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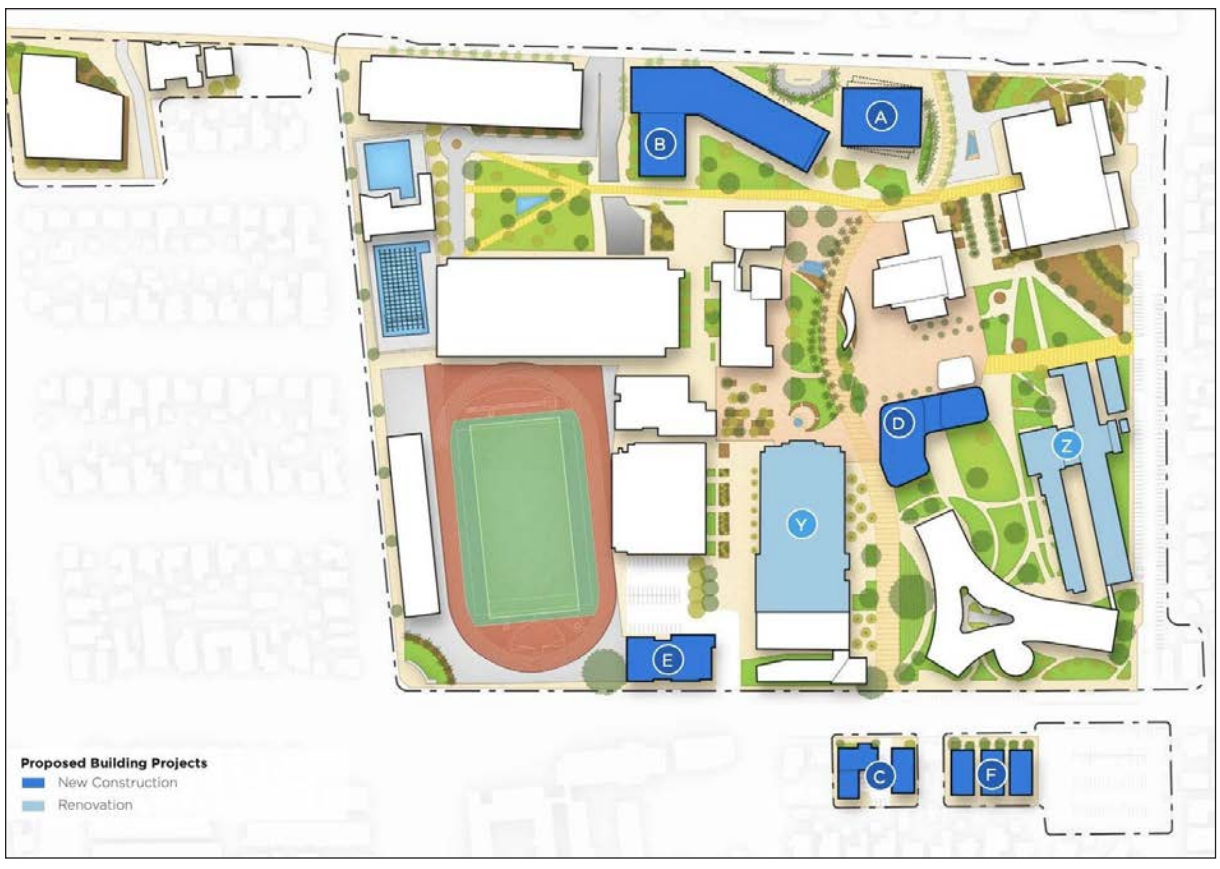
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smdp
Santa Monica Daily Press

Volume 24 Issue 50 WEDNESDAY 1/29/25 smdp.com

SMC campus plan includes Drescher, Business building replacements



Courtesy Graphic

SMC: Santa Monica College recently unveiled its proposed master plan for the Pico campus.

THOMAS LEFFLER
SMDP Staff Writer

Santa Monica College has unveiled an ambitious plan to remake its Pico Blvd. campus.

This month, SMC released its intention to develop a new master plan for its Main Campus, which serves over 30,000 students across Los Angeles County and beyond. The proposed plan includes the demolition of over 350,000 square feet of buildings, replaced by 256,000 square feet of new construction.

Despite the downsizing in square footage, the proposal would include a host of educational opportunities. Buildings proposed as part of the

SEE **SMC** PAGE 11

Students displaced by fires begin enrollment into SMMUSD schools

THOMAS LEFFLER
SMDP Staff Writer

On top of serving its own students during wildfire recovery, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District has to account for a potential surge of new enrollees created from the crisis.

During a two-hour wildfire debriefing by the SMMUSD Board of Education Jan. 23, Director of Student Services Dr. Frank Dussan stated that 145 documented requests for enrollment have come in thus far from students displaced by wildfires. Of those 145 requests, 77 had been approved for enrollment, and 46 of those have enrolled in SMMUSD schools.

Dussan added that the situation is "pretty fluid" and that numbers

SEE **STUDENTS** PAGE 7

Restaurant openings and closings abound early in 2025

SCOTT SNOWDEN
SMDP Staff Writer

ACCLAIMED ASIAN RESTAURANT CASSIA SET TO CLOSE AT END OF FEBRUARY

After nearly a decade of business, the popular Southeast Asian eatery, Cassia will host its final night on February 22, 2025. Part of the Rustic Canyon Family, the restaurant offered a modern interpretation of Singaporean, Chinese and Vietnamese dishes with a Parisian-style panache.

In a statement, owners Chef Bryant Ng, Kim Luu-Ng, along with Zoe Nathan, Josh Loeb and Colby

SEE **RESTAURANTS** PAGE 8

Second Realtor charged for price gouging fire victims

MATTHEW HALL
Daily Press Editor

A second Los Angeles real estate agent is facing criminal charges for allegedly price gouging evacuees of the Eaton Fire, California Attorney General Rob Bonta announced Tuesday.

Lar Sevan Chouljian allegedly attempted to rent a Glendale home to an evacuated family at more than 50% above the listing price, violating state price gouging restrictions that

SEE **CHARGES** PAGE 7

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Trump wants to break California's sanctuary state law: 5 things to know



Photo by Damian Dovarganes, AP Photo

SANCTUARY: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrest an immigrant considered a threat to public safety and national security during an early morning raid in Compton on June 6, 2022.

BY ANA B. IBARRA

Back in the Oval Office, President Donald Trump is once again trying to break a policy California Democrats adopted during his first term to protect certain undocumented immigrants from being deported.

One of his first executive orders targets the state's so-called sanctuary law, which generally limits how local cops interact with federal immigration officers. Trump's order, titled the "Protecting the American People Against Invasion", would deny federal funds to sanctuary jurisdictions across the country.

It's not clear yet what kind of federal funds the Trump administration would withhold. But, for a state of 39 million people that relies heavily on federal dollars for its public programs and currently for its wildfire recovery, withholding money could be a crippling blow.

It's worth noting that Trump attempted something similar during his first term. California sued and the courts sided with the state.

Before Trump took office, a nonprofit led by his policy adviser Stephen Miller sent letters to hundreds of local elected officials around the country warning them they faced "legal consequences" if their sanctuary policies interfered with immigration enforcement.

So what does the state's sanctuary law do exactly and what does it mean for Trump's mass deportation plans?

Here are five things to know about the California Values Act.

IT'S ABOUT WHAT CALIFORNIA COPS CAN DO

In October 2017, Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law Senate Bill 54, the California Values Act, commonly referred to as the state's sanctuary law. That law bars state and local police from investigating, interrogating, or arresting people for immigration enforcement purposes, and limits — but does not entirely prohibit — police cooperation with federal immigration officials.

Kevin De Leon, the former state Senate leader who authored the law, told NPR in 2017 that the point of the law was to make clear that the feds cannot enlist local police "as a cog in the Trump deportation machine."

The "sanctuary" movement goes back to the 1980s when Central American refugees fled civil war and immigrated to the U.S. When they were denied asylum, they sought protection from deportation in churches and other places of worship.

Today the sanctuary law does not actually refer to a place or territory where immigrants can seek protection. Living in California alone does not shield someone from deportation.

Instead, the law clarifies what state and local law enforcement in California can and cannot do with regard to immigration. For example, the law says that local police cannot detain or keep someone in custody more than 48 hours past their release date just for immigration officials to pick them up.

The law does not restrict what the federal government can do in the state. To be clear, that means U.S. Immigration Customs and

SEE **SANCTUARY** PAGE 6

GUEST COMMENTARY

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Californians made it clear they want a different approach to addiction and homelessness



Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

ADDICTION: A sign warning against selling fentanyl in Placer County hangs over Taylor Road in Loomis on July 24, 2023.

California's drug crisis has only escalated, with so-called "compassionate solutions" like harm reduction and past policies that decriminalized hard drugs making things worse.

Many drug addicts in the state have essentially faced two stark choices: homelessness or incarceration. This false dichotomy has normalized substance abuse, endangered public safety and failed to address the root causes of both homelessness and addiction.

In response, California voters last fall overwhelmingly passed Proposition 36, a third option that prioritizes rehabilitation over incarceration and offers a clear path to recovery, helping break the cycle of addiction and homelessness.

Programs like syringe exchanges, for example, have fallen short in addressing addiction itself. While well-intentioned, these programs have led to unintended consequences, including public spaces littered with used needles, increased health risks and the normalization of drug use. While syringe exchanges help reduce disease transmission, they don't always guarantee that people enroll in treatment programs, and research shows they can even increase mortality rates.

The scale of this problem is stark. In 2021 alone, nearly 11,000 Californians died from drug overdoses, with over two-thirds involving opioids like fentanyl. Each of these lives lost represents a missed opportunity for intervention and recovery. Prop. 36 has given the state a framework to address this crisis by requiring treatment and rehabilitation for people struggling with addiction. This approach has the potential to reduce recidivism, save lives and help people reclaim their futures.

The negative consequences of harm reduction policies are evident in communities like El Dorado County. Despite having relatively low addiction rates, the county faced rising safety concerns and a public outcry over the lack of meaningful solutions. When state officials, including Gov. Gavin Newsom and Attorney General Rob Bonta, sued the county, it underscored the limitations of one-size-fits-all approaches. Local communities deserve the flexibility to implement policies that reflect their unique challenges while prioritizing treatment and accountability.

California must now leverage the tools Prop. 36 provides to move beyond the shortcomings of harm reduction. Drug courts, for example, offer a proven model for addressing addiction by combining judicial oversight with mandatory treatment and rehabilitation services. Studies show that these programs reduce both substance use and criminal behavior, making them an effective strategy for fostering long-term recovery.

Public education campaigns also play

SEE **GUEST COMMENTARY** PAGE 11



Surf report

WATER TEMP: **56.7**

WEDNESDAY — ***POOR*** — **SURF:** Shin to knee 0-1FT

Small SSE swell nudges up through the day. Could just get the points rideable. Some small, off-season SSE swell creeps in through the day, generally shows best west of Dume because of the swell angle. Will be a slow morning on the high tide but the afternoon low tide will see a touch more surf.

THURSDAY — ***POOR*** — **SURF:** Shin to knee 0-1FT

Small SSE swell tops out. Just enough to push a big board. Little round of off-season SSE swell tops out through the day. It's not much but should offer just enough push to get a big board down the line. Worth watching.

Weather

Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 60. Northeast wind 5 to 10 mph becoming west southwest in the morning.
Wednesday Night: Increasing clouds, with a low around 44. West southwest wind 5 to 10 mph becoming light west in the evening.
Thursday: Partly sunny, with a high near 57. Calm wind becoming south around 5 mph in the morning.
Thursday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 43.

Date	Day	Time (LST/LDT)	Predicted (ft)	High/Low
2025/01/29	Wed	02:18 AM	1.84	L
2025/01/29	Wed	08:33 AM	6.48	H
2025/01/29	Wed	3:44 PM	-1.41	L
2025/01/29	Wed	10:05 PM	4.04	H
2025/01/30	Thu	03:01 AM	1.60	L
2025/01/30	Thu	09:12 AM	6.37	H
2025/01/30	Thu	4:16 PM	-1.26	L
2025/01/30	Thu	10:37 PM	4.28	H
2025/01/31	Fri	03:48 AM	1.40	L
2025/01/31	Fri	09:53 AM	5.99	H
2025/01/31	Fri	4:48 PM	-0.92	L
2025/01/31	Fri	11:11 PM	4.53	H
2025/02/01	Sat	04:40 AM	1.27	L
2025/02/01	Sat	10:38 AM	5.35	H
2025/02/01	Sat	5:20 PM	-0.40	L
2025/02/01	Sat	11:47 PM	4.77	H
2025/02/02	Sun	05:38 AM	1.19	L
2025/02/02	Sun	11:29 AM	4.51	H

Daily Lottery

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site at http://www.calottery.com

POWERBALL — Draw Date: 1/27 — 2 40 47 53 55 — Power#: 20 — Jackpot: 69 M

Fantasy 5 — Draw Date: 1/27 — 5 6 7 8 16

MEGA MILLIONS — Draw Date: 1/24 — 8 12 43 52 62 — Mega#: 18 — Jackpot: 44 M

Daily 3 — Draw Date: 1/27 — EVENING: 0 6 7 — Draw Date: 1/27 — MIDDAY: 9 1 1

SuperLotto Plus — Draw Date: 1/25 — 13 20 25 32 35 — Mega#: 21 — Jackpot: 20 M

Daily Derby — Draw Date: 1/27 — 1st: 02 - Lucky Star — 2nd: 09 - Winning Spirit — 3rd: 10 - Solid Gold — Race Time: 1:42.17

PUBLISHER
Ross Furukawa
ross@smdp.com

PARTNER
Todd James
todd@smdp.com

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Matthew Hall
matt@smdp.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Charles Andrews,
Jack Neworth,
David Pisarra.

CIRCULATION
Guadalupe Navarro
ross@smdp.com

Keith Wyatt
ross@smdp.com

STAFF WRITERS
Scott Snowden
scott.snowden@smdp.com

Thomas Leffler
thomas@smdp.com

DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING
Cindy Moreno
cindy@smdp.com

MARKETING MANAGER
Dina Araniva
dina@smdp.com

PRODUCTION
Esteban Inchaustegui
production@smdp.com

Julio Davalos
julio@smdp.com

1640 5th Street, Suite 218
Santa Monica, CA 90401
OFFICE (310) 458-PRESS (7737)
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Santa Monica Daily Press

California senator reappointed as insurance chair despite questions over corruption probe

The leader of the California Senate has reappointed the former chair of the chamber's insurance committee, despite uncertainty over her possible involvement in a federal corruption probe.

On Friday, Senate President Pro Tempore Mike McGuire announced he was reappointing Democratic Sen. Susan Rubio of West Covina to chair the committee after the seat had been vacant for three weeks.

"Senator Rubio has headed up the Insurance Committee since 2019, and I have confidence in her experience and her ability to lead the committee while the state faces unprecedented challenges with the insurance market," McGuire said in an emailed statement, referencing the Los Angeles fires.

The insurance committee chair was the only one McGuire left vacant when he announced his committee assignments on Jan. 3. McGuire told CalMatters he had been "awaiting additional information from the U.S. Attorney's Office before finalizing any decisions."

McGuire said last week in a statement: "The Senate takes allegations of ethical and criminal behavior incredibly seriously which is why I directed the Senate's legal counsel to pursue answers as to whether any violation involving a member of the Senate occurred.

> Senator Rubio has headed up the Insurance Committee since 2019, and I have confidence in her experience and her ability to lead the committee while the state faces unprecedented challenges with the insurance market
>
> - Mike McGuire, Senate President Pro Tempore

What's been learned: No case has been filed by the U.S. Attorney's Office and no

SEE **INSURANCE** PAGE 7



Photo by Fred Greaves for CalMatters

PROBE: State Sen. Susan Rubio addresses lawmakers during the Senate floor session at the state Capitol in Sacramento on May 16, 2024.

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Governor suspends Coastal Commission rules to facilitate wildfire rebuilding



Courtesy Graphic

COMMISSION: Rebuilding coastal homes will bypass some State laws.

MATTHEW HALL
Daily Press Editor

Governor Gavin Newsom has issued a new executive order to expedite recovery efforts for survivors of the devastating Los Angeles-area firestorms. The order suspends permitting requirements under the California Coastal Act, further streamlining rebuilding efforts. It also temporarily relaxes rules to expand access to hotels and short-term rentals for displaced residents.

The executive order clarifies that the Coastal Act's permitting requirements, suspended under earlier orders, remain unenforceable. It also directs the California Coastal Commission to cease issuing guidance or taking actions that could delay rebuilding.

"As the state helps the Los Angeles area rebuild and recover, we will continue to remove barriers and red tape that stand in the way. We will not let over-regulation stop us from helping the LA community rebuild and recover," Newsom said.

The Commission had previously issued a statement stating rebuilds of destroyed structures are except from Coastal Development Permit (CDP) requirements but property owners trying to build larger or different structures than previously existed should contact their local permitting agency or the Coastal Commission for specific guidance.

Newsom's response reiterates that all permitting requirements under the California Coastal Act are suspended. "That legally erroneous guidance threatened to create confusion and delay in rebuilding efforts for impacted communities," said the announcement of the new order. "The order further directs the Coastal Commission to stop issuing guidance or attempting to enforce permitting requirements that conflict with the Governor's Executive order issued on January 12, 2025, which waives the CEQA and Coastal Act requirements, as well as a subsequent order issued on January 16 to streamline the building of accessory dwelling units to assist in creating more temporary housing."

> As the state helps the Los Angeles area rebuild and recover, we will continue to remove barriers and red tape that stand in the way. We will not let over-regulation stop us from helping the LA community rebuild and recover
>
> - Gavin Newsom, Governor

Newsom's order also allows survivors to stay in hotels and short-term rentals beyond 30 days without being reclassified as tenants. This flexibility, effective until March 8, 2025, aims to boost available shelter options at a time when temporary housing is in high demand.

Newsom has also mobilized federal hazmat teams for debris removal, expanded anti-price-gouging protections, and directed over $2.5 billion in state aid to recovery efforts.

For more resources, visit CA.gov/LAfires.

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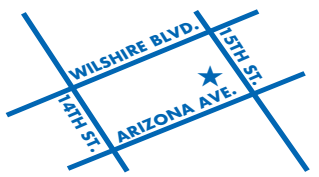
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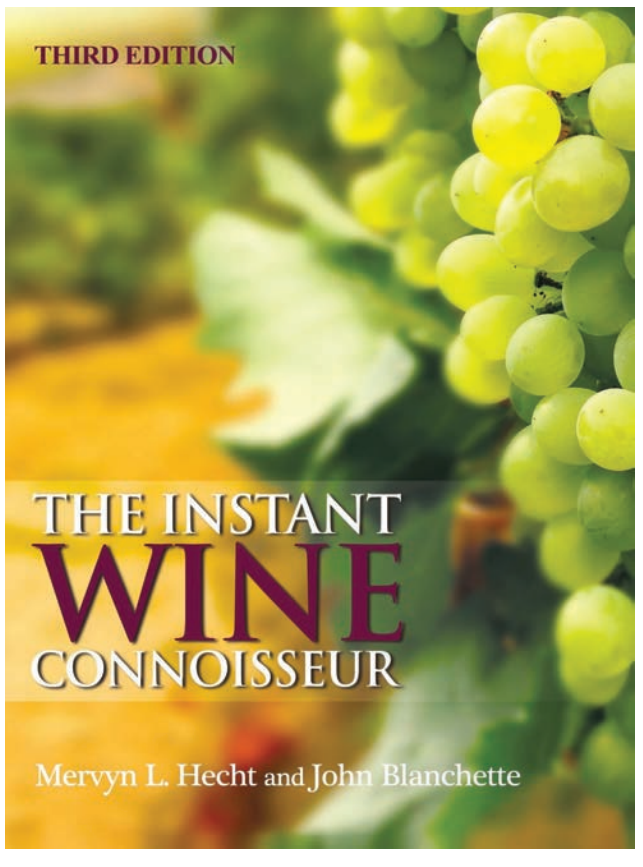
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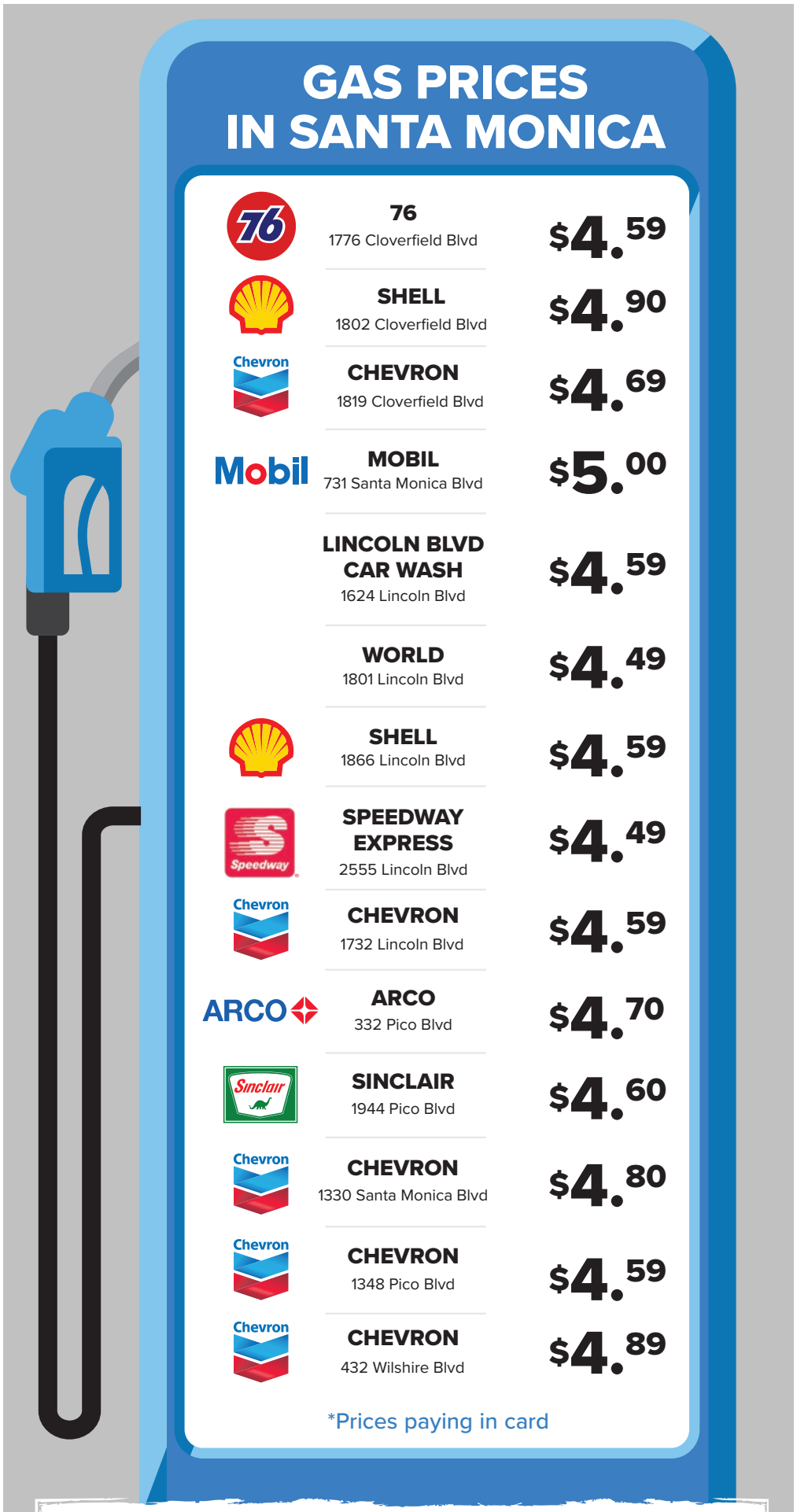


★★★★★ A light-hearted fun read.
★★★★★ Well written, particularly useful, instantly accessible.
★★★★★ ...Hecht has a joyful eye and fabulous taste



Daily Press Food &Wine Columnist Merv Hecht takes you on an delightful tour of the world of wine. A fun way to increase your appreciation and knowledge of wine.

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Average gasoline prices in Los Angeles are unchanged in the last week, averaging $4.42/g , according to GasBuddy's survey of 2,135 stations in Los Angeles. Prices in Los Angeles are 5.4 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 12.3 cents per gallon lower than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has increased 4.4 cents in the last week and stands at $3.650 per gallon.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Los Angeles was priced at $3.72/g while the most expensive was $5.29/g, a difference of $1.57/g. The lowest price in the state was $3.49/g while the highest was $5.99/g, a difference of $2.50/g.

The national average price of gasoline has fallen 0.9 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging $3.08/g . The national average is up 6.5 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 1.8 cents per gallon lower than a year ago, according to GasBuddy data compiled from more than 11 million weekly price reports covering over 150,000 gas stations across the country.

Santa Monica Daily Press

SANCTUARY

FROM PAGE 2

Enforcement (ICE) can still arrest and deport undocumented people living in California and other sanctuary jurisdictions.

"The federal government has a lane that they are entitled to move in, they can enforce immigration law," California Attorney General Rob Bonta said last week during a press conference in San Diego. But "They can't conscript or force the city or the county or the state law enforcement entities to do their job for them."

WHO ISN'T PROTECTED BY SANCTUARY LAW

President Trump and his allies have repeatedly argued that sanctuary laws shield dangerous criminals. They have at times pointed to specific crimes committed by undocumented immigrants to argue the sanctuary law puts the greater public at risk. In 2019, for example, Trump pointed to the slaying of a police officer in Stanislaus County to criticize the sanctuary law and demand more funding for border protection.

But that's not the whole story. The law says police can tell immigration authorities about an inmate's upcoming release if that person has been convicted of a serious crime or felony, such as: murder, rape, kidnapping, robbery and arson, among many others.

And as some sheriffs have noted, there is nothing that stops immigration officials from using jail websites and fingerprints databases to identify people of interest.

It is up to ICE to pick up individuals on their release. Between 2018 and 2023, California jails transferred more than 4,000 individuals to immigration authorities. At the same time, ICE doesn't always show up when someone is released from jail or prison. For example, ICE picked up about 80% of undocumented immigrants released from state prisons between 2017 and 2020, according to a 2022 Senate legislative analysis.

"It is an absurdity to be talking about SB 54 as preventing bad, non-citizens with serious criminal convictions from being turned over to (the Department of Homeland Security), it doesn't do that," said Niels Frenzen, a professor at USC's Gould School of Law and co-director of the school's immigration clinic. "But those facts are just not part of the political debate."

Immigrants who are protected by the sanctuary state law are usually those who are arrested for less serious offenses, such as traffic violations and driving without a license or insurance, Frenzen said.

COURTS UPHELD CALIFORNIA'S SANCTUARY STATE LAW

After California enacted its Values Act, Trump's Justice Department took the state to court, arguing that the state law "interferes with federal immigration authorities' ability to carry out their responsibilities under federal law."

Some immigration attorneys, however, have pointed out that the state law seemed to have little impact on ICE's ability to do its job.

For example, the Justice Department in its 2018 lawsuit said that in 2017 ICE apprehended 20,201 unlawfully present people in California, which represented about 14% of all ICE arrests made that year.

ICE was on track to exceed that number in the following year. In the first two months of 2018 after the sanctuary law took effect, it arrested 8,588 people in California, or about 14% of all arrests nationwide, according to a filing in the lawsuit by Trump's Justice Department.

In 2019, the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the California Values Act did not impede enforcement of federal immigration law. When the Trump administration asked the Supreme Court to review the case, it refused to do so, leaving the law as is.

In a separate fight, California sued the Trump administration for its policy to withhold federal law enforcement grants from jurisdictions with sanctuary policies. A federal judge sided with California.

STUDIES SHOW NO EFFECT ON CRIME

Critics of the law have long claimed that the sanctuary state law harms public safety. The Hoover Institution, a conservative think tank at Stanford, for example, has linked the law to the fentanyl epidemic, noting that a spike in fentanyl-related deaths started happening around 2018, soon after the sanctuary policy went into effect. Whether causation or coincidence, there isn't much in the way of official research that proves this.

To prove such a claim, one would have to isolate the sanctuary state law's specific impact on crime, researchers say.

A 2020 analysis of California's law by researchers at the University of California, Irvine examined the state's 2018 violent and property crime rates and compared them to estimated crime rates had Gov. Brown not signed the sanctuary policy. The study found that the law did not have a significant impact on either violent crime or property crime.

Charis Kubrin, who authored the study, said the takeaway of her research was that changing the state's sanctuary status is not likely to result in major reductions in crime. "Getting rid of SB 54, for example, is not going to make crime go down because it didn't cause crime to go up in the first place," Kubrin said.

A separate study by researchers at Stanford and Princeton looked at sanctuary policies across the country and found that these measures reduce the overall number of deportations by one-third, but they did not reduce the number of deportations on people with violent criminal convictions.

That study also found that these policies don't have much of a direct effect on crime.

CONFLICT EXPECTED IN 'SENSITIVE AREAS'

During the Biden administration, the federal government had in place a "sensitive areas" order, which discouraged immigration agents from making arrests in places like schools, hospitals, churches and courthouses. Last week, the Trump administration rescinded that order.

"When ICE engages in civil immigration enforcement actions in or near courthouses it can reduce safety risks to the public," reads a Jan. 21 memo to staff from ICE Acting Director Caleb Vitello.

The sanctuary state law asks officials at the same places to adopt policies to limit public participation with immigration enforcement, such as requesting a warrant from ICE agents before they attempt to arrest anyone. That could create a conflict for local officials if the immigration crackdown in the new administration hits their venue, said Alvaro Huerta, director of litigation and advocacy at Immigrant Defenders Law Center.

Given Trump's recent rule reversal, Huerta said, "the federal government may attempt some (immigration) enforcement in those spaces, but the state government is asking those spaces to require warrants."

This article was originally published by CalMatters.

STUDENTS

FROM PAGE 1

will fluctuate as family situations change. This not only includes more new enrollments, but also those who temporarily enrolled finding a new educational home.

He explained that displaced non-SMMUSD students' families can inquire for enrollment in three categories. First, Santa Monica student residents currently attending charter schools can transfer, followed by two government actions.

Displaced students can also be added via the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, a federal law providing educational rights and services to students experiencing homelessness.

According to the act "homeless" children are defined as those "who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence" due to "loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason." Under the act, homeless children and youth "must be enrolled in school immediately," even if they have missed enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.

A third way displaced students can join SMMUSD is through a recent executive order signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom, aimed at assisting displaced students affected by the wildfires. The order suspends a number of state rules to allow displaced students to attend schools outside of their district, and directs state agencies to work with schools destroyed or damaged to develop a plan for serving those displaced.

"We are using the full force of the state government to respond to the Los Angeles firestorms and ensure recovery for the thousands of residents who have been impacted by this unimaginable loss, including school-aged children," Newsom stated. "The executive order I signed ... will help bring back some sense of normalcy for our youth by eliminating barriers to getting them back to school."

Dussan has been working with displaced families under McKinney-Vento and the executive order, adding that he "can't deny that it's going to impact (us) on some level."

"It guarantees enrollment in our districts and it comes with additional protections, so we're working with those families to identify their needs and enroll them as soon as we can," Dussan said.

> "It guarantees enrollment in our districts and it comes with additional protections, so we're working with those families to identify their needs and enroll them as soon as we can
> - Dr. Frank Dussan, Director of Student Services

What came to mind of SMMUSD officials during discussion of enrollment was the district's Basic Aid status. Superintendent Dr. Antonio Shelton explained that this status typically means that no additional funding comes with any new student, adding that the district is trying to facilitate the process of taking students without hurting class sizes.

Assistant Superintendent of Business and Fiscal Services Melody Canady said she has started conversations with State Sen. Ben Allen's office and Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur's office regarding the unfunded mandate for new students who are displaced.

On the student and health services end, the district's Bilingual Community Liaisons have been receiving McKinney-Vento training and will be conducting campus tours, while the SMMUSD Mental Health Coordinator will collaborate with the City of Santa Monica on the McKinney-Vento process.

thomas@smdp.com

INSURANCE

FROM PAGE 4

additional information is available from the U.S. Attorney's Office."

A spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles had no comment and referred CalMatters to the Department of Justice's policy guidelines that detail when federal prosecutors can publicly discuss investigations.

"DOJ generally will not confirm the existence of or otherwise comment about ongoing investigations," it reads. "DOJ personnel shall not respond to questions about the existence of an ongoing investigation or comment on its nature or progress before charges are publicly filed."

Federal officials have not identified Rubio by name in the corruption probe, which has ensnared a handful of other officials in San Bernardino County, Compton, Commerce and Baldwin Park.

However, no one else matches the description of "Person 20," who according to recently released federal court documents asked for $240,000 in bribes from a cannabis company and accepted $30,000 in illegal campaign contributions. The allegations stem from when Rubio was a member of the Baldwin Park City Council.

Rubio emphatically denied accepting bribes in an interview with CalMatters' reporting partner, CBS News, that aired Wednesday night. But when asked if she denied that she was "Person 20" she responded, "I'm not saying that."

"I'm just saying that you read the report," she continued. "And whatever is happening there is happening there, but I think that (investigators) would have to reach out to me in order for me to be part of any of this."

Rubio's office previously told the Los Angeles Times in a statement that she "volunteered hours of her time" aiding the authorities in their investigation and that she "has no reason to believe that she would be included in any criminal allegations."

By Ryan Sabalow and Julie Watts. This article was originally published by CalMatters.

CHARGES

FROM PAGE 1

cap increases at 10% during emergencies, prosecutors said.

"In the face of natural disaster, we should be coming together to help our neighbors, not attempting to profit off of their pain," Bonta said.

The charges come amid an aggressive crackdown on price gouging following the Southern California wildfires that began in early January. The California Department of Justice has issued over 650 warning letters to hotels and landlords suspected of illegal price hikes during the emergency period, which extends through March 8.

The first Realtor charged, Mike Kobeissi, was arrested last week. He is accused of increasing the price of a rental home by 38% after being contacted by a couple looking for housing after the fires.

Law enforcement officials up and down the state have intensified efforts to combat disaster-related fraud and price gouging in recent years, with cases surging during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent wildfire seasons. Under state law, businesses cannot raise prices more than 10% above pre-emergency levels for essential goods and services, including housing, during declared emergencies. Violations can result in up to one year in jail and fines up to $10,000.

The Department of Justice launched a dedicated website and hotline for reporting suspected price gouging and other wildfire-related fraud. Officials are particularly focused on investigating reports of inflated rental prices and unsolicited lowball offers on fire-damaged properties in Los Angeles County.

Prosecutors are working with district attorneys and local law enforcement to investigate complaints since the state of emergency was declared on January 7. The Attorney General's office urges residents to document all correspondence and pricing details when reporting suspicious activity.

TIPS FOR REPORTING PRICE GOUGING, SCAMS, FRAUD AND OTHER CRIMES:

Visit oag.ca.gov/LAfires or call the hotline at: (800) 952-5225.

Include screenshots of all correspondence including conversations, text messages, direct messages (DMs), and voicemails

Provide anything that shows what prices you were offered, when, and by whom.

If you're on a site like Zillow, you can also send screenshots of the price history and a link to the listing.

Include first and last names of the realtors, listing agents, or business owners you spoke to. Be sure to include phone numbers, email addresses, home and business addresses, websites, social media accounts.

Don't leave out any information that can help officials find and contact the business or landlord.

editor@smdp.com



Santa Monica Daily Press office (310) 458-7737

RESTAURANTS

FROM PAGE 1

Goff alluded to a host of difficulties and dilemmas, including rising operational costs, sustained diminished business from the 2023 entertainment-industry strikes and of course, the city's recent wildfires.

"We were fortunate to survive the pandemic and have enjoyed our wonderful 10-year run, but like many restaurants, we faced new challenges over the past few years, mainly the rising costs of operating a large-scale restaurant, but also entertainment industry strikes, and now fires," the statement said. "We are not unique, but it's been a challenge for sure. While we've done our best to adapt, these circumstances have rendered us unable to continue to operate."

"Although this chapter is coming to a close, the story of Cassia, and the incredible team behind it, will live on in the memories of everyone who walked through our doors," the statement reads. "We are immensely proud of what we've built and the legacy we leave behind."

However, both Bryant Ng, Kim Luu-Ng are currently working on opening their next project, a restaurant called Jade Rabbit, set to open in early 2025. Located at 2301 Santa Monica Blvd, the new restaurant will serve fast-casual Chinese American food out of a 3,400-square-foot space.

The group will continue to operate its other Los Angeles and Ojai-area restaurants including Birdie G's, Milo and Olive, the Duchess and the flagship Rustic Canyon.



Courtesy photo

HOLY BASIL: Wonton nachos, kewpie mayo, sweet sour sauce, pickled cucumber and Serranos, chives from Holy Basil.

BAR MONETTE AND BURGETTE "CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE"

A notice on both the Instagram page and front doors of adjacent eateries Bar Monette and Burgette simply state, "Due to the uncertainty of the fires and a portion of Santa Monica under evacuation, we will remain closed until further notice. Hope everyone is safe. Our thoughts and prayers [are] with everyone affected during these unprecedented times."

Bar Monette was the first venture for Chef Sean MacDonald in the US and in fact outside of his home country of Canada. Originally hailing from Calgary, he was named Canada's best young chef in 2016 by San Pellegrino.

Opened in April 2023, the intimate 900 square-foot restaurant filled the space formerly occupied by Little Ruby, at the prime location of 109 Santa Monica Blvd. The Daily Press reached out to MacDonald, but so far has not received a reply.

Burgette was a Parisian-inspired eatery located next door to Bar Monette that offered burgers and small dishes, each with a very subtle French twist and opened in February 2024.

LA'S TRENDY THAI RESTAURANT, HOLY BASIL, IS HEADED TO SANTA MONICA

What began as a stall in a downtown Fashion District food hall serving Bangkok-style street food, has slowly increased its number of outlets to match its increasing popularity. This will mark the third outlet of the popular eatery created by the husband and wife team of Chef Wedchayan "Deau" Arpapornnopparat and Tongkamal "Joy" Yuon.

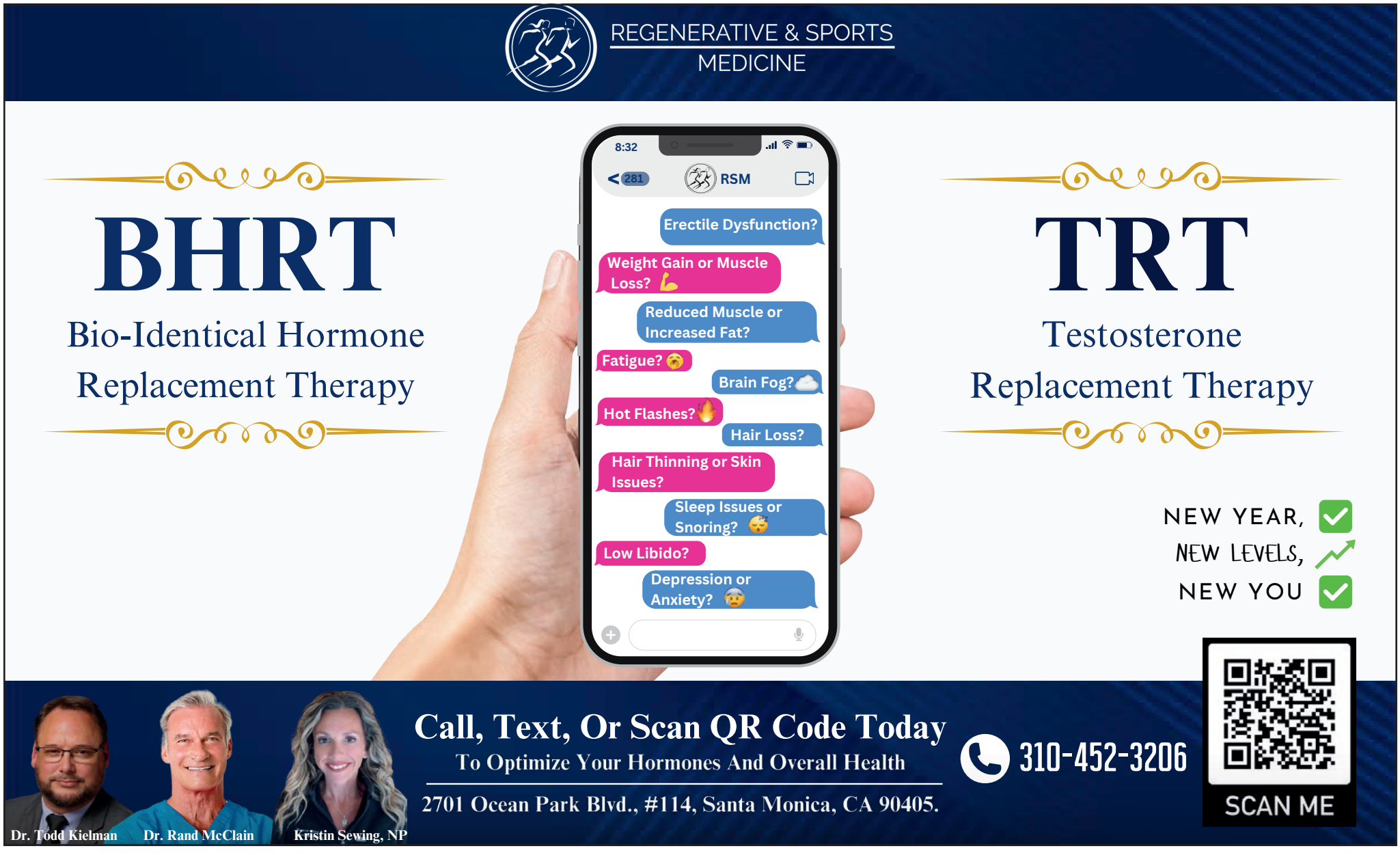
Holy Basil is set to take up space on the ground floor of a new development that features 50 luxury residential units located at 2828 Santa Monica Blvd and is slated to open in late February or early March, offering fan favorites like scallops on the half-shell, crudo and crab fried rice.

According to Resy, the two talented cooks are also in the process of opening a tasting menu restaurant in Melrose Hill, although additional details have yet to be shared.

EARTH, WIND AND FLOUR

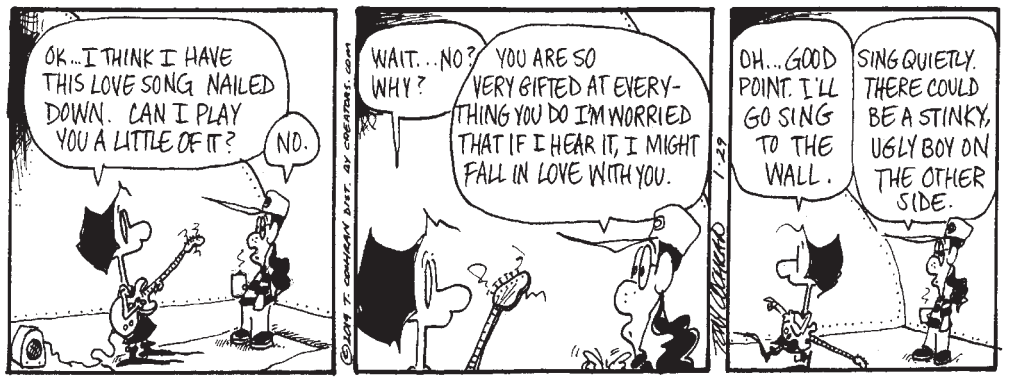
After cooking up its version of California Italian food since 1981, the restaurant will be closing in a matter of weeks after new owners purchased the property.

scott.snowden@smdp.com



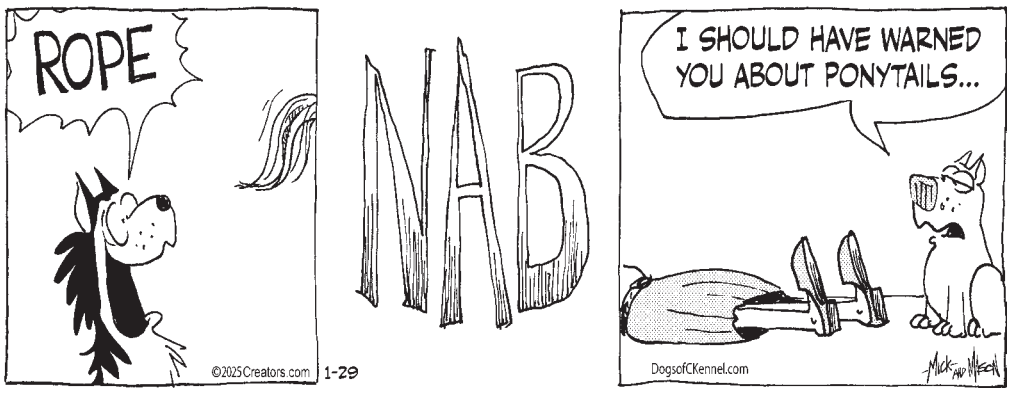
Agnes

By TONY COCHRAN



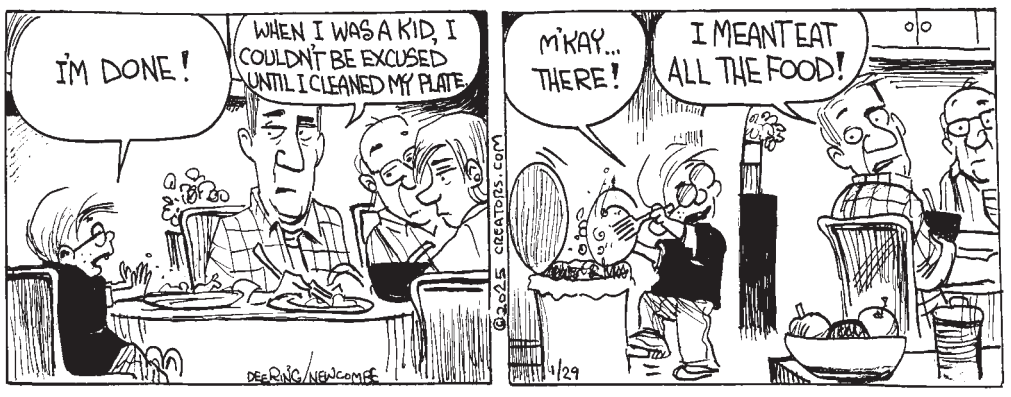
Dogs of C-Kennel

By MICK & MASON MASTROIANNI & JOHNNY HART



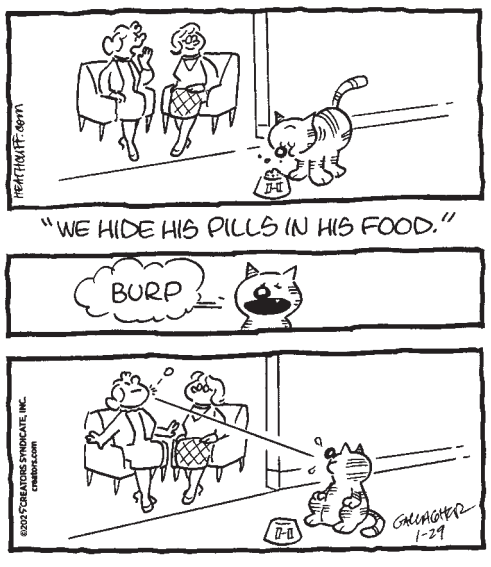
Zack Hill

By JOHN DEERING & JOHN NEWCOMBE



Heathcliff

By PETER GALLAGHER



Strange Brew

By JOHN DEERING



FIND THE WORDS

This is a theme puzzle with the subject stated below. Find the listed words in the grid. (They may run in any direction but always in a straight line. Some letters are used more than once.) Ring each word as you find it and when you have completed the puzzle, there will be 19 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle.

© australianwordgames.com.au 6470

Garbage collection

S	F	O	U	L	E	W	M	E	S	S	H	I	G	H
S	N	I	T	E	N	R	U	B	B	I	S	H	A	B
E	G	A	B	R	V	E	E	T	S	U	D	E	U	M
I	R	C	C	N	I	F	D	D	O	G	S	R	N	D
N	U	O	I	E	R	I	E	T	U	E	Y	S	C	F
T	O	B	L	E	O	L	C	R	C	C	E	L	P	I
L	L	I	P	P	N	D	O	I	F	L	E	X	L	L
U	V	A	T	S	M	L	M	D	T	A	O	S	E	T
E	P	H	I	A	E	I	P	T	N	B	T	L	H	H
Y	D	C	E	S	N	W	O	D	K	A	E	R	B	O
D	K	I	E	S	T	B	S	C	R	A	P	S	T	M
I	F	R	R	F	U	I	E	C	R	I	S	I	S	I
T	A	N	W	P	O	E	P	F	I	N	E	S	O	N
C	S	E	H	C	A	O	R	K	C	O	C	A	C	D
S	T	R	A	S	H	T	D	I	S	E	A	S	E	E

Bag	Cut	Help	Reuse
Bin	Decompose	High	Rubbish
Bottles	Dirt	Ill	Scraps
Box	Disease	Implore	Sick
Break down	Dogs	Mess	Tidy
Bury	Dust	Mice	Tins
Cans	Enrich	Mind	Tip
Cares	Environment	Nation	Trash
Clean	Filth	Paper	Vile
Cockroaches	Fines	Pride	Wildlife
Cost	Food	Rats	
Crisis	Foul	Reduce	

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S WORDS PUZZLE.

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smdp Santa Monica Daily Press

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 29)

A year of expectations exceeded, fortifying relationships and enchanting entertainments. Being drawn to people with an intensity that matches your own, you'll create powerful alliances of pure magic. More highlights: an emotional investment with a high rate of return, an alliance that gives needed resources to all and a journey that gives fuel to a passion project. Libra and Virgo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 2, 20, 1, 14 and 18.

HOROSCOPES

ARIES (March 21-April 19). It's natural for people to bring their imagination to the task to flesh out the unknown. Mysteries maintain a magnetic quality. This is the reason for the stories that are crafted today. Also, characters may be invented, and timelines speculated upon.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). To live wholeheartedly and free of self-doubt requires a belief in yourself as being fundamentally worthy, not because of what you've done or how others respond but because of who you are. Keep thinking it until the belief becomes you.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Notice the feelings that people inspire in you. Clashes of behavior, chemistry or values may cause uneasiness. If you find yourself working too hard to earn respect and acknowledgment, heed that red flag.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Playing it safe can provide the mental and emotional space needed to heal. You're in a phase where consolidating what you've already learned or built is more important than pushing for more.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Pettiness has no place in your life right now. You need the kind of people around you who will pitch in and help without first thinking about who is responsible and what's fair. Your teamwork will attract other givers and much gets accomplished.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The impact you want to make doesn't hinge on meeting some imaginary standard. Your originality, authenticity and the depth of your vision are your greatest strengths, and the quirks and imperfections are often the exact things that connect with people.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The way you organize things tells a story about the items, but in a larger sense about the way you see them, how they fit into the bigger picture and perhaps even the way you see the world at large. That said, no pressure.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You don't need to be tough. Instead, be proactive. Avoid anxiety and burnout by retreating to a place of stability, rest and recovery. Spend time in a room that doubles as a safe haven and cocoon.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Relationships blossom through discovery. Tension will spark growth rather than conflict. You take part in a rhythm of energetic flow that draws all participants into deeper, richer layers of themselves and each other.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Choose your own adventure. Climbing a mountain is an adventure, and so is sweeping a floor. The sweeping brings a clean floor; the mountain brings a memory. What's more important to the day -- an experience or a clean house?

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You make every effort to really see people, to learn who they are and acknowledge their specialness. As a result, you're fun, you're warm, and you bring a depth of connection to interactions. Your presence leaves an imprint long after the moment has passed.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Your options will be so numerous and varied that if you were to use logic to decide what to do, you would take too much time deciding and miss the opportunity at hand. Instead, move quickly, get a sense of things, and follow your intuition.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

L	U	R	E	D	■	A	S	K	S	■	C	A	R	P
E	R	O	D	E	■	F	L	I	T	■	A	L	O	E
I	S	A	A	C	■	T	I	E	R	■	B	E	L	T
■	A	R	M	O	R	E	D	V	E	H	I	C	L	E
■	■	■	■	R	A	R	E	■	S	U	N	■	■	■
A	F	L	O	A	T	■	■	U	S	E	■	W	I	T
B	L	O	A	T	■	F	E	T	E	■	D	I	C	E
B	U	F	F	E	R	E	D	A	S	P	I	R	I	N
E	T	A	S	■	O	A	T	H	■	E	V	E	N	S
Y	E	T	■	F	U	R	■	■	O	N	E	D	G	E
■	■	■	I	O	N	■	E	T	N	A	■	■	■	■
P	A	D	D	E	D	E	N	V	E	L	O	P	E	■
O	B	O	E	■	O	U	T	S	■	I	R	A	T	E
E	L	L	A	■	F	R	E	E	■	Z	E	S	T	Y
T	E	L	L	■	F	O	R	T	■	E	S	T	E	E

Sudoku

Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column, and 3x3 block. Use logic and process of elimination to solve the puzzle.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S SUDOKU

3	2	6	8	9	5	7	1	4
1	9	5	7	6	4	3	2	8
7	4	8	2	1	3	9	6	5
6	8	1	4	3	9	5	7	2
5	3	2	6	8	7	1	4	9
9	7	4	1	5	2	6	8	3
4	6	9	5	7	8	2	3	1
8	1	3	9	2	6	4	5	7
2	5	7	3	4	1	8	9	6

	3		2			5		
		1		3			9	
	4		5	6	1		2	
		2			3		8	
5				2				1
	9		1			2		
	8		4	7	2		3	
	6			9		8		
		3			8		7	

Newsday Crossword

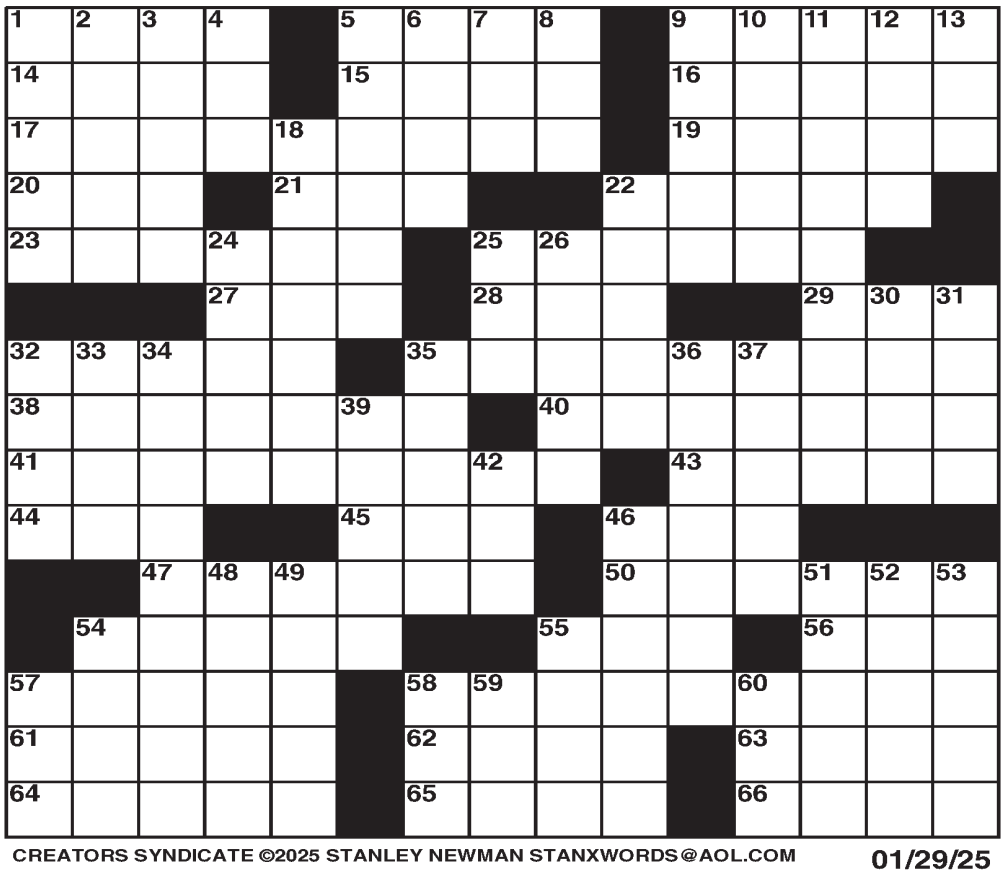
SALON SERVICES by Fred Piscop
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS

1 __ mater (grad's former college)
5 Word-of-mouth
9 Look happy
14 Earl Grey and pekoe
15 Write an email
16 Powder in a printer
17 Antique laundry device
19 Generic dog name
20 Pose a question
21 Very long time
22 Thoroughbreds' fathers
23 Flip for a profit
25 Skiing surfaces
27 False story
28 Letter after sigma
29 Six-pt. football plays
32 Nobel Prize category
35 Ruthless in competition
38 Toward a stream's source
40 Informal "Understood"
41 Creation of a stage's scenery
43 Young girl, informally
44 "For __ a jolly good fellow"
45 Large briny body
46 Abbreviation for elevation
47 Yellow songbird
50 Detached for devouring
54 Exclamation of anticipation
55 Light brown
56 "__ you kidding?"
57 Water pitcher opening
58 Period with little rainfall
61 Sprang up
62 All through
63 Pay heed to
64 Standish of Plymouth Colony
65 Food for a 47-Across
66 __ Spumante wine

DOWN

1 Engaged in combat
2 Rental agreement
3 Halloween face coverings
4 Campfire remnant
5 Peter of *Lawrence of Arabia*
6 TV host Seacrest
7 Busy mo. for a CPA
8 Was in charge of
9 Piece of bacon
10 Actress Julianne or Demi
11 Stockbrokers' clients
12 Wine bottle dregs
13 Make a mistake
18 Think to be true
22 Down on a map
24 National hero of Spain
25 Letters before V
26 Vatican City language
30 Portions of a week
31 Remain
32 Give a shove to
33 Fencing sword
34 Where future sculptors are trained
35 Town newsperson of old
36 Skirt's edge
37 Blues-rock singer Bonnie
39 Op-ed piece
42 Happy, as in "Deck the Halls"
46 Belittled
48 Treat poorly
49 Classroom jottings
51 Sahara stopover
52 "Cold" or "warm" weather system
53 Italian high-fashion brand
54 Grand Ole __
55 Actress Daly
57 America's Uncle
58 Tooth pro's deg.
59 Eggs at a sushi bar
60 Organization for GPs



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01/29/25

MORE OF STAN'S CROSSWORDS! Play FREE from Stan's archives of Easy, Hard and Sunday puzzles at: tinyurl.com/stan-newman-crosswords

SMC

FROM PAGE 1

plan include a 76,000 square foot Pico 1 building and a nearly 100,000 square foot Pico 2 building, replacing services provided by Drescher Hall and the Business Building.

In addition, construction would bring a 12,000 square foot police headquarters, a 42,000 square foot student union center, a 26,000 square foot maintenance and operations building, as well as two smaller buildings on Pearl Street.

"The plan envisions a dynamic campus that addresses both the current and future needs of the college," the Master Plan document reads. "Instead of focusing on physical expansion, the plan optimizes existing physical assets of the campus and replaces buildings that are beyond their useful life to support an environment of discovery, innovation, societal change, and learning."

As far as the widespread demolition goes, SMC states that about one-third of the campus' building inventory "is in poor condition," and the planned replacement of the Business Building and Drescher Hall "will transform the Pico campus edge and meet the program needs of the future." Demolition will also happen for modular and temporary structures, as well as buildings "that do not have the flexibility to transition to future learning environments."

The Drescher Hall replacement looks to house programs like English, Communication and Media Studies, and Photography in a four-story building. The Business Building replacement will house such programs as Fashion, Accounting and Cosmetology; as well as student-focused spaces like clubs and the Veterans Resource Center.

Along with the demolition of Drescher and the Business building, proposed demolitions also cover the Cayton Center for student health and activities, called "outdated and underutilized" by the plan text. The proposed new Student Union building looks to feature updated dining vendors, a right-sized book store, health and wellness offices and a maker space.

"The new Union will be a modern facility suited to the 21st Century campus and student … the project will bring together scattered tutoring resources into a centralized Learning Resource Center," the plan stated.

Funding for the plan, if approved and passing environmental review, comes from multiple sources. A portion of remaining Measure V funds, a $345 million piece of funding passed in 2016, remains to be invested in master plan projects. In addition, part of the funds will come from Measure SMC, an authorization of $375 million for repairs and upgrades of aging facilities approved in 2022.

SMC has also submitted applications for state funding for both of the proposed Pico classroom buildings, with initial project proposals already submitted for the Drescher Replacement building and the Business Replacement building, with the latter also having a Final Project Proposal submitted.

If approved, the planned construction would go through 2035, with the first phase focused on the construction of the two Pico buildings and the Police Headquarters, as well as proposed renovations to the Life & Physical Sciences Complex.

thomas@smdp.com

GUEST COMMENTARY

FROM PAGE 3

a vital role, and can shift cultural attitudes toward addiction and encourage healthier choices — as they did for smoking and drunk driving. School-based education programs, community outreach and interventions for at-risk youth can help us create a prevention-focused culture.

The need for action is urgent. As Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a former addict and the current nominee to lead the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has noted, "Addiction requires long-term treatment, not short-term harm mitigation." His leadership could inspire California to expand its commitment to treatment-based solutions and reimagine its approach to the opioid epidemic.

Normalizing addiction is neither compassionate nor effective — it's destructive. California must ensure the success of Prop. 36. Alongside drug courts and prevention-focused public education, this new law can address the root causes of addiction and homelessness, offering people a chance at recovery and stability.

Vern Pierson is the district attorney of El Dorado County and was a co-sponsor of Proposition 36. He is a past president of the California District Attorneys Association. This article was originally published by CalMatters.





WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 29

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CLUB
4:30 - 6 p.m. Youth Activity Room, Santa Monica Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. Join the adventure for one-shot sessions with characters you created or pick up a ready-made character for the day's journey. All materials provided. Ages 10 - 14.

THURSDAY | JANUARY 30

DOG MAN PARTY
4 - 5 p.m. Youth Activity Room, Santa Monica Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. Celebrate all things from Dav Pilkey's wildly popular series "Dog Man" with crafts, games and prizes. Make a visit to "Lil Petey's Robot Shop" and build your own cardboard robot buddy with recycled materials. For ages 5 - 11.

WOMEN IN TECH LA 2025
6 - 9 p.m. LouLou Santa Monica, 395 Santa Monica Pl. #300. LA's premier tech networking event with one of the largest membership groups in Southern California and growing every month. Don't miss this opportunity to meet your next big business connection. Tickets $20, to purchase visit: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/women-in-tech-la-2025-tickets-1106531067209.

RENT CONTROL BOARD
7 p.m. City Council Chambers, Santa Monica City Hall, 1685 Main St. The Rent Control Board meets to conduct business associated with the Rent Control Charter Amendment and Regulations.

FRIDAY | JANUARY 31

FRIENDS OF VENICE LIBRARY PILATES - CORE WORK
11 a.m. - 12 p.m. Venice Branch Library, 501 S. Venice Blvd. Develop strength, flexibility and valance through the fusion of Pilates mat movement. All levels welcome. Class starts on-time, no entry after the first 10 minutes.

SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 1

RECYCLING EVENT AT CITY YARDS
9 a.m. - 2 p.m. City Yards, 2500 Michigan Ave. The City of Santa Monica is hosting a free recycling event for Santa Monica residents only. Bring your used mattresses, box springs, electronic waste, and up to five boxes of paper for shredding. Shredding will happen on-site and the paper will be recycled. For any questions, call 866-311-7266.

LIBRARY LOVERS' MONTH
10:30 - 11:30 a.m. Pico Branch Library, 2201 Pico Blvd. Stop by a pop-up and write a love letter to the library and receive a special Library Lovers' Month token of appreciation, while supplies last.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH FILM SCREENING
2 - 4 p.m. MLK Jr. Auditorium, Santa Monica Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. Celebrate Black History Month with a screening of "Wade in the Water," a deep dive into the history of Black surfing. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion with film director David Mesfin, Black pro surfer Sharon Shaffer and more.

SUNDAY | FEBRUARY 2

REGIONAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY WEBINAR
12 - 1 p.m. Virtual. In an effort to streamline information to businesses impacted by the recent wildfires, government agencies across the region have come together to provide updates and guidance to Community Business Organizations serving the Los Angeles Region. Organizations present include the Small Business Administration and CA Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development. To RSVP, visit: https://business.venicechamber.net/events/details/la-regional-economic-recovery-community-business-organizations-weekly-webinar-02-02-2025-57158

CINDERELLA
12:30 - 2 p.m. Santa Monica Playhouse, 1211 4th St. The beloved Rudie-DeCarlo musical "Cinderella" is back for February only, with a stunning multi-media makeover. It's Cinderella like you've never seen her before, with new songs, hilarious special FX, a silent movie segment and more. Tickets $17.50 for adults, $15 for kids, free to first responders. To purchase, visit: https://www.showclix.com/event/cinderella-2023-the-musical.

MONDAY | FEBRUARY 3

PAWSOME MONDAYS
2:30 - 6 p.m. Marina del Rey Hotel, 13534 Bali Way, Marina del Rey. Bring your furry friends for Doggie Happy Hour at Del Rey Lounge. Enjoy an afternoon of fun, relaxation and special treats for you and your pups. Sip on discounted drinks while your pups mingle in the outdoor bar area.

ARBOR VENICE POOL TOURNAMENT
5:30 p.m. Tavern on Main, 2907 Main St. Join in the fun as Arbor Venice takes over Tavern on Main, showing skateboard and snowboarding footage on the screens and hosting a pool tourney with prizes for the winner each week. Come and play, hang or whatever suits your mood.

DISABILITIES COMMISSION
6:30 p.m. SMI Room, Civic Center Parking Structure, 333 Civic Center Dr. The Disabilities Commission helps improve the quality of life for people with disabilities in Santa Monica by prioritizing issues of concern and advising the City Council and City Staff on those issues. The Commission recommends ways to maximize participation of people with disabilities in all facets of City life and increase awareness of the abilities, rights and issues of people with disabilities throughout the community.

THE GORDONS IMPROV RESIDENCY
7 - 10 p.m. Westside Comedy Theater, 1323-A 3rd St. Get ready for a night filled with laugher, spontaneity and hilarious moments, an evening of unscripted comedy where every joke is made up on the spot. Improv performers will create scenes, characters and stories based on your suggestions. Tickets $10, to purchase visit: https://ci.ovationtix.com/34923/production/1126449?performanceId=11576550.

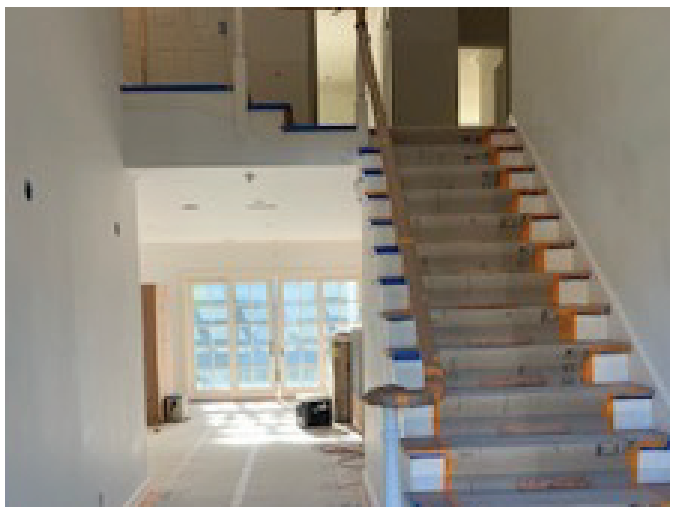
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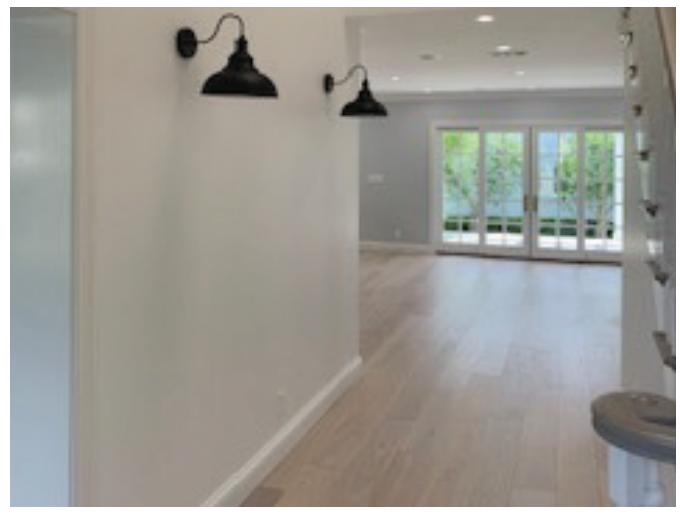
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