



# OUR CORNERSTONE

MEGA ISSUE

Volume XXI • Issue 1 • Fall 2021

## LA City Council Unanimously Votes YES on the HCM Nominations of the Chicano Arts Collectives of Highland Park

*By Jamie Tijerina*

¡SI SE PUDO! After years of work and nearly a year of hearings and delays associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, we have reached the major moment in which the LA City Council has officially recognized the buildings that housed the Mechicano Art Center and the Centro de Arte Público as Historic-Cultural Monuments (HCM) in the City of Los Angeles. This was a unanimous 14-0 vote on Tuesday, August 24, 2021.

Nationally, fewer than 10% of historic landmarks are associated with communities of color. Important places that are historically connected with the struggle for Latino civil rights in the US, the Chicano Movement, are at risk of being lost, just as Roosevelt High School was in Boyle Heights when the R Building and Auditorium were demolished in 2019.

The nominations of Mechicano Art Center and the Centro de Arte Público are not only critical for the preservation of Chicano history in Northeast Los Angeles, but they also are a step toward achieving

equity in this space, ensuring that these important places will be there for our community and for many years to come.



Top: Centro de Arte Publico • Bottom: Mechicano Art Center

The overwhelming support of our community has been critical throughout the HCM process, and we also are grateful to have a champion in the LA City Council who understands the importance of Chicano History, our CD1 Councilmember Gil Cedillo. Northeast LA and the Eastside value the preservation of our history and honoring those who came before, and the community's and our councilmember's support of these nominations at every step has underscored this.

We additionally would like to thank our local elected officials who also sent

in letters of support including LA County Supervisor Hilda Solis, State Senator Maria Elena Durazo, and Assemblymember Wendy Carrillo.

We are also thankful to all the members of the

*continued on page 3*

## A Message from President Jamie Tijerina



THE HIGHLAND PARK HERITAGE TRUST has had a challenging but eventful year as we navigate a world that is forever changed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am so happy to present you with this first-ever MEGA issue of *Our Cornerstone* newsletter with the help of a Neighborhood Purpose Grant from the Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council. This grant is allowing us to expand the content and distribution of *Our Cornerstone* in the NELA

community, and thereby enhancing our outreach capacity.

The Heritage Trust has not been immune to the struggles faced by non-profits all over the country as a result of COVID-19. Dramatically increased workloads, brushes with the COVID-19 virus, funding concerns, adapting to fulfill the organization's mission in a fully remote environment...all of these and more comprise the challenges that we have navigated. The pandemic is not over yet, but we are grateful that our membership and our community has stayed with us at every step, and we pray that all of us stay safe and healthy so we can come out of it together.

In the face of challenges, we have found bright spots and successes to celebrate in the community including the HCM Designations of the Chicano Arts Collectives of Highland Park; The Dedication of Annette Cardona Square; The Opening of the Tiny Homes Village at Arroyo Seco Park, and so much more that we are sharing with you in detail in this issue.

As we approach our 40th anniversary in 2022, we look ahead with a focus on sustaining our organization far into the future and taking you with us on this journey into the next 40 years. In the meantime, please enjoy this MEGA issue of *Our Cornerstone* and get up to speed on preservation efforts and related community news in Northeast LA.



For your charitable giving in 2021, would you consider a contribution to the Highland Park Heritage Trust? We are an I.R.C. 501(c)(3) non-profit and your donation to our General Fund or the Diana Barnwell Fund is tax deductible and will help our organization continue to fulfill its mission and persevere through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.



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City Council citywide who unanimously voted YES on the nominations, including Councilmember Kevin DeLeon in neighboring CD14. Organizations who sent in letters of support included Occidental College, Boyle Heights Community Partners, Historic Garvanza, Art in the Park LA, Latino Heritage Conservation, Avenue 50 Studio, and the Los Angeles Conservancy. Thank you also to the businesses occupying each building, Stone's Throw Records and Huntington Group + Feli-Mex Market for recognizing their community role as stewards of these historic places and supporting the nominations of their respective properties. There are so many people and organizations whose support we are grateful for, including HPHT's past VP Alexandra Madsen who spent countless hours writing and researching to author the nominations, and we hope to continue

working together with everyone and recognizing you for your contributions to the preservation of Chicano History.

Finally, we want to recognize the artists who made history here in these spaces in Highland Park, and whose legacies are important to honor and preserve, including Judithe Hernandez, George Yepes, Barbara Carrasco, Frank Romero, John Valadez, Leo Limon, Dolores Guerrero Cruz, Victor Vaya, Robert Delgado, Gilbert 'Magu' Lujan, Wayne Healy, and Nicandro 'Gronk' Glugio, Richard Duardo, Guillermo Bejarano, Carlos Almaraz.

Very soon, we hope to complete and submit the third nomination associated with the Chicano Arts Collectives of Highland Park, Corazón Productions, and others locally. We look forward to sharing this and many more nominations in the future with you, our community. ■

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## Origins of Mexica

THE TERM "CHICANO" is based on the indigenous, Nahuatl word "mexica" that was incorporated into Spanish and then used as an identifier in the United States for the descendants of Mexicans starting in the late 1950's and 60's. A discussion of the term "Chicano" must begin with a look at the phonetic / etymological origins of the word. In his essay, "The Chicanos: An Overview," Edmundo García-Girón defines the term "Chicano" as one that:

"...reflects the pronunciation of the grapheme X in Spanish. In Old Spanish the sign X denoted the palatal sibilante sound s' (English sh). The Spaniards used the grapheme to transcribe the Nahuatl s' in Mexica (Meshica), as the Aztecs called themselves. But by the middle of the seventeenth century the sound of X had changed to the palatal affricate c' (English ch, as in church): México and mexicano sounded like Méchico and mechicano. Chicano, then is an aphaeresis of mechicano.

During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, many Mexican Americans wanted to reconnect with their cultural roots. After many years of oppression and stigmatization and search for meaning and identity, they were encouraged to reach beyond their Spanish language and their Latin American history, and back to the pre-Hispanic heritage of the Aztecs. Eventually, the name was shortened from Mechicanos

to Chicanos. Since the modern societies in both the United States and Mexico tended to marginalize the experiences of Mexican Americans this group had to go back further in history to find something that they could identify with and hold on to as the basis for their identity. They found it in the Mechicas (Aztecs) and appropriated the term Chicano."

excerpted from:

"Mechica: Indigenous Origin of the Chicano Hybrid Identity" By: Rolando J. Diaz

Southeastern Oklahoma State University ■





# Preserving Chicano/Chicana Cultural History

*By Councilmember Gilbert Cedillo, Council District 1*



WHEN I WAS IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE, it was of utmost importance that I supported and preserved iconic buildings that reflected the rich and diverse history of Los Angeles. It was indeed an honor to be the legislative author and co-author that established the Chinese American Museum, Italian Hall, Japanese American

National Museum, Korean American Museum, Breed Street Shul, and the former St. Vibiana's Cathedral. All were in the state district I represented.

Mechicano Arts Center and Centro de Arte Público are important cultural institutions that reflect our rich and diverse cultural history. I was happy to support the Highland Park Heritage Trust nomination

of these sites as LA Historic-Cultural Monuments. I also salute the artists involved with these institutions. They are cultural heroes.

Richard Duardo, who founded Centro de Arte Público, and many of the artists were my friends. I was in Upward Bound at UCLA with Richard. Frank Romero was a neighbor in Boyle Heights. Watching them become recognized artists meant a great deal in the community where I grew up.

Even though my path was in politics, seeing artists like Richard, Frank, Carlos Almaraz, Gilbert Magu Lujan, Judithe Hernandez, Guillermo Bejarano and others inspired me. They used their art to pursue social justice for all Angelenos. It is through their art and their collective efforts that the Centro de Arte Público and the Mechicano Art Center are finally recognized and given their rightful place in our City's rich and diverse cultural history. ■

## Buchanan Elementary's Upcoming Urban Greening Project

OUR LOCAL BUCHANAN STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL was recently awarded a \$1,088,980 grant for a School Urban Greening Project administered by North East Trees, Inc. The program is designed to replace grey asphalt surfaces and restore them into lush green spaces. This project emerged as a result of Buchanan's participation in a research study led by researchers from Occidental College and Cal Poly Pomona. Buchanan served as the control school and maintained its concrete finishes, while Eagle Rock

Elementary was transformed into an urban green space. After five years, the researchers found students with access to green spaces had reduced levels of stress, anxiety and disorderly conduct, and increased levels of academic performance. In response to the study and with the help of a local grant, Buchanan will now be able to transform its playground with a design that improves the mental and physical wellbeing of its students.

The program is in its early stages. If you would like more information, the School Principal Mrs. Amelia Carranza along with North East Trees and Cal Poly Professor Claire Latané will be hosting a virtual event in early fall to provide updates on the project.

## character PROJECTS

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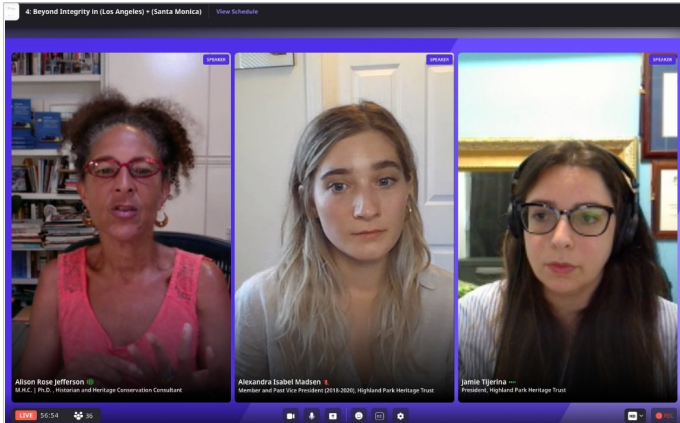
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<https://bondaccountability.resources.ca.gov/Project.aspx?ProjectPK=30461&PropositionPK=49>

## Quick News Corner

- Highland Park Heritage Trust served as an Official Redistricting Ambassador organization for the 2021 LA City Redistricting Effort. We provided impartial, non-political information, education, and outreach to the community throughout the process so that NELA and the Eastside had a chance to give their public comment throughout the process, focusing on digital outreach.
- The Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council awarded HPHT a Neighborhood Purpose Grant to support our outreach efforts in the upcoming fiscal year, including this MEGA issue of *Our Cornerstone*. Additionally, they have provided funding to support giving up to 35 neighborhood walking tours for NELA students once it is safe to resume our walking tours.
- On August 10-11, 2021, HPHT member Alexandra Madsen and Board President Jamie Tijerina were invited to present at the Beyond Integrity in (X) Conference about the Nominations of the Chicano Arts Collectives of Highland Park. For more information, visit [www.beyondintegrityinx.com](http://www.beyondintegrityinx.com)



- On November 18, 2021, the Cultural Heritage Commission voted unanimously to take under consideration HPHT's HCM nomination of the Throop House in Garvanza. This means that the nomination will advance through the nomination process. The Cultural Heritage Commission will continue its investigation into the property and will convene within 90 days to decide upon a recommendation to confer HCM status on the property and advance it through the HCM process.

- HPHT Board President Jamie Tijerina was invited by the LA Conservancy to serve as a Juror for the Conservancy's 2021 Preservation Awards. Learn more about this year's honorees at [laconservancy.org/awards](http://laconservancy.org/awards)
- In June 2021, Highland Park Heritage Trust Boardmember Antonio Castillo was elected to the Board of Trustees for the California Preservation Foundation (CPF). CPF is one of the state's leaders in advocacy and education and a strong force in ensuring the protection of California's diverse cultural heritage and historic places. Antonio is an urban planner with over 19 years of experience and has served on the Board of the Highland Park Heritage Trust since 2012. Antonio will continue his role on the HPHT Board serving the Arroyo Seco Communities, while also working towards protecting and advocating for our cultural and historic resources at the state level. For more information on CPF, please visit [www.californiapreservation.org](http://www.californiapreservation.org). ■



### LOOKING AHEAD

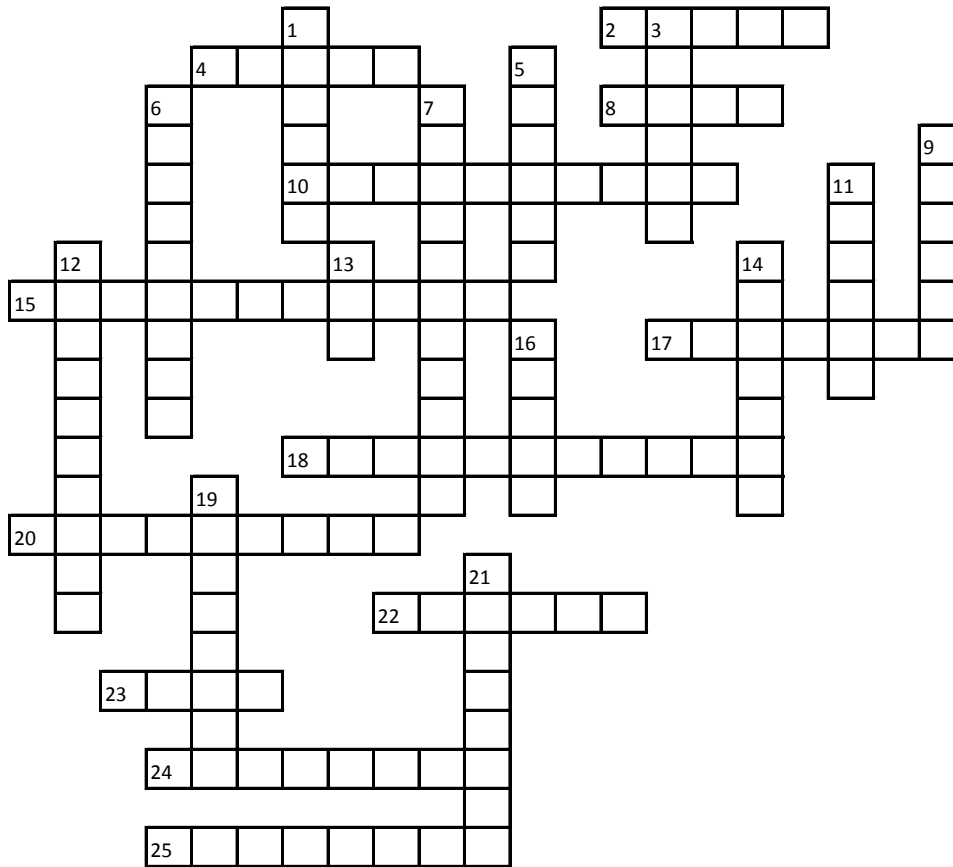
The former Security Trust & Savings Bank, a Historic Cultural Monument on Figueroa St/ Ave 56 has been purchased by a new owner. HPHT plans to host a meeting, open to the community, in February 2022 to learn more about plans for the building. More details, including Zoom meeting information, will be shared as they become available.



5601 Figueroa Street, Built in 1923

# Highland Park Crossword Puzzle

By Keiko Miller



## ACROSS

2. The Marionette Theater on York:  
Bob \_\_\_\_\_
4. A philanthropic org. founded by women:  
The \_\_\_\_\_ Club on Ave 57
8. Local Native American Tribe
10. A college in Highland Park
15. Annual parties hosted by Charles Lummis
17. The "LA Tiffany" stainglass makers
18. The river confluent with the LA River
20. The Highland Park Masonic Temple's Other  
name: The \_\_\_\_\_
22. An Academy Award winning actress raised  
in Highland Park: Diane \_\_\_\_\_
23. Highland Park Heritage Trust (abbrev)
24. The high school on Ave 54
25. The community cast of Highland Park

## DOWN

1. A popular taco place on Eagle Rock Blvd  
\_\_\_\_\_ Fish
3. Another name for the Lummis House
5. Chicano Art Pioneer Frank
6. A popular type of home to be revitalized in  
the 2000s in Highland Park
7. The 22ft farm animal statue standing atop  
5558 N Figueroa St (2 words)
9. The acronym for Los Angeles County Metro  
Railroad System
10. A go-to soda pop store on York
12. NELA's grassroots community based art  
group: The Arroyo Arts \_\_\_\_\_
13. Barber shop by day hiding a \_\_\_ behind it  
5715 N. Figueroa St.
14. HLP's urban wilderness across from the  
Southwest Museum
16. Acronym for LA Dept. of Transportation
19. Charles Lummis' middle name
21. Neighborhood in NELA bordered by HLP  
to the west

Answers on page 9



# Historic Cultural Monument Nominations for Throop House and Mexico-Tenochtitlan “The Wall that Talks” Mural

By Charlie Fisher

THE HIGHLAND PARK HERITAGE TRUST has submitted a nomination to the Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources for the Throop House on San Pascual Avenue, one of the oldest houses in Garvanza, dating from 1885.

The vernacular cottage is of a rectangular plan with a pyramidal roof design, referred to as a National Folk house by Virginia and Lee McAlester in their book, *A Field Guide to American Houses*. The house is distinguished by its age and that it is an example of the earliest development in the area, being built prior to the 1886 filing of the Town of Garvanza.

The house exterior is presently being worked on with the application having been filed for a needed new roof; the interior has already been partially gutted. The house presently maintains its original architectural integrity. Nomination and HCM status will protect this property and ensure that any remodeling now and in the future is sensitively done.



The Throop House at 902 San Pascual Street in Garvanza

The HPHT is also working with Kathy Gallegos and Jade Puga from the Avenue 50 Studio to nominate the Mexico-Tenochtitlan “The Wall that Talks” Mural at Avenue 61 and Figueroa Street. Painted in 1996,

the mural is the design of artist Anthony “Eagle” Ortega. A number of important Chicano artists worked on the mural as well, with much of the funding coming from Doors drummer John Densmore.

Also known as “The Wall of Quetzalcoatl,” the mural was painted under the auspices of the Quetzalcoatl Mural project, a community-based mural arts collective which was co-founded

by Ortega and artist Andy Ledesma.

For the most up to date information on these HCM nominations as they move through the process, be sure you are following us on Facebook and Instagram @highlandparkheritagetrust. We will also be providing updates via email, the [hpht.org](http://hpht.org) website, and the print *Our Cornerstone*. ■

## Historic Beaufort Foundation Honors Diana Barnwell

IN HONOR OF OUR FOUNDING MEMBER DIANA BARNWELL (1938-2021), who we lost earlier this year, the Highland Park Heritage Trust has started the “Diana Barnwell Fund.” The goal of this fund is to honor her legacy by supporting plans to ensure that our organization remains sustainable and can continue fulfilling its mission for the next 40 years and beyond.

We would like to thank the Historic Beaufort Foundation for their inaugural donation to the Fund.

“The Historic Beaufort Foundation is pleased to offer a tribute donation to the Highland Park Heritage Trust in celebration of Diana Barnwell’s life and legacy. Our organization, which is located in the Barnwell’s ancestral home, Beaufort, South



Carolina, was fortunate to have connected with Diana and to have been entrusted with Barnwell family items dear to Diana and to Beaufort.

The Historic Beaufort Foundation is a 501(c)3 not for profit education foundation established in 1965 to preserve and protect the historic, architectural and cultural legacy of Beaufort,

South Carolina. Our flagship property, the John Mark Verdier House, ca. 1805 is operates as a house museum at 801 Bay Street, Beaufort, SC.”

[www.historicbeaufort.org](http://www.historicbeaufort.org)

843.379.3331 ■



# Historic Garvanza Endangered by Los Angeles City Planning Decision

*By Brad Chambers, HPHT Member*

THE QUAIN T RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT OF GARVANZA, located in northeast Los Angeles, has been home to one of the highest concentrations of cottage-sized, arts and crafts, Victorian, mission revival, Tudor, and other small, eclectic homes for nearly 150 years. The collection of quaint-size houses, together with their beautiful architecture, display of unique, natural materials including Arroyo-sourced river rocks and old-growth redwood, cedar and Douglas fir wood siding, along with a beautiful array of historic window and door styles, made it an important candidate for historic and cultural preservation. In 2010, after a significant amount of volunteer work was done within the greater Highland Park and Garvanza communities, Garvanza became a cultural Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, commonly known as a “HPOZ”.

As a result of Garvanza’s HPOZ status, the community members and property owners have been held to a consistent set of standards outlined in what is known as the Historic Highland Park-Garvanza Preservation Plan—for the past 11 years. In the preservation plan, a list of design standards are set forth to shape and govern the overall design and construction activity in the HPOZ, upholding the historic look and feel of the community and providing consistency in new construction or restoration work.

Garvanza’s historic appearance and community feel has become endangered by a decision rendered by the Los Angeles Department of Planning on September 16, 2021, in favor of a controversial development proposed for a highly-visible development site located at the southwest corner of Garvanza Avenue and Avenue 64—the old Rite Aid overflow parking lot. This Planning Department approval came notwithstanding the disapproval of those plans by the local HPOZ Board. The site is of particular importance to the community and the HPOZ, as it is the most visible ‘gateway’ entry into the community. Whatever is built on this site sets the design tone for the historic district and potentially introduces a precedent for future development in the Highland Park-Garvanza community and the broader network of HPOZ communities taken as a whole. The site is bordered to the immediate north by a row of cottage-sized residences, and it abuts the historic

Dr. Laurence Smith site to the west, consisting of 3 historic, single-family, Victorian-styled residences dating back to 1870.

The decision by LA City Planning to allow for the development came as an alarming shock to the community. The applicant/owner, Gelena Skya-Wasserman, as referenced in the Planning Department’s determination letter, and her project team, have been in front of the HPOZ board and a large segment of the community at multiple planning-related meetings and hearings over the past 12 months. The Skya-Wasserman team is controversially proposing a three-story, 33 unit mixed-use building building, many of which are 4 and 5 bedroom suites sharing a single kitchen and single public space, designed for co-living. The co-living design concept is a new form of development that allows a developer to invest less money in a project by reducing the number of kitchens and public gathering spaces, and minimizing the amount of space dedicated to parking. The co-living development concept allows developers to skirt unit restrictions and occupancy limits otherwise in place by allowing households in bedrooms instead of full-scale apartments. The end result is the developer achieves significant income enhancement while the community standards for living decline.

In the case of the Skya-Wasserman project, the approved development acts like an approximate 150-unit development, instead of a 33-unit development. It has been said that this style of living is a new form of tenement housing that stained New York City’s reputation in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The co-living also requires fewer dedicated parking spaces, resulting in an overflow of cars spilling onto the streets and overburdening the existing parking landscape. In addition to the co-living controversy proposed for this project, the project design remains large and shapeless, lacking any compatibility with the surrounding community. The building proposes a Utilitarian, commercial style of design, consisting largely of a large box, clad in a brick veneer and stucco. The guidance from the HPOZ board has been consistent: the building shape needs to have more variation, giving it ‘modularity’ and

*continued on page 9*



better design articulation through scaling back some of the exterior massing (giving it a smaller appearance instead of a long and tall mass of walls), adding more design features to the roof line, alternating the roof shape and providing more eye-catching finish to the top, changing the orientation of courtyards to become street facing instead of dark alleys tucked inside the building, utilizing windows and doors designs consistent in the neighborhood and the period, and using real brick instead of faux materials.

To assist the developer and offer a channel for community feedback, several meetings with the Skya-Wasserman team were done as consultations to assist the developer in its design, provided through guidance from the experienced set of HPOZ board members as well as obtaining community feedback. Each consultation concluded with a list of recommendations made to the Skya-Wasserman team to prepare it for its final meeting with the HPOZ board, where a determination would be made to recommend or deny support for the project based upon its design.

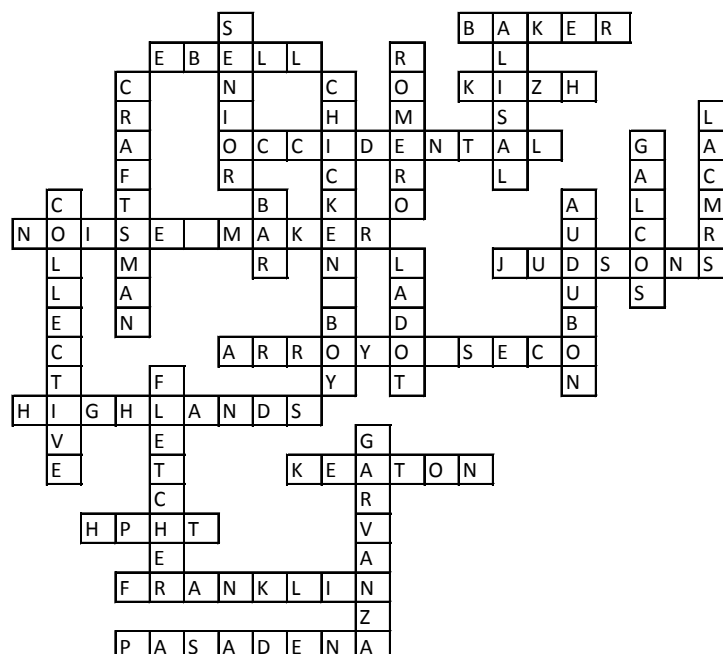
The final approval meeting with the HPOZ consisted of 4 board members together with members of the Planning Department and nearly 100 members from the community. The Skya-Wasserman team presented its final design plans. The final design plans reflected little change or incorporation of the recommendations provided through the feedback in the earlier consultations. After a nearly 1-hour discussion, the HPOZ board concluded that the

project was NOT compatible with the guidelines of the Highland Park-Garvanza Preservation Plan, and the collective body voted unanimously to recommend that the project be denied approval in its current form.

The community remains outraged about the ensuing endangerment of Garvanza and the lack of demonstrative care from the City of LA's Planning Department. The decision by Planning to accept the project 'as is', ignoring the HPOZ board's recommendation, and without any corrections to achieve compatibility with the Preservation Plan and community feedback is anticipated to harm the small, community feel of Garvanza, surrounding property values, the integrity of the Preservation Plan document, and the value of the HPOZ. The decision is anticipated to set a dangerous precedent for future development within all HPOZs. Given the significance of the decision and anticipated harm and disregard for consistency of rules, a community group has formed with the intent to appeal the Director of Planning's controversial decision. The deadline for the appeal's submission was October 1, 2021. Given the anticipated costs to fund legal expenses, a fund has been established to receive donations.

**Update as of press time:** A grassroots coalition of community members, the Historic Garvanza Coalition, has filed a Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) appeal along with abutting neighbors Brad Chambers, Isidro Aguilar, Kesley Davis, Vincent McKelvie, and Amanda Schulz. We will continue to keep the community posted as the appeal moves through the process. ■

## Highland Park Crossword Puzzle Answers (puzzle on page 6)





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# Actress Annette Cardona Remembered with Her Own Square in Cypress Park

*By Anthea Raymond*

JUNE 28 WAS A GREAT DAY at the corner of Jeffries Avenue and West Avenue 26 for the Highland Park Heritage Trust. HPHT reps including President Jamie Tijerina, Carmela Gomes and Anthea Raymond joined family, Councilman Gil Cedillo, his staff as well as community leaders and neighbors to rededicate the square as “Annette Cardona Charles Square,” in honor of the actress and dancer who grew up in the area.

A 2019 article in the Trust’s *Our Cornerstone* helped make dreams for the square a reality. Soon after a letter of support from President Tijerina helped elevate the project in the eyes of the City Council District Office.

Designating a square requires a vote of approval from the full City Council. COVID delayed such a vote

for about a year but as restrictions lifted both the vote and the dedication ceremony became possible.

Cardona, who came to fame in the movie “Grease” as Cha Cha DiGregorio, passed away in 2011 at the age of 62. But she left behind a large extended family, nearly twenty of whom showed up for the dedication. Cardona’s mother Mary, in her nineties, still lives in Elysian Valley and watched the ceremony via Zoom.

Some are now hoping for a community screening and singalong at or near the square. Council District staff supported the idea and suggested the Trust might partner on that.

Former board member Gomes also hopes that nearby Sonia Sotomayor Learning Academies will start teaching students about success stories like Cardona’s and other “local kids who made good.” ■



From L-R: Councilmember Gil Cedillo, President Emeritus Carmela Gomes, Current President Jamie Tijerina, Programming Chair Anthea Raymond



# Green Alley Housing Density through Community-Driven Design

by Louisa Van Leer, AIA

IN HIGHLAND PARK-GARVANZA, we have seen what can happen with a poorly crafted, top-down response to the housing crisis. Recent Transit Oriented Community (TOC) housing projects have resulted in mediocre, out-of-scale buildings that erode historic character and add fuel to

gentrification. Mandating housing density that towers over the local fabric, does not promote affordability and sidelining public input can threaten the livability of neighborhoods.

What if we could do density, but do it better? Recent passage of Housing Bills SB9 and SB10 point toward a growing awareness that “Missing Middle” or low-rise housing can help if implemented well. If architects, planners, nonprofits, and government work creatively with our community to understand and address neighborhood concerns, we can add density that responds to the neighborhood—and everyone wins.

Recently, my architecture firm stepped up to try and address our neighborhood’s concerns around housing density. We created a design concept called **Green Alley Housing**, a community-driven design approach to housing in urban neighborhoods. The concept won the Subdivision category of the 2021 **Low-Rise: Housing Ideas for Los Angeles** design challenge, organized by the Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and the City’s Chief Design Officer, Christopher Hawthorne.

Based on the green-alley movement spreading throughout North America, Green Alley Housing converts underused public alleys to sensitively add low-rise infill, blending new duplexes into existing neighborhood fabric.

**Green Alley Housing is a roadmap for density done better. It uses five strategies to boost density while preserving neighborhood character and livability:**

## 1. Community Involvement



## 2. Sense of Place

## 3. Equity and Affordability

## 4. Sustainability and Resilience

## 5. Jobs and Innovation

## Community

## Involvement

Our team worked with local community groups to create a housing solution

from the bottom up. We held outreach meetings with the Garvanza Improvement Association and Highland Park Heritage Trust. We focused on Garvanza, whose residents voiced concern with the loss of green space, housing inequity and affordability, gentrification, and threats to neighborhood scale and character. We used their input every step of the way, and we will continue working with residents to make the concept a reality.

**Sense of Place** Green Alley Housing reimagines public alleys as pedestrian-friendly spaces with small-scale live-work environments. It keeps original housing stock on the street front, adding duplexes on the alleys. Backyards can be converted into shared green space or commons. A new planning overlay zone would regulate the scale, density, setback, and height of the infill. Residents would help shape each Green Alley Overlay Zone to reflect their needs, neighborhood fabric, community values, and sense of place.

**Equity and Affordability** The duplex infill takes a “density, not demolition” approach, which preserves original housing stock. Studies show that older neighborhoods have a high level of existing affordable housing. The new infill can work as a standalone subdivision concept nestled behind the original housing, with a lower per-unit cost than demolition and all-new construction. Or, partnering with a nonprofit community land trust or affordable housing developer can produce cooperative housing along the green alley. This approach creates an economy of scale along with a housing type designed for equity and affordability.

*continued on page 13*



GREEN ALLEY HOUSING *continued from page 12*

**Sustainability and Resilience** Green alleys provide sustainable infrastructure and stormwater infiltration. Our proposed concept meets the City's Green Alley Design Guidelines. It also exemplifies the Net Zero design philosophy, from no-tech shade trees to high-performance building envelopes. Solar roof arrays and electric battery storage systems can create a Virtual Power Plant, and selling clean energy back to the grid can provide income for community members. Residents can also reduce the number of cars on the road with an on-site electric vehicle share program.

**Jobs and Innovation** The pandemic put a klieg light on the urgent need for flexibility and live-work options in housing design. Green Alley Housing is built for live-work, micro-enterprises. The duplexes can serve as mini-workshops along the alley. Garages can double as flex space for weekend home restaurants, cottage food operations, and creative spaces.

**Impact** In Garvanza, our team calculated space for **roughly 100 units** of low-rise infill housing along the neighborhood's half-mile of alleyways. The City of Los Angeles has **over 900 linear miles of alleys**. In theory, replicating our concept throughout the city can add up to **180,000 new units** of live-work housing. Green Alley Housing has vast potential to add much-needed density to Los Angeles while fostering equity, building resiliency, and preserving neighborhood character.

*Louisa Van Leer Architecture wishes to thank our Green Alley Housing community partners, Highland Park Heritage Trust and Garvanza Improvement Association, and our competition team: city planners Antonio Castillo and Garen Yolles; interns Aang Castillo, Galin Aghkryan, and Don Chavez from Cal Poly Pomona's College of Environmental Design; and sustainability advisors Dr. John Van Leer and Robert Frischmuth. ■*

# Two State Bills Aimed at Increasing Housing Density Are Signed into Law

*by Louisa Van Leer, AIA*

ON SEPTEMBER 16 THE GOVERNOR SIGNED into law SB 9 and SB 10, bills intended to increase housing density in the face of the housing shortage plaguing the State of California. Over the past several years a number of housing bills have been floated and have failed. The latest was SB 50 which would have allowed very dense, five story housing development along transit corridors, regardless of adjacent neighborhood zoning and development patterns. The two bills signed into law, SB9 and SB10, are targeted towards lower scale infill development. SB9 housing is on the scale of duplexes, triplex's and fourplexes, and SB10 is on the scale of small apartment buildings, up to 10 units. While not perfect, with the passage of SB9 and SB10, the legislative process has reduced the scale of the housing density mandate from Sacramento.

About the State Laws themselves, the first, SB9, requires that that local governments allow up to two duplexes on a single-family zoned lot. At minimum, each unit would be allowed to be 800 SF with 1 parking space per unit unless it is a half mile from a bus stop. The law also allows a single-family zoned lot to be split into two equal parcels or subdivisions, with a maximum of one duplex on each parcel. The law contains certain restrictions including the prohibition of SB9 in historic districts or on local or state designated historic properties, Very High Severity Fire Zones and sensitive habitats. SB9 also prohibits the demolition of existing Rent Stabilized housing or other forms of affordable housing. SB9 includes a provision to exempt an SB9 project from CEQA review.

The next housing law, SB10, is optional. If a local government chooses to adopt the provisions of SB10, it would allow a city to re-zone any parcel to permit the building of 10 units or less, when the parcel is near mass transit. SB10 includes a provision to exempt CEQA review in order to rezone a parcel. Historic properties and Rent Stabilized Housing are not specifically protected by SB10 as they are with SB9, however it appears that local government could add-on protections if compelled to.

While most civic leaders and community members are mindful of the need for more housing, both bills have been met with both support and

opposition as would be expected. From many members of the historic preservation community, there is concern that SB9 and 10 will further erode protections for historic resources and that any bypass around CEQA will lead to demolition and loss of historic resources. Added to those concerns is the sense that SB9 effectively does away with Single Family Zoning, a cornerstone of residential development and central to the "California dream". For groups in support of the new housing laws there is the realization that single family zoning was originally enacted as an exclusionary housing practice and it is high time to do things differently. And with the State in the middle of a housing crisis, it is time to act. There is also the concern that none of the bills do enough to protect and promote affordable housing and that a developer driven roll out could fuel gentrification.

All of these concerns are important at the end of the day. In our role as preservationists, it is essential that we keep an open mind and be part of the solution to the housing crisis, not on the sidelines. We need to bring the preservation community to the centerfield around increasing housing density. The good news is we have a tremendous toolbox, an organized grass roots network and are uniquely positioned to help. But we may need to adjust our mindset along the way. The terms "infill, duplex, triplex, fourplex, small apartment" needn't send ripples of fear, when you stop to think about it. In fact, it might even feel familiar—small scale apartment housing is peppered all over our oldest neighborhoods. Large swaths of Northeast LA already have a mix of housing types coexisting side by side.

The types of housing now referred to as the "Missing Middle" is not a new idea, it is actually a very old idea, brought out, dusted off, and put back into service. What we need to do is come together in the preservation community, help preserve existing and support new affordable housing, share our toolkit with others, work with elected leaders, neighborhood councils and the community at large. All these steps can go a long way to insure we see housing infill that reflects our community values and adds density while preserving neighborhood character. ■



# Stones Throw

*Bill Cody - Senior Field Deputy Council District 1 - Office of Gil Cedillo*

I FIRST HEARD ABOUT STONES THROW RECORDS back in 2014 when a film I directed was out on the “music festival” circuit. My film *Kids Like You & Me*, a travel film about Atlanta’s Black Lips doing a tour of the Middle East with a band from Beirut during the height of the so-called Arab Spring always seemed to follow the Stone’s Throw documentary *Our Vinyl Weighs a Ton*.

Every time, it seemed like we were a mid-level act following the Beatles. Our screenings had decent turnout. The Stones Throw doc had overflow crowds and standing ovations. Every time.

So imagine my surprise when I found out that Stones Throw Records offices were located in my Highland Park neighborhood. That one of the most innovative and beloved independent record labels was literally a Stones Throw from my house.

Not located in just any building either. Located in the former home of the Centro de Arte Público, one of the most influential Chicano Art Centers in the city.

It made total sense that the record label was supportive for their current home to be recognized as a historic monument by the city of Los Angeles based on its illustrious past. Co-owners Chris “Peanut

Butter Wolf” Manak and Jason McGuire were not only aware of the building’s history when they moved in, its legacy as an art and music center over the years had a definite attraction for them to locate in the building.

Manak, founded Stones Throw in 1996 as a means of releasing music he had recorded previously with the subsequently deceased rapper Charles Edward Hicks Jr., known professionally as Charizma.

Since that time the label has gone on to produce numerous hit artists including J Dilla, Aloe Black, the Arabian Prince and Madvillian, among many other soul and hip hop artists. They even released a special EP from Goth Punk legends Bauhaus that I was proud to add to my own collection of vinyl. More importantly the label has consistently given back to the community through fundraising for local causes and schools.

So when you think of our newest historic landmark on Figueroa, it’s rich history as the home of so many great Chicano artists back in the 70’s and 80’s, know that great art continues to be made in the space under the banner of Stones Throw Records. One of the top independent record labels in the world. ■

## Local Non-Profit Spotlight: Highland Park Ebell Club



THE HIGHLAND PARK EBELL CLUB was organized to promote culture, education and philanthropy and has carried on this work for well

over 100 years since its founding in 1903. It was one of several California clubs named for Dr. Adrian Ebell who encouraged advancement for women, including the study of arts and sciences. Women’s clubs of that early era were critically important to the passing of the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote in 1920. The historic clubhouse, completed in 1912, is located at 131 N. Ave 57, 90042.

Notably, the clubhouse has been home to performances of the Pacific Opera Project and has been used as a filming location, recently for HBO’s Barry. A book was recently published, *Women of the Highland Park Ebell, 1903-1945*, written by club

member Carol Colin, featuring illustrations by many members. The book is available for purchase on Amazon or at club meetings.

The Ebell Club is active and meets from October-May every third Tuesday of the month at 12 noon. Meetings feature guest speakers over an affordable \$5 lunch offering. In 2022, the theme of guest speaker talks will be “Coming Back Together.”

Typically at the club’s May meeting, called the “Silver Tea,” the club awards scholarships and community grants to local students and organizations. These grants are funded by the rental of the historic clubhouse.

Membership is not required to attend meetings, all are welcome. To learn more about the organization, or be added to their email list, you may email [amy@futurestudio.com](mailto:amy@futurestudio.com) You may also visit their website at: [ebell-hp.org](http://ebell-hp.org) ■

# Échale Ganas: The Villa's Tacos Story

by Ulysses Salcido and Shirley Yumeng He

RECENTLY WINNING THE 2021 L.A. TACO competition, Highland Park's own Victor Villa of **Villa's Tacos** has been featured in a short documentary.

After migrating from Mexico in the 1980's and having their possessions lost in an apartment fire, Victor's grandmother, Guadalupe Villa and her family of eight children were relocated by the Red Cross to a 3-bedroom home in Highland Park. Built in 1950, this triple front-gabled California Bungalow is located one block south of York Blvd. on Avenue 50, and is home not only to the Villa family, but to Villa's Tacos Los Angeles—the award winning taco pop-up shop found in the family's backyard run by Guadalupe's grandson, a role model and leader in the community.

Documentary Filmmaker Shirley He first discovered Villa's Tacos on youtube. After visiting

for the first time, she knew there was something special about this taco pop-up shop run by a family that works from their backyard. Soon, Shirley learned that the Villa's had a deep history and connection with their home and community. With the help of the President of the Highland Park Heritage Trust, Jamie Tijerina, *Échale Ganas: The Villa's Tacos Story* chronicles the history of racial bias across the housing market in Highland Park. Narrating the family's recent struggle against eviction, the film speaks to Redlining's effect on city development and how it

informs social issues today.

*Échale Ganas: The Villa's Tacos Story* held a private sneak preview in September with community screenings in Highland Park to come. For updates and previews, please visit [www.echaleganasfilm.com](http://www.echaleganasfilm.com). ■



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## NELA Newspaper Archives Project

For over a decade, the Highland Park Heritage Trust has been part of the NELA Newspaper Archives Project. This project has been a collaboration between HPHT, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society (ERVHS), and Occidental College. This year, the Eagle Rock Neighborhood Council (ERNC) awarded HPHT a Neighborhood Purpose Grant to support the project by ensuring a secure storage space for the year, as well as enhanced outreach efforts to share this with our community. In November 2021, members of HPHT, ERVHS, and Oxy conducted a site visit of the Eagle



Rock storage facility to view the archives in preparation for a move in the second half of 2022 to a new home at Occidental College, and transition ownership of the newspapers to the College. The archives include historical issues of the *Highland Park News Herald* and more. Thanks to this support from ERNC, we look forward to sharing this transition with the community, as well as

highlights from the historic documents included in the archive. We will continue to keep you up to date in future MEGA Cornerstone issues, and through our social media platforms and email newsletter. ■



# Highland Park Tiny Homes Groundbreaking

ON JUNE 23, 2021, the Highland Park Heritage Trust participated in the Groundbreaking of the Tiny Homes Village at Arroyo Seco Park spearheaded by the LA Council District 14 office under Kevin de Leon. HPHT Members Clara Solis and Suzanne Gero participated in the Groundbreaking along with HPHT President Jamie Tijerina who spoke on behalf of the organization, which supported this project and its potential to help our homeless neighbors in Highland Park find shelter and a path toward permanent housing: “The mission of the Highland Park Heritage

Trust is to preserve and protect the built and natural environment of our Arroyo Seco communities now and for the future. But as we see it, preservation doesn’t just refer to places and things. It also refers to people and culture, and requires that we care for the people who make Highland Park and our Northeast LA Communities special.” We are happy that the Tiny Homes Village opened in time this November 2021 to welcome our neighbors as the cold winter weather begins. ■



## Highland Park Tiny Homes

*by Sarah Flaherty*

COUNCILMEMBER KEVIN DE LEÓN has opened the Arroyo Seco Tiny Home Village on Arroyo Drive. The 115 tiny homes will provide transitional housing for individuals currently experiencing homelessness in Highland Park. Homeless services provider, Hope of The Valley, will run the site and provide wrap-around services to ensure the physical, mental, and emotional well being of the residents. Unlike previous transitional housing efforts, the tiny homes concept allows individuals to have their own private space, bring their pets, and even stay with their partner in the same tiny home if they so choose. Three meals a day, individual bathrooms and showers, laundry facilities, and a dog run are available to those living in the tiny homes. Councilmember Kevin de León’s Office will work closely with Hope of The Valley and the Highland Park community to connect

village residents with community driven resources and programs. If you are interested in joining the community committee planning this programming, or, if you have questions about the project, please contact Matthew Tenchavez at [Matthew.Tenchavez@LACity.org](mailto:Matthew.Tenchavez@LACity.org) and Alice Roth at [Alice.Roth@LACity.org](mailto:Alice.Roth@LACity.org).

The Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council committee on Housing, Renters & Homelessness hosts a monthly Q&A space where residents may ask Hope of The Valley and Council District 14 questions directly. You may join us at this Q&A at 7:00 PM on the third Wednesday of the month. The meeting agenda with the call-in information is posted a few days prior to each meeting on: <https://highlandparknc.com>. ■



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#### GRADES 6-12

- DISTANT (ONLINE) LEARNING
- SAFE & CLEAN CAMPUSES
- SMALLER CLASS SIZES
- FREE PUBLIC SCHOOL
- FAMILY RESOURCES
- HYBRID LEARNING (WHEN SAFE)

- 100% HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
- 98% PARENT PARTICIPATION
- 86% ACCEPTED TO 4-YR UNIVERSITIES
- 1:1 CHROMEBOOK FOR STUDENTS
- COLLEGE & CAREER PREPARATION
- INTERNSHIPS & CTE COURSES








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