



# WHHO Newsletter

## August 2020

**Woodland Hills Homeowners Organization**

P.O. Box 6368, Woodland Hills, CA 91365 | [www.whho.com](http://www.whho.com)

### **General Meeting**

Wednesday, August 26, 2020

7:30 PM

Zoom Meeting – Invitations will be sent to you by email and on [whho.com](http://whho.com)

Guest Speaker: Councilman Bob Blumenfield on our area's most pressing issues.

### **Councilman Blumenfield to address homeless situation, SB-1120 and other hot-button issues on Wednesday's Zoom meeting.**

The WHHO will resume a schedule of monthly Community meetings focusing on pressing city, county and state issues that are either threatening our area's neighborhoods or will impact our community.

After postponing meetings because of the coronavirus pandemic, we are inviting the community to participate in our Wednesday, August 26<sup>th</sup> Zoom Meeting that will feature Q&A discussions with CD-3 Councilman Bob Blumenfield. If your email is listed with WHHO, contact information to the Zoom meeting will be sent to your email. But if your information isn't with the WHHO, you can find the Zoom Meeting access information on the WHHO website at [www.whho.com](http://www.whho.com).

According to WHHO President John Walker, the WHHO board asked the Councilman if he could share his insights and opinions on a number of important issues that are currently impacting our community, or may have a serious negative effect if they are enacted

into law. Primarily, the topics concern the homeless situation of tent villages being erected under Freeway underpasses on Winnetka Ave. and under the Shoup and Ventura underpass. Also, the proposal in the City Council to support Sacramento's onerous Senate Bill 1120 which would virtually throw out any LA City zoning laws and allow the construction of apartments and four-plexes in single family home neighborhoods.

In a phone call to the Councilman, he shared that while he was the "official" second for a motion for the City Council to back the SB 1120 legislation, it was only done as a "courtesy" to get the motion onto a committee for discussion. He noted that Councilman David Ryu of the Sherman Oaks-Studio City area has an opposing motion that asks the City Council to denounce the SB-1120 legislation. The WHHO Board has filed a letter condemning SB-1120 with the Councilman and the City. (See related story in this newsletter).

The Councilman was also asked if he had stated his opposition to the SB-1120 bill to Representative Jesse Gabriel, who has refused to answer WHHO's letters and phone calls requesting an explanation why he voted for a measure that could destroy the lifestyle of many of the Valley communities he represents. Blumenfield said he hadn't talked to Gabriel, but that he would call him in the near future.

The Councilman stated that a good deal of his time and efforts are going into trying to solve the homeless issues impacting our streets and threatening nearby communities. He went on to articulate how the CD-3 staff was trying to find ways to comply with a judge's order requiring that shelter

beds or rooms be provided before the City can legally move people from under freeways and remove their bulky items like mattresses and cast-off furniture.

“We’re hoping that the Councilman can explain the quagmire of legal requirements and obstacles each City Councilman faces trying to comply with the court orders so that the streets and sidewalks can be cleared of tents and junk,” Walker said. He added that WHHO members may have some thoughts they can air with the Councilman that could help solve the dilemma.

The WHHO Zoom meeting begins at 7:30 this Wednesday and that log-in information will either be sent out to WHHO members, or the general public can access the meeting by getting the access information on the WHHO website.

## West Valley Neighborhoods Under Threat From Sacramento Bills and Greedy Developers.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shut down businesses and schools, but it hasn’t been able to slow down State legislators or wipe out a number of reckless and devastating bills currently oozing out of both the State Senate and the State Assembly in Sacramento. That could permanently destroy many of the State’s neighborhoods--including many in Woodland Hills, like the Walnut Acres area.

California Senate Bill SB-1120 is the most insidious piece of legislation pending. It was authored by San Francisco’s Scott Weiner who has spent the past three years trying to jam his reckless concepts for increasing housing through the legislature. It is being pushed by Democratic Senate Leader Toni Atkins of San Diego who is intent to satisfy Weiner’s lust for stripping away all zoning regulations and power from California cities.

A threat to over 8 million homeowners at virtually all income levels, SB-1120 crushes single family zoning and would allow 4 market-rate homes to be

constructed where one single family home now stands.

Weiner based his legislation on the premise that yards and single family dwellings are “immoral” and the bill would allow 4 market-rate or luxury homes to be constructed where one single family home now stands—and 8 units if cities have local “granny flat” laws, which LA has. This legislation opens residential streets in every neighborhood—including HOAs—to speculation frenzy by unscrupulous developers and rental giants who would then take control over neighborhoods.

The WHHO has written a letter of protest to our representative in Sacramento (Assemblyman Jesse Gabriel) and to our L.A. City Council members asking them to use their influence to stop this legislation.

Here is part of the text (full text on the WHHO website) of the letter send to Councilman Bob Blumenfield asking him to oppose a motion in the City Council supporting SB-1120:

**TO: THE HONORABLE COUNCILMEMBER BOB BLUMENFIELD,**

**RE: WHHO Opposition to Council File: 20-0002-S107**

Motion by Councilmember Gil Cedillo – 2nd by Bob Blumenfield

Title: SB 1120 (Atkins) / Cities and Counties / Ministerial By Right Approval / Duplex and Lot Split Housing Developments / Environmental Review Exemption

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Dear Councilmember Blumenfield,

The Woodland Hills Homeowners Organization (WHHO) strongly opposes to Senate Bill 1120 and is opposed to Councilmember Cedillo’s resolution that you seconded, seeking the full L.A. City Council to support SB 1120. SB 1120 crushes single-family zoning in California as it would allow

existing single-family lots to be subdivided into lots as small as 1,200 square feet, thus allowing 12-foot-wide lots to be sold.

Especially as the Councilmember who represents such a prime speculation areas as Walnut Acres, it is your duty to protect your constituents from ill-conceived legislation. SB 1120 encourages land speculation as the more homes that can be built on a site, the more valuable that site becomes to large land developers. Rather than adding affordable housing stock this bill adds more market rate housing and adds significant infrastructure problems on communities. Clearly this bill opens up all of California to speculation frenzy.

Further, State Senate Bill 1120:

- Eliminates public hearings and public notice and only require administrative, ministerial review;
- Provides ministerial approval of a parcel map of four or fewer parcels;
- Undermines the Subdivision Map Act which now vests the authority to regulate and control the design and improvement of subdivisions by the legislative body of a local agency;
- Exempts projects from environmental review, undermining community participation and vetting by local legislative bodies;
- Overrides local zoning, in effect eliminating single-family zoning in the city and statewide;
- Disregards the zoning limitations that homeowners statewide relied upon when making their home purchase decision;
- Reduces parking requirements and eliminate parking within ½ mile of transit; and
- Does not require that any of the units created be affordable, so fails to address the City's and the State's most pressing need for low and very low-income housing.

Communities across L.A. City and L.A. County lack affordable, subsidized, housing, yet this bill doesn't solve that problem at all. It is a purely market-rate solution. This bill is a catalyst to further gentrification as many residents currently facing displacement pressure will not be able to benefit from this trickle-down housing approach. When you allow for only market rate and luxury housing to be built the surrounding housing cost goes up, not the other way around.

The Los Angeles City Council rightly opposed SB 1120's predecessor SB 50. But when that bill failed the State Senator behind it regrouped and created multiple mini-SB 50 "Frankenstein" bills, that when all approved together, will cause the same if not more damage than SB 50. Bills like SB 1120 and SB 902 are a State overreach. It's Sacramento putting Wall Street and the Real Estate Industry in control of our housing policy, which is just like putting Philip Morris in charge of our Tobacco policy. If Sacramento politicians really wanted to focus on the affordable housing crisis they should instead focus on anti-speculation policies.

In closing, it is communities, not corporations that make the State of California great and our communities are the solution - not the problem. For all these reasons and more, we oppose this motion that you seconded. We hope you will reconsider and pull your support and instead support Council File: 20-0002-S101 that opposes SB 1120.

Respectfully Submitted,  
 John Walker  
 President, Woodland Hills Homeowners  
 Organization

## **LAUSD school properties still in peril from School Board and City and State legislators.**

The LAUSD School Board finds itself in even more precarious financial and operations situations than it was in February before the Coronavirus pandemic virtually wiped out live classroom teaching.

That has had serious ramifications on LAUSD's financial capabilities and projections, and may impact the five West Valley school properties that have either been closed (Platt Ranch), bulldozed (Oso Street, Highlander Avenue and Collins Street) or are serving another purpose (Hughes Middle School).

The City of LA had proposed that those properties be used for creating homeless residential centers under a long-term lease with the LAUSD. However, homeowners surrounding each of those locations lobbied School Board members Scott Schmerelson and Nick Melvoin as well as CD-3 Councilman Bob Blumenfield to reject those plans and declare that the sites could only be used for educational venues and not housing. Melvoin declined, but Schmerelson agreed and Blumenfield issued a statement that he was in favor of holding the sites for educational uses only.

Now, however, Sacramento has gotten involved, and led by our Assemblyman Jesse Gabriel, is proposing Assembly Bill AB-3308 that would allow school districts to build affordable residential units (most probably apartments, duplexes or four-plexes) on LAUSD sites. School Districts would restrict occupancy of affordable housing on school district-owned land, funded with low income housing tax credits (LIHTC), to teachers and school district employees of the school district that owns the land.

That increases the probability of most of the five West Valley school sites being turned into multi-family housing for LAUSD employees, although many LAUSD teachers wouldn't qualify for the housing because their income levels far exceed the requirements for affordable/low income housing.

Assemblyman Gabriel introduced his bill at the end of February, and as of today it has not come up for a vote. But, from all indications it appears that support for maintaining the five West Valley school sites for educational purposes only is fading among the LAUSD and City government officials.

The WHHO will pursue possible actions on this issue and we will attempt to marshal the community to

make it known to the LAUSD, the City Council and to our legislators in Sacramento that retaining the five former LAUSD school sites for future replacement educational facilities is a high priority for anyone holding public office and representing this community.

## **A View from WHHO**

Back in March, Woodland Hills resident Erik Hullman was shopping at Bristol Farms in the El Camino Shopping Center and noticed a team of LA City arborists inspecting the grand Valley Oak tree that marks (and makes) the shopping center.

He became concerned because 3 months prior in December there had been a structure fire that destroyed Fazio's Cleaners and Nancy's Alterations and had also scorched the tree. By the time the arborists were inspecting the tree it had already sprung back to life. Erik, assuming the arborists were there to check up on the health of the tree, inquired how it was doing and became shocked when the arborists told him they were not there for a health check, but instead, were there because they got a request for the tree's removal.

The request was made from the shopping center's owners/operator Regency Centers. Upon hearing this shocking news Erik jumped on Nextdoor.com and alerted the neighbors. Because it's such a beloved tree the community came together and WHHO became involved in the fight to protect the tree because the thought of it disappearing from Woodland Hills forever was unfathomable.

Because the tree is a Valley Oak it is a protected species of tree, so anyone looking to trim or remove it would need approval from the Los Angeles Urban Forestry division. Fortunately, Ron Tull, the Superintendent of Los Angeles Urban Forestry Division and his team denied the Regency Centers' request to remove the tree because they found the tree to be in healthy (and beautiful) condition.

The El Camino Valley Oak is thought to be over 700 years old and dates back to the 1300's.

Its significance to the community is so special; when the original developers of the El Camino shopping center built the development in 1968 they actually developed and built the center AROUND the tree. The laws protecting Oak Trees came about much later and the original planners and developers could have easily removed it to make more room for the shopping center floor print and retail space but the planners and developers loved the tree so much, and realized it's what made the location special they decided to build around it and incorporate its majesty into the development.

So why the Regency Centers attempted to remove such a landmark tree back in March is unknown. But it is worrisome that they tried. As it stands Regency Centers would face a stiff penalty if they ignore the ruling and proceed ahead to remove it, but... it doesn't mean they wouldn't try if they thought the benefit of a larger footprint outweighed the financial penalty.

So WHHO became involved to ensure that would never happen. We worked with Councilman Blumenfield's office to see what they could do so that the tree could receive extra protection, beyond just the protection of it being of a Valley Oak species. WHHO wanted to see how we could designate the tree as having a historic, cultural, or landmark value to the community.

On June 9<sup>th</sup> at the LA City Council meeting Councilman Blumenfield put forth a motion to have the City Forest Management with the assistance of Bureau of Street Services' Urban Forestry Division and any other relevant City Dept., create a report to recommend a new City of LA Landmark Tree's Program. The hope is that the City will create this Landmark Tree Program to identify trees for public enjoyment and provide them with an extra layer of special protection because of their historic, cultural or landmark value. The Program would have a clear nomination process for the evaluation of trees to be included and allow for robust public input and participation. Certainly the majestic El Camino Shopping Center Valley Oak would qualify to be a

Landmark Trees and was the impetus of Councilman Blumenfield putting forth his motion to create a Landmark Tree Program in the City of LA.

You can read Councilman Blumenfield's motion here:

[http://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2020/20-0720\\_mot\\_06-09-2020.pdf](http://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2020/20-0720_mot_06-09-2020.pdf)

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