



STUDIO CITY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Your Advocate for Studio City

April 2010

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THE FACTS ABOUT THE STUDIO CITY OVERLAY/RFA: COMMUNITY HAS OPPORTUNITY FOR FINAL OPINIONS

For the past two years, the Studio City Residents Association (SCRA), with the support of the SCNC, has worked diligently to pursue an ordinance that would address the size of development in Studio City.

The March SCRA newsletter reported the City Planning Department continued a recent hearing about the Studio City Overlay so that further public hearings can be held. Those who oppose the overlay said they had not received adequate notice of the proposal and expressed their concerns. The new hearing date is April 22, 2010 at Van Nuys City Hall, 14410 Sylvan Street, second floor at 8:30 a.m.



According to the Planning Department, the proposed Residential Floor Area (RFA) Overlay restricts square footage to 33 percent of the lot size. If the owner articulates the design, i.e., the design is more than a square box, then 40 percent of the lot size is allowed. The typical 400 square foot garage, an accessory building not exceeding 250 square feet or breezeways that open on two sides are not included in calculating the square footage. For more details about exceptions, see the Planning Report for Case Number CPC-2009-3741-CE at page A-1 (www.planning.lacity.org).

Here's how it works: Houses in Studio City are on average 1,970 square feet on lots from 5,000 to 8,000 square feet. For purposes of this exercise, assume the smaller lot size of 5,000 square feet (a substandard lot) with a 1,970 square foot house: under the above proposal, the house can be remodeled or rebuilt to 2,000 square feet, not including 400 square feet for the garage or the other exceptions. If the house is on an 8,000 square foot lot, then the 1,970 square foot house can be remodeled/rebuilt to 3,200 square feet plus extra for the garage and exceptions. If there is a reason to exceed the limit, there is a variance procedure in place to allow for the proposed increase.

The SCRA has received phone calls; e-mails; copies of petitions, pro and con; and copies of letters and flyers urging opposition to the RFA. The SCRA has also read the City Planning Department Staff Report. The following questions come from comments received by the SCRA office staff and conversations with both SCRA members and non-members who have spoken with both the SCRA Board and the SCRA Overlay Committee.

1. Exactly what is the purpose of the RFA?

As stated in the report by the City Planning Department, "It is important to note that the proposed RFA district is not

CITY ATTORNEY TRUTANICH TAKES BACK THE COMMUNITY

"City Hall is an island surround by a sea of reality." That's how Carmen Trutanich, new Los Angeles City Attorney, began his comments at the March SCRA Community Meeting. Trutanich went on to say that he did not go in search of such issues as illegal billboards, marijuana sales, the Michael Jackson memorial or the Laura Chick lawsuit. Rather, he inherited all of them from the prior city attorney, together with an \$18 million budget shortfall (20 percent of operating income) and 8,000 open civil, criminal and workers compensation case files. Trutanich explained the City Attorney's office is now being conducted as a real law office, applying and enforcing the laws, both civil and criminal.

In an effort to operate with the operating budget shortfall, Trutanich's offices have instituted certain economies, such as cutting outside counsel hourly fees by 15 percent, with audit checks in place to ensure compliance. Trial support teams are in place so that attorneys have the support they need when

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(Overlay/RFA, cont'd)

intended to prohibit any and all new development or large homes, but it is a measure to reasonably restrict buildings that are substantially larger than the range of existing homes size and are incompatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood."

(Department of City Planning: Staff Report Feb 25, 2010)

2. But if my house burns down, can I replace it to the same size?

This concern comes from a flyer that stated, "If you have a house fire or water damage that destroys your home, you may not be able to rebuild your house to its current size." This statement uses the word "may," which creates an ambiguity about what would be allowed. The SCRA has received assurances that the final RFA will include language that provides protection to the homeowner for the right to rebuild to the square footage of the original house. An update issued by the Planning Department dated March 22, 2010 provides further details. The SCRA's Overlay Committee will be vigilant in monitoring the RFA to ensure the RFA protects the homeowner in these circumstances.

3. How big a house is permitted under the proposed RFA?

It all depends on the size of the lot. The bigger the lot, the bigger the house. The percentage of the floor area is initially set at 33 percent of the lot size, but that can be increased up to 40 percent if a minimal amount of articulation is part of the design. The 40 percent applies only to the living areas, e.g., bedrooms, baths, kitchen, etc. Other parts of the development, such as a garage at the standard 400 square feet, additional structures up to 250 square feet, patios, breezeways and balconies are not included in the 40 percent calculation.

4. But I am on a small lot and don't want or can't afford to go to a second story. What can I do?

According to the City Planning Department staff report, if you want to make a first floor addition only, i.e., no second floor, and wouldn't qualify for the bonus, then you will automatically qualify for the 40 percent RFA plus the 400 foot garage and other exceptions. According to the Planning Department survey, there are 300 houses that do not conform in this category.

5. What about my property values being reduced by this RFA coming into effect?

The argument is that there is value in the existing character in Studio City's neighborhoods and the restrictions can ensure property values by preserving the desirable characteristics of these neighborhoods. Sunland Tujunga has had a similar RFA for some years now, and property values there have not diminished because of its RFA. According to brokers in that area, prospective buyers can get assurances that a mansion

will not be built next to the house they are contemplating buying.

6. I have seen flyers that say: "If your house is larger than 2,062 to 2,227 square feet currently, then you will never be able to add even a bathroom or a bedroom." How about this?

This quoted statement above is incorrect. The size of the house is governed by how large the lot is.

7. So how do I figure that out?

Take the square footage of the lot and multiply by 0.4. That calculation will yield the size of the house allowed under the RFA. Compare this figure to the current size of the home now; that will tell you how much bigger you can make it.

8. But what happens if I need more room than allowed?

There is a variance process that addresses to what extent the square footage can be increased. It is on a case-by-case basis.

9. What is a "Conformance Rate" the Planning Report talks about?

The majority (84 percent) of the existing housing (single family residences) have a floor RFA of 33 percent or less. The proposed RFA will complement the surrounding houses in terms of scaling and massing.

10. Why do we need the RFA? We have the Baseline Mansionization to protect us, right?

No, not necessarily. The Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (BMO) expires on June 29, 2010, unless the City votes to extend it. And if the BMO is extended, there is still no real protection. Under the BMO, with readily obtained bonuses, the rate is at 60 percent, e.g., lot size 6,250 square feet, allowable house = 3,750 square feet plus a 400 square foot garage for a total of 4,150 square feet. A lot size of 6,750 square feet provides for allowable house of 4,050 square feet plus a 400 square foot garage for a total of 4,450 square feet.

11. When all is said and done, what is this about?

If you are concerned about the size of a remodel or tear down next to your house that will impact the enjoyment and privacy of your home and diminish the value of the neighborhood, then some form of restriction on size is necessary. Make your concerns known to the City Planning Department (priya.mehendale@lacity.org) and your Council office. (Daniel.brumer@lacity.org). Or simply complete the enclosed prepaid postcard and drop it in the mail.

12. What does the public hearing accomplish? Isn't it a done deal?

It is not a done deal. The Notice of Public Hearing states the purpose is to obtain testimony from affected and/or interested parties regarding the proposal as well as the merits of the proposal as it relates to existing environmental and land use regulations.

BREAKING NEWS

Bye Bye Billboard Blight



Thanks to efforts by City Attorney Carmen Trutanich, the freestanding large flat advertising structures that sprang up all over Studio City and the Valley during the last few years have come down. No longer are they at the entrances of the parking lot at Trader Joe's. Gone is the blight at Moorpark and Laurel Canyon, Lankershim and Ventura, at gas stations along Riverside and at many other locations.

Walter Reed Marquee

Digital signs opposite Studio City's residential neighborhoods have prompted the SCRA to take action. With the help of LAUSD Board Member Tamar Galatzan, the district has issued a school marquee guideline policy. The guidelines specify size, location and brightness for the digital signs, among other requirements, including the two colors, red or amber, which can be used. The policy eliminates blinking or flashing and requires auto dimming. It also specifies hours of operation and requires promotional messages be kept up to date. This is especially good news for SCRA members on Colfax across from the Walter Reed digital sign where light pollution into living space has been an issue.

New T-Mobile Antenna

The Los Angeles Department of City Planning Office of Zone Administration approved a Conditional Use Permit for a T-Mobile antenna on the Public Storage building behind Great Earth Restaurant on Ventura Place. The SCRA, the SCNC and local residents argued against the tower location, but the commission ruled in favor of T-Mobile. An appeal is pending.

Mulholland Construction

The washed-out section of Mulholland Drive that has been closed for a month should be completed, with a newly paved street, by the end of April.

STUDIO OAKS PARK - PHASE ONE COMPLETED

The month of March saw final touches were made to the park median west of Coldwater Canyon on the south side of Ventura Blvd. between Valley Vista and Van Noord. This median was the one most heavily damaged by the Coldwater Canyon DWP water main break in September, 2009.

The last remaining areas of the median, containing flood-contaminated dirt, were replaced with fresh dirt and mulch, and the irrigation work has been completed. Tests were



TO THE MARKET

Special feature: a poem by Michael Greenberg, a weekly customer of the Farmers Market

Early spring Sunday morning the air is clear under a cloudless light blue sky
A scent of fresh flowers after a night shower kindles the air
An average run-of-the-mill street is transformed into an extravaganza affair
It's opening time and the stage is set for a glorious day.

The ambience is delightful with various musical acts
That can dance your heart away
Trumpet playing like Miles Davis, African drumming
And a banjo creates a happy mood to your stay.

Lots of babies and toddlers make it a family affair
An animal zoo, cotton candy and a mini train to entertain
A central walkway is colorfully decorated and alive
With numerous stalls selling a myriad of tantalizing goods

Specialty foods; Indian, Mexican and sausage
Are minutes away to titillate your palate
Deliciously baked cookies, breads and muffins
Home cooked together with butter and love

The best wholesome fruits and vegetables
Where merchants travel great distances
With delicate lettuces, delectable sharp tasting tomatoes,
And crunchy Persian cucumbers the finest around

Many meet a love interest or best friend
Walking into the labyrinth of spaces or sitting at a table
Numerous patrons and merchants form bonds of
Friendships lasting a lifetime all at Farmers Market

The show is ending and most have gone
Leaving a reminisce of laughter, chatter and good times
The merchants all gone
from today's meet
Only thing left is a sad
old lonely street...till
next week...



conducted throughout March to ensure the sprinkler system is operating efficiently. Ten large boulders are also now finally in place on all three medians of the park.

The Studio Oaks Steering Committee will resume meetings later this year to discuss how to bring the community together to plan for the park's future. The SCRA thanks the Studio Oaks Park Committee for its dedicated work on this amazing improvement to the community and encourages neighbors to join the Steering Committee when it resumes planning for the next phase.

For more information and updates about the park, visit www.studiooaks.com.



taking a case to trial, helping eliminate the need for using more expensive outside sources. And on the days when the courts are closed, the lawyers use their down time by taking additional training. This effort will develop their skills in other areas for future assignments as the

workload dictates. In addition, Trutanich has developed an all volunteer "Reserve Deputy City Attorney" program where newly graduated attorneys go through a 30-day training period and are sent on court appearances and trials, all at no cost to the taxpayer.

Marijuana

Trutanich raised serious concerns about marijuana of suspect origin. Recent laboratory tests on plants that had been seized contained pesticides absorbed by the plant and that, along with other additives not known to the user, are potentially unwittingly ingested. A law known as the "Sherman Law" mandates labeling the ingredients (including any flavoring, the latest move) and testing them by a certified laboratory. Under the law, marijuana for medical use may be grown by a collective with shared expenses; marijuana was never meant to be sold at retail outlets. Trutanich stressed the intent is not to curtail use for those whose medical condition warrants it, but the City Attorney's job is to enforce California law regarding the use of marijuana. The Planning Department will be releasing its proposed determination of acceptable locations, inspection fees and permits. Thereafter, compliance in accordance with the law and court rulings will be enforced by

the City and County of Los Angeles (city attorney and district attorney), LAPD, DEA and the Sheriff's department.

Billboards

Trutanich's office has not lost one billboard case since the city attorney took office; these actions have added meaning to the billboard ordinances passed by the City. The super graphics on Hollywood Blvd. erected just prior to the Academy Awards presented a major hazard, with the weight of the sign creating a tremendous pedestrian safety risk. It also posed a risk to firefighters. Fires are fought from inside a building; if the windows are covered, there is no way for the command center on the ground to manage those inside and give instructions. As well, covered windows block possible escape routes. There was no permit issued for the Hollywood Blvd. sign; there was no inspection by anyone; and the installers were not licensed in California. Next on the agenda will be tackling the blight created by mobile billboards.

Toyota

The City of Los Angeles owns more than 800 Toyotas. The City Attorney's office has taken its Toyotas off the road, and has advised other City departments of this action. The City Attorney's office is exploring unfair business practices and information as part of an investigation involving the public safety hazards caused by sudden unintended acceleration and braking and steering problems on certain models of Toyota and Lexus automobiles. Further details on this matter, including how to report a similar problem with one of these vehicles can be found at <http://atty.lacity.org/INVESTIGATION/index.htm>. Alternatively go to www.lacity.org and log on to elected officials (City Attorney) and follow the leads to Toyota.

IT'S HAPPENING IN STUDIO CITY

Studio City Recreation Center (a.k.a. Beeman Park), 12621 Rye Street, Studio City

Senior Exercise Class every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9:30-10:30 a.m. for all seniors from 55 to 95. Join this fun class and learn to exercise the entire body; includes chair and standing exercises. Call the park at 818-769-4415 or Marge at 818-763-6779.

Tennis for 50+. Drop-in doubles tennis for men and women every Tuesday 9:30-11:00 a.m. Bring a racquet. The park provides partners and tennis balls. All ability levels welcome. \$12 per month. Contact Sharon Crigler at 818/985-6236 or sharoncrigler@sbcglobal.net.

Studio City Beautification Association Annual Board Meeting, March 8, 2010, 12:00 p.m. Discuss the progress on Prop 84 grant dollars, phase II and III of Moorpark Parkway,

progress on permits for Welcome to Studio City monuments. and other projects. Space is limited. If you wish to attend, please send an e-mail: Attn: SCBA to SCRABoard@studiocityresidents.org.

Studio City Library

Saturday April 17, 2010 Annual Edible Book Tea from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

New Friday Hours: The library is now open Fridays from 1:30-5:30 p.m.

Book Donations: Every Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., in the library community room. Donations in "good enough condition to be resold" accepted. Receipts for donations are available.

Book Sale: Saturday, April 24, 2010, from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Please bring bags or boxes for purchases of books, videos and DVDs.

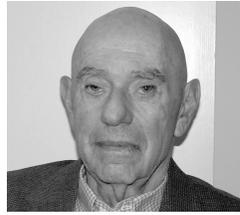
CALLING ALL SENIORS! HAVE A CLEAN-UP PROJECT THAT CAN USE AN EXTRA HAND?

This year, on May 2, 2010 - known as Big Sunday - students and adult volunteers from Campbell Hall, supported by the SCRA, will continue the good work done last year to help Studio City seniors, ages 70+, with much-needed "clean-up" type projects. The SCRA is looking for approximately 10-15 projects in such areas as:

- General garden work, including turning over the garden and fertilizing lawns and plants
- Hazardous waste pickup
- Garage clean-up
- Fence and wall painting
- Outdoor window cleaning
- Graffiti paint over

A team of hard-working, enthusiastic volunteer teenagers, supervised by adults, will provide the labor on that day. Email the SCRA with projects at scraboard@studiocityresidents.org or call the SCRA at 818-509-0230.

MEET THE SCRA BOARD: ART HOWARD



Former SCRA President and currently Farmers Market Director and Co-Chair, Art Howard has been volunteering in Studio City for more than 20 years in many capacities. He started as part of the LAPD's Community Tagger Task Force in 1990. Art became a Neighborhood Watch block captain, attending regular LAPD community meetings. He is a graduate of the Community Police Academy and has served as liaison between the community and local law enforcement.

After the earthquake in 1994, Studio City's Laurelgrove footbridge was deemed unsafe. Art spearheaded the effort to get an improved footbridge for the neighborhood, testifying in front of the Cultural Affairs Commission. Studio City now has a safe and attractive footbridge, which is the most traveled footbridge in Los Angeles. Art was next selected by City Councilman Mike Feuer to represent the needs and

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Alan Dymond

I am now into my third term as president of the SCRA. This year is already becoming the most significant of the three years. The hot issue right now is the proposed Floor Area Ratio (RFA) being suggested in order to curtail the overbuilding on small and medium size lots that threaten the continued enjoyment and the property values of those who are impacted and who have been unfortunate to have mansions built right next door. This RFA proposal has engendered hate mail, personal insults and threats to take over the SCRA, but the SCRA has never forgotten who it represents, and that is our members.

Commercial interests have a place in our community: they have their organizations, with which SCRA maintains good working relationships. The SCRA respects the symbiotic interplay that exists in a healthy viable neighborhood. But the SCRA is the advocate in Studio City for our residents who otherwise would not have a voice in the management of our community. When the SCRA sent out more than a thousand postcards to our members regarding the proposed overlay, 720 members responded, asking our then city councilmember:

"As one of your constituents, please respect my wish and implement the proper procedure to expedite approval of the Studio City Overlay in its entirety."

The SCRA had its mandate in no uncertain terms. Initially the SCRA wanted all of Studio City to undergo a review by the Planning Department. However, with the pending Baseline Masonization Ordinance, the City decided the Planning Department would begin by reviewing the single family zoning in non-hillside areas that allowed houses to be over built. The present proposal is the result of two years work by the Planning Department.

I find it ironic that the statement in one flyer is that "only a grass roots effort will stop the radical activists that are pushing this proposal." This is made by some who have monetary interests in preventing this proposal from going forward. Inspection of our membership rolls and the residences in the RFA area under consideration suggests there are 1,281 SCRA household members in that area. Having received 720 postcards from our members wanting something done about overbuilding, I wonder just how those 720 members would appreciate being referred to as "radical activists."

It is the SCRA that is the local grass roots organization, not those representing "for profit" entities or having other financial interests. Please read the analysis of the RFA in this edition, and please attend the hearing before the Planning Commission to express your concerns.

Alan Dymond



**GET THE FACTS ON THE
STUDIO CITY OVERLAY/RFA**



**Save LA River
Open Space**

**Special SCRA Community Meeting
completely devoted to
Save LA River Open Space**

THURSDAY, April 15, 2010

7:00 p.m. Light refreshments

7:30 p.m. Meeting begins

Please join California State Senator Fran Pavley and Esther Feldman of Community Conservancy International for a presentation of the completed hydrology analysis for the Los Angeles River Natural Park

vision/concept for the last 16 acres of unprotected open space—commonly known as Weddington Golf and Tennis—along the LA River in the San Fernando Valley.

Come see what this vision/concept will look like; hear the results of the feasibility study, and get an update on the status of the effort to preserve this property in perpetuity as recreational open space.

Visit our website to donate, read FAQs and sign up for our email list.

**www.savelariveropenspace.org
saveopenspace@SLAROS.org**

818-509-0230



(Art Howard, cont'd)

desires of concerned citizens on a committee for the design of Studio City's new Branch Library.

Art served on Neighborhood Code Watch, the Plan Review Board for the Ventura/ Cahuenga Specific Plan, the Neighborhood Oversight Committee for the Beautification of the L.A. River and the committee for Studio City's new parking structure on Ventura Blvd. He was elected to the first Studio City Neighborhood Council.

Art has served the Studio City Residents Association for several years in differing capacities—as a board member, president and a citizen—by testifying at city hearings, monitoring local projects, dealing with local representatives of government and always being a voice for the community's needs.

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