

"Together
we have
clout!"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ COMMUNITY MEETING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

— WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025 - 7:00 PM — SOCIAL HOUR/DINNER - 6:15 PM —

SHERMAN OAKS EAST VALLEY ADULT CENTER • 5056 VAN NUYS BLVD

COUNCILMEMBER TRACI PARK

AN ADVOCATE FOR ALL HER CONSTITUENTS



- **Fighting SB79 and Advocating for Intelligently Built Affordable Housing**
- **Conducting an Independent Fire Investigation to Help Rebuild a Safer Palisades**
- **Getting Encampments Cleaned Up and Finding Better Homelessness Solutions**
- **Funding and Rebuilding LAPD and LAFD**
- **Restoring Public Trust in City Council**

Councilmember Traci Park was elected to City Council in 2022, following a successful 20-year career as a municipal attorney with degrees from Johns Hopkins University and Loyola Law School. Her district ranges from Topanga to Pacific Palisades to LAX. She's not from a political background but stepped up because of what was and wasn't happening. She's committed to being a voice for ALL RESIDENTS in her district, been an advocate for the business community and its vital workforce, worked to keep communities safe so kids can safely walk to school and visit local parks, beaches, and libraries, and was also a voice of reason and honesty during the Palisades Fire.

Don't miss our live meeting and the opportunity to ask questions directly to Councilmember Park. You can email questions to SOHAZoomMtg@gmail.com no later than noon Tuesday November 18th. Streaming starts at 7:00 pm. Zoom ID 876 7050 9461; Zoom Passcode SOHA914. To stream the meeting, go to our website at www.SOHA914.com and click the "Stream SOHA Meeting" button. Meeting video is available on our website a day after the meeting by clicking the "SOHA Meeting Videos" button.

RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH



FIND OUT MORE ON PAGE 4
SOHA SOCIAL HOUR @ 6:15 PM

WHAT DOES LA DO NOW ABOUT SB79?

by Maria Kalban, SOHA Housing Committee Chair

Since March we have been telling city and state officials about the harm Senate Bill 79 poses for LA, presenting them with maps and graphic charts showing SB79's impacts. Now, SB79 is approved and LA is panicked as they stare into its "headlights". The Planning Department is trying to understand the impacts of this bill and untangle its poorly defined complexities. They are still trying to understand which transit stops qualify, the capabilities of our existing infrastructure, and SB79's negative impacts to our communities.

We can't overstate how harmful SB79 will be to LA and specifically Sherman Oaks. This bill allows 200,000 new housing units in Sherman Oaks where we have only 76,000 residents. Think about that! By our calculations, SB79 could add five to ten million more housing units in LA!!! As a point of reference, there are 1.4 million housing units in LA city today. Think about what that will mean to our infrastructure – sewer, water, power, schools, fire and police. And who pays for this? We do!

But SB79 is a bill sponsored by special interest groups like Abundant Housing and Streets for All with huge monied donors who want access to our neighborhoods. They have no concern about the infrastructure, our safety, or who pays the bill. SB79 will rezone single-family and duplex areas near transit stops. The city can defer implementation of SB79 in high fire zones, historic districts, and low-resource areas – but only until 2030. Basically, the city's hands are tied when it comes to protecting vulnerable neighborhoods because SB79 projects are "by right" with no allowed city or public input. Can SB79 be stopped? Only if we all keep fighting for something better and more responsible.

Mayor Bass is basically silent on SB79. She sent in a letter requesting the Governor's veto – but did she do enough? She couldn't even get the LA Delegation to understand the harm SB79 would cause. SB79 won by only one vote. A little push from the mayor could have defeated it. Three members of our LA Delegation to Sacramento voted yes on SB79. We also must all keep voicing concern to Councilmember Raman, Assemblymember Schultz, and Senator Stern every time we see them because they need to solve the problems this bill creates.

United Neighbors has formed a working group to see what steps we take to undo the most damaging aspects of SB79. Stay tuned as we fight back for our communities. We can get lots of new and affordable housing and still protect our neighborhoods. Let's stand up against special interests that only work to better their pocketbooks.

LA PLANNING DEPARTMENT'S SYSTEMIC FAILURE ON SB79 UNDERMINES THEIR ESSENTIAL ROLE... DO WE REALLY NEED THEM ANYMORE?

by Tom Glick, SOHA Planning and Land Use Committee Chair

It is with profound concern that I address the LA City Planning Department's inadequate response to SB79. Signed into law on October 10, SB79 represents one of the most significant and complex generational shifts in California's urban land use policy. Yet, LA City Planning – the state's largest planning agency – has met this pivotal legislative challenge not with strategic preparedness, but with a demonstrable display of organizational inertia, reactive leadership, and a fundamental misalignment with state priorities.

Failure of Foresight and Preparation – The core provision of SB79 is a clear, enforceable state mandate: cities must upzone existing single-family and low-density areas within a quarter- to half-mile radius of major transit stops and high-frequency bus corridors. The intent is clear – to align California's housing production with its climate goals by creating substantial new density where infrastructure can support it. This implementation crisis was entirely avoidable. The legislation, introduced by CA Senator Scott Wiener in February 2025, was public for eight months. Forward-thinking municipalities used this period to commission detailed impact analyses, conduct early public engagement, and develop "on-the-shelf" strategies to ensure immediate compliance upon enactment.

In contrast, under its Director Vince Bertoni, LA City Planning remained conspicuously passive. No meaningful internal task force was established, no proactive scenario mapping was conducted, and no transparent public communica-

tion strategy was deployed. The essential work of identifying impacted parcels and modeling density potential fell to community organizations, such as United Neighbors. Relying on volunteers for a core municipal responsibility signifies not merely bureaucratic oversight, but a serious lapse in institutional readiness.

Misplaced Priorities and Resource Allocation – The current scrambling to interpret and apply SB79 has sown widespread uncertainty among developers, property owners, and community organizations, directly jeopardizing the city’s compliance with critical state housing deadlines. This lack of preparedness is particularly concerning given the department’s failure to utilize SB79’s alternative plan provision. This strategic flexibility mechanism was included to allow local governments to redistribute mandated density intelligently across their jurisdictions, balancing growth with infrastructure capacity and neighborhood context. While other cities are leveraging this tool, LA City Planning leadership has demonstrated an inability to articulate a coherent strategy, citing a lack of “time and resources”.

This excuse is difficult to reconcile with the department’s resource allocation. LA’s budget continues to support a large administrative hierarchy and discretionary spending on branding, promotions, and conferences, while essential analytical and community engagement units appear under-prioritized. The organizational structure – led by a Director, Executive Officer, four Deputy Directors, and numerous supervising planners – appears optimized for internal coordination rather than external outcomes. Furthermore, the persistent post-pandemic hybrid work model has contributed to a diffusion of accountability and a noticeable reduction in the department’s public-facing responsiveness.

The Necessity of Structural Reform – Director Bertoni’s near-decade-long tenure has been consistently marked by the prioritization of outward perception over measurable progress. The incomplete zoning code overhaul, the outdated General Plan, and the faltering implementation of state housing laws have established a pattern of organizational drift. SB79 has simply served as the stress test that exposed this long-standing systemic weakness. The repeated failures compel a difficult, but necessary, policy question: Does Los Angeles still require a Planning Department in its present form?

As state housing and land-use mandates increasingly supplant local discretionary authority, the department’s role as an independent policy actor has diminished. What remains is a slow-moving, expensive bureaucratic layer that functions more as an administrative bottleneck than a visionary agency. Under charter reform, the city should seriously consider consolidating City Planning into a more efficient Department of Development and Infrastructure that integrates planning, building, transportation, and housing functions under a unified strategic framework. This would streamline processes, eliminate functional redundancies, and restore clear accountability to a system currently paralyzed by compartmentalization.

Los Angeles urgently requires a planning apparatus defined by foresight, agility, and technical integrity. Without decisive leadership change and comprehensive structural reform, the Planning Department risks obsolescence at a time when the city’s housing, climate, and infrastructure challenges demand peak performance.

SOHA 27TH ANNUAL TOY DRIVE AT GELSON’S ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7TH – 11 AM TO 2 PM

SOHA is again joining the LA County Department of Children and Family Services to collect toys for young children who truly deserve them. Join your friends, family, and neighbors at Gelson’s Market on Van Nuys Blvd for free coffee and snacks when you drop off NEW UNWRAPPED TOYS that will put a smile on a young child’s face. Every year for 26 years, SOHA has collected toys for children – some of them have never received a holiday toy before! More info on our website at www.SOHA914.com.

METRO DELAYS SEPULVEDA PASS DECISION TO 2026

by Bob Anderson, SOHA Transportation Committee Chair

It's all quiet from Metro as they try to figure out what to do next on the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project. Metro's Draft Environmental Impact Report provided 21,000 pages about five unaffordable Alternatives, each with its own challenges. Our Supervisor Lindsey Horvath is working to ensure a selection that is fair to the Valley – and we applaud her for this. We keep hearing that Metro will make an STCP decision in the first quarter of 2026 – more than three years later than originally planned. Let's hope it's the right decision for Sherman Oaks.

STREET FAIR AND SHERMAN OAKS CLEANUPS

by Kelly Lynch, SOHA Beautification Committee Chair

Big thanks to everyone that stopped by SOHA's booth at the Sherman Oaks Street Fair. This year's fair was hugely successful with attendance estimated at 75,000 to 100,000. There were more than 150 local vendor booths covering everything from food, drinks, and deserts to jewelry, clothes, home goods, and gifts. Six local pet adoption/rescue organizations participated in the Pet Zone sponsored by Subaru of Sherman Oaks. Our local schools came out to entertain us – Dixie Canyon Community Charter Elementary, Louis Armstrong Middle School, and The Buckley School students performed on the Sherman Oaks Hospital Main Stage. And our very own Local Peasant, The Oaks Tavern, and Buvette Islands made the Cham-BAR a fun adult spot to grab a drink and relax. It was great to see all our neighbors, friends, and family out having such a great time!

Our local Volunteers Cleaning Communities (VCC) chapter continues to clean up Sherman Oaks' streets on the first and third Saturdays of the month. It's a fun morning that usually starts with a breakfast at The Pineapple Hill Saloon & Grill sponsored by The Village At Sherman Oaks. Everyone is welcome! It's also a great opportunity for students working to fill their school service hour requirements. Check SOHA's website calendar for more details.

If you are interested in joining our SOHA Beautification Committee, please email Kelly Lynch at klynch@kplselect.com. We are working on our Spring 2026 Shine LA Cleanup and Tree Planting Day as well as a few other projects bringing our business and resident communities together to make Sherman Oaks, Clean, Green, and Beautiful.

RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH

POQUITO MÁS

by Jane Kaplan, SOHA Restaurant Chair – It's hard to believe, but Poquito Más first opened its doors on Cahuenga Blvd in October 1984 – and 41 years later, it's still going strong! What began as a single neighborhood spot with a dream of serving “fresh food fast, not fast food” has grown into seven thriving locations across Southern California.

From the very beginning, Poquito Más stood out by doing things a little differently – and, true to its name, giving customers a little bit more. More freshness. More flavor. More authenticity. Their mission has always been simple but powerful: to serve real Mexican food made with real ingredients, prepared right before your eyes. If you've ever had one of their famous burritos, sizzling tacos, or perfectly seasoned rice and beans, you know exactly why this local favorite has stood the test of time. Every bite tastes like sunshine, surf, and a trip down the Baja coast.

And here's even better news – Poquito Más is catering SOHA's November 19th meeting! So come hungry and ready to enjoy a taste of one of our community's most beloved restaurants. Because after all, “Poquito Más” doesn't just mean “a little bit more” – it's a promise of quality, freshness, and heart that's been served up for more than four decades.



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COMINGS AND GOINGS

by Matt Epstein, SOHA President

November Reflections in Sherman Oaks – As I write this article, the sun is blazing, and the thermometer reads 90 degrees. It hardly feels like Thanksgiving is around the corner – or that Christmas and Hanukkah are right behind it. From where I'm sitting, it feels more like I should be firing up the grill and welcoming summer! Still, even after all these years, I never take this incredible Southern California weather for granted. It's one of those clichés that just happens to be true – our sunshine is one of the biggest reasons I love living here in Los Angeles.

Holiday Spirit: Tina's Trees and Pumpkins – With the holidays approaching, I can't help but think of people like Tina of Tina's Trees and Pumpkins, who has become a true Sherman Oaks tradition. Tina's pumpkin lot on Woodman Ave behind Fashion Square is a local landmark every fall – bright, cheerful, and full of community spirit. As I drove by this week, I couldn't help but smile knowing that while tomorrow is Halloween, Tina's work is just getting started.

The day after Thanksgiving, her lot transforms from a sea of orange to a forest of green, as the Christmas trees roll in. Tina and her family have been bringing this magic to Sherman Oaks for more than 30 years, raising their family right here in our community. And now, she's even expanded with a second location in Calabasas! It's these local gems and familiar faces that make our neighborhood feel like home. For hours of operation visit www.tinastrees.com.

A Taste of South America on Ventura – On the restaurant front, there's exciting news for food lovers. Alto Fire to Table has opened its doors at 12969 Ventura Blvd, just before Coldwater. Inspired by the time-honored culinary traditions of Uruguay and Argentina, Alto celebrates the art of open-fire cooking – think smoky, flavorful dishes straight from the Pampas region of South America.

The Pampas, known for its rich soil and world-class cattle, is the heartland of South American barbecue culture. Alto takes that legacy and gives it a modern California twist, using locally sourced ingredients from the finest farms in our state. I've driven by a few times, and it looks beautiful – warm, modern, and inviting. I haven't had a chance to try it yet, but the early reviews have been glowing. I can't wait to experience it firsthand. We hope that this restaurant follows the long line of famous and long-lasting restaurants that have been at this location such as Pino Bistro and before that the world-famous La Serre. Their website is www.alto.la.

Changes on the Boulevard – Of course, with new openings come a few closings. Sadly, Delicee Café and Cake House, located next to Five Guys and Western Bagel at Coldwater in Studio City, has closed its doors. Despite offering lovely baked goods, they never quite found their audience.

But sweet-tooth fans, don't despair – Something new is coming. Crema, a high-end coffeehouse, is opening in early November on the corner of Mammoth and Ventura on the south side. Along with their fabulous coffee, they'll be serving breakfast burritos and an array of fresh pastries. From the looks of it, Crema will bring a stylish and cozy vibe to the neighborhood – just the kind of spot where you'll want to sip, snack, and linger.

If your Jonesing for a New Coffee Shop Now – Lynx Coffee on the corner of Sunnyslope and Ventura on the south side is a must-go. They opened a few months ago and there is always a line around the block. I had the pleasure of meeting the owner at the Rendition Room Speakeasy in Studio City recently and he is a great guy with a super positive attitude, and the coffee is great. Check them out at www.Lynxcoffee.com.

A Growing Concern – Sherman Oaks remains a thriving hub for dining and community life. But there's one issue that's been increasingly hard to ignore: the rise of unlicensed street vendors setting up full-blown restaurants on our sidewalks. The other night, I drove past Van Nuys Blvd across from Gelson's and saw a two-tent setup serving Mexican food. A few blocks away, at Riverside and Fulton, another operation was cooking over an open flame under a tent. These vendors aren't following the same rules that our brick-and-mortar restaurants must abide by – no health permits, no taxes, and no restroom facilities for their workers.

It's simply not fair to hardworking restaurant owners who invest so much to do things the right way. Our small businesses deserve a level playing field. I reached out to Councilmember Raman's office recently and was surprised by their response. She said that "street vendors contribute to the neighborhood's vibrancy and the local economy". If this concerns you too let me know and I encourage you to reach out to Councilmember Raman's office and make your voice heard.

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Councilmember Traci Park shares her plans
to advocate for ALL her constituents. ◀

▶ **Also: SB79...what does LA do now;**
Planning Dept...do we need them anymore;
Metro's latest delays; and SOHA's 27th Annual Toy Fair. ◀