WHAT IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING? SAN DIEGO HOUSING FOUNDATION EXPLAINS

Broadly speaking, housing is considered affordable when a household pays no more than 30% of its gross income to pay for their rent or mortgage. Households paying more than 30% of their income for housing are considered "rent burdened" or "cost-burdened."

Our economy depends on a large supply of lower-wage workers, but does not provide housing that is affordable to these households.

People often assume that "affordable housing" refers to subsidized housing, but it’s important to note that most low-income households live in what we call "Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing" or NOAH. This is housing that is provided at low rents, not because there are any subsidies or rent restrictions on the property, but because the homes simply can’t command a higher rent. They are typically older apartments and houses with few amenities.

In a "balanced" housing market, where new housing supply keeps up with demand, the market provides new homes that reflect current homebuilding costs as well as a constant supply of older homes that slowly slip into naturally affordability. But increased demand drives up rents, and these older homes (both apartments and houses) become occupied by lower-income households. The lower income households that used to live in these homes are pressed to double up, move further from their jobs, leave the region, or, all too often, end up homeless. Because there is such a demand for rental housing, there is also a very profitable business in acquiring older, slightly distressed apartment buildings, making modest improvements in them, and then turning around and selling them for a substantial profit. This results in improvements to the housing stock, but it also has led to the loss of over 65,000 naturally extremely affordable housing units in the City of San Diego over the past 20 years and caused many thousands of lower-wage workers, retired seniors, and neighbors living with disabilities to be deeply cost burdened and in many cases, lose their housing.

It is simply not financially feasible for the open market to build new units that are affordable to these lower income residents – it costs too much to build. At the same time, the region continues to create most of its new jobs in fields that pay low wages. This is where subsidized affordable housing becomes a necessity. Housing can be subsidized in a number of ways, but the largest number of rent-stabilized affordable units are created through a federal tax credit program known as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, or LIHTC. This program provides tax incentives for investors to work with non-profit developers, municipalities, and other entities in a Public/Private approach.
PRESIDENT’S CORNER

Marc Johnson

Welcome to 2022!

As we entered the holiday season, my family and I were aglow as we started hosting some small get-togethers again. But Omicron reared its viral spikes at us, and we (along with many of our friends and family), went back into the cautionary state that we’ve all been living under for the last two years. Such is life in a pandemic.

I know many folks who have struggled with illness, job changes, and never-ending schedule changes. But, through the challenges we’ve all endured, I remain optimistic. I believe we have hopefully made it through what appears to be the worst of this—I’ve seen people come through the pandemic stronger and thriving.

We have a lot going on in our community: new housing and developments are popping up all over our neighborhood, while restaurants and businesses are opening and expanding. We also have ongoing issues with encampments in the canyons, homelessness, zoning changes, and new updated master plans for both our parks and library. I hope UHCA is helping to keep you informed through this paper, on our social media, and through our meetings.

We won’t be having our large in-person events until doing so is deemed safe, but that hasn’t stopped our mighty Beautification Team from doing their awesome best to help keep UH beautiful, with the Barnyard Cleanup, ongoing efforts of our trash angels, the Vermont Street Bridge decorations and upkeep, and of course the always popular Lights in the Heights (see full coverage in this issue).

We will be starting off the new year with our monthly community meetings via Zoom, where important topics covering Zone Watch, homelessness, housing, and developments will be covered, along with updates from our library and friends, school friends, and elected officials. The monthly meetings are the best way to find out the latest on what’s happening in UH, and to raise your questions and issues, whether as part of the Crime Watch at 6:45pm or during the general meeting starting at 7pm. Representatives from our elected officials’ offices are there to answer questions and bear concerns directly from you.

UHCA is the voice of our community, and together we’ve made a difference for nearly 40 years. With your support and help, we continue in our mission of “Improving the quality of life and sense of community in San Diego’s University Heights.”

I wish everyone a safe, healthy, happy, and prosperous 2022.

~ Stephen Russell

(Dee, Mr. Russell will be the featured speaker at the UHCA Feb. meeting on Thursday, Feb. 3)

AFFORDABLE continued from front page

Partnership to produce new, rent-stabilized housing with affordability requirements that last for 5 years.

The bottom line is that our economy depends on a large supply of lower-wage workers, but does not provide housing that is affordable to these households. We are producing only between 900-1200 new rent-stabilized affordable units per year, while we are losing an average of 3,000 NOAH units. The overcrowding and homelessness that is evident in our communities is the inevitable result of our failure to provide a housing supply that matches the needs of our workforce.

~ Stephen Russell

GOLDEN OSTRICH

BUSINESS/CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

( ) $120 Golden Ostrich (Household)

Referred by

City/State     Zip

Address

Business Name

Published 10 times per year by the University Heights Community Association. We welcome articles, letters, and announcements about issues and events in University Heights. The deadline for submission is the first of the month. Please see www.uhsd.org/submissions for details.

AFFORDABLE, continued from front page

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December 2 UHCA Community Meeting Summary

The “Crime Watch” segment of the meeting began at 6:45pm. Nan McGraw noted evidence of fires in the canyon below Zone 3, above the 163, which is Caltrans property. Officer David Surillo shared that we need to complain to Caltrans and get an email confirmation. He recommends to always start with something that can be documented. Then let Chris Ward, our State Assembly representative, know about the situation. Ask his office to follow up with Caltrans as well. Articulate your concern. This is not a FIVI issue. It is an illegal live issue. Fires can burn up the hill and put our residential communities and is a real concern for University Heights. Officer Surillo also shared some good tips regarding shopping during the Holidays. Although SDPD did increase police presence at the malls, you should never put purchased items in your car, even the trunk, and return to shopping. Your car may be broken into at this point. If you want to continue shopping, get into your car and drive to another part of the parking lot. Make it look like you just arrived. Additionally, UH residents were reminded to use the Get It Done App to report homeless camps. Reports will be forwarded to the appropriate department. Follow up this with an email to Stephen Whitburn’s office – our City Council Representative.

Marc Johnson opened the General Meeting at 7:00pm, thanking all our members for joining and renewing throughout the year - including our Business Members. The University Heights Community Association began in 1983 primarily to push back against developers and establish the Trolley Barn Park. That is our heritage. We are a non-profit, volunteer supported organization whose mission is to enhance our quality of life and sense of community. We organize events, publish the UHCA News, hold monthly meetings, coordinate neighborhood clean ups, and provide volunteer opportunities. Our Zone Watch Program connects our communication with law enforcement. Our members empower the community and amplify its voice. Thank you to our Membership. Lisa Getz, our latest Board Member, was introduced. Lisa has a long-time presence in our community and will be a definite asset as she assists us with Social Media and Business Outreach.

We have a number of volunteer positions open, including Lead Editor for the UHCA News – about 5 to 10 hours per month. A Newspaper Distribution Coordinator. Block walkers for newspaper distribution. Event Coordinators (we plan on holding events again in 2023) and Website Coordinators. The experience would be of great benefit.

Sol Schumer reported on the Birney Giving Tree 2021. Residents were asked to purchase gift cards for families in need at the Alice Birney Elementary School by December 3rd. Thank you Sol for all your hard work spearheading this cause.

Sol also reported on the Beautification Team. Our November 13th Beautification clean up was a big success. Even Stephen Whitburn and members of his team pitched in. Thank you to everyone who participated. On November 28th Holiday decorations and lights were installed on the Vermont Street Bridge. The Lights in the Heights judging took place on December 18th. Winners are announced in this issue of the UHCA News. The Beautification Team is also working on a tree initiative with the goal of having blocks of streets planted at once.

Erin McKinnon reported on the Birney Big Give, a great cause for our neighborhood. The school offers a lot of wonderful programs which are supported through fundraising. Their goal is $55,000. UHCA is a sponsor. Please feel free to give at any time during the year. Helene Iedls from the University Heights Branch Library joined us. The new “Discover and Go” program is now here, offering free passes to participating museums. Wi-FI Hot Spots are available for library card holders. Isabel Schecter from the Friends of the Library reports that the FOL does a lot for our branch including the purchase of books, leasing of popular books, and supporting many local projects. Sign up cameras were installed during 2021. The library has a wish list that enquires funding through donations from businesses and individuals.

The Greater Hillcrest CID (Central Business District) is moving forward without working with University Heights. A part of UH is projected to be included in their proposal. Only 50% of the vote is needed to enact. UH business owners are a small fraction of the vote. CCU is working with Hillcrest to encourage a “No” vote. The Dog Park at the Ed Center is moving forward. The 10,000 sq ft fenced off-leash area is planned to be designed and built in the Spring – open in the Summer of 2022. We are reminded to clean up after our dogs if using the Birney joint use field. Let’s do our part for our community.

Christopher Vallejo from Senator Toni Atkins’ office shared that 588 million has been designated to affordable housing. Her office continues to assist constituents with the EDD, FTH, and State agencies.

Rick Arloh Yah Lira was introduced as Co-host and moderator for Stephen Whitburn and Chris Ward. This meeting marked Stephen Whitburn’s 1-year anniversary as our representative. He explained that our Community Association was fundamental in us receiving funds for the Dog Park. Whitburn is impressed with the fact that we are an engaged neighborhood. He continues to work on the homeless situation and says benefits will begin to be noticed. His office is reaching out to provide shelter services and looking for support from city colleges. Shelters are reachable. More needs are needed and are being located. The city is opening unused properties. The County is providing a Shelter Tent. Behavioral Health Care is being introduced. A Mental Health Crisis Team is up and running, provided by the County. The State is now investing billions of dollars into the homeless situation with millions of it coming to San Diego. Different levels of government are working together on this crisis in alignment with one another’s efforts. Budget season is approaching. Mr. Whitburn is keeping a list of University Heights’ requests for future project funding. Questions from the audience were fielded.

Chris Ward, our State Assembly Representative, said that housing and homeless continues to be an important issue. The Federal government is investing $75 billion, which will be allocated to immediate priorities. There are approximately 120,000 homeless in California. Ward is helping these investments with $15 billion for permanent affordable housing and $5 billion for new permanent affordable housing. Money is being set aside for affordable housing as well as to stop homelessness before it happens. Our climate crisis is another important issue. Funding is being provided to help communities protect themselves from wildfire threats, extreme heat, rising sea levels, water security, and other changes that impact our neighborhoods. Ward is supporting small businesses through relief grants, payroll protection loans, tax relief, and the Golden State Stimulus Program which will help almost two thirds of Californians. Project dollars support Health Care, Transportation, Broadband Infrastructure, and Targeted investments include Balboa Park maintenance and restoration, Normal Street Promenade, Hillcrest Medical Center, and gun restriction training. Bills that Ward submitted and were approved include Native Species Protection Act, Eliminate Discrimination in Housing, expanded college savings programs (Scholarshare), and support for Equality California. Christopher Gris shared his contact information as Chris Ward’s support staff member (see “Our Representatives” in this issue for details). Questions from the audience were fielded. Happy New Year to you all.

-Brent Orrick, UHCA Secretary & Treasurer

CRIME WATCH SIGNS
UHCA to display new signs in 2023. If you know of an old sign that needs replacing or a location needing a new sign, email signs@uhsd.org.

SLOW DOWN SIGNS
Spending time in the 25 mph zone or in school zones may not speed up. Please SLOW DOWN! Please email signs@uhsd.org.

DISASTER CONTACTS
In case of a major disaster, have two out of area contacts handy. When the power is out, know your cell phones may not work. Make sure your cell phone is charged. Call 911 for updated information.
Meet Grace, University Heights’ Newest Volunteer!

For the past five years, I have been a blockwalker, delivering the UHCA community newspaper to homes and businesses on Meade Avenue between Park Boulevard and Texas Street. As I was heading out to deliver the September 2021 issue, I was joined on my route by my best buddy and neighbor, 5-year-old Grace, a proud Birney Bee.

That day marked the beginning of Grace becoming a community volunteer. She enjoyed delivering the paper so much that she asked if she could join forces with me to become a junior blockwalker. Each month since then, Grace and I have gone up and down Meade Avenue with a big bag of newspapers. Grace personally placing a newspaper on each homeowner’s step. She is quick to offer a smile or stay for a brief conversation and particularly enjoys the stops where there is a friendly dog for her to pet.

When I became the UHCA Beautification Team leader in October, I invited Grace and her parents to volunteer at the November 13 Birney Elementary clean up. Grace worked side by side with her parents the entire morning. In December, when I mentioned that I was going around the neighborhood to do my monthly trash pick-up, Grace asked if she could come along and help. Wearing gloves and bringing her broom, Grace swept the sidewalks and picked up trash alongside me, cementing her role as a volunteer with the Beautification Team.

If you would like to volunteer within our community, there are numerous opportunities available. Please see Page 2 of this newspaper for a list.

- Jennifer Lisa Bishop

CALL FOR WRITERS!

UHCA News is always looking for content that matters to UH residents. We strive to cover local UH news, and our best “reporters” are our neighbors. So if you have news to share, or an item that would be of interest to your UH neighbors, we want to help you share it to the community in these pages. You can pitch ideas, articles, or topics to the UHCA News team by sending them to uhcanews@uhsd.org. Be sure to check out our Editorial Guidelines at www.uhsd.org/submissions.

Nature in the Neighborhood

Winter Warbler of The Benign Southlands

The coastal lowlands of San Diego County and environs are transitional in terms of latitude on the West Coast. Whereas our coastal mesas and canyons are well within the temperate zone, our southern location imparts a gentler winter climate than mountainous regions to the east and colder areas further north on the coast. For these reasons, the San Diego suburbs support a high variety of native plants in resurgent natural areas (such as canyons), and the developed neighborhoods have been planted in a dazzling array of non-native plants by humans for over a century. Many of these exotic plants are from tropical regions and/or the Southern Hemisphere, and so they bloom throughout our winter. The green, blooming plants and mild temperatures in turn support more of an active winter insect fauna, all of which provide suitable conditions for small, insect-eating birds. Coastal weather is variable, though, which can render insect populations unreliable, so bird species that can utilize alternate food sources, such as fruit or plant nectar, possess a survival advantage during the colder months.

In November we profiled the Yellow-rumped Warbler, a winter visitor from the high mountains, but its relative, the Orange-crowned Warbler (Oreothlypis celata), occupies in and around our suburban environment throughout the year. Males of this diminutive, yellow-green bird rarely display the small patch of orange feathers atop their heads, so the name may seem like a misnomer. Furthermore, the retiring habits and soft call of the species may cause it to be overlooked by all but the most careful observers. The abundance of this species in the southern coastal lowlands actually increases in the winter, as our area receives southward migrants from colder areas to the north. Orange-crowns occupy a range of coastal habitats in search of tiny insects in plant foliage and are particularly fond of native oaks (Quercus agrifolia), but also readily supplement this diet with nectar from exotic blooming plants such as Cape Honeysuckle (Tecoma capensis), Bottlebrush (Callistemon), Eucalyptus, and Kangaroo Paw (Anigozanthos).

The soft, slightly descending trill song is only occasionally heard from the rims of densely vegetated canyons where a few of these birds breed in spring and summer. In winter, the orange-crowned betrays its presence with only a very soft, toneless, whispery “tip” note that is detectable only to a trained ear. It is best to look for this species as a flash of pale yellow in dense vegetation, particularly flowering shrubs. The bird will also fly closer to investigate a human observer who utters the fuzzy white noise known to birders as “pishing.” Orange-crowns will also readily join roving flocks of the more familiar and conspicuous Bushtits (Psaltriparus minimus). Look for a small, active bird with uniform plumage color and a dark line through the eye.

- John Lewis

IT’S YOUR BUSINESS

Valentine's Day Treats at Twiggs

2022 marks the 25th anniversary of Bernie and I owning Twiggs. Our bakery has specialized in wedding cakes and special occasion cakes and, of course, Valentine’s Day is a special occasion for many. Most of the cakes we sell feed anywhere from 8 to over 100 people. But for Valentine’s Day, everyone is looking for a cake for two with the possibility of a little leftovers. I suppose it would be great for business to own a bakery in a Mormon town of plural marriages selling cakes to feed all the sister wives, but that’s not University Heights. So we bake a few desserts that we make only around Valentine’s Day, designed just for two.

Honestly, pre-Covid Valentine’s Day was a modest sales period compared to Thanksgiving, the December holidays and, of course, wedding season (almost year round in San Diego). Since Covid, however, many more couples decided to have quiet dinners at home rather than dine out, which turned out to be a bit of a boon for us. For years we’ve sold our Red Velvet cake in a heart shape covered in a chocolate ganache. We generally put one of the simplistic sayings from a Sweet Tart candy heart on top, like “Be Mine,” though the most popular is the Ralph Wiggins Valentine’s card sentiment from the Simpsons: “I Choo Choo Choose You.” We also offer a heart-shaped Passion Fruit Tart topped with fresh fruit that can have any inscription you choose on top. For kids (ok, and adults), we have heart-shaped brown sugar cookies for a small bite.

The cookies will be available at both Twiggs locations, while the cakes and tarts will be sold only at our 2804 Adams Avenue location. Thanks to everyone, be they Valentines or not, for supporting Twiggs through the past 25 years!

- Dan Stringfield
flames in dry brush on a hillside with surrounding homes 100 feet away?

I understand that Caltrans isn’t going to run out or deal with service requests as soon as they come in, nor is anyone from the city, should it be in their jurisdiction. But what can private citizens do in the meantime, without running afoul of Caltrans or the city, to feel like our neighborhood isn’t going to go up in flames before a service request hits the top of some department’s queue and a crew is sent out?

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Following is a timeline of my attempts to get help from city and state agencies after smoke was seen coming out of the bushes one Sunday morning:

CityNet – It was mentioned during the November UHCA Zoom meeting that CityNet had recently signed a contract to deal with encampments specifically on Caltrans property. I received no response to my email sent Nov. 22nd.

HOT/Homeless Outreach Team – No response to my voicemail left on Nov. 24th.

Caltrans – No response to an email sent Nov 28th. I had a contact within Caltrans I’d dealt with in the past. Although he wasn’t specifically in a department that could offer direct assistance, I asked that he forward my email on to someone who could.

San Diego Fire & Rescue – Understood they couldn’t offer any help as “...it’s on Caltrans property.”

Caltrans (again) – As suggested by Officer Surwilo, because Caltrans had closed out my previous service request without any action, I filed another request on December 11th stating my concerns over the fire danger of the homeless man whose meth-induced rants can be heard echoing up the canyon walls. On January 6th, 2022, I got a notification from Caltrans stating “...the Customer Service Request has been addressed, and your ticket has been closed.” However, the homeless camp was still there when I checked on the 7th. I filed a third service request on Jan 8th.

State Assemblymember Chris Ward – I sent a follow-up email to Chris Ward’s office on December 28th. (NOTE – I’m waiting for a response from both/either Assm. Chris Ward’s office – Benny Cartwright, Communications & Council Representative (Hillcrest), forwarded my concerns to Assm. Chris Ward’s office on December 2nd.

San Diego Park & Rec – They couldn’t offer any help as “…it’s on Caltrans property.”

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February 2022

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

1
SDUSD Board Meeting
9 pm, sandiegounified.org
Uptown Planners
6:30 pm, uptownplannerssd.org
Chinese New Year (Tiger)
March News Articles Due

2
UHDC
6:00 pm utdco.org
UHCA Beautification Meeting
6:00 pm
Groundhog Day

3
UH Park & Rec Meeting
5:30 pm uhsd.org
UHCA Meeting
6:00 pm, via Zoom (www.uhsd.org/attend-a-meeting)

4
Rosa Parks Day

5
Lincoln’s Birthday

6
Hillcrest Farmers Market
9 am - 2 pm

7
Hillcrest Farmers Market
9 am - 2 pm

8
SDUSD Board Meeting
9 pm, sandiegounified.org
Hillcrest Town Council
6:30 pm

9
Library Lover’s Day
National Organ Donor Day
Valentine’s Day

10
No UH Library Task Force Meeting

11

12

13
Hillcrest Farmers Market
9 am - 2 pm

14
Library Lover’s Day
National Organ Donor Day
Valentine’s Day

15
North Park Planning Committee
6:30 pm northparkplanning.org
Susan B. Anthony’s Birthday

16

17

18

19

20
Hillcrest Farmers Market
9 am - 2 pm
Love Your Pet Day
World Day of Social Justice

21
Presidents’ Day

22
SDUSD Board Meeting
5 pm, sandiegounified.org
March UHCA News Out

23

24
National Tortilla Chip Day

25

26

27
Hillcrest Farmers Market
9 am - 2 pm

28

Happy Valentine’s Day!
UHCA News University Heights Community Association  |  February 2022

BIRNEY BUZZ

Do your best and forget the rest.

For our family, it was when we were about to have dinner and they asked us what they were going to have for lunch. Or when one of our kids mispronounced a big word and we tried to explain that it was another exception to the rule, but we weren’t exactly sure what the rule was. Winter break was much needed, but it was time to get back to schedules and learning.

However, with all the news about Omicron, I know I’m not alone when I say that it’s scary—the thought of sending our kids to a potential outbreak. Then news about viral Tik Tok challenges to vandalize school property or cause disruption and harm compounded our worries. A new year has never been about external things, like beauty, dreams aren’t dinner, but happiness is in the eye of the beholder. So, to put it in real-life terms, we do what can to mitigate the bad possibilities and let our kids go learn.

For us, that means being vaccinated, masking up, talking to our kids about safety, and developing a trust with the Birney staff. I also put myself where my kids are, in their world. Their world at Birney is one where they are encouraged to be risk-takers and inquirers, and their main job is to learn. During an unplanned emergency drill in December, our daughter’s first grade teacher reassured her students to stay calm, to listen, and that they were safe with her. I believe they were and are as safe as they can be in order to grow as people.

So, I will do my best to be cautiously optimistic, and I hope you will do the same.

Although 2021 is behind us, we would be remiss to not say thank you to the University Heights and Birney communities for their continued support. We appreciate the neighborhood volunteers who cleaned up the Meade side of Birney one cold December morning. And Birney’s Big Give fundraising drive on December 9th raised $34,800 for Birney’s IB programs due to the generous contributions of Birney families, staff, alumni, community members, and sponsors.

In 2022, we have the 1st (annual) scavenger hunt fundraiser scheduled for January 29th, so expect to see our students and their families, in their finest Birney apparel, roaming the neighborhood looking for clues. The 15th annual Run for the Green Jog-a-thon fundraiser is scheduled to take place from March 14 to 18th. Our Birney farmstand occurs on the second or third Saturday of the month at Twiggs on Park. We welcome new sponsors and donors for all Birney events, so please contact us at info@friendsofalicebirney.org if you would like more information. Please visit us at friendsofalicebirney.org for more information on all our events!

-Vesuvius Hallman, Proud Birney parent and Friends of Alice Birney Elementary (FABE) Board Member

Fill in the blank: “You know your kids need to go back to school when _____.”

As we begin 2023, let’s focus on what truly matters, and raise a toast—

Measure with your heart

Therefore, my dears make meals of poetry and art

Pour out your glass of “what ifs” and “if onlys”—regret’s a vintage that costs much to keep.

Unicorn instead the wishes you’ve been hoarding and drink deep!

Birney staff. I also put myself where masking up, talking to our kids about rest.” I’m still learning to do that as an her class, “Do your best and forget the other.”

Want to make things happen? Yes UHCAN!

UHCAN, The University Heights Community Action Network, is a new tool being launched by the Community Coalition of University Heights. CCUH is a coalition of the University Heights Community Association, University Heights Community Development Corporation, and the University Heights Historical Society. Some of the issues that these organizations work together on include City Council budget priorities for UH, the Education Center redevelopment, City Council redistricting, and promoting/demanding UH boundaries.

During the recent City Council redistricting process, CCUH representatives advocating for UH interests saw how other community groups organized their members to attend, speak, and write comments supporting their goals. CCUH was able to rally 30 residents to comment in favor of keeping UH in a single Council District, which ultimately succeeded.

There are times where we will need voices from our community, whether in person (or via Zoom) at a city council meeting, via emails, or responding to survey questions from San Diego City Council and department staff. To help facilitate quick action, CCUH is launching UHCAN to make sure our neighbors can band together and effectively make sure our community’s voice is heard.

How does UHCAN work?

UHCAN is an email list where people who are willing to help out will be notified when action is needed. UHCAN will provide background information, links, and help with suggested wording for comments or emails. CCUH is governed by leaders from each of the member organizations, and the operating agreement is that all positions and actions will be unanimously agreed to by all three organizations, with the backing of each organization’s board.

What is UHCAN?

UHCAN is not a political action committee and will not be involved in any electoral politics, candidate endorsements, or other partisan actions. All issues and actions will be directly related to quality-of-life issues in University Heights.

What are you signing up for?

You will get action alerts from the CCUH email system when an issue is coming up for public comment. These emails will be clearly identified and will let you know what is being proposed and how to make your voice heard, with specific instructions (including suggested responses). There should be no more than 1-2 Action Alerts per month.

Signing up is easy. Just visit www.ccuh.org, click on the “Stay Informed” button at the top right, complete the form, click the button labeled “Sign up for UHCAN to advocate for a better quality of life in UH,” and then hit “Subscribe.”

CCUH will provide updates at www.ccuh.org, in UHCA News, and at UHCA meetings when there are activities happening. We look forward to helping make sure our city hears us! - Marc Johnson

New Year’s Toast

by Jane Muschenetz

Let all of us be happy!

Isn’t it better to have a head full of delicious dreams than drinking rancid, sour thoughts day after day?

Dreams aren’t dinner, but happiness has never been about external things, like beauty, it’s in the eye of the beholder.

Impossible concoctions full of mirth are just as real as our imagined fears…

Therefore, my dears make meals of poetry and art

Stop fasting! Measure with your heart what truly matters, and raise a toast –

To hope! To love! To friendship everlasting!

(To all the things we cannot touch but move us most)

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Pour out your glass of “what ifs” and “if onlys” –

regret’s a vintage that costs much to keep.

Uncork instead the wishes you’ve been hoarding and drink deep!

What UHCAN is not…

UHCAN is not a political action committee and will not be involved in any electoral politics, candidate endorsements, or other partisan actions. All issues and actions will be directly related to quality-of-life issues in University Heights.

What are you signing up for?

You will get action alerts from the CCUH email system when an issue is coming up for public comment. These emails will be clearly identified and will let you know what is being proposed and how to make your voice heard, with specific instructions (including suggested responses). There should be no more than 1-2 Action Alerts per month.

Signing up is easy. Just visit www.ccuh.org, click on the “Stay Informed” button at the top right, complete the form, click the button labeled “Sign up for UHCAN to advocate for a better quality of life in UH,” and then hit “Subscribe.”

CCUH will provide updates at www.ccuh.org, in UHCA News, and at UHCA meetings when there are activities happening. We look forward to helping make sure our city hears us! - Marc Johnson

New Year’s Toast

by Jane Muschenetz

Let all of us be happy!

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North Park Recreation Center
4044 Idaho St. San Diego Ca 92104
619-235-1152

MISS HELENE

February is “National Library Lover’s Month,” and we would love for our community to visit us at the University Heights Branch Library to say hello and see what’s new. I would like to introduce myself. I’m Helene Idels, the Library’s new Youth Services Librarian. I have worked at several San Diego Public Library branches over the years and recently came over to University Heights in October 2021. I look forward to getting to know the community as we start to gradually bring back some of our library programs such as Storytime and Creative Crafts. I am often referred to as “Miss Helene, the Steampunk Librarian,” so don’t be surprised if you see me costumed in period or themed attire for my storytimes! Do you know about our latest 2021-2022 “One Book One San Diego” reading selections for all ages? They include Being Heumann, When Stars Are Scattered, and All the Way to the Top – with all three focusing on disability rights and services. You can place a hold on these titles and pick them up when you come in to visit us at the library! SDPL will be offering OHSD programs throughout the spring related to this topic. And, speaking of spring, be sure to stay tuned for details about our “Spring into Steel” program coming soon.

“Let’s Grow” is this year’s theme, and it will include opportunities to learn about botany, gardening, and sustainability. You can find more information for SDPL programs and services at the library website: www.sdpl.org/public-library. And we love for you to follow our University Heights Branch Library's Facebook page and online calendar of events for all the latest happenings at: www.facebook.com/universityheightslibrary.

Meet Newest Cardholder!
A special welcome to Matisse de la Rosa, newest library card holder at the UH Branch, thanks to the “My First Library Card” program. Stop by and help your little ones get their special first library card and a keepsake photo with Ms. Hat the Cow! (photo by Monica de la Rosa)

 Tex is a partial Snowshoe cat. That’s why we got him for half off at the shelter – we Tex loves curling up on the couch with us, playing with his toy pipe cleaners and toy mice, and waking us up at 4:30 in the morning because it is apparently essential that all of us are awake at the same time! He will proudly trot around the house, pipe cleaner or toy mouse in his mouth, and happily play by himself with the toy for a solid 15 minutes. He has very specific and particular places where he sleeps. He will sit on his hind legs and keep himself warm and cozy at all times, knitting the softness of the bed together and curling up to take a nap. He will hold a toy in his mouth, move his arms and legs in a hoardling situation and was considered one of the Humane Society’s “behavior cats” because he was so timid and shy. With a suggested behavior plan in place that we put into action, Tex warmed up to his new environment quickly. He became bold quickly, conquering new unknown noises in an instant, and also became fast friends with our other cat Kitty and our neighbor’s sweet dog. Tex is 3 years old, and we couldn’t imagine our home without him in it.

Pet of the Month

 Tex

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University Heights is a place with great walkability where people in every stage of life can co-exist and work in a mid-urban neighborhood surrounded by diverse plant life. Alyssa Perez is a UH resident and licensed engineer specializing in designing ADUs currently in progress or planned for the immediate coming years. As you may have seen, a big step in the right direction. Using individual cars to drive anywhere is an added stress.

HELP NEEDED!

UHCA News is looking for a Lead Editor volunteer. This position will work with the experienced editorial team to pull each month’s issue together. If you like working with people, have a sharp eye, have ideas for the paper, some editorial experience, and want to make a difference in University Heights, please reach out to us at uhcanews@uhsd.org. This role would requires about 5-10 hours of time per month.

San Diego's ADU Giveaway Must End

The City of San Diego's Accessory Dwelling Unit ("Granny Flat" ordinance) immediately revealed itself as a giveaway to absentee landlords and corporate investors at the expense of residents in University Heights and San Diego's older neighborhood areas.

The City Council approved the current Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulations in October 2020, at the height of the pandemic, without adequate input from concerned residents and community planning groups. Worse, city staff misrepresented the most controversial aspects of the ordinance at large-venue meetings, forcing those members of the ordinance that would simply bring our city into "compliance" with existing state regulations that allow homeowners to build a separate "granny flat" and an additional, smaller living unit attached to their existing home (usually by remodeling the garage).

In fact, San Diego's ordinance goes far beyond what's required by state law. It encourages the conversion, construction, or addition of ADUs on residential properties in neighborhoods zoned, designed, and built to accommodate single-family homes. These multi-unit projects are essentially apartment buildings, and the current ordinance allows investors, developers, and absentee landlords to profit from them. It strips them of their share of infrastructure costs or providing even a single unit of the very-low and low-income housing our city desperately needs.

Investors are taking advantage of these giveaways by outbidding first-time and move-up buyers, then clear-cutting the backyard to make room for two — or even three — multi-story rental units. They also convert the garage in the existing house into an ADU and, of course, they rent the house itself. When they've finished, they've transformed an attractive neighborhood home into a st. or eight-unit apartment complex.

The perverse incentives for these destructive projects include:

- The ability to build an additional ADU for every so-called "affordable" unit. But the city's definition of "affordable" allows landlords to charge whatever the market rate for those so-called "affordable" apartments. In Talmadge, a 470-square-foot, one bedroom, one-bath "affordable" unit will rent for $2000 a month, a price the landlord's consultant was forced to publicly admit is "absurd from the standpoint of affordability."

- Properties within a half-mile of high-frequency bus and trolley services get a density bonus, which allows investors to use the bonus to increase the size of a house or to build a second home. Developers have an incentive to build a density bonus because of the added value of a ranch-style home. Investors have an incentive to build this type of home because they can sell it to a buyer who wants a single-family home. Investors have an incentive to build this type of home because they can sell it to a buyer who wants a single-family home. Developers have an incentive to offer developers or investors the right to build right up to the neighbor's property line. A thirty-foot height limit allows three-story structures with windows and balconies that look directly into neighbors' backyards and bedroom windows.

- Developers are destroying mature shade trees and other oxygen-rich and rainwater-absorbing backyard foliage to make room for these multi-unit apartments. This environmental-harmful policy directly contradicts the city's Climate Action Plan, and its supposed commitment to vastly expanding our urban tree canopy.

- The City also waived infrastructure fees for multi-unit ADUs. Profit-driven developers don't pay their fair share for the streets, sidewalks, parks, libraries, and other public improvements so desperately needed in our established neighborhoods. The city of San Diego now has a multi-billion dollar deficit to repair, replace, and expand our aging infrastructure. And because developers must still pay those fees when they build apartments in areas actually zoned for multi-unit housing, there's less incentive to invest in those so-called "affordable" projects. These multi-units are essentially apartment buildings, and the current ordinance allows investors, developers, and absentee landlords to profit from them. It strips them of their share of infrastructure costs or providing even a single unit of the very-low and low-income housing our city desperately needs.

As a result of this monumental assault on sensible planning, a volunteer group sprang into action last April. To be clear: Neighbors for a Better San Diego (NFABSD), supports state regulations that allow homeowners to build a "granny flat" and junior: or much farther; in one Carmel Valley neighborhood bisected by the I-15, it's a more than mile walk to the trolley station.

These multi-unit projects are essentially apartment buildings, and the current ordinance allows investors, developers, and absentee landlords to profit from them. It strips them of their share of infrastructure costs or providing even a single unit of the very-low and low-income housing our city desperately needs.

By now, many people have heard of accessory dwelling units from friends or family who either have recently built one or are interested in building one in their backyard. ADUs, also known as granny flats, in-law suites, guest houses, or companion units, are a more sustainable and desirable housing option to build and live in compared to apartment complex.

In my neighborhood, the City of San Diego has most of the homes are non-compliant. It’s estimated that of neighborhoods, our UH seems to have a lot of features and characteristics that make living in. And while ADUs are so versatile that they can be well-suited for a wide variety of people in every stage of life can co-exist and work in a mid-urban neighborhood surrounded by diverse plant life.

Home Is Wherever I'm with ADU

Everyone knows that we are in the middle of a housing crisis. Whether you intend to rent or buy a home, single family properties in job-rich, high-opportunity areas such as San Diego continue to be in short supply, and those that are available are unaffordable to the average single family household. So how do we even begin to address the complex issue of affordable housing?

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UHCA News is proud to provide neighbors with the opportunity to share their perspectives on issues that affect our community. Our editorial guidelines are available on our website at www.uhsd.org/submissions. Submissions must be factual, and should avoid derogatory, pejorative, or inflammatory language. We welcome articles on controversial issues relevant to the neighborhood, we require a respectful approach. The newspaper's editorial team reserves the right to edit submissions for length and content. We will add details, if required, and cut or change phrases to clarify, tone, or focus, and as needed to fit the allotted space in our issues and meet our readers' needs.

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UH Community Garage Sale a Big Success

COVID-19 certainly put a damper on University Heights' ability to gather socially, so back in October, Stu McGraw and I decided that a community garage sale might just bring some energy back to our neighborhood after all of us had been cooped up for more than a year.

With just a little bit of planning and some elbow grease, we were able to bring our neighbors together for a fun, profitable day on December 4. By 10 that day, Stu had handed out flyers to 600 households in 5 blocks and 150 neighbors came from all over town looking for great deals on cool garage sale finds. These treasure hunters were determined to get their hands on clothing, books, toys, household decorations, garden tools, outdoor equipment, and board games, as well as larger items like furniture and home appliances.

Afterwards, Stu and I drove around the neighborhood to ask people about their experiences. To say that everyone we spoke to was appreciative would be an understatement. There was definitely a party atmosphere out there! Everyone knows that we are in the middle of a housing crisis. Whether you intend to rent or buy a home, single family properties in job-rich, high-opportunity areas such as San Diego continue to be in short supply, and those that are available are unaffordable to the average single family household. So how do we even begin to address the complex issue of affordable housing?
The early stages of the pandemic made suspending parking tickets during the pandemic necessary. Many local governments provided rent and utility service and most information possible, so the public can safely resume meeting in person. Council meetings were virtual all of last year, and we expect to have more in-person meetings in the coming year.

I want to personally thank each and every one of you for your continued support. The work we do as city council is not easy, but it is rewarding. We are fortunate to have a mayor and city council who work together productively.

We’re also fortunate to have communities like University Heights who are engaged and passionate about the neighborhood. In fact, community leaders from University Heights were among the first to reach out to our office when we got started. I’m proud of the work we have done together and look forward to making more progress in the coming year.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, city council meetings were virtual all of last year, and our first meetings of 2022 will be virtual as well. I look forward to when we can safely resume meeting in person. In the meantime, my team and I are committed to providing you with the best service and most information possible, be it through attending virtual events, responding to phone and email inquiries, and sharing important updates with you through this newspaper and other means.

Helping our communities begin recovering from the COVID-19 shutdowns was one of the first things our new council and mayor tackled. We implemented a number of measures like providing rent and utility bill relief to struggling San Diegans, suspending parking tickets during the shutdowns, and capping the amount third-party delivery apps could charge restaurants they service.

The early stages of the pandemic made clear that San Diegans embrace outdoor dining. In light of that, many of the outdoor structures that restaurants built to serve their customers when indoor dining was restricted will remain permanently under the City’s new Spaces as Places program. Now, businesses will be able to utilize outdoor spaces to expand their operations, giving San Diegans even more opportunity to enjoy our fantastic weather.

Homelessness has been a long-time problem in San Diego, and as I wrote in a previous edition of this newspaper, there are more unsheltered individuals than we’ve seen in the past. Over the past year, the City has created a new Department of Homeless Strategies and Solutions, expanded outreach to the unsheltered by social services providers, and added affordable housing. The County is ramping up efforts to address behavioral health issues within the homeless population, and the State is investing unprecedented resources to reduce the number of people on the streets. While this is not a problem that we will solve overnight, our government jurisdictions are finally working together and doing the right things to end the widespread homelessness we face today.

Lastly, as we all know, University Heights residents are passionate about their four-legged friends, and I am pleased that our council office secured funding to build a temporary dog park at the San Diego Unified School District headquarters site. Once complete, it will provide a space for residents to bring their dogs, get some exercise, and spend time with neighbors. Work on the project will begin this year, and it will be a great interim solution until we identify a permanent dog park site.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on these and many other issues you care about including the library, mobility issues, housing, and more. It’s exciting to envision what we can do together in the coming years to make University Heights an even better place to live, work, and play. As always, our office is here for you. Please feel free to reach out to us at any time by contacting our representative for University Heights, Marcela Miranda, at JMC.sheller@sandiego.gov. Your District 3 team is always at your service.

Stephen Whitburn, City Councilmember, District 3

Hello, University Heights!

Happy New Year! It has been just over a year since I began working as your city council representative, and it has been an honor to serve you. I have reflected on the work we have done and what we have yet to accomplish. We are fortunate to have a mayor and city council who work together productively.

The new year is starting with forward progress on two major infrastructure projects in San Diego. Last month, I joined the San Diego Regional Airport Authority, California State Transportation Secretary David S. Kim, as well as regional and federal leaders, for the groundbreaking of the new Terminal 1, or T1, which was called, nearly a decade in the making. T1 will eventually deliver 11 additional gates (for 30 in total), new food and retail concessions, an updated baggage handling system, a new parking garage and a new three-lane airport access road. The long-term construction project will also include some key sustainability measures, including additional solar panels and stormwater recycling.

The other major project now under construction is Phase One of the new UC San Diego Hospital in Hillcrest. This project, which will bring a brand new, state-of-the-art hospital and medical campus to our region, is an investment in the lives, health and well-being of all of our communities.

Our outdoor spaces—in San Diego and throughout the state of California—received a boost in the amount of $548 million in grants as part of the 2021 State Budget in December. Of that sum, $225 million of that will be put to use in San Diego County and the City of San Diego to ensure that there is “access for all,” ensuring equity in providing parks and outdoor spaces for everyone in our communities.

Team Toni attended the announcement of the historic funding last month, as well as team Toni. In December, the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Department of Parks and Recreation and U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, I look forward to working together across all levels of government to ensure there is outdoor access for all.

Here’s to a great 2022—California Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins represents UH as part of State Senate District 39. Additional information, news, and contact information can be located at https://sd39.senate.ca.gov/.

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Want to help make UH better?

Give your home the protection it deserves.
Spotlight on: Artist in our ‘hood, Ansley Pye

An Awesome Artist with an Amazing Story

Upon meeting Ansley, you are immediately struck by her warm smile and positive energy. Looking at her art work, you can see the pain and beauty she has experienced in her life.

Ansley was born and raised in San Diego. She graduated from Patrick Henry High School (where her A.P. art teacher advised her not to pursue a career in art) and attended SDSU. However, at age 20, she wanted to experience the world and sold all of her possessions and bought a one-way ticket to Paris where she was accepted into the Sorbonne University. She fell in love with the city and its culture. Ansley graduated with a degree in linguistics, and a minor in archeology.

After graduating, she traveled throughout Africa and the Middle East and eventually returned to her hometown of San Diego.

In 1998, Ansley gave birth to a baby girl (she named her Paris, after her hometown). She became a prolific painter and her work was shown in numerous galleries throughout the county, as well as commissioned work throughout the country. She moved from a studio on Kettner Blvd. to Liberty Station where she ran the Pulse Gallery and was involved in the mentor program.

For three years, Ansley painted with Carol and absorbed her style, focusing on color and texture (and various oil products to give her paintings a deep richness. She has many large pieces that reflect her own mortgage company. By her late 20s, she was financially successful, but emotionally unfulfilled. At the same time, she began experiencing bizarre symptoms of overwhelming fatigue, tingling, vertigo, vision impairment, pain, and numbness in various parts of her body.

Finally, at the age of 28, Ansley was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Unable to walk or move, she asked herself, “If I die now, what would I regret not doing?” She had clear visions in her head and knew that the answer to her question was “art.” She taped a paint brush to her hands and started painting. The more she painted, the better she felt. She started off painting in watercolors. Art filled her heart, but not her bank account. Ansley struggled with her illness and inability to work. She experienced homelessness and found herself living at an abandoned warehouse in downtown San Diego. Realizing this was not the way she wanted to live, she moved to Austin, Texas to live with her mother.

In Austin, Ansley met a watercolorist named Carol Light who took her under her wing and mentored her in her art and in life. For three years, Ansley painted with Carol and absorbed her positive influence. Eventually, Ansley got her own art studio and painted every day, gravitating to painting in oils. Ansley loved the feel of oil paint and its movement on the canvas. She started to enjoy financial and critical success as an artist. Her paintings were shown in galleries and were coveted by buyers around the country. Her M.S. symptoms would intermitently return and then she would go into remission. But her painting brought her joy and gave her a new lease on life.

In 2018, Ansley moved to her current residence in University Heights, where she created her studio space in her garage. It is a cozy place with old paintings tacked away and new paintings displayed in various stages of progress. She has many large pieces that reflect her old style of painting fruits and flowers and leaves. She developed her own technique that involves numerous layers of color to give the painting a deep richness. She also found beauty in allowing “imperfections” through drips with various oil products to give her paintings a unique and original look. She now paints almost exclusively in an abstract style, focusing on color and texture (and using various “tools” to apply paint to the canvas as opposed to traditional brushes).

Despite not painting in watercolors anymore, Ansley does teach students one-on-one in her studio to paint in watercolors. In her spare time, Ansley likes to work in mosaics. Art literally pours out of her and into the world. Her artwork is rich and unique and brave, just like her.

If you would like to see Ansley’s work, either online or in person, check out her website: https://ansleypye.com.

-Anse Pye, 2022

FROM CONGRESSWOMAN JACOBS

Happy New Year, University Heights!

I am honored to represent California’s 53rd District in Congress and to fight for our community in Washington, D.C. While the past year was difficult for so many of us – and this pandemic isn’t behind us yet – I’m so proud of the resilience of our communities and what my office was able to accomplish on your behalf.

It has been quite a historic year in Congress. During my first year in office, I helped pass transformative pieces of legislation like the American Rescue Plan and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, along with securing significant funding for our district. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill is a once-in-a-generation investment in our nation, providing $550 billion in new funds to repair highways and bridges, expand reliable internet access, and help our communities recover from the devastating impacts of climate change. California alone is set to receive more than $44 billion over the next five years.

I was also proud to secure more than $1 billion of American Rescue Plan funding for our local governments and institutions of higher learning to get schools open, keep essential workers on payroll, and maintain essential services. And I was especially excited to have secured $3 million in Community Project Funding to create additional child care spots in San Diego and address the region’s child care crisis, while also improving our local libraries and making Balboa Park more accessible for everyone.

My office has worked hard to get money back to our community – returning $1,256,176.16 to constituents through federal casework and returning $132 million to more than 8,000 CA03 families through the expanded Child Tax Credit. Even amidst the pandemic, my team and I made it a priority to remain engaged in our district, participating in more than 1,800 meetings and events, responding to more than 35,000 letters from constituents, and completing more than 1,000 cases with federal agencies on behalf of our constituents.

As a Freshman, I’ve been honored to serve our community on the prestigious House Armed Services and House Foreign Affairs Committees, in addition to being the only Freshman on the Select Committee on Economic Disparity and Fairness in Growth.

I look forward to continuing to work towards a stronger, safer, and more equitable future for our community and our country. My office is always here to listen and to help – if you need assistance with a federal agency or want to connect with my team, please contact our district office at 619-280-5353.

Here’s to a happy and productive New Year on behalf of the community we all love!

-Congresswoman Sara Jacobs represents California District 53 in the U.S. Congress

Oh, Cherished Love

who should make up new love rhymes
on the eve of Saint Valentine’s
day

new loves come as the old ones depart,
Valentines is as sweet as can be tart

we dream of challenge and a brand new start

ride new love in a hopeful new cart

love starts up shining, bright as pure light
floats with Valentine Day’s high kite
but we may end up weeping by the night

careen is wise and never out of sight

we pray for cullies until they sting

wish for chocolates, more of everything

hold them tight for fear they might wing
for love can slip, fall from life’s blissful swing

we live to love, we hope to wed,
and hope it lasts through life’s big spread

we praise our brides, our groom’s fair head

and dine on unity, until we’re dead

but of all, we keep Valentine’s Day hot
romance must last after we tie the knot
we keep the rhymes coming, for those well caught
having snapped the one, love’s perfect jackpot

Jon Von Erb 2/2022
University Heights residents and businesses take decorating VERY seriously. While everyone was blown away by the amazing show our neighbors along Maryland put on for Halloween, Christmastime is when folks all over our neighborhood shine bright! This year we simplified the Lights in the Heights judging to a “Best Home” and “Honorable Mention” for each zone, plus an overall “Best Business.”

Special thanks to the UHCA Beautification Team who organized this year’s event and were the judges. Clearly this was not an easy task with so many awesome displays. If you want to get involved in planning and/or judging next year’s Lights in the Heights, please let our Beautification Team know at beautification@uhsd.org.

Congratulations to all of our “Bests” and “Honorables” … but everyone in UH is a “winner” because so many folks made the holiday season a little brighter and more beautiful.

- Jennifer Bishop, Chair
UHCA Beautification Team

2021 YEAR IN REVIEW
THANK YOU FOR MAKING 2021 A GREAT YEAR!
I’M EXCITED TO SEE WHAT 2022 HAS TO COME. CALL ME TO DAY FOR ANYTHING REAL ESTATE RELATED!

ROXANNE GOVARI
619.778.0577
ROXANNE@PEMBERLEYREALTY.COM
PEMBERLEYREALTY.COM
COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE BECAUSE WE CARE