

▶ SUPPORT SOHA's ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE ◀



If you receive an email request or renewal envelope and haven't renewed your SOHA members – Please Renew!



Members who joined or renewed by credit card have a membership subscription that automatically renews each year. They're all set.

IF YOU'RE NOT A MEMBER YET, PLEASE JOIN NOW!

It's only \$45 per year and members enjoy our monthly newsletters, community meetings, social hours, informative eblasts, and more.

- ▶ Go to www.SOHA914.com and click the "JOIN OR RENEW SOHA" button. Select your membership level, enter your name and email, and click on the "Subscribe" button to pay by credit card.
- ▶ You can also mail a check with your name, address, and email to: SOHA Membership, PO Box 5223, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5223.
- ▶ IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, CONTACT US AT JoinSOHA@gmail.com or leave us a voicemail at (818) 377-4590.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING SOHA THROUGH YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

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.

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IN THIS ISSUE OF SOHA NEWS

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Artificial Intelligence scams, fraudsters, and internet scams ◀

▶ **Find out about Desirable Density, whether Metro**
answered our 20 questions, and an exciting
announcement about our June SOHA meeting ◀