



WHHO Newsletter

June, 2022

Woodland Hills Homeowners Organization
P.O. Box 6368, Woodland Hills, CA 91365 |
www.whho.com

This Wednesday night:
What the #&!!%!!#!!!!
are they planning on
doing to Ventura Blvd.?
(And the whole rest of
the Southwest Valley?)

WHHO General Meeting
This Wednesday May 18,
7:30 PM- 9:00 PM

Big, big changes are being planned for Ventura Blvd. that could allow 7 and 8-story apartment buildings, displace small one-story businesses and restaurants, double the traffic and turn the western end of Ventura Blvd. into a huge asset or a crippling problem for decades to come.

Presentation by City's Department of Planning staff in charge of the Southwest Valley General Plan

Webinar Virtual Meeting – Register to attend
by going to www.whho.com

The **WHHO's Webinar meeting begins at 7:30 P.M.** Wednesday night, and you must register at www.whho.com in order to attend.

The State is forcing LA City planners to re-think, re-draw, and replace the zoning, protections and uses for Ventura Blvd. and other areas of Woodland Hills.

At this Wednesday's virtual WHHO meeting, Woodland Hills residents, businesses and interested parties will have their first real, clear presentation of exactly what the City's Planning Department is proposing to scrap, add and alter in the department's long-awaited proposal for the Southwest Community Plans Update.

This Wednesday's WHHO General Meeting will host the key personnel involved in redesigning the Southwest Community Plan. Making the visual and oral presentation will be:

- Andy Rodriguez, Senior City Planner
- Tal Harari, Senior City Planner
- Jojo Pewsawang, Senior City Planner
- Erika Cui, City Planner
- Lucy Martinez, City Planning Associate

According to Mr. Rodriguez, the main area of change will be the existing Cahuenga and Ventura Blvd. Specific Plan which governs land use requirements and restrictions from the Cahuenga Pass on the far east end to the Ventura-Mulholland/Valley Circle terminus on the far west end. The Planning group will concentrate on the parts of the Ventura Specific Plan that impact areas in both Woodland Hills and Tarzana and use a visual presentation that will make it easy for WHHO meeting attendees to see what they have come up with in an attempt to fulfill the new housing and development edicts that have become law after a

number of Senate and Assembly bills were passed by Sacramento and signed by the Governor.

Those bills have already started to undercut existing residential zoning laws and restrictions throughout the State, and opened the flood-gates for developers to triple, quadruple and in many cases simply flood existing neighborhood zoning and density restrictions in cities and towns throughout the State in Sacramento's desperate attempts to create housing for low-income, low-low-income and in numerous cases no income families and individuals who have decided LA is where they want to be.

Ventura Blvd. not the only area of Woodland Hills being changed.

While the Planning group will be concentrating on the virtual "scrapping" of the existing Ventura Blvd. Specific Plan, there are some other zoning and land use changes being proposed in the new Southwest Valley Community Plan. Planning representatives will also point out some of the changes they are proposing from the existing Southwest Valley Community Plan like increasing the density in areas that have already been designated as "High Fire" areas by the State. Many of those areas newly tabbed for increased densification, have very sub-standard roads that have not been paved in over 50 years and also streets that are only wide enough for a single vehicle or that dead-end in the hills.

"We are counting on the folks from Planning to discuss why increasing density in these hillside areas without first having rebuilt or replaced the substandard roads is even logical," WHHO President John Walker observed. "It would seem to put even more people at risk of fire dangers before the paths to safety have been installed. I guess we'll have to see what kinds of answers Planning has for that life-threatening dilemma."

How much more can Ventura Blvd. take before commuters, shoppers and diners can't take it anymore?

The Cahuenga/Ventura Blvd. Specific Plan hasn't always worked as planned.

When it was first created 1991, the Planners had hopes of organizing and balancing community and business needs along the 17-mile stretch that has often been called the "commercial heart of the Valley." But, over the years, most of those hopes never materialized. In some areas like Sherman Oaks and Encino, commercial development flourished and the nearby neighborhoods benefitted from new restaurants and unique shopping possibilities. In other areas—like the far western end of Ventura Blvd. in the area west of Topanga, , numerous commercial ventures dried up and left empty storefronts behind—many still empty to this day.

There have been numerous attempts to up-date and fix the Cahuenga/Ventura Specific Plan by several City Councilmen and an advisory group made up of representatives from each of the six communities that are governed by the Specific Plan (Parts of Hollywood, Studio City, Sherman Oaks, Encino, Tarzana and Woodland Hills.) However most of those attempts have fallen by the wayside due to infighting among communities and a "one size fits all" mentality used to tie together six vastly different communities which each in need of a size that fits that community.

"The problem now is that the State has stepped in, and that makes a difficult situation even more difficult," Walker pointed out. "The Specific Plan has become "stagnant and unresponsive to changes in community and business needs, design guidelines, commercial economics and development.

What's more, because of the failure to attract significant new commercial ventures in Warner Center and the increased traffic congestion, brought on by motorists using the Ventura and Cahuenga boulevards to escape traffic on the U.S. 101 and 405 freeways, the plan to add large 6 and 7-story apartments along Ventura Blvd. in order to solve the City's housing situation looks like the City is creating a potential mess that will be impossible to solve, since

the only real mass transit system—the Orange Line—is miles away.

Walker said that the WHHO, and businesses and developers are waiting to hear how Planning has planned to solve the problems that the proposed significant changes may bring to the West Valley. “So far, for over 20 years, no one has seemed to have the answers concerning the issues of Ventura Blvd. We’ll have to wait for Wednesday night to see if this group of Planners has figured out this life-impacting puzzle.”

Despite neighbor’s pleas, West Valley Food Pantry gets served up what it wanted by the City.

It was framed as “the neighborhood versus a community service center” that had long out-grown its location and was causing numerous safety, trash and traffic problems for homeowners who had lived with it for almost 50 years.

The WHHO’s April meeting was devoted to a discussion of the issues and the solutions with both a representative of the Food Pantry and the Prince of Peace Church going against a neighborhood spokesman who represented 50-70 homeowners surrounding the Pantry’s location in the church on Rudnick Street.

The main issue was the proposed expansion of the Pantry with a Conditional Use Permit that would allow construction of a new 6,646 sq. ft. structure and the expansion of a parking lot. The bone of contention was that in the almost 50 years the Food Pantry was at the Church, it has grown exponentially from a closet in a spare classroom, into a facility that is now serving 8,000 people a month in the middle of a quiet residential neighborhood.

It was up to a Zoning Administrator to determine if the Pantry had outgrown its site and should be moved to a commercial location that was set up to handle the increase of cars and food recipients six days a week,

or whether to allow the Pantry to continue to expand at its present location.

On May 19, the Zoning Administrator announced his decision: *Authorized herein is the construction, use, and maintenance of a new approximately 6,646 square-foot, 31-foot tall, one-story multi-purpose community facility and expansion of an existing surface parking lot in conjunction with the existing church and food pantry.*

While most residents were disappointed with the decision to issue the Conditional Use Permit, some of the neighborhood’s concerns were taken into consideration by the City and included within the operational limitation guidelines.

Broadly, and most notably, the Church/Pantry is responsible for their immediate grounds *as well as* the grounds surrounding the Pantry activities. The determination states that strict maintenance guidelines and debris removal is mandated for the property along with a neighborhood maintenance plan.

Also, the ZA’s Letter of Determination established strict hours of operation. The hours the Pantry operates shall not exceed 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. Any commercial truck delivery of items shall not be permitted before 8:30 a.m. and after 3 p.m. Social service for the distribution of food to the public shall be limited to 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 7:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Friday. And, Food distribution shall not exceed 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon, Friday. A 30-minute period after closing hours is to serve those in line by 12 noon.

The Zoning Administrator also directed that Noise, music and sound levels that adhere to Sections 112.06 or 116.01 of the LA Municipal Code.

A parking and driveway plan will also need to be approved by the LA Department of Transportation (LADOT). The parking lot must be secured after hours to prevent any loitering.

Another request from the neighborhood was also included. A mandated complaint log that must be kept--and complaints must be responded to within 24 hours--with a required resolution to each complaint. A 'complaint' telephone number and email address are to be posted by the entry of the Food Panty, visible to patrons.

Both the neighborhood group and the Food Pantry have the option to appeal the decision to the South Valley Area Planning Commission in seeking any changes to the Determination or rescinding the entire decision. If that does not resolve the matter, either part can file suit and let the courts make the final determination. Although the WHHO has reached out to both groups to see how they propose to deal with Planning's decision, we have not been able to receive a response.

City Council motion to keep homeless encampments away from our schools may find itself in limbo instead of in action.

The safety and security of our neighborhood schools and the growing number of homeless encampments near them apparently had our Los Angeles City Council feeling some trepidation about the uncertain results of the June 7 Primary Election which as of this date are still being counted.

The growing dissatisfaction of parents, school personnel and voters caused Council members to pass motion 20-1376-S1 this past May 31st which tasked the City Attorney to draft an ordinance that amends the LA Municipal code section 41:18. That amendment would state that sleeping, lying or storing property within 500 feet of a school or daycare center will be prohibited.

To clarify, the existing anti-camping ordinance (41:18) allows the City Council to prohibit encampments on sidewalks near parks, libraries and schools--but enforcement cannot occur until the

Council has voted on each individual location by a special resolution. If the Council gives final approval to the ordinance from the City Attorney, every school and daycare center could become subject to immediate enforcement without the normal and needlessly lengthy special resolution process. In turn, that brought a sigh of relief from schools throughout the City.

That was the idea behind City Council President Nury Martinez surprising her colleagues at the City Council's May 31 meeting by using "Rule 16" which allows a member to send an item directly to the Council floor and bypass the Council committees.

On May 31st, the City Council voted 13-2 to approve the motion directing the City Attorney to write the legal draft with only Council members Raman and Bonin voting "No." Our CD-3 Councilman Blumenfield said he agreed with the motion "conceptually"--but wanted it to go to the Homeless and Poverty Committee for discussion before voting. But when that suggestion was nixed, he later bowed to the pre-election pressure and voted "Yes."

To cast some light on City Council machinations, generally, when a motion is sent back to Committee for discussions, it is a code for "we need to avoid a controversial topic and send it back to committee to die and never be heard from again."

Councilmembers Blumenfield, Cedillo, O'Farrell and Price were all running for re-election and DeLeon was running for Mayor and Koretz for Controller. In many of those contests, homelessness and public safety continue to be the major concerns of the constituents in those Council Districts.

During the May 31 City Council meeting, LAUSD Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho made a passionate appeal asking the City Council to *pass this amendment*. He said, "I have seen elementary schools with conditions that none of us as parents would find acceptable for children; individuals with mental illness--some of them absolutely unclothed and shouting profanities in the listening ears of children."

He added that he was concerned about the "trauma" and the 'long-term, short-term repercussions of these incidents, and the impact on the psychological, cognitive development of the children who were targets." The Superintendent added that he was speaking about this issue as someone who has experienced homelessness himself.

Mr. Carvalho has made it quite clear in numerous public statements that he understands the risks that homeless encampments and mentally unstable individuals present to our children. Yet, LAUSD and its Board have been silent about the proposed conversion of the 818 hotel and the Extended Stay Hotel directly across from Taft High School on Ventura Blvd. into homeless housing.

These two hotel-to-homeless conversion sites would be "low barrier to entry" housing, which means there are no requirements to be sober, mentally stable or be off drugs in order to be admitted as a resident.

The majority of the Woodland Hills public understands that there is no question this type of housing is needed in the City, but a majority believes choosing a location directly across from a school is unacceptable and potentially dangerous to the students.

On the other hand, Councilman Blumenfield has called the openings of these facilities "an upgrade to the Woodland Hills Community" and insists there will be a security guard on site and a 500 ft. encampment barrier. However, those would do virtually nothing to protect the health and safety of the students who may have to walk by those shelters, and the as previously stated, the anti-camping bans cannot actually be enforced unless there is a separate motion specific to that location that is voted on by the entire City Council. Now the question is if Superintendent Carvalho will make another passionate appeal to the County and the City and stop the conversion of these hotels?

When communities throughout the City learned about the vote on this proposed amended law, most felt that their concerns about safe passage to schools were finally being heard by our elected leaders. But, there

is already a movement within parts of the City to over-turn the motion even before the City Council takes a final vote.

As of May 16, the City Attorney released his paperwork amending 41:18 to include no encampments within 500 ft. of schools or day care centers. That's the good news. The bad news is—the June 7th election is virtually over and several key City Council races have now been determined. That means that is all probability, the report is going to be sent to the Council's Homeless and Poverty Committee, which in the past has failed to take any steps to address one of the most serious issues of homeless encampments endangering our schools.

When the school and daycare ordinance from the City Attorney, returns to the floor for a final vote, the Council can vote to send it back to the Homeless and Poverty Committee with Raman, De Leon and Blumenfield still in office through January--all of whom no longer facing a threat of not being re-elected.

Plus there will probably be the addition of several newly-elected Council members who have been campaigning on a promise of voting "No" on this motion.

Another possibility is that whatever the City Attorney creates for the ordinance will have so many changes that it will become useless and unenforceable-- which is exactly what happened to the original 41;18 motion that is now on the books.

The LA Times has reported that tents still remain at many of the City's No Encampment areas, with an increasing number of outreach teams struggling to get people to move voluntarily. LAPD can do nothing more than issue a meaningless citation. So once again we watch our elected leaders pass motions that they know are useless and unenforceable, but whose purpose is to convince voters that they are making progress, while every day tent encampments continue to encroach on our schools' doors and play areas in neighborhoods throughout our City.

First it was the Promenade. Now it's the Blue Cross site. What are the Rams and Stan Kroenke planning on doing with it all?

In February, 2022, when the LA Rams and owner Stan Kroenke announced that they were buying the old Westfield Promenade site in Warner Center as base for the LA Rams offices and training facility, the West Valley—and the entire City of LA—was stunned and wanted to know what the Rams planned to develop there. Would it be a stadium? A practice field? A football-centered entertainment center? The guesses and the predictions were as fanciful and as wild as the imagination could conceive.

Now, after six months, there still hasn't been any kind of speculative plan presented.

Only now, the dreams and the guesses have gotten even bigger and more fantastic as the Kroenke Organization and the Rams have added to the Promenade purchase by buying the former Blue Cross building and site just across the street from the Promenade site.

The 13-story Anthem building and site on Oxnard Street in Warner Center is comprised of 32 acres and was purchased by Kroenke for \$175 million, while the 33 acre Westfield Promenade mall property was purchased for \$150 million. Kroenke and the Rams now own two square blocks in Warner Center totaling 65 acres.

That's a lot of acreage and a big building, to boot. Now the question (or questions) remain, what are Kroenke and the LA Rams going to do with all that space? And, will they be following the guidelines of the Warner Center 2035 Specific Plan that sets the requirements for land use on the two properties located in the Downtown District of Warner Center?

“We feel certain that the Rams and the Kroenke Organization will maintain the integrity of the Warner Center 2035 Plan,” emphasized John Walker, President of the Woodland Hill Homeowner's Organization (WHHO).

“Because of a prior agreement the WHHO had with Westfield and the plans for the replacement Promenade site development, the WHHO was invited to discuss the desires and needs of the community before the sale went public,” Walker related.

“The Kroenke Organization and the Rams understood that the community has a significant need for affordable housing and also a need to attract new commercial activities into Warner Center. The WHHO underscored that Warner Center was envisioned as a major City Center that was balanced with live/work/play features. The executives of Kroenke and the Rams told us they understood the needs of the community, and were in agreement that whatever they developed, would balance the live/work/play concept.”

Prior to the two sales, there were plans that were proposed for the Promenade site and for the Anthem site.

Last summer, a developer who was interested in building out the Anthem/Blue Cross site presented his initial plans to “reface” the Anthem building and use it for luxury apartments. Along with that proposal was a plan to build a new 12-story hotel complex that would face the former Fry's location. However that plan was shelved and the property went back on the block until Kroenke purchased it.

The plans for a replacement for the old Promenade mall property were in far more advanced stages. Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield had created a major land and development plan for the former shopping center site that included a 23-story tower along Oxnard Street, two hotels, several 7-10 story apartment complexes, shopping areas and a large 10,000 seat

indoor sports complex. Those plans had made it all the way through the LA Planning process and had received approval for construction by the City.

But the Covid pandemic put a halt to those plans, and the French parent of Unibail decided that they no longer wanted to pursue developing large shopping centers or development projects in the U.S. That's when the Rams and Kroenke stepped in.

While no one has seen any plans or preliminary sketches of any buildings or complexes envisioned for the two sites, the WHHO's John Walker stated that he expects Kroenke's company to come up with a new land-use design that will encompass the entire site. The WHHO group supports improvements in Warner Center, but has stated both publically and privately that they will press for any proposed development plan to address ways to control noise and traffic, such as an expanded freeway off-ramp and even street widening.

"We let them know very clearly that the noise and traffic issues are always problematic," Walker said. "They said they were interested in putting in some practice fields. They were not sure what they would do with an arena. They don't really have a plan yet for all of that, but we're looking forward to working with them."

Walker also stated that the WHHO was thinking of extending an invitation to the Kroenke Organization and the Rams when they have put together a plan for their team and for the sites. "We'd love to have them give you the details personally—without it being filtered by the newspapers or TV stations, and give the homeowners and businesses in the West Valley to ask the questions they would like answers to," he said.

Will the last commercial orange grove in Valley become a

housing tract, or a Woodland Hills attraction?

The Bothwell Ranch, a 100 year old, 14-acre orange grove hidden in the hills above Ventura Blvd. is the last commercial operating grove in the San Fernando Valley. But its future may soon be as a new luxury housing tract—and a public agricultural park, if Councilman Bob Blumenfield can maneuver the financial hazards and the politics involved in keeping at least a chunk of the historic site as an agricultural landmark.

The Councilman has previously had the site named as a landmark, but that designation can't save it from being sold to a developer for a housing tract. Blumenfield says that a plan he has helped shape would save about a third of the grove, approximately four acres, "to be preserved in perpetuity with the main ranch house and rows of the orange trees. The remaining 10 acres would then be developed with 21 luxury homes.

The Councilman's initial plan was to purchase the entire tract and maintain the all of the grove's fruiting trees. He and his office worked with California state senators, assembly members and neighbors to raise the funds to purchase the citrus orchard outright, but said that they were not able to come up with enough money to make a proposal to buy even a fraction of the land.

This new effort is "Plan B." The problem is that a final determination has to be made soon because the current owners are spending upwards of \$30,000 each month for water necessary to keep the trees healthy and alive. And that water bill keeps rising as the drought continues to broil all of the San Fernando Valley.

According to his office, the Councilmember has been speaking with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and the local developers who are purchasing the property from the Bothwell Family about a potential "hybrid plan" for the future of the Bothwell Ranch.

Under the Plan-B proposal, the preserved area of the ranch will eventually be donated and transferred by developer Borstein Enterprises to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, which will then have the responsibility of taking care of the trees and the buildings. It was pointed out that some of the trees in the section of the orange orchard targeted for development could possibly be moved to the preserved section of the property.

The two main questions are, can the money be found to purchase the land, and can the deal be completed before the water has to be turned off and the trees die?

Blumenfield said he was confident that the developer would keep untouched, and preserved, the agreed-upon protected part of the orchard. In a press release issued by the CD-3 office, the Councilman said, “While I wish there was a way to save the entire Bothwell Ranch, with this partnership we can save a large amount of it to be run by one of the best land preservation organizations in the country—the Mountain Conservancy.”

Even if the money is found and the deal is arranged, it has yet to be determined what the remaining orange grove property would become. Some neighbors are pushing for a park, while others are lobbying for the site to become an educational farm, a tourist attraction or even a school.

And WHHO’s next speaker is....

WHHO’s Board members are working to line up a list of speakers for the rest of 2022 and the first half of 2023 who will be able to enlighten you about some of the most critical issues facing our schools, our neighborhoods, the Woodland Hills community, the City of Los Angeles and the entire State.

While we traditionally go “dark” during the months of July and August, we are trying to arrange an appearance in July of one of the key figures at the Department of Water and Power to give us some insights into the future of our drinking water and our electric needs.

With the on-going drought shrinking water levels to never-before seen lows on the largest reservoirs in the State and in adjoining states, the reduced flow of the Colorado River and other water resources, and rapidly decreasing snowfall levels in the mountains that California depends on to deliver so much of its water reserves, the State and the entire Southwest USA are staring at a “Dust Bowl” situation in the coming decade if new water resources can’t be found, created or delivered.

The drought is also impacting electrical power generation at several key dams because there isn’t enough water flowing through the dams to operate the hydro-electric systems. That’s a huge problem, since more and more of us are adding millions of electrical devices every year and there is a huge shift starting to replace gas powered cars with electric vehicles.

The WHHO thinks that you need a very accurate picture of what’s ahead for our water and Power resources,” stated WHHO VP Marty Lipkin. That’s why we’re trying to arrange an evening with a leader at DWP who can provide us with more helpful information than just telling us to cut back lawn watering to two times a week, or switching off major electric appliances until late in the evening.”

Lipkin also noted that the WHHO Board is already trying to arrange for a debate between LA Mayoral candidates Rick Caruso and Karen Bass, the two final candidates for County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl’s seat, and a discussion with LAUSD’s new Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho.

And when the LA Rams and Stan Kroenke’s real estate development company have come up with their initial plans for their development of the Promenade site and the Anthem Blue Cross site, we will extend an invitation for them to present their vision to the WHHO membership and to the entire West Valley and give homeowners an opportunity to ask questions..

The WHHO needs You to be part of us in 2022.

We're almost at mid-point of the year—one that is already proving to be monumental in trying to resolve some of the biggest crisis our community and our City have ever faced. The WHHO stands ready to speak up for you and carry forward your expectations and desires.

We want to be your voice as well as your eyes and ears into what's going on that will affect your lifestyle, your property and your neighborhood.

As you know, the Woodland Hills Homeowners Organization holds forums on critical issues impacting you, your home and your community. We actively lobby City and State decision makers on your behalf. Our meetings are free and open to all. But, it does cost money for insurance, electronics and hopefully in the not-to-far in the future—for a return to meeting hall for live presentations.

We are a Community Organization, and we'd like to gain your assistance in helping us sustain and invigorate every neighborhood in Woodland Hills and Warner Center. The WHHO has been around long enough, and we've created big enough waves, so that we don't get ignored by elected officials or City departments. And those waves are beginning to be felt up in Sacramento, too. So if you have an issue or a cause you want help in, we'd like to help you reach your goal.

And if you believe that the WHHO is providing a valuable public service in addressing some of the most critical issues impacting you and your neighborhood, hosting the City and State officials who can answer your most pressing questions, and speaking up for you during the endless calendar of meetings and hearings, then we invite you to step up and become an *official* member of the Woodland Hills Homeowner Organization.

It is only \$25 a year for an *entire household* to belong to WHHO, and your membership helps to sustain us by covering taxes, insurance and other legally required fees.

You'll find an Application at the bottom of the first page of our web site, WHHO.com. So please fill it out. In fact, you can even pay for your membership using PayPal. So, join us today. We look forward to having you part of our family.

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