

FRIENDS OF SUNSET PARK

A California nonprofit corporation of Sunset Park residents • 1122 Oak Street, Santa Monica, California 90405 • (310) 358-7117

FEBRUARY 2003 NEWSLETTER

Layout by Bill Josephs

We Need Your Membership — What Have We Done for You Lately? (1989 – 2003)

Friends of Sunset Park (FOSP) is a neighborhood group in Sunset Park made up of volunteers from your community. FOSP is dedicated to informing, protecting, and enhancing our Sunset Park neighborhood. We know most of you have very busy lives but care about your community. We

President's Farewell

It's has been a real honor to have served as President of Friends of Sunset Park for the past four years. I joined the Board in 1995 to help work on getting the word out on the traffic impacts on Sunset Park from the massive Playa Vista project on the Ballona wetlands. I knew the traffic nightmare of 200,000 new car trips per day would have a devastating effect on Sunset Park, especially on 23rd Street, 11th Street, and Lincoln Blvd. Thanks to the work of many citizens over the past ten years, the project has been significantly cut back. However Playa Vista's Phase II EIR is in the process of being written, so there is more work ahead.

I feel lucky to live in such a great community of Sunset Park with so many wonderful neighbors. That is why I tried to emphasize a community feeling at our Annual Meetings. In 2000, we did had a wonderful program on the history of Sunset Park, and two years ago we started a tradition of opening our

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can help you stay in tune with your community, but to remain effective in our work, **We need your help:**

- ★ Become a member of FOSP or renew your membership. Our annual household membership dues are only \$30, with reduced rates available (see below).
- ★ Come to our monthly meetings, which are on the first Wednesday of most months at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, 14th and Ocean Park Blvd, at 7 PM. Check our website at www.friendsofsunsetpark.org for dates and times.
- ★ Contact us with your concerns by mail, email, or phone.
- ★ Volunteer—get involved. We can only be effective with your help. Join us to make our community stronger!

Our achievements on your behalf are many:

- ★ **Airport**—We have successfully lobbied for stricter aircraft noise enforcement, including passage of Prop MM and revision of the city ordinance raising fines for noise violations. Since this implementation, noise violations have dropped 31%. In tandem with Eastside Airport Neighbors, we requested Environmental Task Force involvement in investigating aircraft emissions. We are continuing to advocate for implementation of safety enhancements, including runway safety zones and aircraft conformance to a B-II standard (basically eliminating large aircraft not safety appropriate for our runway length.)

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JOIN FRIENDS OF SUNSET PARK

2003 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Today's date _____

I will help with:

- ____ Annual Meeting
- ____ Crime and Safety
- ____ Environmental Concerns
- ____ Fairview Library
- ____ Historic Preservation
- ____ Planning and Development
- ____ Public Schools
- ____ Santa Monica Airport
- ____ Santa Monica College
- ____ Traffic, Parking, Pedestrian Safety

Membership Dues:

- ____ \$30 Regular Household Dues
- ____ \$50 or \$100 for Sponsor
- ____ \$10 Minimum Household Dues
- ____ Additional Donation

(Please check):

- ____ New ____ Renewal

*Please make check payable to
"Friends of Sunset Park"
and forward to:
1122 Oak Street,
Santa Monica, CA 90405.*

(Contact our Membership Committee at (310) 358-7117 for senior/fixed income membership dues.)

Proposition A will appear on a vote-by-mail ballot to be sent to Santa Monica voters on February 20. Voters will have until March 21 to return their ballots in prepaid envelopes sent to you with the ballot. The traditional position statements and counter arguments by both sides on this issue will also be sent to you with the ballot.

VOTE Yes – Proposition A

by Tom Larmore

Proposition A—the Homeowners Freedom of Choice Initiative—addresses a very simple question: should an individual homeowner have the freedom to choose whether his or her home should be designated as a historic building? And it answers this question with a resounding “yes.”

The City’s Landmarks Ordinance gives the Landmarks Commission and the City Council the authority to designate private homes as landmarks or structures of merit or to place those homes in “historic districts,” even over the owners’ objections. Once placed in an historic district, for example, most of the “exterior features” of homes cannot be changed without the Commission’s or Council’s approval.

Can you add a room or a second story which complies with the zoning ordinances applicable to everyone else? Not without obtaining a special approval. Can you paint your house a different color? Or change the style of the doors or windows? What about fences? Or even landscaping? Go see the City first. Perhaps it will allow the change, or perhaps not.

A homeowner in the Third Street Historic District recently wished to add a garage underneath her home in a manner which is frequently found in the Ocean Park area. Because her home was subject to the special rules applicable to historic districts, she needed permission from the Landmarks Commission. This permission was denied even though she was supported by a nationally-recognized historic preservation consultant. One reason was that accessing the garage would have meant removing a low retaining wall which the Commission found to be a “character-defining” feature of the district.

Proposition A is not about whether the City should have landmarks or historic districts. It is about choice. There are clearly benefits, both financial and social, in the preservation movement and these, along with the accompanying restrictions, should be clearly understood by potentially affected homeowners. But the final balancing should be made by the homeowner, not the City.

Proposition A is not about “monster mansions,” as our opponents would like

to have you believe. The City has zoning restrictions dealing with size, height, setbacks and other development features of private homes and is considering others. Proposition A has absolutely no impact on any of these ordinances, or any others that might be adopted in the future.

The difference between typical zoning laws and the Landmarks Ordinance is that zoning restricts all of us equally. The Landmarks Ordinance swoops down only on selected homes and places a burden on them not shared by others. This is simply not fair.

The type of home one wants for his or her family is a matter of intense personal taste and a home is generally one’s major investment. I do not believe I have the right to tell my neighbor, or anyone else, that they must allow their home to be part of an outdoor museum simply because I think it ought to be preserved. I believe this is a choice which the homeowner should be entitled to make. That’s why I support Proposition A.

Call 310-260-3315 for more information.

VOTE No – Proposition A

by Bea Nemlaha

Proposition A would make compliance with Santa Monica’s landmark ordinance completely optional. Since the overwhelming amount of home demolitions are done by developers building on speculation, these same developers would be given sole authority to determine whether an existing home has historical significance and should be saved.

Very few are given landmark status. In the 26 years that Santa Monica has had its historic preservation ordinance, **ONLY 16 HOMES HAVE BEEN LANDMARKED IN THE ENTIRE**

CITY. That’s less than one home per year, out of 6500 single family residences. Last year, 96 of 97 permits for demolition were approved. At current rates, it would take over 100 years for even 1% of Santa Monica homes to be landmarked!

The organizers of Proposition A, well-founded by wealthy real estate and development interests, have frightened many people into supporting their initiative with false and inflammatory misrepresentations. Here are some of them:

MYTH: All single family homes are under siege.

FACT: Only properties with clear architectural or historical merit are ever candidates for protection from demolition. While most homeowners love their homes, very few homes are significant enough to merit landmark designation.

MYTH: Proposition A is vital to the survival of property values in our City.

FACT: Property values have skyrocketed in Santa Monica in the last 26 years under our **CURRENT** landmark ordinance.

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Vote No on A, continued from page 2

Now developers want to get rid of that ordinance. But why would property values suddenly decline if we continue to live under the same landmark ordinance we have always had?

MYTH: The city is planning to designate large portions of various neighborhoods as historic districts.

FACT: Historic districts (and there is only one residential historic district in Santa Monica) can only be created by a majority vote of homeowners within that potential district. If a majority of area homeowners do not want a historic district, then one can not be formed.

MYTH: You can't change the inside of your home if it is landmarked or in a historic district.

FACT: The Landmarks Commission has never told homeowners what they may or may not do to the inside of their homes. The code has just been rewritten to clarify that the Commission has no jurisdiction over the interior of a residence.

MYTH: You can't remodel the outside of your home if it is a landmark or in a historic district.

FACT: Landmarks and buildings in historic districts can be and, in the 3rd Street historic district, have been remodeled with significant exterior changes and major additions.

Proposition A would give developers sole authority to make decisions affecting all of us. Vote "NO" on Proposition A. Call 399-4692 for more information.

Proposition A is also opposed by:
 Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights
 Democratic Club of Santa Monica
 National Trust for Historic Preservation
 Santa Monica Conservancy
 Los Angeles Conservancy
 North of Montana Association
 Ocean Park Community Organization
 Wilshire/Montana Neighborhood Coalition
 Mayor and Sunset Park homeowner
 Richard Bloom
 Mayor Pro Tem Kevin McKeown
 City Council Member Michael Feinstein
 City Council Member Ken Genser
 City Council Member Pam O'Connor

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meeting with a beautiful choral program from the John Adams Middle School Madrigal Singers.

Now it is time to pass the position on to a new leader, Zina Josephs. Zina has been a leader in the community in the Grant PTA, the SMMUSD Fine Arts and Prop X Oversight Committees, and the Santa Monica Arts Commission. I know she will make a great President and I urge you to give her your full support.

See you around!

Kathy Knight
 Past President, Friends of Sunset Park

Sinkhole!

A 12-inch water main broke at the end of December, causing sections of the Ocean Park Blvd. pavement to fail between 11th and Euclid. City crews have installed a new water line, the Gas Company has installed a new gas line under the sidewalk, Verizon has repaired and replaced telephone cables and conduits, and a sewer which was damaged in the Northridge earthquake has been repaired.

The City plans to complete repairs by the first week of March.
Photos by K. Riddle



Airport News

by Cathy Larson

- ★ The Ad Hoc Committee of the Environmental Task Force and the Airport Commission will meet with AQMD (Air Quality Management District) on February 12 regarding aircraft emissions at SM Airport. An update on their findings will be presented at the March 24 Airport Commission meeting.
- ★ The City Council has approved airport safety enhancements: the implementation of runway safety areas and an aircraft conformance plan (aircraft size appropriate to runway length). Next step: engineering report. Stay tuned...
- ★ Noise violations have dropped 31% since implementation of the revised noise ordinance! The 2002 Annual Noise Report will be presented at the April 28 Airport Commission meeting.
- ★ The Museum of Flying is being relocated. More information to follow.

Visit our website if you want more detailed information. To be included on our Airport Notification list, call (310) 392-1907 with your name, email, address, and phone number.

Friends of the Library “Paves” the Way with Fundraiser for Fairview Branch

by Ellen Mark

A renovated Fairview Branch Library reopened January 21, 2003. Changes include a new reading area, additional wiring for online services, new carpeting, painting inside and out, and new landscaping, all made possible with funds from a 1998 voter-approved library bond. The non-profit Friends of the Santa Monica Public Library hopes to add new items such as shelving, furniture, and a sound system for the community room with private donations from a Brick Fundraiser campaign.

The campaign, with a goal of \$50,000, centers on the sale of 8×8 pavers, engraved with the donor’s message, such as family names or tributes. The pavers will be placed near the library’s front entrance and will form the new floor of the back patio. A similar campaign was launched last summer for the Montana Avenue Branch Library.

To order the brick pavers, or for more information about the campaign, call 310-392-1306, or inquire at the Fairview Branch, 2101 Ocean Park Blvd. Hours are 12 NOON to 9 PM Monday through Thursday and 10 AM to 5:30 PM Saturdays.

New Development Standards for Sunset Park

by Tom Cleys

An interim ordinance extending the protections of the so called “monster mansion” ordinance which has been in place north of Montana Avenue for some years, is now in place in Sunset Park and the North of Wilshire community. Our community demonstrated overwhelming support for extending this ordinance to Sunset Park at the 2001 FOSP annual meeting and in newsletter inquiries. Spearheaded by Mayor Pro Tem McKeown and Sunset Park resident Michael Dobbs, the City Council unanimously passed the ordinance at its January 28th meeting. The interim ordinance is likely to be in place for a couple of years until full public hearings can be held in Sunset Park and the Planning Department addresses other pressing priorities. Special use permits will be required in some hillside areas of Sunset Park until the special needs of these areas can be assessed.

The ordinance reduces the maximum size of a home allowed on a typical 50×135 foot lot from up to 5,000 square feet under the old ordinance to about 3,700 square feet now (excluding garages). The new ordinance increases setbacks from the side lot lines and stepbacks required on the second floors. These features provide for increased space between homes, more air and light, and reduced massing, while still allowing for very sizable homes to meet the needs of modern families.

For more information, contact the Planning Department at 458-8341.

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- ★ **Planning and Development**—In January 2003, we were successful when the so-called “Monster Mansion” ordinance was passed by the City Council to control oversized homes in Sunset Park and north of Wilshire (see separate article). We helped stop a large strip mall from being built at the NW corner of Pico and Cloverfield in 1989, and look forward to an expanded Virginia Park on that site in the near term. We have worked to keep the community educated about hot topics including commercial and residential developments, historic districts, and landmarking.
 - ★ **Traffic, Pedestrian Safety, and Parking**—Since 1989, we have helped reduce and slow down cut-through traffic and protect pedestrians, especially school children. Over the years crossing guards, crosswalks, traffic signals (Pico and 26th), speed humps, and chokers have been added. We also worked to get preferential parking added in impacted neighborhoods.
 - ★ **Santa Monica College**—We have monitored the various Master Plans of the college over the years for impacts on Sunset Park, including parking, circulation, traffic and construction. We opposed the college’s proposed closing of Pearl Street in 1994 to add tennis courts, which would have resulted in poorer traffic circulation and “campus creep.” We have worked with the college on cut-through traffic and have worked with the community to implement preferential parking around the college.
 - ★ **Crime and Safety**—We organized a Neighborhood Watch program in 1990 and, after three rapes occurred within two weeks in 1995, co-sponsored with Pico Neighborhood Association a community awareness meeting. Over the years, we have distributed informational flyers in our neighborhood after several violent incidents.
 - ★ **Community Service**—We have sponsored a variety of events including:
 - Adopt-a-Highway
 - Holiday food and toy drive
 - Earthquake preparedness meetings
 - First Santa Monica neighborhood group to participate in the National Night Out Against Crime (1994).
 - Blood drives collecting over 500 pints of blood since 1994
 - Arranged for free counseling from the L.A. County Psychological Disaster Response Team for neighbors who witnessed the violent death of a pedestrian in a hit-and-run accident, an attack on local residents by their handyman, and a shooting incident in 1996.
 - We communicate with you through our website and through newsletters flyered to over 7,000 households throughout the year, an average of three community meetings per year on issues of concern to the neighborhood and annual general membership meetings.
- So please, **send in your membership application today.** To keep up the good work, we need your membership, your interest, and your involvement.