

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ COMMUNITY MEETING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

— WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2025 - 7:00 PM — SOCIAL HOUR/DINNER - 6:15 PM —

SHERMAN OAKS EAST VALLEY ADULT CENTER • 5056 VAN NUYS BLVD

🕒 PLEASE NOTE: EARLIER MEETING TIME 🕒

LAPD FACING TOUGH CHALLENGES CHIEF McDONNELL RESHUFFLES TOP BRASS



- Too Few Officers and Tough Recruiting
- ICE Sweeps and Violent Protests
- Upholding Right to Free Speech
- Homelessness and LAPD
- Working with the New District Attorney
- World Cup and Olympics Are Coming

LAPD Chief Jim McDonnell brings more than four decades of distinguished service to law enforcement – marked by innovation, leadership, and a deep commitment to community safety. Born and raised in Boston, he moved to LA and joined LAPD in 1981. After 30 years with LAPD, he has worked in nearly every role. His vision focuses on officer morale and wellness, recruitment and retention, accountability and transparency, and crime reduction.

Don't miss our live meeting and the opportunity to ask questions directly to the Chief. You can email questions to SOHAZoomMtg@gmail.com no later than noon Tuesday August 19th. Streaming starts at 7:00 pm (new time). Zoom ID: 876 7050 9461; Zoom Passcode: SOHA914. Zoom link is on our new website at www.SOHA914.com, click on "Events Calendar", then click on the August 20th meeting link. Our meeting video will be available on our website homepage a day after the meeting; click the "SOHA Meeting Videos" button.



RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH THE LOCAL PEASANT

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SOHA SOCIAL HOUR @ 6:15 PM

NITHYA – WHAT ARE YOU HIDING FROM YOUR CONSTITUENTS?

by Matt Epstein, SOHA President and Tom Glick, SOHA Planning and Land Use Committee Chair

Over the past few months, SOHA has written extensively about our desire for a “Seat at Her Table”. Our repeated efforts have been aimed at encouraging Councilmember Nithya Raman to engage with the very community that elected her. We want to know she is listening.

In May – nearly three months ago – we submitted a formal request under the **California Public Records Act (CPRA)**, seeking access to Ms Raman’s and her staff’s official calendars. CPRA, enacted in 1968, is a foundational law that affirms the public’s right to access information concerning the conduct of the people’s business. It mandates that governmental records must be made available to the public upon request, with limited exceptions for issues such as personal privacy or security. We requested items so that we could better understand who our councilmember has been meeting with.

CPRA requires government agencies, including City Council offices, to respond within ten calendar days of receiving a request to determine whether the records will be disclosed. If needed, the agency may invoke a one-time 14-day extension, bringing the total maximum response period to 24 calendar days. We are now well beyond that timeline – **nearly 90 days have passed – and our CPRA request remains largely unanswered.**

Rather than complying with the spirit and letter of the law, Ms Raman’s office has responded with **delays, excuses, omissions, and fragmented or inaccurate data**. This failure to provide a complete and timely response is not just a bureaucratic oversight – it is a violation of the public trust and of CPRA itself. It undermines the very transparency and accountability that the law was designed to protect. We did finally receive what we believe are incomplete or made-up calendars. Go to www.SOHA914.com, click on “Councilmember Nithya Raman” under “Hot Topics”, then on the “CPRA Calendars” button, and judge for yourselves. Why are there so few names? Why just basic topics? Who has calendars that are so vague?

Let us be clear: SOHA’s request was not intrusive or partisan. It was a simple, lawful attempt to better understand how the councilmember and her staff are spending their time and to whom they are granting access. Calendars are public documents when used in the context of official business. By refusing to provide a full accounting of her schedule, Ms Raman is not only sidestepping legal obligations but reinforcing our growing concern – that she is prioritizing meetings with **outside special interest groups**, such as the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and Abundant Housing, while disregarding the concerns of everyday constituents in Sherman Oaks and other communities that she serves.

Democracy requires accountability. **CPRA exists to uphold that accountability.** And yet, in our opinion, CM Raman seems to treat transparency as a selective exercise – welcoming it when it aligns with her personal advocacy (for example, on issues like immigrant or hotel worker rights) but dismissing it when her own constituents are the ones demanding answers.

This ongoing pattern of behavior reflects a troubling misunderstanding of the role of a city councilmember. While advocacy on broader policy matters is important, **it should not come at the expense of addressing local, district-level issues such as homelessness, rising crime, and declining public safety.** These are the issues that affect our community daily – and they are not improving under her leadership.

We are also deeply concerned about Ms Raman’s position as Chair of the Homelessness and Poverty Committee, from which she appears to have **directed millions of dollars in city contracts to certain nonprofit groups** – groups that are often ideologically aligned with her and appear frequently on her sparse public calendar. And stay tuned for upcoming reports from SOHA where we will examine these financial relationships in greater detail.

Let this letter serve as both a formal reminder and a public statement: many of us in Council District 4 are watching closely. We will continue to pursue every legal avenue to ensure our voices are heard and that public records are made available to the public – as required by law. Unfortunately, we have now been forced to contact the State Attorney General’s office to assist in this simple request. If we do not get satisfaction, then we are prepared to file a lawsuit in order to receive this basic information.

We call on Ms Raman to reconsider her approach. **Transparency, open communication, and community responsiveness are not optional – but essential to effective representation.** We remain committed to engaging in good-faith dialogue, but trust continues to erode each year this office disregards its obligations to its constituents.

THE LIGHTBULB MUST WANT TO CHANGE

by Larry Slade, SOHA Homelessness Committee Chair

How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb? Only one, but the lightbulb must want to change. I use this riddle with legal clients experiencing frustration with the civil litigation process. It refers to the actions and inactions of other people. Put simply, you cannot force someone to do something that they refuse to do – whether it is honoring the terms of a contract or paying money that is overdue. People move or refuse to move based on their own motivations. And, most importantly, they often only comply with their obligations when forced to do so.

Applied to homelessness, the sad reality is many homeless are lightbulbs that don't want to change. If LA was able to efficiently spend the billions of dollars they've thrown at this problem (hint: they haven't), were able to streamline the process for building a lot more housing (another hint: they won't), and then actually built the housing needed (not holding my breath), there would still be thousands of homeless who choose to remain homeless. Before you jump and accuse me of blaming homelessness on the homeless, I acknowledge that most homeless are such involuntarily. But, not so for everyone.

For some, the benefits outweigh the downsides. All housing comes with rules. There are regulations for what you do with your trash and human waste, what you can and cannot do in your unit, noise, visitors, parking, the list is extensive. We all voluntarily comply with these rules. But for some, compliance is not an option – either because they don't want to (think: illegal activity) or because they can't (think: mental illness). As I have asked over and over in this column, what do we do about them? What do we do when the lightbulb doesn't want to change – when the homeless don't want to be housed?

The answer for many members of our City Council is: "Homelessness is not a crime – the solution is providing them housing, not jail cells." While I agree that "jail" is not a solution. Neither is letting them live on the streets to destroy our neighborhoods and peace of mind. Clearly, there is no single answer. But a combination of 5150s (involuntary psychiatric holds), forced treatments, civil conservatorships, and, yes, arrests for criminal violations are all tools in the toolbox. All these should (and are) being employed by the city and the situation has improved somewhat. But, at its core, the city needs to the ability to force the lightbulb to change. The alternative – designed to protect the rights of the homeless – would effectively rob all of us of our rights to live in peace.

IT'S NOW OR NEVER FOR SB79

by Maria Kalban, SOHA Housing Committee Chair

As you all know, the fight to stop Senate Bill 79 is ongoing. After the California legislative recess ends on Aug 18th, we will again reach out to our assemblymember and senator to try and secure their "no" votes on this bill. SB79's author accepted several amendments to the bill, which frankly did nothing to lessen its massive impacts on our neighborhoods. One of the amendments simply allows a city to move around the density generated by the ½-mile radius but doesn't lessen the numbers of units originally mandated – and requires all single-family neighborhoods within the radius to be rezoned for multi-family development.

We've sent letters regarding our concerns about SB79 to all legislators. We expressed our support for individual Housing Elements that add a lot of density to each of our communities but are much more equitable and consider community character, open space, urban tree canopy, and infrastructure – and spread out density (unlike SB79).

SB79 states housing is a statewide concern and therefore removes local control over land use. But it also exempts major portions of California from the bill. If it's a statewide concern, shouldn't it apply to all statewide?

We've sent letters asking Mayor Bass to explain where she stands on SB79 because it will impact our city tremendously. Her leadership is important here, especially since she will be asking for our support in her reelection bid. Please send a simple email to the mayor at karen.bass@lacity.org (with cc to jenny.delwood@lacity.org) asking "Where do you stand on SB79?"

Also send emails to our state senator and assemblymember asking for their "no" vote on SB79.

- Assemblymember.schultz@assembly.ca.gov
- Senator.stern@senate.ca.gov

Your letters/emails matter because at this point everyone is counting whether people are yes or no on the bill. Don't be left out of the count. The pro-housing special interests are out in full force. Only we can save our neighborhoods.

TEN FATAL FLAWS IN SEPULVEDA PASS TRANSIT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

by Bob Anderson, SOHA Transportation Committee Chair

SOHA strongly supports effective public transit but cannot yet support any of the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project (STCP) Alternatives due to missing or erroneous information. We do, however, completely oppose Alternative 4 because its elevated trains in only the Valley are unfair. We have gone through all 73 documents and 21,000+ pages of the STCP Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) package. Our July 11th letter to Metro identified ten Fatal Flaws in the package and requested Metro respond to us within 14 calendar days explaining the capital cost discrepancies noted in Fatal Flaw 2. Needless to say, Metro didn't respond.

Ten Fatal Flaws In STCP DEIR Package

1. Insufficient Funding for Any Alternative	6. Minimal & No Station Parking
2. Surprising High Tariffs on Monorails	7. Zero Public-Private Partnership Detail
3. Inept Alternative Selection Method	8. No Early Public Input into Alternatives
4. Unrealistic & Improbable Project Schedules	9. Inconsistent Heavy Rail Technologies
5. Suspicious & Insufficient Ridership Analysis	10. Trivial Public Presentation Content

The flaws prevent the public from making informed and correct DEIR comments. Worse, any decision the Metro Board might make would be flawed and wrong. Metro must postpone the DEIR evaluation cycle, correct all ten Fatal Flaws, and present an updated DEIR to the public before their Board even considers the Alternative that might be built. This will require additional time and funding but this is mandatory for a fair and honest outcome.

You can learn more about SOHA's ten Fatal Flaws by going to our website at www.SOHA914.com and clicking on "Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project" under "Hot Topics". Then click the button "SOHA Letter on 10 Fatal Flaws in STCP DEIR". The flaws are scary and show how dishonest Metro has been with us.

RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH

THE LOCAL PEASANT

by Jane Kaplan, SOHA Restaurant Chair – A Sherman Oaks Secret No More: The Local Peasant Turns 15! Tucked away at 14058 Ventura Blvd on the southside corner of Hazelton, The Local Peasant has been quietly winning hearts – and stomachs – for nearly 15 years. What makes it especially unique? There's still no sign out front. No flashy name. No neon lights. Just a cozy, unmarked entrance that leads to one of the Valley's most beloved gastropubs. It's the kind of place you hear about from a friend ... who heard it from a friend ... and suddenly, it feels like your own little discovery.

When The Local Peasant first opened its doors back in November 2012, the term "gastropub" was still new to many Angelenos. But the concept – elevated comfort food paired with local craft beers and wines – caught on fast. Since then, it's become a staple in the Sherman Oaks dining scene, known for its chef-driven menu, farm-fresh ingredients, and laid-back yet lively vibe.

Whether you're craving a hearty brunch, a relaxed lunch, or a night out with killer cocktails and shareable plates, The Local Peasant delivers – without the need for gimmicks or glowing signs. They've even expanded with a second location in Woodland Hills. But we'll always have a soft spot for the original Ventura Blvd gem.

Join us at the August 20th SOHA meeting for a special dinner celebration from The Local Peasant, where word of mouth built a local legend – no signage required.



ANOTHER SHERMAN OAKS BEAUTIFICATION EVENT

by Kelly Lynch, SOHA Beautification Committee Chair and Howard Jaffe

Howard Jaffe, our local Volunteers Cleaning Communities leader organizes Sherman Oaks cleanups on the first and third Saturdays of every month. Go to www.SOHA914.com and click on our "Events Calendar" for more info.

- First Saturday of August – meet at Pineapple Hill Saloon and Grill, 4454 Van Nuys Blvd at 8:30 am.
- Third Saturday of August – meet at Tortoni Caffe, 15069 Ventura Blvd at 8:30 am.

This is a fun opportunity to get involved in your community (students can complete service hours), meet your neighbors, and help keep Sherman Oaks, Clean, Green and Beautiful!

To join our cleanup group email list, email Howard at h.jaffe@sbcglobal.net.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

by Matt Epstein, SOHA President

Have you noticed the espresso-fueled explosion happening in Sherman Oaks lately? It feels like every time you blink, another stylish coffee shop pops up along Ventura Blvd – and honestly, we're not mad about it.

One of the newest spots to keep an eye on is **Crema Sherman Oaks** at 13750 Ventura Blvd, just west of Woodman on the south side – and set to open any day now! This specialty café promises to deliver where "bold espresso meets creamy perfection." Think rich signature drinks topped with velvety cream that look as good as they taste. It's coffee with a flourish – and a little flair. They also have a very successful location in our Westfield Mall.

If you've strolled down Ventura Blvd recently, you might have already seen the crowd forming outside Lynx at 13460 Ventura Blvd, at Sunnyslope in the new two-story center where the old tired used car lot sat for years. Another trendy newcomer that's quickly building a loyal following.

And of course, our tried-and-true favorite **Red Window Coffee** at 13365 Ventura Blvd on the north side just before Dixie Canyon continues to pour the goods. It's official – Sherman Oaks is becoming the spot for morning meetups, casual hangs, or solo sips with your favorite book.

Sushi City still Going Strong. Long before the coffee boom, Sherman Oaks (and its sister neighborhood Studio City) were known as the sushi capitals of the Valley. With so many incredible sushi joints packed into just a few miles, it's always been hard to choose a favorite. And now ... another contender joins the lineup!

Also say hello to **Zen Toro** at 13573 Ventura Blvd on the north side at Ventura Canyon – the new kid on the sushi block. This was the old location of Izakaya M for many years. From the outside, it looks sleek and inviting – a sushi sanctuary waiting to be explored. I haven't had a chance to check it out yet, but if you do, I'd love to hear your take. Is it the next standout in our sushi scene?

A Goodbye (Sort Of) to a Local Gem – Here's a bittersweet update. **In Your Place** at 5943 Sepulveda Blvd, just before Oxnard on the west side of the street, the beloved outdoor furniture store that's held strong on Sepulveda for over a decade, is shifting gears. They're closing their retail showroom and transitioning into a wholesale-only business. If you've ever snagged one of their well-priced patio sets, you know what a loss this is for weekend furniture hunters. But don't worry – David, the friendly and knowledgeable owner – isn't disappearing. He's still a fantastic resource if you're in the market for quality outdoor pieces. Just don't expect to window shop – it's wholesale from here on out!

Sherman Oaks is clearly buzzing with energy, from the first sip of espresso to the last bite of toro. Whether you're caffeinating, dining, or lounging in style, there's never been a better time to explore the neighborhood.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

BECOME A SOHA MEMBER!

It's \$45 a year and includes our monthly newsletter, community meetings, public service emails, and more. Go to www.SOHA914.com, click "Join or Renew", and pay by credit card subscription that renews annually. Or mail your check, name, address, and email to: SOHA Membership, PO Box 5223, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5223. Thanks

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the quality of life here in Sherman Oaks.

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Find out about LAPD challenges and changes
from LAPD Chief Jim McDonnell.

Also...What is Councilmember Raman hiding;
Lightbulbs and Homelessness; Only you can save your
neighborhood; Metro report's 10 Fatal Flaws; and
another great Sherman Oaks beautification event.