



# STUDIO CITY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Your Advocate for Studio City

September 2023

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## READ ALL ABOUT IT! SCRA MEMBERS SURVEY RESULTS ARE IN!

Earlier this summer, we published our first-ever SCRA survey, "Studio City: What's on Your Mind?" The month-long survey consisted of eight questions about daily life in Studio City and invited members to freely share it all: the good, the bad, and the ugly. We received a total of 133 responses. Put together, they form an honest look at life in Studio City in 2023. Below are some highlights.

### Studio City today: A snapshot in time

When asked what issues in the community respondents would like to see addressed, 58% indicated homelessness as a top concern, followed by overdevelopment (30%), crime/safety/lack of police presence (29%), and traffic/congestion (14%). Other notable concerns: airplane noise, potholes, cracked sidewalks and dangerous driving. Because questions were open-ended (as opposed to multiple choice), many respondents listed multiple issues.

Time and again respondents decried the worsening nature of these problems: pervasive homelessness, an increase in crime, traffic out of control, and growing forms of unwelcome development (McMansions, upbuilding along Ventura, party houses, ADUs, oversized development projects). A sense of frustration came through loud and clear.

Asked specifically about Harvard-Westlake's proposed redevelopment of Studio City Golf and Tennis, an overwhelming majority (74%) expressed strong opposition to the school's plans and noted serious concerns about potential impacts. One comment sums it up:

*"The project removes public space. It overbuilds in an already congested area. It will have a negative impact on the neighborhood. The school should live within its current bounds and respect the needs of the community over the wants of their private institution."*

Overall, most of the issues we are facing are not uniquely ours. They are the familiar mix of problems plaguing cities all over Los Angeles, and in that sense, we are no different than many other communities today.

What does set Studio City apart, however, is a palpable sense of community spirit - persistent and undiminished in the face of it all.

### A village of our own

It is clear residents are proud to call Studio City home. Respondents treasure Studio City's small-town feel, the abundant amenities within walking distance, the great restaurants, the friendliness of neighbors, the sense of duty to community, and having nature within reach. Here's a

(Continued, Page 2)

## COMMUNITY MEETING SEPTEMBER 12, 2023

### Special Presentation - Radford Studio Center

On Tuesday, September 12th, at 7 pm, there will be an informal presentation to discuss the Radford Studios expansion plan. There will be employees from Hackman Capital Partners, Strategies 360, Trifiletti Consulting, and Radford Studio Center at the meeting. All attendees should enter through the Sater Parking Structure on Radford Avenue. If they are walking onto the lot, they need to also enter/exit through the Sater Parking Structure as we have a pedestrian check-in there. Lastly, there will be light hors d'oeuvres at this meeting.



## (Survey, cont'd)

sampling of quotes:

*"It's a nice little community in the middle of a big city;" "I love seeing my neighbors when I'm out and about;" "the location, the history, the family vibe;" "the variety of interesting people who live here;" "there is great access to just about everything here."*

## Where do we go from here?

As your advocate for Studio City, we make sure elected officials pay attention to this community and its specific needs. Key takeaways will be shared with elected officials as we urge them to make decisions that align with the priorities of their Studio City constituents.

Just as well, your responses provide your SCRA Board with a clear directive moving forward. To be sure, we are already hard at work on many of these issues. But we are emboldened by your calls to keep going - to fight unwanted development and work with local leaders as well as law enforcement officials to keep our neighborhood safe, green, clean - and heard.

Thank you again for taking the time to send in very thoughtful responses. As we forge ahead with a clear agenda, we will keep you informed about our work and how you can help.

## BEAUTIFICATION UPDATE

**Meg McDonald Seltzer, SCBA President**



Studio City Beautification Association is an all-volunteer organization and if you're looking for an opportunity to volunteer,

we have an opportunity right now that could use your help. Being a volunteer with our "My Studio City" project that shines a light on the beauty of our community...in pictures...taken by you.

Your photos will be published on our Facebook page and Instagram account, and you'll get a photo credit byline. Pictures can be of anything you think reflects Studio City at its best. They should be clear, high-resolution, and in focus. Please include the name of the street where the pic was taken. We usually mention the location in the post, such as "Seen on Dilling Street."

We invite you to visit SCBA's Instagram account (it's @studiocitybeautification) to get a more comprehensive view of the photos we post but we've included three examples in this column to give you a snapshot.

We mostly focus on closeups of plants or flowers, and homes with nice landscaping (we edit out any number of addresses for privacy). We also try to avoid showing anything ugly in the shot like trash cans, cars, litter, telephone wires, etc.

Sometimes we show local dogs or cats out and



about in Studio City.

Occasionally we receive photo submissions that are not as beautiful as they could be, so we offer these simple guidelines.

- Be sure your camera lens is clean
- Hold your phone camera straight on the subject (not pointed up or down)
- Submit the largest picture size possible

Text your photos and any questions you might have to SCBA's social media volunteer Christine Hsia 323-353-1975. This will be fun!

Stay safe and see you in the neighborhood.  
Meg McDonald Seltzer, SCBA President



## UPDATE FROM SLAROS



Save LA River Open Space, SCRA and Save Weddington met with Harvard-Westlake's David Weil, Chief Financial Officer, and Ari

Engelberg, Head of Communications and Strategic Initiatives to discuss reducing the size of the sports complex which is surrounded by single-family homes.

The HW sports complex is not compatible with its surroundings. There is a multitude of health and environmental impacts that make the project undesirable, however, in this newsletter, I will focus on one issue: the impacts of two football-length fields of toxic artificial turf.

After SCRA procured a test that found PFAS in the turf that Harvard-Westlake planned to use, Harvard-Westlake changed to a new turf.

In a test of this new proposed turf, Harvard-Westlake's experts reported that the lab test indicated only a minimum level of "forever chemicals." SCRA ordered an independent lab test on the new turf proposed and found that PFAS "forever chemicals" are in the blades and the backing at significant levels. The EPA has stated that there are no acceptable levels of PFAS. These "forever chemicals" pollute our water, and are known to cause cancer, birth defects, and other reproductive harm.

The other significant problem with artificial turf is the heat island effect and greenhouse gases that these massive fields will generate. The fields will increase temperatures in Studio City by more than 15 degrees. Experts report that on a day when Studio City is registering a temperature of 85 degrees, the area around the turf will be 100 degrees or hotter. Additionally, the plastic that the fields are made of emits methane gas from the time they are made until they are put into landfills, where they do not degrade.

The School has been made aware of the many different safety, health, and environmental issues of installing artificial turf and continues to choose to ignore these environmental impacts.

Next newsletter, I will discuss the impact of the destruction of 240 mature trees.

Alan Dymond, President SLAROS

## IT'S NOT TOO LATE, YET...

*If you don't renew your annual membership by Sept. 30th:*

- *this will be your LAST Newsletter*
- *you will MISS OUT on all the discounts available with the SCRA Member Discount Card*
- *we will STOP emailing you our topical and newsworthy eBlasts*

*Stay informed, stay connected, and strengthen our special Studio City community, renew NOW.*

*It's easy, you can renew online at [StudioCityResidents.org](http://StudioCityResidents.org) OR you can call the SCRA office at 818-509-0230.*

*SCRA values your membership and we don't want to lose you.*

**PLEASE, DON'T WAIT ANY LONGER,  
RENEW NOW**

## UPDATE ON STUDIO CITY PROJECTS

### Crosswalk on Ventura at Rhodes

A big thank you to the Business Improvement District (BID) for following up with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to create a safe and very visible pedestrian crossing on Ventura at Rhodes Ave. In May 2023 the SCRA published how we were disappointed about the installation of the crossing at Rhodes Ave. After waiting for years for this safety feature to be installed we were extremely underwhelmed.

The really good news is that DOT has installed painted left turn lanes with highly visible reflectors. This improvement along with the blinking crossing lights slows traffic along the Boulevard and creates a much-needed safe crossing.

### Tree trimmed on Laurel Canyon

A year ago, in May 2022, the SCRA requested Urban Forestry trim a city eucalyptus tree that was dangerously hanging over Laurel Canyon just south of Fryman Cyn. The trimming of this tree was scheduled and trimmed in August 2023 which is just short of the end of Southern California nesting season. It was a huge project requiring closing lanes on Laurel Canyon and coordinating with the homeowner to open their gate.

Different bird species have different nesting behaviors and timing may be dependent on temperature or specific food availability so it can vary from year to year but in general nesting season in Southern California extends from February 1 to August 31.

## UPDATES ON STUDIO CITY NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

In 2018, the SCRA fully supported the Studio City Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan for the residential hillside neighborhoods south of Ventura Boulevard.



## TO THE MARKET

The Market is excited to welcome two new vendors.

Cheat Day makes the most delicious smash burgers and has been selling out since its first Sunday! Menu items

include The Elegant Farmer - double beef patties, blue cheese spread, red onion jam, and arugula on a brioche bun, The Morning After - double beef patties, fried egg, pimento cheese, and maple butter spread on a brioche bun, and a few other delectable options. They also have a black bean burger to spice things up. Cheat Day is located in the small parking lot.

Joining us in the main section of the Market is Calamaki Foods, makers of authentic Greek food packaged and ready to take home. Menu items include marinated grilled octopus, ceviche, gazpacho, and a marinated vegan black-eyed pea salad that is out of this world delicious and flavorful.

As a reminder dogs are not allowed at the Market. Therapy dogs are not the kind of service dogs allowed. Please honor this health department rule.

The Studio City Farmers Market, located on Ventura Place between Laurel Canyon Blvd. and Radford Ave., is open on Sundays from 8 am to 1 pm. Rain or shine.

Since 2020, many traffic calming measures have been implemented, including an effort to stop cut-thru traffic through our serene residential neighborhoods.

Board members Stephen Sass and Barry Johnson have been keeping tabs on the implementation progress with our City Council offices.

Thanks to CD4's Transportation Deputy, Mehmet Berker (who inherited this whole thing when the neighborhoods south of the boulevard became part of CD4 with redistricting), CD2's Director of Transportation, Sahag Yedalian (for passing along all the carefully kept records of this project to Mehmet), and to Councilmember Krekorian for protecting the funds allocated for this project, which could easily have been lost in the redistricting shuffle. To view the progress of the implementation, visit: [tinyurl.com/Traffic-Mgmt-Plan](https://tinyurl.com/Traffic-Mgmt-Plan) OR you can use your phone's camera to access this QR code.



## **FROM STUDIO CITY'S TUJUNGA VILLAGE/WOODBRIDGE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD: AIRBNB PARTY HOUSE THREATENS QUIET STUDIO CITY NEIGHBORHOOD - IS YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD NEXT?**

On Sunday, June 25th, a party at an Airbnb house in Studio City's Tujunga Village/Woodbridge Park neighborhood quickly grew to hundreds of rowdy teenagers and young adults, some displaying firearms. When the crowd failed to disperse, the LAPD responded with more than 20 LAPD officers in riot gear and a police helicopter hovering overhead in an attempt to diffuse the loud, disruptive, and dangerous situation as reported by ABC7 news. For more info, visit: [tinyurl.com/ABC-News-Party-House](http://tinyurl.com/ABC-News-Party-House)

While there have been other disruptive events at this location, now referred to as "The Party House" by neighbors, this was by far the most dangerous. The partygoers essentially took over the entire neighborhood, not dispersing until almost 4:00 a.m. Residents were unable to enter or leave their homes and first responders would have been unable to easily reach anyone in need such as the elderly woman who lives alone in close proximity to this property. Since June 25, the neighborhood has endured multiple smaller but disruptive parties, some lasting until 4:00 a.m.

The "Party House" appears to be one of several Party Houses run by a family enterprise of builder Arie Abekasis of Diditan Group/Gefen Investments and managed by Dylan Abekasis of DRE Management. While the property has had an active real estate listing from Keller Williams since completion, it has primarily functioned as an Airbnb for more than a year. The neighborhood has reached out to the Abekasis Enterprise on multiple occasions, but they have not shown interest in being good neighbors. For example, when informed that we are working to "resolve" the party house issue after the 6/25 incident and parties on 5 successive nights the week of July 17, Abekasis replied, "Good Luck". While expected, this response was a clear indication of what / who neighbors are dealing with.

In addition to outreach to the property owner, the neighborhood has quickly organized and developed a multifaceted plan including requesting support from Councilmember Paul Krekorian's Office (CD2), LAPD, SCRA, Keller Williams (KW), and Short-Term Rental (STR) agencies such as Airbnb. Krekorian committed to follow-up with the City Attorney's office and other City agencies and reassured neighbors that "the law will be enforced, and violators will be held accountable". LAPD Senior Lead Officer Shawn Smith has also been very supportive in issuing a "notice of violation" for "loud noise, unruly crowd, loitering, blocking traffic, etc."

CD2 has been very responsive to our concerns, coordinating with all the necessary departments, Planning, Housing, City Attorney, Building and Safety, and LAPD. They are making sure all departments are communicating and following up with their necessary inspections and enforcement. They are also working with Building and Safety to verify if there are any code violations on the property. An inspection by the LA Housing Department (LAHD) determined that the property is an illegal rental according to LA's Home Sharing Ordinance which only permits short-term rentals (STRs) in a person's primary residence. For more info, visit: [tinyurl.com/Sharing-Ord](http://tinyurl.com/Sharing-Ord)

Based on neighbors' research, party house operators commonly use active real estate listings as a public relations tactic to appease the community and prevent complaints. The listing creates a false impression that these disturbances are only temporary until the house is sold. We have reached out to Keller Williams Studio City to inquire if the listing is a false front since there have been no open houses, marketing, etc. since the property went on the market more than one year ago. Is Keller Williams complicit with the owner in running this party house? KW has replied to some neighbors, but the listing has not been pulled as neighbors requested. It seems that if KW really cared, they would run as far away as fast as they can from this property owner who has disrupted lives, caused undue stress, and threatened the safety and tranquility of this previously tranquil Studio City neighborhood. As a result, neighbors have pledged not to use Keller Williams should they decide to sell their homes.

Beyond the issue of this specific party house, the real issue facing LA residents is the City's weak and ineffective LA Home Sharing Ordinance adopted in December 2018. Despite strong statements from City officials and Airbnb lauding the ordinance as a way to protect LA residents' quality of life, Airbnb party houses are a problem throughout the City driven by lax enforcement, multiple loopholes, and low penalties that don't deter illegal activity. In fact, since the "order to comply" was issued for the Studio City Party House, illegal rentals continue unabated for more than 50 days later. Several investigations have shown that City rarely takes tough action against illegal short-term rentals, five years after the city council passed a law giving City agencies the power to crack down on violators. Airbnb says all the right things but is largely indifferent to this illegal activity. Krekorian has informed us that he is working to make changes to make the ordinance more effective. The bottom line, unless organizations like the SCRA and SCNC remain vigilant and fight for change, this problem will not only persist in our communities and diminish our quality of life, but it will also lead to violence and tragedy.

The Tujunga Village/Woodbridge Park neighborhood needs your help to fight party houses in Studio City. Please e-mail them at [woodbridgeparkpartyhouse@gmail.com](mailto:woodbridgeparkpartyhouse@gmail.com) to find out how you can help keep party houses out of our neighborhoods.

## LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES: BELOVED BOOK-SHARING BOXES NOW HOME TO THE SCRA NEWSLETTER!



Do you recall the first time you were out for a neighborhood stroll and happened by a curious box that looked like a miniature house on a stick? As you came closer you noticed there were books inside and a sign that read, "Little Free Library: Take a Book. Share a Book." Immediately you thought, "Now isn't that a lovely idea?!"

Little Free Library is a Minnesota-based nonprofit with a mission of building community, inspiring readers, and expanding book access. The very first box, built in 2009, was a quaint model of a one-room schoolhouse built by co-founder Todd Bol in honor of his mother, a teacher who loved reading. As of 2022, 150,000 Little Free Libraries can be found in 115 countries worldwide.

Books have a way of connecting us, and when you borrow a book knowing that a kindly neighbor left it there with intention, that feeling of connection has extra magic to it.

It's no wonder people adore these book-sharing boxes, and Studio City is lucky to be home to about 20 of them. We are pleased to announce that starting this month, a number of LFLs will begin housing the bi-monthly SCRA newsletter. This is a great opportunity for SCRA to share important Studio City updates with residents, reach and engage new members, and continue building community.

### **NEW: Little Free Library Map on the SCRA website!**

Wondering where to find the nearest Library? Visit the Studio City Residents Association website for a map of local Little Free Libraries (LFLs) and an up-to-date list of those carrying our newsletter. Visit [tinyurl.com/SC-LFLs-Map](https://tinyurl.com/SC-LFLs-Map)

## FROM YOUR BOARD

*Unlike any other community in the City of Los Angeles at present, Studio City's charming character is under attack. Post-pandemic, we've been bombarded with HUGE and TALL project proposals.*

- Sportsmen's Lodge wants to build an 8-story, 94 feet tall, 520-unit apartment building where the Sportsmen's Lodge Hotel now sits.
- A 5-story Eldercare facility is planned for the northeast corner of Ventura and Colfax.
- A 75 feet tall, 129-unit apartment building at the corner of Ventura and Arch Drive.
- On the horizon are a huge "cliff-dweller" development on the cliff across from the old Bed, Bath, and Beyond and the possible total redevelopment of that same Bed, Bath and Beyond property from Whitsett all the way to (and including) the bowling alley, again with heights **never seen** in Studio City.

*Currently, there is practically no building in Studio City over 45 feet tall. "And a partridge in a pear tree" would of course be the proposed Harvard-Westlake so-called "River Park."*

*As we go to press for this Newsletter, none of these projects has received the final go-ahead from the "last to weigh in" City Council. But most seem to be a shoo-in without further legal action.*

*For the most part, the SCRA isn't opposed to the concept of most of these projects, except for their bigness and extreme height. Unfortunately, our state legislators have seen to it that local control has been taken away from us. Protections like the Ventura-Cahuenga Specific Plan are trumped by the new state laws they've passed. The fight isn't over by any means yet. Stay tuned.*

## WHO WE ARE

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# *Hello Again.*

The SCRA Member Discount Card is back for our 5th year! Join us as we continue celebrating our 60+ years advocating for you. When you renew your membership, you will receive your new Member Discount Card that is welcomed at these local businesses: (New cards available on or after July 1st)

- |                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Anna Cheselka Dance          | Floaty Swim School         |
| April Davis Investigations   | Gisele Tune                |
| Arnold's Copy & Print        | Gramercy Boutique          |
| Auto Plaza                   | Habit                      |
| Back to Wellness             | James Thomas Stained Glass |
| Belle Bakery Cafe            | La Knitterie Parisienne    |
| BLVD Hotel & Spa             | Matthew's Jewelry Store    |
| Charlies' Shoe Repair        | Mister O's                 |
| Chateau de Luce              | Panache Boutique           |
| Classic Toys                 | Pepe's Pizza               |
| Cocoa and Candy              | Prosecco Trattoria         |
| Creation Station Studio City | Rain Bar & Lounge          |
| Dana Kathryn Jewelry         | Rouge                      |
| Daniell Menswear             | SALT. Optics               |
| Diana's Boutique             | topdrawer                  |
| Eye Candy Optometry          | The Village                |
| Eyedentity Eyewear           | Vitello's Restaurant       |
| Flair Cleaners               | Wild Flora                 |



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## STUDIO CITY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



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# SCRA COMMUNITY MEETING

**Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023**

## AGENDA Special Presentation

**7:00 p.m. Start**

Presentation of Radford Studio expansion plans.

Light hors d'oeuvres will be served.

## MEETING LOCATION

Radford Studio Center

All attendees should enter at Sater Parking Structure on Radford Avenue.



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