

"Together we have clout!"

## ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ COMMUNITY MEETING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

— WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2024 - 7:15 PM — SOCIAL HOUR/DINNER - 6:15 PM —

SHERMAN OAKS EAST VALLEY ADULT CENTER • 5056 VAN NUYS BLVD

# MAYOR BASS ADDRESSES TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF LA, THE VALLEY, AND SHERMAN OAKS



- **Budget: Is There a Crisis? Is LA Really Broke?**
- **Jobs: How Do We Keep Businesses in LA?**
- **Homelessness: State/Federal Dollars Pour In - Yet We Always Need More. Will it Ever End?**
- **Rezoning: How Do We Protect Single-Family Neighborhoods in Perpetuity?**
- **Mass Transit: Are There Better Solutions Than Just Digging Outrageously Expensive Tunnels?**
- **Public Safety: Will We Ever Feel Safe Again?**

Mayor Karen Bass was raised with her three brothers in the Venice/Fairfax community and is a proud graduate of Hamilton High. After serving as a front-line nurse and physician assistant, she founded the Community Coalition to organize the predominantly Black and Latino residents of South LA against substance abuse, poverty, and crime – and to pioneer strategies addressing the root causes behind the challenges faced by underserved neighborhoods.

She was then elected to represent LA in the California Assembly and became Speaker. She later represented LA and Culver City in Congress, where she helped protect small businesses during the pandemic and led the passage of the most significant child welfare policy reform in decades.

During her first years as mayor, thousands more unhoused came inside and LA reported a homelessness drop for the first time in years. LAPD received record numbers of applicants, while homicides and violent crime decreased. New businesses opened. LA provided more city services like pothole repair and graffiti removal, secured hundreds of millions of dollars from state/federal partners, and continued to lead on reducing climate impacts. Yet the LA Times reported that "LA Is Broke".

Email your questions for Mayor Bass to SOHAZoomMtg@gmail.com no later than noon Tuesday November 19. Streaming starts at 7:15. The Zoom ID is 875 8646 7871 with passcode SOHA914. The Zoom link is on SOHA914.com. We email it to members a day before the meeting. The meeting video is available about a day after the meeting – search YouTube.com for "SOHA Community Meeting".



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

## **A WORD SOMETIMES DOES MATTER**

*by Maria Pavlou Kalban, Legislative Committee Chair*

As Draft #3 of the Housing Element advances through the city process, a Letter of Determination (prepared by the Planning Department) was sent from the Planning Commission to the City Council stating the Commission's support for the rezoning plan as presented in the Housing Element Draft #3 without "options" that would have opened single-family neighborhoods to higher density. Although the letter stated support for the Planning Department's staff report, a part of the report that explained all the "options" for rezoning single-family neighborhoods was labeled "recommended by the City Planning Commission". This was not only incorrect but also could prove damaging since what the Commission recommends is something City Council seriously considers.

Having been at the hearing, we knew the Commission had never recommended the "options" and this needed correcting. To be clear, the Commissioners had discussed the possibility of taking a position on these "options", but they chose not to and simply supported the Planning Department's staff report.

We immediately sent out a letter of concern to Planning Director Vince Bertoni stating that the wording in his department's communication was in error and needed to be corrected for the record. As you all know, wording matters. Initially we were told the only thing that mattered was the Planning Commission's support of the Staff Report which clearly omitted the options and the use of "recommended" on the section of the draft report that spoke to the options wasn't an issue. Frankly we couldn't see how it didn't matter. We sent out an alert to our United Neighbors coalition to write to Director Bertoni insisting on the correction. Lots of letters went out that day and within 24 hours the Planning Department informed us that the word "recommended" was removed and a correction was submitted to the Council File and in the letter of Determination going to City Council.

Next step for this process is the City Council Planning and Land Use Committee (PLUM) hearing that might occur on November 19th. Hopefully the committee will approve Draft #3 of the CHIP/Housing Element without options and send that recommendation on to the City Council for a full council vote.

We know there are councilmembers that support the idea of opening our single-family neighborhoods for apartment developments, but our own detailed analyses concluded that it is absolutely unnecessary to do so in order to build the housing we need and accommodate more people into all our communities. We stand by our position that the city needs to do the least amount of harm to existing neighborhoods (both multi- and single-family) while at the same time encouraging new housing on our corridors that can create tomorrow's new welcoming neighborhoods with more diversity for each of our communities.

## **CONSTRUCTION STARTED ON NEW CHICK-FIL-A**

*by Tom Glick, Planning and Land Use Committee Chair*

Construction on the new Chick-fil-A at 5043 Van Nuys Blvd in Sherman Oaks is officially underway! Here's what to expect:

- **Demolition and Construction:** Demolition and construction activities began on Monday, October 28th, 2024.
- **Preservation of Historic Elements:** The contractor's team is working closely with historic consultants to ensure the preservation of the building's historic features.
- **Construction Timeline:** The contractor's schedule shows completion in Summer 2025.
- **Monthly Updates:** SOHA will provide regular updates to keep the public informed about construction progress and other important information.
- **Security Measures:** To ensure site security, the contractor will implement: perimeter fencing with dust cloth cover; an on-site security guard; and video surveillance towers with motion-activated lighting.
- **Questions:** Contact the Project Superintendent, Jason Irvine at (714) 258-6670.

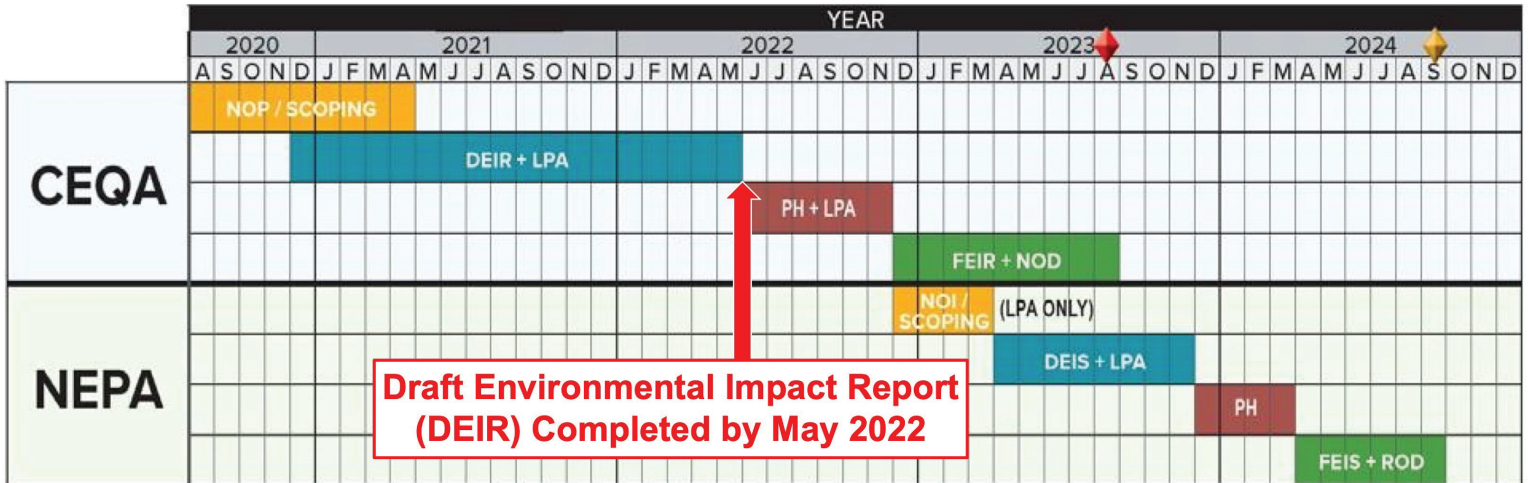
Chick-fil-A appreciates the community's patience and understanding they bring this new restaurant to Sherman Oaks.

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM METRO – MORE DELAYS FOR THE SEPULVEDA PASS TRANSIT PROJECT

by Bob Anderson, Transportation Committee Chair

When voters passed Metro’s Measure M ordinance in 2016, it showed the Sepulveda Pass Transit Project groundbreaking start date was in 2024. Today, 2024 is ending in a month and Metro is now saying the public won’t receive the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) until early 2025 – we hope. Metro originally promised the DEIR by May 2022 – as shown below in their environmental studies schedule which SOHA obtained through a California Public Records Act request. Metro is already three years behind schedule – and we think it will get worse.

## Metro September 2020 Environmental Studies Schedule



Project groundbreaking usually occurs at least three years after the DEIR is released. So hopefully Metro can begin sticking shovels in the ground by early 2028 – only four years later than their original Measure M commitment – and just in time to make a mess for the Olympics.

## NEIGHBORHOOD COMINGS AND GOINGS

by Matt Epstein, President

Unwrap the Magic of Ventura Boulevard: New Flavors, Old Favorites, and Holiday Traditions Await! The holiday season is upon us, and Ventura Boulevard is buzzing with new culinary gems and cherished local traditions. Just in time for those festive cravings, some exciting new spots are popping up – and you’ll want to experience every one of them!

**Donny’s Breakfast Spot: A Colorful Comeback with Flavor and Flair.** First up, a blast from the past with a fresh twist! Donny’s Breakfast Spot has reopened on Ventura Blvd near Nagle, returning after its initial popularity a few years back near Woodman and Ventura, next to Petit Trois. Fans of this beloved breakfast joint can now dig into their favorite morning bites right here in Sherman Oaks! But there’s a spicy twist: Donny’s Spicy Wings and Fries has also joined the scene – and for now, you can get those wings right alongside breakfast at Donny’s.

Step inside, and you’re greeted by a vibrant and uniquely soulful atmosphere. The walls come alive with jazz-inspired murals painted by local 16-year-old talent, Eve Wilson, bringing the rhythm of the city’s heartbeat into the dining experience. Donny’s has curated a menu that’s nothing short of mouth-watering, featuring heaping buckets of chicken and waffles, savory breakfast burritos, fluffy pancakes, southern-style grits, sizzling sausages, and of course, Mimosas to toast the season! With a mission centered on outstanding food, friendly service, and creating a cozy community spot, Donny’s is redefining the breakfast experience, one delicious bite at a time.

And this weekend, I can’t wait to dig into Donny’s and see if the food lives up to the tantalizing menu. From the stylish, music-filled decor to the classic comfort-food offerings, breakfast here feels like a must-do this holiday season. 13346 Ventura Blvd. [www.donnysbreakfastspot.com](http://www.donnysbreakfastspot.com)

New Arrivals and Neighborhood Staples. Just a bit further down Ventura, something exciting is brewing at the former Mas-

sage Envy location: Massage Heights has moved in, ready to bring its signature relaxation services to Sherman Oaks. Whether you're looking to unwind before the holiday madness or recover from the festivities, a massage session here might be just the ticket. 14562 Ventura Blvd. <https://www.massageheights.com/sherman-oaks/>



And for food lovers craving bold, aromatic flavors, keep an eye out for the mid-November opening of DiDar Kitchen right on Ventura, just west of Van Nuys. This Iranian restaurant, an extension of the beloved Westwood location, promises to bring rich Persian flavors to the neighborhood, adding even more diversity to our local dining scene.

**Tina's Trees: The Holiday Tradition That Warms Every Heart.** Of course, what's the holiday season without a trip to Tina's Trees? A cherished Sherman Oaks institution since 1977,

Tina's Trees is much more than a place to pick up your holiday greenery – it's a heartwarming community tradition. Tina herself is known for her kindness and community spirit, making every visit feel personal and special. Beyond a stunning selection of fresh-cut trees, Tina's offers gorgeous wreaths and garlands to complete your holiday decor. Need delivery? Tina's got you covered, bringing that holiday cheer right to your door.

Tina's also hosts an epic pumpkin patch every Halloween, overflowing with pumpkins, gourds, hay bales, and all the autumnal touches that make fall in Sherman Oaks so delightful. Located in the Fashion Square parking lot behind Joann's, Tina's Trees is a must-visit for locals and newcomers alike. 4725 Woodman Ave. <http://www.tinastrees.com>

So, as we dive into the holiday season, Ventura Blvd is packed with cozy spots, new flavors, and beloved traditions that make celebrating here so unforgettable. Whether you're sipping Mimosas at Donny's, unwinding at Massage Heights, or picking the perfect tree from Tina, this stretch of Sherman Oaks has all you need to make the season bright. Enjoy every bite, every sip, and every moment – Happy Holidays!

## RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH

# CASITA

*By Jane Kaplan, Restaurant Chair – Ventura Boulevard's Emerging Culinary Gem: A Look Inside the Restaurants Redefining Sherman Oaks' Food Scene.*

If you've strolled down Ventura Boulevard in Sherman Oaks lately, you may have noticed something remarkable in the air – a tantalizing aroma hinting at a culinary renaissance. This once quiet stretch is now a budding food haven, thanks in large part to the creative forces behind Casita, Taisho, and the newly unveiled Blvd Steak. These three standout spots are not just restaurants – they're experiences – each designed to transport you through flavors, ambiance, and an unmistakable passion for quality.



Blvd Steak is the latest addition from this powerhouse team, setting a new standard for dining in the neighborhood. But before that, their second venture, Casita, took Sherman Oaks by storm with its vibrant take on modern Mexican cuisine. Casita isn't just another Mexican restaurant – it's a culinary escape to the dreamy, laid-back vibes of Tulum, Mexico. Every dish is meticulously crafted from scratch, with an unwavering commitment to freshness and authenticity.

At Casita, it's all about reimagining traditional Mexican dishes while honoring the roots that make each flavor pop. Their menu is a love letter to Mexico's bold culinary heritage, offering everything from expertly crafted tacos to vibrant shared plates. Dive into tacos stuffed with succulent carne asada, crispy fish, melt-in-your-mouth barbacoa, and even rib eye for a truly elevated twist. And for those who enjoy creative small bites, the options are irresistible – corn tamales, roasted cauliflower, chili relleno, and lobster bamba rice make a statement on every plate.

Casita also serves up a lively selection of margaritas, each one bursting with unique flavors that complement the cuisine. Pair one with their fresh-made guacamole or any of their signature dishes, and you're instantly transported to a breezy Tulum beach, right from the heart of Sherman Oaks.

For November we're thrilled to announce Casita as our Restaurant of the Month! We can't wait to explore more of their culinary artistry and see what they have in store next. So, if you haven't yet experienced Ventura Boulevard's emerging food haven, make your way to Sherman Oaks, and let Casita, Taisho, and Blvd Steak treat you to an unforgettable culinary journey. Casita is located at 14015 Ventura Blvd. [www.casitarestaurant.com](http://www.casitarestaurant.com)



 **PLEASE DONATE LOTS OF TOYS TO SOHA'S**   
**26TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE AT GELSON'S**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8**  
**11:00 to 2:00**

**Gelson's Market**  
on Van Nuys Blvd (next to Best Buy)



Join friends, family, neighbors, elected officials, and Santa for complimentary coffee and snacks when you drop off new unwrapped toys for children.

*Holiday Gift Suggestion List*

*Infant to Age 5 - Stuffed animals, pull toys, building blocks...*

*Age 6 to 10 - Dolls, trucks, action figures, puzzles, books, tech...*

*Age 11 to 13 - Watches, music, computer games, books, tech...*

*All Ages - Gift Certificates*

Every year for 25 years, SOHA has helped the LA County Department of Children and Family Services collect toys for young children who truly deserve them. The Department helps more than 70,000 children - some of whom have never received a holiday gift before.

**HELP SOHA GIVE CHILDREN THEIR BEST HOLIDAY EVER!**

**IF YOU'RE NOT A SOHA MEMBER YET, PLEASE JOIN**

It's only \$45 per year. Go to [www.SOHA914.com](http://www.SOHA914.com) and click "JOIN OR RENEW SOHA" to pay by credit card - or mail a check with your name, address, and email to: SOHA Membership, PO Box 5223, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5223

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## IN THIS ISSUE OF SOHA NEWS

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**LA Mayor Karen Bass will answer tough questions**  
**about the future of LA, the Valley, and Sherman Oaks.** ◀

▶ **Find out about one word that could change**  
**our neighborhoods, Metro's latest delays,**  
**and SOHA's 26th Annual Toy Drive.** ◀