

"Together
we have
clout!"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ COMMUNITY MEETING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2025 - 7:15 PM — SOCIAL HOUR/DINNER - 6:15 PM

SHERMAN OAKS EAST VALLEY ADULT CENTER • 5056 VAN NUYS BLVD

LA CITY ATTORNEY HYDEE FELDSTEIN SOTO IS FOCUSED ON:



- Improving Community Safety
- New Community Outreach Courts
- Stopping Party Houses
- Addressing the Homeless Problem
- Eliminating Corruption in LA

Hydee Feldstein Soto is LA's 43rd City Attorney – the general counsel who is legal advisor to the Mayor, City Council, and the jigsaw puzzle of offices that make up our city. The City Attorney is responsible for civil and criminal misdemeanor enforcement actions and is the

city's chief prosecutor. She leads a team of more than 1,000 legal professionals, including 550 attorneys.

Hydee was born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico, moving to the United States to attend Swarthmore College and Columbia University School of Law. She then moved to LA and has called it home for more than 40 years. She raised her family here and built her career as a partner at international law firms, earning wide recognition for her leadership, problem solving acumen, and legal ability.

Don't miss our live meeting and the opportunity to ask your questions directly to the City Attorney. You can also email questions to SOHAZoomMtg@gmail.com no later than noon Tuesday March 18th. Streaming starts at 7:15 pm. Zoom link is on SOHA914.com. Zoom ID is 826 8859 7628 with passcode SOHA914.



RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH - DONNY'S - SOHA SOCIAL HOUR @ 6:15 PM

By Jane Kaplan, Restaurant Chair – Alright, Sherman Oaks, get ready to ditch the usual SOHA dinner spread! Our March meeting is getting a serious upgrade, courtesy of the legendary Donny's Breakfast Spot. Now, I know what you're thinking: "Breakfast? At night? Should I wear my pajamas?" Trust us, it's going to be glorious. Donny's is indeed a breakfast haven – a beacon of crispy waffles, fluffy pancakes, and perfectly crisped bacon. They're also proving their versatility by bringing their A-game to our evening gathering.

If you haven't yet experienced the magic of Donny's, prepare to be converted. Their food is, frankly, ridiculously good. We're talking melt-in-your-mouth pancakes, eggs cooked to utter perfection, and bacon that sings a delicious, smoky tune. Word on the street is they're even whipping up some special evening-friendly delights, perfectly balancing breakfast charm with a touch of dinner sophistication. Think savory breakfast burritos maybe? Or a breakfast-inspired slider situation? The suspense is killing us!

Let's be honest, SOHA meetings can sometimes feel a bit ... let's say "procedural". But with Donny's providing the grub, we're guaranteed a delicious distraction. It's a chance to bond over shared plates of culinary joy and maybe even forget (for a few blissful moments) about that pesky local ordinance. Donny Harrell's return to Sherman Oaks is a triumph! His new restaurant, a stunning space near Fulton, is a must-see. The walls are alive with incredible, oversized jazz portraits painted by a young local artist. The restaurant's design is just as impressive as the art and the food. If you can't make the SOHA meeting, treat yourself to Donny's Breakfast Spot – you won't be disappointed!

CONTINUING FAILURE OF OUR CITY LEADERSHIP

by Tom Glick, Planning Committee Chair

The recent wildfires in Los Angeles have exposed a critical leadership failure at the city's highest levels. Mayor Karen Bass's response, marked by blame-shifting and a lack of accountability, is deeply concerning. The first rule of leadership – "Everything Is Your Fault" – seems harsh, but it in fact highlights a fundamental truth often ignored by most politicians nowadays. Mayor Bass's actions directly contradict this principle. Her actions are taken directly from the Donald Trump Playbook in the Chapter titled "NEVER ADMIT FAULT".

Her claim that insufficient staff briefings on impending high winds prevented her from adequately preparing for the wildfires is disingenuous. Local and national news outlets had been predicting catastrophic winds for more than a week, making her assertion of ignorance unconvincing. In fact, her own City Department of Emergency Management sent several warning alerts several days prior to the first winds hitting the region. This deflection of responsibility onto her staff, whom she herself hired and presumably trusted, reveals a troubling lack of personal accountability.

Furthermore, the mayor's decision to fire LAFD Chief Kristin Crowley, citing unpreparedness for the wildfires, is particularly egregious. This action comes just six months after Mayor Bass proposed a nearly \$20 million budget cut to the Fire Department, including significant reductions in overtime funding – a move that directly impacted the availability of the 1,000 firefighters she claims should have been on duty. This paints a picture of a mayor creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure, then using the consequences as justification for dismissing a subordinate. The removal of Chief Crowley appears less a response to inadequate firefighting and more a convenient scapegoat for her own budgetary decisions.

And let's not let our City Council off the hook regarding the reduction in the LAFD's budget. The mayor isn't alone in this travesty. The City Council's Budget and Finance Committee wholeheartedly supported the mayor's budget, including the LAFD cuts. City Council has been on record supporting the mayor's response to the wildfires and especially the firing of Chief Crowley. After all, the council would rather circle the wagons around supporting Mayor Bass than take their own responsibility in this major screwup. So, the next elected office any of these people try to seek, their responsibility in this fiasco should never be forgotten.

Additionally, Mayor Bass's handling of the homeless crisis mirrors this pattern of inaction and blame-shifting. While she boasts of increased funding and tax initiatives, tangible improvements remain elusive despite all her campaign promises two years ago that she would tackle the problem the first day in office. The upcoming annual homeless count will likely reveal a worsening situation, demonstrating a profound disconnect between her pronouncements/promises and the reality on the ground.

Before she embarks on another campaign, she owes the citizens of Los Angeles a far more substantial accounting of her first term. A simple question needs to be addressed. Does her leadership reflect a genuine commitment to the well-being of Los Angeles – or is it simply a performance of political posturing? The wildfires and the ongoing homeless crisis demand a far more substantial and accountable response than we have seen thus far.

And finally, the Covid crisis ended more than two years ago when the State of Emergency was lifted by President Biden, Governor Newsom, and then Mayor Garcetti – but Mayor Bass and the progressive-leaning City Council still go on as if we are under Covid emergency procedures. Most department staff continue working from home more than 50 percent of the time. What is most troubling is that many of those departments saw increases in their budgets last year. But other departments, like LAFD and LAPD, that do not allow their employees the benefit of working at home three days a week, saw budget decreases. Can you imagine a police officer responding to a crime scene via Zoom in their pajamas, cup of coffee in hand, and yelling at their kids in the background to be quiet? Our wonderful fire and police personnel – sanitation, street services, and DWP too – must be on tap 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. For Mayor Bass, time to follow President Trump again and make all city employees come back to the office full time – because new studies show that work from home may benefit the employee but certainly doesn't benefit the city or its constituents, voters, and taxpayers.

Do you receive our email updates?

If not, we do not have your email address. Email it to us at soha914@gmail.com.

WHAT THE HOMELESS COUNT MISSES

by Larry Slade, Homelessness Committee Chair

The City of Los Angeles conducted its annual homeless count in mid-February. We must wait until this summer for the results to be released. The count itself is a good idea and should be continued. But it's important to note, the count will not produce an accurate or reliable measure of the total number of homeless. This will occur not from a lack of good faith but from a flawed process that falls far short of accuracy.

When the count is released, any alleged reduction in the homeless count will be touted by local elected officials as a "victory". But let's get real for a minute. Counting homeless is far from an exact science. We can only count in areas that volunteers can access, and then volunteers can only count what they see. Homeless people (contrary to popular belief) are not always out in the open. They hide. They look to station themselves (if they can) where they won't be disturbed. People driving around a neighborhood from inside a car looking for homeless are bound to miss some, if not many. Plus, there are thousands of homeless that are not living on the street but in friends and family's houses, in hotels, or wherever they can find a safe place. None of these are counted.

Additionally, this is a hand count conducted by individuals and small groups in different areas using US Census tract maps to divide the city into small regions. This is a necessary step and using the census tract is as good an approach as any. In addition, this year there were a shortage of volunteers, technical glitches with the phone app, and rescheduled dates for the count (because of the fires). All likely impacted the number of registered volunteers which was reported to be about 10% lower than last year. But the actual number of volunteers was probably even lower due to registered volunteers that did not show. This is bound to have impacted the results – which we will not learn about until this summer.

Politicians pay close attention to this count and look to it as evidence that their efforts to reduce homelessness are working. I support the count but think its value has severe limitations. As a result, I will wait to see what numbers the count produces – but plan to take the numbers with a grain of salt.

STAYING VIGILANT

by Maria Pavlou Kalban, Legislative Committee Chair

When Los Angeles approved the Housing Element last year, single-family neighborhoods were protected from being impacted with more density. We fought for this Housing Element because we knew that LA had enough capacity to build lots of housing on commercial corridors. But we also knew this would not be the end of the attacks on single-family neighborhoods. Pro-development groups like Abundant Housing, YIMBY, and Streets for All, and even several individual LA councilmembers want single-family neighborhoods included in the rezoning of LA. They want more density in our neighborhoods even though the city has more than enough capacity to build all needed housing on our corridors. It was no surprise, therefore, when CA Senator Scott Wiener introduced two new state bills that would add more density to single-family neighborhoods. State bills have the power to override any local ordinance a city approves. We would be unable to stop higher density in our neighborhoods if these new bills pass. It is unfair to do this before cities have a chance to implement and analyze results from their new Housing Elements.

We are currently meeting with the Planning Department and legislative analysts to discuss these complicated bills before we start a statewide effort to stop them. We will eventually need your help to convince our CA Senator Henry Stern and our newly elected CA Assemblymember Nick Schultz to vote against or amend these bills. It won't be easy to defeat Senator Wiener, the powerful author of these bills, but hopefully we can convince our electeds that these bills will do more unnecessary harm if not defeated or amended. Next month we will start explaining these bills to you and ask for your help reaching out to our electeds. Your involvement will make a difference, especially when added to all the voices in the city that will be part of this effort.



MISSED A SOHA MEETING - WATCH THE VIDEO

Do you know we record all SOHA Community Meetings and post the videos on YouTube? Meeting videos are available a day after the meeting - search www.YouTube.com for "SOHA Community Meeting".

TWO BEAUTIFUL NEW MEDIANS IN SHERMAN OAKS

by Leslie Elkan, President, Village At Sherman Oaks Business Improvement District (BID)

The BID is excited to announce that we have received full approval to construct two landscape medians on Van Nuys Blvd in Sherman Oaks. One of the medians will run from Hortense to Milbank and the second from Milbank to Moorpark. The medians will be like the wildly popular one on Ventura Blvd near Cedros, with its eye-popping light displays. The Van Nuys Blvd medians will also have lighting. We don't yet know exactly when construction will begin or how long it will take, but it has taken us three years of a painstaking design and approval process to get to this point – and we are thrilled. The project will be overseen by the Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI), which partners with the LA Office of Community Beautification. We are grateful for the support we received from our council office and from the Ventura-Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan Review Board. The medians will enhance safety as well as beauty in Sherman Oaks.

METRO WAFFLES ON SEPULVEDA PASS TRANSIT

by Bob Anderson, Transportation Committee Chair

On February 12th, SOHA sent a short letter to Metro CEO Stephanie Wiggins concerning when Metro would release the 25,000-page Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project:

“Metro has spent more than \$200 million studying the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project since 2010. Metro’s project website states that ‘The Draft EIR release is anticipated in early 2025 ...’ It is mid-February and Metro has never mentioned the STCP DEIR release in any email bulletin. This is nonprofessional and irresponsible. The DEIR is already three years behind schedule. Metro must immediately provide a specific release date for the DEIR and a decision date for the Locally Preferred Alternative decision – or risk the public thinking that Metro is even further behind schedule and has lost interest in the project.”

Eight days later Stephanie replied, explaining the complexity and rigors of Metro’s environmental process and stating the DEIR “... will be released soon for public review, with sufficient time for comments.” This was not the specific date we requested, but a very typical Metro non-response. They continue to treat the public like mushrooms – keeping us in the dark and covering us with manure. But don’t worry – SOHA will review the DEIR when released and let you know what’s happening and how you can help.

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER

by Vickie Bourdas Martinez, CEO, Sherman Oaks/Encino Chamber of Commerce

In every neighborhood, there’s an opportunity to build stronger, more vibrant communities. One of the most effective ways to do this is by supporting local businesses. The Sherman Oaks/Encino Chamber of Commerce has the unique privilege of fostering connections between residents and the businesses that contribute to our community’s character and economy.

Benefits of Supporting Local Businesses – Local businesses are the heartbeat of any community, offering products and services tailored to residents’ needs. When you support these businesses, you’re not just getting a quality service or product; you’re investing in your neighborhood’s long-term prosperity. Local businesses contribute to job creation, support local schools, and sponsor events that bring neighbors together.

Why It Matters for Homeowners – As homeowners, we all want our neighborhoods to thrive, and the success of local businesses is a key factor. The Chamber works to connect homeowners with businesses that improve daily life – from home improvement services to fitness centers – and even local cafes that create meeting spots for neighbors. Strong local businesses help raise property values, contribute to safer, more connected neighborhoods, and promote a higher quality of life overall.

Shop Locally – Next time you need something, consider supporting a local business first. You’ll be amazed at the hidden gems right around the corner or a couple of miles away.

Attend Local Events – Many businesses host or sponsor community events and participating helps build a stronger local network. Here are some upcoming events:

- Saturday, March 29th – Community Preparedness Drill, Encino Park
- Saturday, May 3rd – Health & Wellness, & Lifestyle Expo, Westfield Fashion Square
- Sunday, October 19th – 33rd Annual Sherman Oaks Street Fair on Ventura Blvd from Kester to Van Nuys Blvd

Spread the Word – Word-of-mouth is powerful. Share your positive experiences with neighbors and friends, and help these businesses grow.

The Sherman Oaks/Encino Chamber encourages our members to support local businesses by hosting our networking lunches and mixers at different locations each month. We provide our members and guests with the opportunity to enjoy a location they might not otherwise visit from restaurants to wellness studios to offices and more. If you're interested in collaborating with community-focused businesses, explore our online Chamber directory to discover member businesses. If you're a business owner looking to expand your local network, we invite you to join an upcoming event and experience firsthand why the Chamber is thriving and how building relationships within the community can benefit your business.

By supporting local businesses, we are investing not just in our economy, but in our neighborhood's future. The Sherman Oaks/Encino Chamber is here to foster these connections, and we encourage all homeowners to embrace this opportunity to strengthen our community. Together, we can make our neighborhood a place where everyone thrives.

SOHA ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE UNDERWAY IF YOU'RE NOT YET A MEMBER – PLEASE JOIN!



SOHA's Membership Drive began last month. Dues renew automatically each year for members who pay by credit card. We email renewal reminders and later mail renewal envelopes to members who pay by check.



SOHA membership is only \$45 per year and includes our monthly newsletter, community meetings, special notices, and much more.



- ▶ **Go to www.SOHA914.com and click "JOIN OR RENEW SOHA" to pay by credit card subscription.**
- ▶ **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.**

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**

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Hear how LA City Attorney Hydee Feldstein Soto
will focus on safety, homelessness, and corruption. ◀

▶ **Find out about failures of our city leadership,**
staying vigilant, Metro waffling, and easy ways to
strengthen our community. ◀