



Rain with  
highs around  
60

# BEVERLY PRESS

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Volume 36 No. 1      Serving Beverly Hills, West Hollywood, Hancock Park and Miracle Mile      January 1, 2026

## Pawn Shop readies for kickoff

■ Melrose sports bar plans to open before World Cup

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

The Pawn Shop, a sports bar currently under construction at the corner of Melrose Avenue and Cahuenga Boulevard, is kicking off 2026 with plans for opening in time for the World Cup match between United States and Paraguay on June 12 at SoFi Stadium.

Owner Diego Torres-Palma has been restoring the former Brothers Collateral building on the north-west corner of the intersection

over the past year. Torres-Palma said he is excited about creating a new neighborhood gathering place where sports lovers can root for their favorite teams – something that is sorely missing from the area now, he added.

“There’s a real sense of alignment right now,” Torres-Palma said. “The progress on site is catching up with the excitement around the vision, and you can see

See **Pawn Shop** page 21



photo courtesy of Heather Duffy Boylston

The interior of the Pawn Shop is being meticulously restored ahead of the opening later this year.

## Beverly Hills prepares for Metro D Line subway extension opening

■ City creates response plan for homelessness

BY TABOR BREWSTER

The city of Beverly Hills is preparing for the opening of its first Metro train station. With the La Cienega station expected to open by March, the Beverly Hills City Council, city staff and the Beverly Hills Police Department are taking action to ensure public safety when Beverly Hills becomes connected to the greater Los Angeles area by subway.

Construction is nearly complete on Section One of the D Line subway extension project. In the first quarter of 2026, the Wilshire/La Brea, Wilshire/Fairfax and Wilshire/La Cienega stations are anticipated to open.

“The remaining work focuses on final testing, finishing touches inside the stations, and preparing the system for service,” a statement from Metro read. “This includes completing systems integration testing, final punch-list items, safety certifications and restoring the streets and sidewalks around the stations. These final steps are taken to ensure the stations, tunnels, trains and support



photo by Tabor Brewster

The La Cienega Metro station is expected to open by March.

systems all operate safely and reliably before opening.”

At a recent City Council study session, Beverly Hills Human Services Administrator Enisha Clark presented an overview of the steps city staff is taking to prepare for the La Cienega station’s opening.

“While the expansion brings important transportation benefits, it also creates new operational considerations during late-night and early morning hours,” Clark said.

She explained that because of the construction timeline, the La Cienega stop will temporarily function as an end-of-line station. While the Metro D Line will eventually connect Downtown Los Angeles to Westwood, the next section scheduled to be completed – which includes the Beverly Drive and Century City Stations – will not open until 2027. During this time, the La Cienega Station will be

See **Metro** page 21

## 2025 designed a new Beverly Hills skyline

■ Planning Commission approved nine builder’s remedy projects

BY TABOR BREWSTER

In 2025, the city of Beverly Hills underwent a transformative shift in the makeup of its housing units, with the approval of several builder’s remedy projects that will recast the skyline. At the beginning of 2025, there were a total of eight affordable housing units in Beverly Hills. However, the builder’s remedy projects approved in 2025 will increase the city’s affordable housing stock to include more than 130 units.

The builder’s remedy is a state provision that allows private developers to bypass local code regulations when a project contains affordable housing. The provision takes effect when a municipality’s housing element – a state-mandated outline of zoning for afford-



rendering courtesy of CARA Architecture

A 19-story building at 145 S. Rodeo Drive will include 30 residential units.

able housing within the city – is out of compliance.

The city of Beverly Hills’ housing element for the 2021-29 cycle

was out of compliance for approximately three years between 2021-24.

See **Beverly Hills** page 22

## Jackie Rocco looks ahead to new position in WeHo

■ Longtime West Hollywood staffer takes over as city manager

BY RANCE COLLINS

For the last 18 years, Jackie Rocco has been a familiar face in the city of West Hollywood. From city parking operations manager to business development manager to assistant city manager, there isn’t an element of the city that Rocco hasn’t had a hand in guiding. Now, with City Manager David Wilson’s retirement, Rocco will step into Wilson’s former role this month.

“The selection of Jackie Rocco as our next city manager is especially meaningful for all of us in West Hollywood who have had the joy of knowing her and working with her,” Mayor Chelsea

Byers said. “Over the past several months, the city conducted a comprehensive national search and screened more than 70 talented candidates. In the end, it was clear that Jackie brings not only exceptional expertise, but also an unmatched commitment to the West Hollywood community. We are confident that we’ve chosen the very best person to help guide our city forward.”

“I have been honored to serve the city of West Hollywood as a staff member since 2008, and over that time I’ve developed a deep understanding of the community,” Rocco said.

A San Fernando Valley resident, Rocco spends her workdays in West Hollywood. Originally from New York, she grew up in Puerto Rico and later moved back to the West Coast to attend

See **Rocco** page 21

1946

Occupant  
Los Angeles 36 Calif

**PARKLABREA NEWS**

VOL. 6 ISSUE 12 PUBLISHING THE 1ST OF EACH MONTH MON. 1ST 1946

**PARK CHATTER**

Here we are right smack dab in the middle of the vacation season and your reporter is still back at work. They should change the wording of that vacation "there's no rest for the wicked" to include journalists.

You can possibly understand my feelings as I sit a very evasive goodbye to Mr. Rance Collins, a good friend of a person who is leaving for Alaska. I don't know why she chose this particular part of our country as her vacation land but damn did she make Alaska – did she! All as her vacation land but damn did she make Alaska – did she! All as her vacation land but damn did she make Alaska – did she!

2026

80 Years

of Publishing

PARKLABREA NEWS BEVERLY PRESS

2025: A year like no other

Twelve months marked by tragedy, loss, chaos, resilience and hope



CALENDAR

Comedy of Bobby Lee

Enjoy an evening of comedy with Bobby Lee & Friends on Friday, Jan. 2, at 6:30 p.m. in the Laugh Factory’s Original Room, and on Monday, Jan. 5, at 8 p.m., in the Belly Room. Lee is a Los Angeles-based comedian, actor and podcaster. General admission is \$36.05 on Jan. 2, \$25.20 on Jan. 5. The show is for guests 21 and older, with a two-drink minimum. 8433 Sunset Blvd. thecomedystore.com.

Jane Monheit

Catalina Jazz Club welcomes award-winning jazz singer Jane Monheit back to her “second home” on Friday, Jan. 2, and Saturday, Jan. 3. With her 13th album and first self-titled recording, Monheit is bringing new energy to the songbook and far beyond. The project, developed over years of touring with her West Coast Band, includes songs old and new presented with dynamic new arrangements. Featuring composers from Ivan Lins to Stephen Sondheim, the album highlights Monheit’s versatility as an artist, presenting her music in a vibrant new light. Showtimes are at 8:30 p.m. Tickets start at \$46.70. 6725 Sunset Blvd. catalinajazzclub.com.



‘Demolition Man’

Film fans are invited to a screening of “Demolition Man” (1993) on Saturday, Jan. 3, at noon at the Los Feliz Theatre. Starring Sylvester

Stallone, Wesley Snipes and Sandra Bullock, the film follows a cop who is brought out of suspended animation in prison to pursue an old ultra-violent enemy loose in a nonviolent future society. General admission is \$15; \$10 for members. 1822 N. Vermont Ave. americancinematheque.com.

LACMA art tour

Join the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for a 30-minute tour of “Deep Cuts: Block Printing Across Cultures” on Saturday, Jan. 3, at 12:30 p.m. “Deep Cuts” explores the world’s oldest and most versatile method of making multiple images. More than 150 works from Asia, Europe and the Americas present the medium as a means of creative expression and a vehicle for mass production that enabled images and ideas to widely circulate. Textiles, prints and books offer intricate patterns and striking imagery that reveal block printing’s global history. LACMA’s Resnick Pavilion, 5905 Wilshire Blvd. lacma.org.



Close Enemies

Close Enemies performs on Saturday, Jan. 3, at the Whisky a Go Go on the Sunset Strip. The powerhouse band features legendary musician Tom Hamilton, multiple Grammy winner, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame member and bassist of Aerosmith, legendary drummer Tony Brock (The Babys and Rod Stewart), touring veterans Peter Stroud (Sheryl Crow and Don Henley) and Trace Foster on guitar, and vocalist Chasen Hampton, who has been singing professionally since the age of 11. The show also includes Dead Groove, Kamenar and The Deffades. Doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$38.60. 8901 W. Sunset Blvd. whiskyagogo.com/calendar/events/14345303/close-enemies-dead-groove-kamenar-the-deffades.

Tony Jupiter

Music fans won’t want to miss Tony Jupiter performing on Saturday, Jan. 3, at the El Rey Theatre in the Miracle Mile. Tony Jupiter, a Chicano surf goth band formed in 2018 in El Paso, Texas, is known for nostalgic surf rock riffs, haunting atmospheres and explosive live shows. Audience members are encouraged to dress in costume to the renaissance themed show. The concert also includes Lalalove, Rangoo and Beach Cowboys. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. General admission is \$35.25. 5515 Wilshire Blvd. theelrey.com.



Beverly Hills Chamber

The Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce is holding its January “Get to Know Your Chamber” event on Tuesday, Jan. 6, from 8:15-10 a.m. Learn about the benefits and opportunities available to members and what the chamber is doing to assist them. Participation is free; registration is required. 9400 S. Santa Monica Blvd., Second Floor. members.beverlyhillschamber.com.

‘Fast & Furious’ book

Book Soup is hosting Barry Hertz for a discussion and book signing of “Welcome To The Family: The

Explosive Story Behind Fast & Furious, The Blockbusters That Supercharged the World” on Wednesday, Jan. 7, at 7 p.m. Hertz will be joined in conversation by Phillip Iscove. The book offers an exclusive look inside the surprising history and contentious future of the “Fast & Furious” franchise, a series that uncannily anticipated the shifting currents of pop culture while changing the business of global entertainment. 8818 Sunset Blvd. booksoup.com/event/2026-01-07/barry-hertz.

Japanese sculpture

The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles presents “The Beauty of Japanese Sculpture: Heian Period” on Wednesday, Jan. 7, at 8:30 p.m. Michael VanHartingsveldt, who is currently writing a dissertation about the Buddhist sculptor profession in medieval Japan, leads a discussion on the gradual shift toward wood as the primary material for Buddhist sculpture during the 700s BCE. The shift established a sculpture-making tradition from which new aesthetics and techniques emerged during the following Heian period. Sculpture-making reached new heights and reinforced the potential of wood as a medium. Admission is free, but registration is required. 5700 Wilshire Blvd, Ste. 100. flalc.org/event-details.php/320/the-beauty-of-japanese-sculpture-heian-period.

Contracting for small businesses

Small business owners interested in contracting with the city of Los Angeles are encouraged to participate in a virtual workshop on Thursday, Jan. 8, from 3-4:30 p.m. The free virtual workshop with Los Angeles City Council President Marqueece Harris-Dawson, 8th District, will present information about services and benefits available through the regional Contractor Development and Bonding Program. lacondev.com.



‘An Inspector Calls’

Theatre Forty moves its production of “An Inspector Calls” to the historic Greystone Mansion in Beverly Hills for a limited engagement from Thursday, Jan. 8, through Saturday, Jan. 18. The classic mystery was written by J.B. Priestley is directed by Cate Caplin. A young woman meets an untimely demise and a respectable family is subject to a routine inquiry in connection with the death. An inspector determines that each family member is implicated. The friendly and close-knit family is shown to be selfish, self-centered and cowardly. A surprising revelation turns up in the end, making it a thriller not to be missed. Showtimes are at 7:30 p.m., Thursday through Saturday; 2 p.m., Sunday; with special shows at 2 p.m. on Jan. 10 and 7:30 p.m. on Jan. 14. Admission is \$75. 905 Loma Vista Drive. (310)364-3606. theatre40.org.

Rock ‘n’ roll photos

The Grammy Museum welcomes photographers Henry Diltz and Jay Blakesberg to the museum’s intimate 200-seat Clive Davis Theater for an engaging evening of visuals and storytelling on Tuesday, Jan. 13, from 7-9 p.m. Sharing images of artists they’ve worked with, Diltz and Blakesberg will tell stories behind their shoots and discuss how photographing the artists changed over the decades. Tickets are \$38.24. 800 W. Olympic Blvd. grammymuseum.org.

80 years of publishing

Don’t we look great at 80? That’s right, eight decades ago in 1946, the Park Labrea News first published, coinciding with the burgeoning construction of the Park La Brea apartment complex, which was then quickly becoming one of the largest in the world – a status that remains with more than 4,200 units total. The newspaper initially served the development, announcing community news, events and spotlighting its residents.

The Park Labrea News eventually expanded its coverage along the Miracle Mile and Fairfax District. In 1990, after it was purchased by Karen and Michael Villalpando, it increased its circulation and upgraded from a biweekly to weekly paper. In

1991, 35 years ago, it expanded even further under the Beverly Press banner. Today, the Beverly Press and Park Labrea News continue to serve the iconic Park La Brea, as well as Beverly Hills, West Hollywood, Carthay Circle, Fairfax, Hollywood, Hancock Park and the Miracle Mile.

All year long for our 80th anniversary, we will be showcasing our storied history, from the newspaper’s inception through to today’s award-winning news team. We will also take a look back at our neighborhood’s history – the people and places that have lived in it, worked in it and shaped it into the community it is today.

Michael and Karen Villalpando Publishers

Beverly Hills mayor, city leaders meet with Israeli delegation



photo courtesy of the city of Beverly Hills

On Dec. 22, Beverly Hills Mayor Sharon Nazarian met with representatives from the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss best practices related to public safety and security. In November, Mayor Nazarian traveled to Israel for the International Mayors Conference that showcased the country’s use of technology relating to safety. The visit marked an opportunity to show Beverly Hills’ innovative public safety programs and its forward-thinking approach to keep its community safe.

For information, visit beverlyhills.org.

Free emergency training available

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health announced on Dec. 29 that more than 6,000 people were trained in essential life-saving skills in 2025 such as hands-only CPR, overdose reversal, mental health training and stopping excessive bleeding in an emergency.

In 2025, 6,096 individuals completed the Community Readiness Champions Gold Medal Training at community events and government staff trainings. Participants included 4,459 public health department staff, 994 staff from other county and Los Angeles city departments, 462 community members and 181 college students. Additionally, the Department of Public Health organized 799 Community Readiness Champions community outreach events and completed 73,212 training modules that provided hands-on training for community members.

The Community Readiness Champions Gold Medal Training is an innovative countywide public health initiative that adapted existing

trainings into one comprehensive course comprised of five modules of life saving skills: Mental Health Awareness During Emergencies, Stop The Bleed, Naloxone Training, Hands-Only CPR with Automated External Defibrillator Awareness and the “5 and 5 Method” – five back blows followed by the Heimlich maneuver – for choking incidents. Trainings are offered free to community groups, businesses, faith-based organizations, colleges, universities and high schools.

“The Community Readiness Champions Gold Medal Training was launched to provide individuals with life-saving skills to take action during an emergency or disaster, especially when emergency response may be delayed,” Los Angeles County Department of Public Health director Barbara Ferrer said.

The Community Readiness Champions Gold Medal Training will continue to be offered free in 2026. For information, visit ph.lacounty.gov/communityreadinesschampions.

BEVERLY PRESS  
PARK LABREA NEWS

Founded 1946

8444 WILSHIRE BLVD.  
4TH FLOOR  
BEVERLY HILLS, CA 90211  
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BEVERLYPRESS.COM

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The Beverly Press and Park Labrea News are weekly newspapers, published on Thursdays. Mail subscription is \$120 annually. Decreed newspapers of general circulation, entitled to publish legal advertising, Feb. 10, 1960 by Superior Court Order No 736637. Decreed newspapers of general circulation, entitled to publish legal advertising in the City of Beverly Hills and the County of Los Angeles, Dec. 22, 2020 by Superior Court Case Number 19STCP04891. Government Code 6008.



# Zbur tackles legislative goals in challenging year

BY RANCE COLLINS

Assemblyman Rick Chavez Zbur (D-Hollywood) has juggled personal struggles with the strong headwinds faced by Los Angeles County in 2025. In fall 2024, the 51st District representative was diagnosed with prostate cancer.

“The beginning of the session, admittedly, was difficult,” Zbur said. “I wasn’t feeling well. I had to start getting back to Sacramento less than six weeks after surgery. And so, it was a bit of a slog doing that. But I think the good news is that the surgery has really addressed the cancer. We’ve been doing the tests that you normally do, and the tests had been coming back as non-detect for cancer. And by probably July, I was feeling 100% again. And so, I’ve got my energy levels back and feeling good, and my doctor has basically said that the likelihood of any recurrence is close to nil.”

Zbur also had to deal with a big loss in his family. On the day he was scheduled to begin cancer treatment, Nov. 20, 2024, his mother died at 100 years old.

“She lived with me, and I was able to care for her over the last four years of her life. And one of the benefits was that I had that time with her. [Losing her] obviously was a hard transition, but I’m very grateful for the time I was able to spend with her because most people don’t have the ability to sort of live with a parent at the at the tail end of their time here,” he said.

No matter personal difficulties, Zbur said that he is proud of the accomplishments he was able to achieve in 2025.

“I had a successful legislative year,” he said. “[I’m proud of] the expansion of the film and television tax credit and modernization of that. Our community has been really hit hard by the decline in film and television production in the area. A lot of that was due to, really, the fact that our tax credit program wasn’t competitive anymore, and we had other states and countries really luring California productions away. And so, the expansion of the credit program – more than doubling it and modernizing it – was probably one of my biggest priorities. It was a relatively heavy lift, but we got that through with a very good vote. We’re already seeing productions coming back into Southern California, and so I’m very proud of that work.”

Zbur said he was also proud of the fact that he was able to address antisemitism with a bill that focused on Jewish children and families in the K-12 school system.

“We saw horrendous levels of antisemitism sweeping our communities,” Zbur said. “It has become a widespread problem in schools across the state, where we have had school districts failing to respond. And so I’m just very proud of that bill, that we were able to get that through with almost unanimous support in the assembly, in the senate and signed into law by the governor, and that will be going into

effect in January.”

Zbur is now looking ahead to a year of progress for his constituents and eyeing reelection to his post in November.

“I get up every day, and one of the true honors of serving this position is that I have the ability to really try to address the key challenges that people in my district and in the state of California are facing,” he said. “And I think over the course of the last three years I have that I’ve been in office, I have actually been successful in accomplishing some really significant pieces of legislation that have improved the lives of people in my district.”

Zbur pointed to bills he pushed forward, too, that addressed retail crime, as well as others that supported small businesses, the LGBTQ+ community, health care, abortion access and combatting climate change.

Housing remains of a focus for the assemblyman in 2026. Earlier this year, Zbur was one of a handful of Democratic representatives that opposed SB79, a law which will allow denser housing developments to be built near public transit.

“I think we made some big advances last year in making it easier to build affordable housing in the state of California,” he said. “There was one bill that I felt did that in a way that didn’t protect our neighborhoods as well as it should. What I’ll say is that I will continue to be a legislator that is that digs into the issues in a deep way, and really tries to make sure that we’re



photo courtesy of Rick Chavez Zbur

Assemblyman Rick Chavez Zbur will run for reelection in 2026.

achieving solutions to problems that we have – that we’re doing that in a way that is reflecting all of the goals that we have as a community, not just some of them. A lot of the problems we have are complex, and they deserve complex solutions.”

Zbur also emphasized other legislative goals he has for the year ahead.

“One of the big issues is going to be how we address the rising costs of homeowners insurance and insurance on affordable housing.

One of the problems that we’re sort of seeing in rising rents is the fact that insurance premiums are going [through] the roof, and that affects not only homeowners, but renters. So, we have to get our arms around rising insurance costs,” Zbur said. “In addition to that, I think we see the benefits of AI out there, but there are a lot of unintended consequences, including potential impacts on job loss and other things that I think we need to be focusing on.”

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City Hall

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Christmas Tree Display

LL

Lights on the Lily Pond

GG

Glowing Gardens at  
Beverly Cañon Gardens

HL

Holiday Lights

M

Menorah Display

JT

Jolly Trolley

RD

Rodeo Nights,  
Holiday Lights

SS

Santa with Reindeer  
& Sleigh

VC

Visitor Center

P

Parking





photo by Edwin Folven  
A fire damaged unit in an apartment building on Melrose Avenue near Van Ness Avenue.

## Fire damages apartment in building on Melrose Avenue

■ Waymo vehicle temporarily stops in restricted area

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

The Los Angeles Fire Department extinguished a blaze in an apartment at 5234 W. Melrose Ave. on Dec. 29 in a neighborhood near Paramount Studios. Firefighters were called to the building at 9:51 p.m. and found flames in a second-floor unit at the rear of the structure. The fire extended into the attic and the first firefighters to arrive cut a hole in the roof for ventilation while simultaneously extinguishing the fire from inside unit. The fire was extinguished at 9:51 p.m. and no injuries were report-

ed. The cause was undetermined at the scene. LAFD spokeswoman Lyndsey Lantz said the fire is not believed to be arson but had no further information about the cause, which remains under investigation.

While firefighters were battling the blaze, a Waymo self-driving ride-hailing vehicle reportedly drove into an area on Melrose Avenue that had been cordoned off by the fire department and temporarily froze before turning around and leaving. A spokesman for Waymo said the vehicle was taking a passenger to a destination when it came into the restricted area and had to stop before recalibrating and driving away. The presence of the Waymo did not affect the firefighting operation.

## Court streamlines process for non-dispute divorce cases

The Los Angeles County Superior Court offers a new legal pathway starting on Jan. 1 that simplifies the divorce process for California couples seeking an amicable dissolution of a marriage or domestic partnership.

Instead of following the traditional adversarial process associated with most divorces and legal separations, the new approach streamlines the legal process through the Joint Petition for Dissolution or Legal Separation program, providing a pathway for parties who agree on all issues to initiate a case in a collaborative manner.

Parties may qualify for a Joint Petition for Dissolution or Legal Separation if they fully agree on all issues including property, support and child-related matters; want to file jointly; and do not qualify for a Petition for Summary Dissolution due to time married, children or assets. Parties may only qualify for the Petition for Summary Dissolution if they have been

married for less than five years, have no children and have limited community property.

Once the Joint Petition for Dissolution or Legal Separation is filed, parties are still required to disclose financial information to one another; resolve any remaining issues that arise by mutual agreement; and incorporate the agreement into a judgment packet submitted to the court for approval. Under the new process, parties pursue a collaborative approach to file a joint petition, allowing parties to reduce processing times and potentially reduce legal costs associated with the traditional adversarial divorce process, in which each party files separately before the court.

If either party wishes to no longer continue with the collaborative process, they may revoke the joint petition and convert the case into a traditional divorce or legal separation proceeding before the court. For information and forms, visit [lacourt.ca.gov](http://lacourt.ca.gov).

## Details remain a mystery in death of girl whose body was found in singer's car

■ Speculation grows as grand jury reviews complex case

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

The new year is starting with renewed speculation about the death of 15-year-old Celeste Rivas Hernandez, a teen whose decomposed body was found in September in a Hollywood impound lot in the trunk of a vehicle registered to the singer D4vd.

The 20-year-old singer, whose real name is David Anthony Burke, has not been named by authorities as a suspect in Hernandez's death. TMZ reported on Dec. 29 that Burke will "likely" be charged in the case. However, an LAPD spokesman said that the police department has no updates or new information in the case. A judge previously granted an LAPD request for a hold on information pending the outcome of an investigation into Rivas Hernandez's death. The investigation is currently under review by a Los Angeles County grand jury and there is no timeline for when the review will conclude.

TMZ reported that "sources" said the grand jury will likely issue an indictment and that authorities believe Burke was involved in her death, but did not name the sources. TMZ also reported that the grand jury review could last through February.

LAPD spokesman Tony Im said authorities would not divulge any further details at this time information because it could jeopardize the outcome of a highly-sensitive case, and reiterated that the police department cannot confirm any of the details being reported. News outlets



photo courtesy of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department  
The death of 15-year-old Celeste Rivas Hernandez, shown in a flyer when she was reported missing in 2024, remains under investigation and no charges have been filed.

previously reported that Rivas Hernandez's body had been frozen and she had been decapitated, both details the LAPD later said were untrue.

Rivas Hernandez, of Lake Elsinore in Riverside County, was reported missing by her family in April 2024 when she was 13 years old, approximately a year and a half before her severely decomposed body was located on Sept. 5 in a Tesla registered to Burke at the Hollywood Tow lot at 1015 N. Mansfield Ave. The teen's family members told police that Rivas Hernandez ran away twice before and that she had a boyfriend named David.

The Tesla was towed to the Hollywood Tow lot after it had been parked for weeks in the same place in the 1400 block of Bluebird Avenue in the Hollywood Hills, approximately two blocks from a home where Burke was staying. Employees at the tow lot noticed a foul odor coming from the vehicle

and called police, who discovered Rivas Hernandez's remains in the trunk on Sept. 8. The Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner took custody of the remains and conducted an autopsy, and the cause of death remains deferred per the LAPD hold on the case.

Private investigator Steve Fischer, who said he was hired by the owner of the home where Burke was staying, appeared on NewsNation on Dec. 29 and said authorities discovered a "brand new chain saw" and "burn cage," which he described as an incinerator, in the residence. Fischer said the items were "unused" but said may show "intent."

Funeral services were held for Rivas Hernandez on Oct. 6. Anyone with information about the case is urged to call investigators with the LAPD's Robbery-Homicide Division at (213)486-6890. During weekends and off-hours, call the LAPD's hotline at (877)LAPD247.

## Charges filed in crash that took life of Loyola student

Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman announced on Dec. 29 that a 33-year-old woman from Los Angeles was charged with hitting and killing an 18-year-old Loyola High School student while driving under the influence in Manhattan Beach earlier this year.

"This case represents an unimaginable loss — not only for Braun Levi's family, but for his school, his teammates and an entire community that watched a remarkable young man build a bright future," Hochman said. "My office has zero tolerance for reckless behavior that endangers lives. Driving under the influence is not a mistake; it is a profound disregard for human life. We extend our deepest condolences to the Levi family and everyone grieving this devastating loss."

Jenia Resha Belt is charged with one felony count of murder and one felony count of gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated, as well as one misdemeanor count of driving when privilege is suspended

or revoked. She is being held on \$2 million bail. Her arraignment was continued to Jan. 13 in Department C of the Torrance Courthouse.

On May 4 at approximately 12:45

a.m., Belt allegedly struck Levi while she was driving intoxicated and speeding as Levi was crossing Sepulveda Boulevard. Belt faces up to 15 years to life in state prison.

## Hotline established to report abuse by county employees

Los Angeles County recently announced that operators are available 24 hours to take reports of known or suspected child sexual abuse committed by county employees, contractors or volun-

teers. The county recently launched the 211 hotline, a centralized, independent reporting platform, as part of plans to prevent abuse.

Victims, families and witnesses are urged to report abuse or sus-

pected abuse by calling 211 or visiting [211la.org/report-childsexual-abuse](http://211la.org/report-childsexual-abuse). Reports will be automatically flagged for a senior county team charged with assessing claims and expediting investigations.

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# Abandoned RVs roll out of the way in 2026

■ Nuisance vehicles will be removed more efficiently

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

A new state law goes into effect on Jan. 1 that will make it easier for the city to remove dilapidated recreational vehicles that are parked for long periods of time on public streets, becoming a nuisance in neighborhoods.

Assembly Bill 630, which was authored by state Assemblyman Mark Gonzalez, offers a new tool to address the problem, streamlining the process for the local municipalities to have RVs towed away, dismantled and destroyed. The law only applies to Los Angeles County and Alameda County in the Bay Area – areas where parked RVs have become a prevalent problem. Gonzalez said constituents throughout the city voiced concerns about the parked RVs, and he added that it is important to make changes that will provide relief.

“I consider [this] a very important piece of legislation that will be going into effect in 2026 that I know even the governor’s team

worked with us on,” Gonzalez said. “This bill provides the local governments with a more clear, more efficient process to be able to dispose of those abandoned and inoperable recreational vehicles.”

Prior to the new law, cities were only allowed to destroy RVs valued at \$500 or less without going through an extensive process. All RVs valued at more than \$500 were required by law to be stored to allow the owner time to reclaim the vehicle or property, and then sold at auction if the owner did not reclaim the RV. Santiago’s law raises the threshold to destroy RVs up to \$4,000 in value, enabling the city to permanently remove the most damaged and dilapidated vehicles. He stressed that the goal is not to criminalize being homeless or living in an RV, and added that resources are required to be provided to any people inside RVs prior to the vehicles being impounded. However, Gonzalez said rules need to be in place to make it easier for the vehicles to be cleared from the public right of way when they become a problem.

“We’re not punishing people for being homeless, because I think that is something that folks were misun-

derstanding when it came to this issue,” Gonzalez said. “This just provides that narrow humane tool that addresses public safety hazards that are caused by these truly abandoned and operable vehicles.”

Senior Lead Officer Daniel Chavez, with the Los Angeles Police Department’s Olympic Division, said abandoned RVs are a complicated issue that sometimes require many steps to remove. An RV that was severely damaged in a collision in November and ended up parked on Van Ness Avenue just north of Third Street took a month to remove, Chavez added. The process required coordination with 13th District Councilman Hugo Soto-Martinez’s office, which brought in L.A. Sanitation to clear the damaged vehicle of hazardous waste and propane. Chavez said the RV was 31 feet long and required a special tow truck to haul away, which also delayed the removal until the truck was available on Dec. 16.

“The one on Van Ness was actually involved in a collision and was parked there legally at first because it couldn’t be towed that night. I don’t know if anybody was living in it at the time. We are still trying to



photo by Edwin Folven

A dilapidated RV that was parked on Van Ness Avenue for more than a month was finally removed on Dec. 16.

figure all that out,” Chavez said. “It hadn’t been registered since 2023 so I was able to get it towed based on that, but it took a little more time because it needed a heavy-duty tow and we had to get it inspected.”

Chavez said RVs will continue to be addressed on a case-by-case basis and will still require multiple steps to address. He said he welcomed Gonzalez’s new law, however, because it will give the city the ability to permanently get more of

the most dilapidated RVs off the streets.

“It’s going to make it easier to impound it and crush it. Anything with under \$4,000 can be crushed without being stored,” he added. “We’re taking the ones that really shouldn’t be out there on the streets, the most dangerous vehicles. From a community standpoint, it’s an eyesore. I’m very proactive on it, especially anytime I get complaints.”

## L.A. approves roadmap to steadily improve parks

The Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks Board of Commissioners adopted a new Parks Needs Assessment on Dec. 18 that provides a roadmap for the city to improve the parks and recreation system, which has been hit hard by stagnant spending and declining staffing. The PNA identifies projects and strategies that could produce tangible improvements to the system quickly and benefit many residents with adequate funding. It also lays out strategies for steadily bringing the whole system up to par with other cities.

The PNA is the result of extensive community engagement that began in January, a park-by-park analysis of conditions and amenities and an innovative approach to prioritizing spending on improving existing parks and building new parks based on where investments will serve the most people in the highest areas of need. It includes a thorough analysis of the history of funding for recreation and parks in the city, the causes of the current budget and staffing shortfalls and a variety of options for increasing revenue and finding savings.

The PNA is informed by the results of a citywide survey of residents and dozens of community meetings across Los Angeles. It

evaluates the state of more than 16,000 acres of public parkland in nearly 500 parks as well as 100 recreation centers and facilities. It will guide future investment in park infrastructure and amenities to help ensure the city’s park system can properly function and provide safe, clean, enjoyable parks and recreation facilities.

“We appreciate the input received from the thousands of Angelenos who have participated in this PNA process,” RAP General Manager Jimmy Kim said. “This feedback from the community will help guide RAP’s investments, operations, maintenance and programs for years to come, focusing on the priorities that matter most in our neighborhoods.”

While L.A. parks remain popular, parks funding is lagging behind the growth of the city, according to the analysis. The PNA found that RAP’s budget has not kept up with the city’s overall budget growth or inflation. RAP’s operating budget grew 35% between fiscal years 2009-23, half the rate of the city’s 68% overall budget increase during the same period. The city’s park system continues to grow, but faces severe challenges as its workforce shrinks, making it more difficult to maintain facilities, offer programs

and care for parks and open spaces. Full and part-time staff at RAP have decreased as park acreage has increased.

While funding is tight and new revenue streams are needed, the PNA serves as a guide to bring measurable results to L.A. parks. The PNA proposes a prioritization strategy based on feedback from residents across the city and input from the PNA’s steering committee, neighborhood councils, technical advisory committee, advisory boards and interested groups. The prioritization process identifies areas that most need improvement as well as new and expanded park space. It also provides guidance for operations and maintenance priorities.

For information on the PNA findings and recommendations, visit the project website at [needs.parks.lacounty.gov](https://needs.parks.lacounty.gov).

## Metro seeks new members for taxpayer oversight committee

Metro is inviting members of the public to apply for two openings on the Measure M Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee. The committee plays an important role in providing independent oversight of Measure M funds and helping ensure transportation investments across Los Angeles County stay on track and aligned with voter intent. Metro is especially interested in applicants with professional experience as a retired federal or state judge, or as a licensed architect or engineer with a background in transportation design or construction. Committee members serve five-year terms and meet a few times each year.

Los Angeles County voters

approved Measure M with 71.15% support in 2016. The no sunset half-cent sales tax measure funds projects to ease traffic, repair local streets and sidewalks, expand public transportation, earthquake retrofit bridges and subsidize transit fares for students, seniors and persons with disabilities.

Measure M partially funds many Metro projects, as well as making funding available to local jurisdictions via the Metro Subregional Program and Metro Active Transportation, Transit and First/Last Mile Program.

For information, visit [metro.net/about/la-metros-measure-m-independent-taxpayer-oversight-committee-seeks-new-members-3](https://metro.net/about/la-metros-measure-m-independent-taxpayer-oversight-committee-seeks-new-members-3).

## Forum seeks applicants for board

The L.A. Forum for Architecture and Urban Design is inviting candidates to apply to join its board of directors. The four-year term is a commitment and an opportunity to actively shape the forum’s initiatives and drive the organization’s mission to provoke dialogue on architecture and urbanism and collaborate with multi-disciplinary design and urbanism aficionados in the L.A. creative community.

L.A. Forum board member positions are volunteer based. Members contribute time,

expertise and leadership to support the mission and work of the nonprofit. Interested applicants should visit [docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSedzCqAUzuUNwN4MW5YXys2URhjO5xUzTHaaUfhuCGUMeiHA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSedzCqAUzuUNwN4MW5YXys2URhjO5xUzTHaaUfhuCGUMeiHA/viewform).

Applications must be received by Saturday, Jan. 31, at 11:59 p.m. The L.A. Forum Board of Directors will begin review of potential new board members on Jan. 15. New directors will be announced by the end of February and will begin their term in March.

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# Harry and Sally remain the ultimate New Year's nostalgia trip

BY RANCE COLLINS

That big ball dropped at midnight, and “Auld Lang Syne” once again wafted through the streets – from New York City to our fair Los Angeles, the comforting hum of “old acquaintances” is, ironically, one that will never be forgot. The Scottish tune, at least according to the internet, dates to the 1700s. What I’m certain of is that it appears in more movies than just about any other melody, perhaps second to “Happy Birthday” or “In the Mood.” It’s certainly up there.

“It’s a Wonderful Life” memorably ends on the song, and it can be found in everything from “Sex and the City” to “Out of Africa.” It is, of course, most frequently used in conjunction with a holiday – Christmas often and New Year’s Eve, even more so. If any piece of music calls to mind a collective visual image, I’d bet, its “Auld Lang Syne” – streamers, balloons bouncing through a crowd, celebratory kisses, and – at least for me – Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan, finally admitting their love for one another.

Filmmaker Rob Reiner’s death certainly brought a kaleidoscope of sensory memories for film and television lovers, be it “All in the Family,” “Spinal Tap” or “Stand By Me.” For me, “When Harry Meet Sally...” was the first thought. To be sure, it is not really an L.A. movie – though it did shoot at least some interior scenes at Hollywood Center Studios on Las Palmas Avenue and early in the film Crystal and Ryan have a meal at a since-removed café in Wilmington, California (standing in for the Midwest). Some would cite “When Harry Met Sally...” as the quintessential New York movie. But what place it might represent is way beyond the point, because the film is – for my money – a universal incarnation of the feeling of “Auld Lang Syne.”

Alchemy rarely strikes. Most pieces of art miss the mark in some shape or fashion. Some hit most of the right notes, then switch unnervingly to a minor key. Others play along, pleasant enough, but are forgotten as quickly as elevator music. “When Harry Met Sally...” is built, cleverly, on nostalgia, so that the movie itself feels familiar even upon first watch. Like the seminal Scottish melody, the film is a warm fire on a chilly morning, complete with your favorite blanket and a cup of cocoa.

Crystal is Harry. Ryan, of course, is Sally. Newly minted University of Chicago graduates in 1979, the

two strangers are paired up for a drive to New York City and the beginning of their adult lives. As they bicker their way through the journey, Harry postures that men and women can never truly be friends, a statement with which Sally ardently takes issue. After arriving in Manhattan, they part ways. They run into each again a few years later ... and then again a few years after that, at which point the pair becomes best friends. Eventually, as so happens, a mutual attraction develops and causes complications.

It would almost seem that the movie supports Harry’s theory, and yet the beauty of “When Harry Met Sally...” is that it rightfully understands that truly successful relationships have friendships as a foundation. The shared experiences the would-be couple have as “just friends” builds trust, builds love and builds something tangible that audiences continue to return to, some 36 years after its release.

Reiner’s career is full of nostalgia trips of varying varieties. “The Princess Bride” brings to life childhood fantasies. “The American President” crafts an idealistic executive branch. “Miserery” – dark as it is – takes Annie Wilkes’ (Kathy Bates) obsessive nostalgia for a literary character to tortuous extremes. Many-a tributes have called to mind the director’s consistency and versatility, particularly in his ‘80s and ‘90s work, but the sentimental quality that permeates his art is Reiner’s version of Hitchcock’s suspense. And, frankly, nobody does it better.

With “When Harry Met Sally...” Reiner is aided by the witty script crafted by the wry queen herself, Nora Ephron, whose own directorial flare would come to fruition with “Sleepless in Seattle” and “You’ve Got Mail.” Her words, down to the iconic utterance (by Reiner’s mother) of “I’ll have what she’s having,” are the perfect pairing for Reiner’s style. He’s not a showy filmmaker – his shot choices don’t call attention to themselves. He’s editing is seamless and logical. In the adorable interstitial moments in which elder couples recount their love stories, the camera stays stagnant, imploring the audience to observe the characters without editorializing, allowing the actors to create something genuine.

The nostalgia extends to the ways in which Harry and Sally build their friendship, littering their conversations with references, including “Casablanca,” the Olympics and Charlie Chaplin. Reiner pads out

the soundtrack, crafted by Harry Connick, Jr., with Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald and Bing Crosby. The chemistry between Crystal and Ryan sweep us up, and the call-backs to cultural touchstones layer the feels. The casting of Carrie Fisher, even, as Ryan’s best friend feels immediately comforting to the masses – a pop culture icon holding Sally’s hand and thereby having the audience’s back.

When “Auld Lang Syne” strikes and a new year begins in “When Harry Met Sally...” Harry speculates on the song’s meaning. Sally ultimately concludes “it’s about old friends.” As 2026 begins, Reiner’s nostalgia cinematic trips remain as old friends, acquaintances that will never be forgot whenever brought to mind.



photo courtesy of Columbia Pictures

Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal’s have sparkling chemistry in “When Harry Met Sally...”

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photo courtesy of Columbia Pictures

“When Harry Met Sally...” ends on a touching New Year’s Eve note.

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# City looks at new steps as tents return on Wilshire

■ More resources directed to keep area clear

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

Tents have returned to the sidewalk in front of the former 99 Cents Only Store building at 6121 Wilshire Blvd., where the city formerly removed an encampment last April just west of Fairfax Avenue. The city has been monitoring the site, which stayed clear for nearly eight months until a small group of people recently began setting up makeshift shelters in front of the boarded building. A spokesman for Los Angeles City Councilwoman Katy Yaroslavsky, 5th District, said more resources will be directed to the area now that unhoused people

have returned. “It continues to be one of the sites in the district where we are regularly engaged,” Yaroslavsky’s spokesman Leo Daube said. “We will do outreach and CARE Plus as necessary, and are working with LAHSA to make sure people are getting the resources they need as quickly as possible.” The city previously conducted multiple CARE Plus (Cleaning and Rapid Engagement) operations at the site, which involve removing tents and debris and power-washing sidewalks. During CARE Plus operations, any people staying at the site are given 72-hour notice that a cleaning will take place and belongings must be removed or will be confiscated. The city does not prohibit people from returning to a site after a CARE Plus cleaning concludes.

Last April, 27 people were moved into housing from an encampment that had grown over several weeks in front of the vacant 99 Cents Only Store building. The city kept the site clear through proactive monitoring, which Daube said will continue. He did not have a specific schedule for additional cleanups or CARE Plus operations, but added they are in the pipeline and that rain storms have added urgency to addressing the issue. The former 99 Cents Only Store building is owned by the family of the now-defunct retail chain’s founder Dave Gold, a longtime Carthay Circle resident who died in 2013. Daube said Yaroslavsky’s staff is in regular contact with the property owners, but no plans for development have yet been announced. “We are in regular communica-



photo by Edwin Folven

Tents have repopulated a space on the sidewalk in front of the former 99 Cents Only Store on Wilshire Boulevard.

tion with the Gold family and certainly we are interested in eliminating abandoned storefronts.” he added. “It’s definitely ongoing work that is going to require a long-term commitment to resolve.”

# L.A. transitions to coal-free energy generation



photo courtesy of Mayor Karen Bass’ office

Mayor Karen Bass marked the transition to 100% clean energy with city and LADWP leaders.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass announced a historic milestone in the city’s accelerated transition to 100% clean energy by 2035. Bass said the city has fully divested from coal use in Los Angeles’ power supply. The achievement marks a pivotal step in the city’s decades-long commitment to environmental sustainability and climate leadership. “This is a defining moment for the city of Los Angeles. L.A.’s coal divestment is not just about discontinuing the use of coal to power our city – it’s about building a clean energy economy that benefits every Angeleno. This milestone will further accelerate our transition to 100% clean energy by 2035,” Bass said. “With major investments in solar, wind and EV charging infrastructure, record amounts of stormwater captured and bold ini-

tiatives in place to reduce carbon emissions citywide, we are taking action to build a cleaner, greener city that will benefit Angelenos for generations to come.” The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power no longer receives coal-fueled energy from the Intermountain Power Project facility in Utah, which supplied the last remaining source of coal-fueled energy for L.A. The move follows LADWP’s earlier divestment from the Navajo Generating Station in 2016 and fulfills a long-standing promise to eliminate coal from L.A.’s energy portfolio. LADWP now utilizes energy from hydrogen-capable generating units that were recently constructed at the IPP facility, part of a modernization known as IPP Renewed. The new units currently run on natural gas and are capable of running on a fuel blend of natural gas and up to 30% green hydrogen, with a plan to eventually transition to 100% green hydrogen as a fuel source in the future. Green hydrogen is expected to be added to the fuel mix in 2026. The changes at the IPP Renewed facility are part of LADWP’s broader strategy for achieving 100% carbon-free energy by 2035. The city has made significant investments in solar, wind, battery storage and renewable technologies to replace fossil fuels, and is working to expand local solar, energy efficiency and demand-response customer initiatives to further support the transition. “This transition has been years in the making,” LADWP CEO and Chief Engineer Janisse Quiñones said. “It reflects the hard work of our employees, the support of our customers and the leadership of our elected officials. Together, we are building a cleaner, more resilient energy future for Los Angeles.” For information, visit [ladwp.com](http://ladwp.com) and [mayor.lacity.gov](http://mayor.lacity.gov).

# Cedars-Sinai convenes AI experts for health symposium

Cedars-Sinai and Canada’s largest research hospital, University Health Network, recently brought together more than 200 international leaders in applied artificial intelligence, medicine and surgery for the second annual Artificial Intelligence in Medicine Symposium. A follow-up to a successful inaugural event in 2024, the symposium sought to advance the practical deployment of artificial intelligence in health care. Attendees from more than 40 institutions explored how to implement AI within clinical settings during the event while addressing critical regulatory and ethical considerations. “The event was designed to offer a road map to help health systems innovate, implement and integrate AI technologies to improve patient

outcomes,” said Dr. Sumeet Chugh, vice dean and chief artificial intelligence health research officer at Cedars-Sinai, and co-chair of the symposium. “By convening experts from around the world, we created opportunities to exchange ideas, tackle challenges and accelerate the safe and effective use of AI in health care.” The partnership between co-hosts Cedars-Sinai and UHN emphasizes the importance of global collaboration in a rapidly changing technological landscape. “UHN is proud to partner with Cedars-Sinai and co-host this collaborative international symposium dedicated to advancing artificial intelligence in medicine,” said Barry Rubin, program medical director of UHN’s Peter Munk

Cardiac Centre and symposium co-chair. “Our goal at UHN is to integrate AI and digital tools to improve patient outcomes and enhance the precision, speed and personalization of treatment.” During a fireside chat, Dr. Peter L. Slavin, president and CEO of Cedars-Sinai Health System, and Kevin Smith, president and CEO of UHN, discussed the need to maintain strong organizational culture while leveraging AI to enhance care delivery. Smith also emphasized his hope for AI to transform care delivery without jeopardizing culture. “Culture is our bedrock,” Smith said. “We strive to integrate AI into our workflows to improve lives, outcomes and efficiencies – without changing the culture of our

unique medical center.” The event featured panel discussions and debates on pressing topics that included data privacy, the need to train future clinicians on AI documentation tools and the challenges of data usage and commercialization Cedars-Sinai and UHN have committed to reconvening for the third annual symposium in December 2026, continuing a shared mission to lead the global conversation on responsible AI integration in medicine. For information, visit [cedars-sinai.org](http://cedars-sinai.org).



photo by Thomas Neerken, courtesy of Cedars-Sinai

More than 200 international attendees gathered at Cedars-Sinai to explore how to implement AI within clinical settings, including Dr. Barry Rubin, left, Dr. Barry Stein; Dr. Shlomo Melmed and Dr. Sumeet Chugh.

## Notable Quotes

“I think it would be fun to run a newspaper.”

Orson Welles [1915-1985]  
as Charles Foster Kane in the classic 1941 film Citizen Kane”

The *Park Labrea News* has been publishing for 80 years as of today. We will celebrate this milestone with special stories and features throughout the year.

source: “Citizen Kane”

# Residents impacted by recent rain storms may be eligible for relief

Los Angeles County Assessor Jeff Prang is reminding property owners impacted by recent torrential rainstorms that they may be eligible for tax relief. Authorities have confirmed that a rare EF-0 tornado touched down in Boyle Heights on the morning of Dec. 25, damaging homes and a commercial strip mall with winds reaching up to 80 mph. The tornado was part of a powerful storm that triggered debris flows and

flooding across Southern California. “The recent spate of winter storms including that rare tornado have caused significant damage and in some cases devastating losses,” Prang said. “I want to remind property owners that you may be eligible for property tax relief that could save you money on your taxes as you move forward.” By filing a claim for misfortune

and calamity relief within one year of the incident, properties that have sustained a minimum of \$10,000 in damage or have been destroyed may be eligible for a refund of taxes already paid and lower annual tax bills until the property is repaired or rebuilt. For information regarding misfortune and calamity relief, visit [assessor.lacounty.gov/tax-relief/disaster-relief](http://assessor.lacounty.gov/tax-relief/disaster-relief). Prang also encourages residents to call the county’s general information line at 211 or visit [recovery.lacounty.gov](http://recovery.lacounty.gov) for information about services offered during disasters such as the recent heavy storms.



## New tenant protections become law in Los Angeles

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass signed new tenant protections into law on Dec. 23 in the city’s Rent Stabilization Ordinance. Passed by the Los Angeles City Council in December, Bass approved the first update to the ordinance in nearly 40 years.

“No parent should have to choose between buying groceries or paying the rent, or live in fear of eviction because they have welcomed a child into their family,” Bass said. “In partnership with the City Council, we are enacting new tenant protections and capping the rent for apartment units protected under the city’s Rent Stabilization Ordinance. This new law protects renters while also streamlining processes and resources for housing providers so that more Angelenos can not only make the rent but live full and stable lives.”

Bass was joined for the signing by City Councilman Hugo Soto-Martinez, 13th District, and tenant rights leaders at Strategic Actions for a Just Economy, an economic justice organization that has served tens of thousands of Angelenos.

“Being able to afford rent is not a luxury – it’s a basic necessity. For the first time in 40 years, we are taking meaningful steps to ensure more Angelenos can afford to live where they work and continue to thrive in the communities they serve,” Soto-Martinez said. “It will support families and make sure people are not priced out of L.A.”

Bass’ action continues efforts to make Los Angeles more affordable, beginning with reducing the high cost of housing. The Rent Stabilization Ordinance, which covers approximately 74% of rental units in Los Angeles, addresses the

current cost-of-living crisis that many residents are facing.

The ordinance limits rent increases, with a floor of 1% and a ceiling of 4%; prohibits rent increases for additional tenants such as babies or elderly family members under the care of the primary residents; removes outdated utility increases; and explores ways to provide more resources to address deferred maintenance and other challenges faced by small housing providers.

Bass noted that the most extreme consequence of unaffordability is homelessness. On the mayor’s first day in office, she declared a state of emergency on homelessness that allowed the city to accelerate the production of permanent affordable housing and rapidly expand interim housing by cutting through years of red tape. For information, visit [mayor.lacity.gov](http://mayor.lacity.gov).



photo courtesy of Mayor Karen Bass’ office  
Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass was joined by Councilman Hugo Soto-Martinez and renter’s rights advocates to sign the protections into law.

## State boosts efforts to protect against antisemitism

In the wake of rising extremism and antisemitism, the state of California is ensuring the public understands that resources are available to increase safety. As the world still reels from the horrific Bondi Beach terror attack in Australia and attacks on Jewish communities and violence at public gatherings, state leaders are condemning hate in all forms and providing helpful resources to maintain public safety.

“Antisemitism and other extremist ideologies have no place in

California, and it will be met with the full measure of this state’s resolve. California is standing up our strongest tools to protect Jewish communities and all families to keep them safe,” Gov. Gavin Newsom said.

While the state’s top law enforcement officials do not have any specific or credible threats to California, the state is acting with urgency to ensure families can gather, worship, and celebrate without fear.

California’s Homeland Security

Advisor, through the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, has issued letters to faith leaders and houses of worship statewide urging heightened vigilance and outlining concrete steps to strengthen security. A parallel message to law enforcement and public safety partners reinforces the current threat environment and calls for proactive coordination with event organizers, fusion centers and federal partners to deter and disrupt potential attacks.

The letters follow recent violent

incidents abroad and disrupted plots in the United States, and emphasize that while there are no specific, credible threats to California, high profile religious and community events remain attractive targets for individuals inspired by extremist ideologies. Cal OES is urging communities and agencies to share information quickly, review emergency plans and utilize state and federal resources to harden soft targets and crowded places.

“California is committed to ensuring that people can gather, worship, and celebrate without fear,” Cal OES Director and state Homeland Security Advisor Nancy

Ward said. “Staying aware, looking out for one another and maintaining strong communication between faith-based communities and law enforcement are some of the most effective ways we can reduce risk and keep our communities safe.”

California is taking nation-leading measures to improve the safety of the state’s diverse communities. Since 2019, the state has invested \$318 million toward the California State Nonprofit Security Grant Program to support security enhancements and activities to nonprofits that are at high risk for attacks and hate crimes. For information, visit [caloes.ca.gov](http://caloes.ca.gov).

## Schiff seeks restoration of free days at national parks

U.S. Sen. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) and Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-Nev.) on Dec. 15 introduced the Encouraging Public Service in Our National Parks and Public Land Act, which will establish six days where visitors will receive free admission to national parks. The legislation directs the Secretary of the Interior to officially designate Martin Luther King’s Birthday, the first day of National Park Week in April, Juneteenth, Great American Outdoors Day, National Public Lands Day and Veterans Day as fee-free entry days to national parks.

The Trump administration recently cut Martin Luther King’s Birthday and Juneteenth, two holidays honoring Black history, from its list of free entrance days next year and replaced them with

President Donald Trump’s birthday.

“Donald Trump’s decision to remove Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Juneteenth from the list of free-of-charge days at our national parks – while adding his own birthday – is a disturbing combination of his particularly divisive brand of politics with megalomania,” Schiff said. “I’m proud to work with Sen. Cortez Masto to introduce this legislation to restore the holidays removed by the Trump administration and to make these free entrance days permanent.”

“Free entry days were created as a way for our national parks to encourage public service and volunteer work,” Cortez Masto added. “It’s our national responsibility to protect and maintain our public lands – so let’s recommit to ensuring free entry days

promote this patriotic act of service, not stroke the president’s ego.”

Since the National Park System and other land management agencies began collecting entry and recreation fees, the Department of the Interior has offered fee-free days to promote America’s public lands and encourage visitors to volunteer in the national parks, especially on select federal holidays where many Americans already have the day off.

The legislation would restore the two holidays to the list of free entrance days and make a list of public service days permanently free. Additional free entry days would be possible at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior.

For information, visit [schiff.senate.gov](http://schiff.senate.gov).



photo courtesy of LASAN  
City employees sorted and distributed the donated gifts on Dec. 15-16.

## Donors sought during a lull in new year blood donations

The American Red Cross urges donors to make an appointment to give blood or platelets to keep the blood supply as strong as possible at the start of the new year. Types

O, A negative and B negative blood donors are especially needed.

Record-setting travel is happening across the country. With more people away from home, blood and

platelet donations dip at a crucial time when patients count on care. Bad weather or shifting travel schedules force donors to cancel or reschedule donation appointments and lessen the blood supply.

As a special thank-you to donors for helping address the need for blood during the critical post-holiday time, those who give through Jan. 25 will be automatically entered for a chance to win a trip for two to Super Bowl LX in the San Francisco Bay Area.

To schedule a blood or platelet donation appointment, use the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org) or call (800)RED-CROSS. Those who give through Jan. 4 receive an exclusive Red Cross long-sleeved T-shirt. For information, visit [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org).



photo courtesy of the American Red Cross  
The public can call (800)RED-CROSS or visit [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org) to schedule an appointment.

## LASAN Gives holiday donation drive benefits youth

The Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment hosted the LASAN Gives holiday donation drive, partnering with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services to bring holiday cheer to transitional age youth ages 16-21 who are transitioning out of foster care into independent living.

The LASAN Gives program hosts several donation drives each year to benefit people in need. The holiday donation drive is an expansion of the Angel Tree program founded years ago by now-retired LASAN Manager Khalil Gharious to ensure that women

and children experiencing hardship experience holiday joy and kindness.

LASAN Gives began with LASAN employees but has since expanded to include all city of Los Angeles employees. The program continues to grow, and a new beneficiary is selected each year. LASAN Gives also includes a holiday bicycle drive spearheaded by staff at Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant and a yearly charitable school supplies drive.

Volunteers from the city of Los Angeles and DCFS sorted and distributed individual gift bags on Dec. 15-16. For information, visit [sanitation.lacity.gov](http://sanitation.lacity.gov).



# Frantic Christmas feast and a ‘Grammable’ holiday

And now we rest what Yeats called our “pilgrim souls,” a nod to our once-bucolic lives ... hard work ... our flinty American ethos. The holidays are every family’s history book. Each year, the plot thickens, like the gravy on the stove, like the nog you never finished, in that forgotten glass over by the fireplace. Our Christmas was fine, though exhausting, though thick. It’s all the screaming that tires me mostly, though we have a rather passive

by  
Chris  
Erskine



family in that regard. As a rule, we only scream during Dodger games and heavy traffic.



photo by Chris Erskine

The platter of prime rib was the centerpiece of our Christmas Day dinner.

And, of course, during Christmas. If you don’t primal scream at least once during the holidays, you’re either a Buddhist or very dead. So, yeah, I’ll confess: Christmas almost killed me. Final straw: the wine opener went missing. I’m always reminding my three adult children that I’m now a kindly old man with occasional anger issues that surface mostly in crowded kitchens. I’m no longer middle-aged, yet not quite elderly. A “tweener” as they say. So sometimes, I yell so as not to be ignored, which happens more and more as you get older and take (what your kids think) are too many naps. I eat, I nap. I do a chore, I nap. A good nap, as I’ve noted before, establishes sovereignty. I napped in preparation for Christmas dinner, the big feast for us. Some families do the big feast on Christmas Eve. We prefer to save the big fiasco for late Christmas Day, when everyone is super tired. Hence, the occasional naps. About a week before, the kids start questioning the menu, though we’d already agreed: prime rib, roast carrots, Brussels sprouts, rolls, a baked-potato bar (my idea), cheesecake, wine, coffee, antidepressants, Tums – a pretty standard American menu. Maybe –like Yeats – you can appreciate its cheery holiday glow? Then the second-guessing begins. For the record, I hate second-guessing. It’s almost always wrong. I’ve seen it in meetings, ballgames, love. Here’s what happens: Rapunzel, a dear daughter of whom I’m very proud, decides she wants “a big winter salad” instead of the Brussels sprouts. Then the lovely and patient older daughter, the pride and joy of all I do, weighs in to say “only if it has pomegranate seeds and the finest aged goat cheese. And is grammable.” Then Smartacus, my favorite slacker elf, weighs in to warn his sisters that my idea of a salad is the



photo by Chris Erskine

Baby’s first Christmas: “We look at the world once, through childhood.”

kind you buy in a bag. Then I weigh in to say, “Why don’t we cancel the \$400 rib roast and just have salads for dinner?” which they deem an unprovoked overreaction to what they were suggesting. Then a son-in-law (Finn) urges us “to just keep it simple,” the best suggestion of all. “So salads it is!” I announce. Quick question: Does your family have these so-called “text chains” that allow a small mob of cynics to annoy each other all day long? Ours does, and it works very well. Anyway, as in the movies, Christmas finally comes. The new baby arrives dressed like Hillary Clinton, in a little red blazer and black leggings, a good look for her and maybe a hint of all the accomplishments to come (a Cabinet post, injunctions). A grandpa can only hope. “We look at the world once, in childhood. The rest is memory,” writer Louise Gluck once warned. I truly believe that. Our baselines are set as children; we load the tank with rich memories to draw from as we get older. Sort of an emotional 401k account. Then we spend the rest of our

lives adjusting to the various storms. We drop a sail, tighten a jib, warm ourselves with past childhood kindnesses. It’s how we manage to manage. I think that’s where the holidays come in. So we can load the tank, show some graciousness even when it’s difficult, summon patience for the ones we love the most. So, yes, we had a very nice winter salad. With pomegranate seeds and the finest cheese we could find. Most important, it was grammable, which at first I thought had to do with graham crackers. But you probably know better. “Grammable” is a boastful social media post, something I fully support. We also had the juciest “roast beast,” as the Grinch put it. All in all, it was a grand feast. Christmas remains a time to do something for your adult children, even when they’re very capable of taking care of themselves. Exhausting, yes. Isn’t everything? Time for a nap.

Happy New Year!



photo courtesy of the city of Beverly Hills

## Beverly Hills Council pours on the love for Alfred Coffee

At the Beverly Hills City Council meeting on Dec. 16, Mayor Sharon Nazarian and the City Council presented “Shining in Beverly Hills,” an initiative to honor a local business that makes the community shine, to Alfred Coffee. Founded in 2013 by Beverly Hills native Joshua Zad, Alfred Coffee has grown from a single shop to a thriving brand with 23 locations across Los Angeles County. Alfred Coffee Beverly Hills is located at 490 N. Beverly Drive. For information, visit beverlyhills.org.

✧

JEFF PRANG

✧

LOS ANGELES COUNTY ASSESSOR

Not paid for at the public expense

Happy New Year!

Looking forward to a Happy and Healthy 2026



# Subway work continues into new year

Construction on Metro’s D Line subway extension project resumes on Jan. 2 around the Beverly Drive station following a holiday work moratorium in Beverly Hills. Construction is also ongoing in the new year near the Wilshire/La Cienega subway station, including a new median being built in the middle of Wilshire Boulevard near San Vicente Boulevard.

The D Line Subway extension project extends nine miles between Koreatown and Westwood and includes seven new stations. The project is being built in three segments, with the first section from Wilshire/Western to Wilshire/La Cienega anticipated to open in the first quarter of 2026. The second section includes the Beverly Drive and Century City stations and is expected to open in Spring 2027. The third section to Westwood/VA Hospital station is anticipated to open in fall 2027. When complete, riders will travel between Downtown Los Angeles to Westwood in 25 minutes.

Crews have been repairing curbs

and sidewalks and installing pedestrian ramps along Wilshire Boulevard near La Cienega Boulevard ahead of the first segment opening. Two lanes of traffic remain open in each direction on Wilshire Boulevard.

Work is also still ongoing on the underground Beverly Drive station and within staging areas along Wilshire Boulevard. K-rail enclosures remain in place along the north and south sides of Wilshire Boulevard near Beverly Drive. Two lanes are open in each direction between Beverly and Crescent drives.

Crews are restoring utilities for the new Century City station in preparation for upcoming deck removal. The process of removing deck panels and restoring the street will be conducted along Constellation Boulevard between Century Park East to a location just west of Avenue of the Stars. Traffic control will be implemented in four phases from east to west.

Decking removal at the Westwood/UCLA station is postponed until Jan. 2 at 11 p.m. The

work is anticipated to run through 6 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 5, and will require the closure of westbound Wilshire Boulevard between Veteran Avenue and Westwood Boulevard, as well as the reduction of eastbound Wilshire to two lanes between Veteran Avenue and Westwood Boulevard. Decking removal is anticipated to require an additional 10 weekends of work at the site, ending in late January.

For questions and concerns about the D Line Extension project, call the 24-hour project hotline at (213)922-6934, email the project team at [purplelineext@metro.net](mailto:purplelineext@metro.net) or visit [metro.net](http://metro.net).



photo by Edwin Folven

Center lanes are closed median while a median is under construction on Wilshire Boulevard just west of San Vicente Boulevard.

## Beverly Hills cautions about Golden Globe Awards road closures

The 83rd annual Golden Globe Awards ceremony will take place at the Beverly Hilton on Sunday, Jan. 11. Partial lane and full street closures will take place in Beverly Hills on Wilshire Boulevard and North Santa Monica Boulevard. Residents are advised to use alternate east-west routes such as South Santa Monica, Olympic, Pico and Sunset boulevards. Residential streets surrounding the venue will be posted with no parking signs.

North Santa Monica Boulevard will have full westbound lane closures from Wilshire Boulevard to Century Park East from Friday, Jan. 9, at 9 p.m. through Monday, Jan. 12, at 6 a.m. Eastbound full lane closures will be in place from Century Park East to Wilshire Boulevard from Saturday, Jan. 10, at 2 p.m. through Monday, Jan. 12, at 6 a.m. South Santa Monica Boulevard serves as an alternate route in both directions.

Eastbound and westbound lane reductions take place on Wilshire Boulevard from Friday, Jan. 2, at 6 a.m. through Wednesday, Jan. 14, at 9 p.m. Wilshire Boulevard will be completely closed between Comstock Avenue and North Santa Monica Boulevard from Saturday, Jan. 10, at 10 p.m. through Monday, Jan. 12, at 6 a.m.

Eastbound lanes of Wilshire Boulevard from Comstock Avenue to North Santa Monica Boulevard will be closed overnight from Thursday, Jan. 1, at 10 p.m., through Friday, Jan. 2, at 6 a.m. The

same section will be closed again from Monday, Jan. 12, through Tuesday, Jan. 13.

Whittier Drive, Carmelita Avenue, Elevado Avenue, Lomitas Avenue, Trenton Drive and adjacent alleys will have limited closures with local access only to residents beginning on Saturday, Jan. 10, at 10 p.m. until Monday, Jan. 12, at 6 a.m. Parking will be completely restricted (no exceptions) from Sunday, Jan. 11, at 6 a.m. through Monday, Jan. 12, at 6 a.m. on Whittier Drive from Wilshire Boulevard to Elevado Avenue; Carmelita Avenue from Wilshire Boulevard to Walden Drive; Elevado Avenue from Wilshire Boulevard to Walden Drive; Trenton Drive from Whittier Drive to Wilshire Boulevard; Walden Drive from Santa Monica Boulevard to Elevado Avenue; and Lomitas Avenue from Wilshire Boulevard to Walden Drive.

For residents without permit parking, a parking exemption can be obtained by calling the Parking Exemption Line at (310)285-2548 or visiting [beverlyhills.org/parkingexemptions](http://beverlyhills.org/parkingexemptions). For questions and concerns before the day of the event, call the askBH Customer Service line at (310)285-1000 from 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday; and the after-hours Golden Globes Hotline on Sunday, Jan. 11, from 2-8 p.m. at (310)550-4680. For information on a complete list of closures, visit [beverlyhills.org/goldenglobes](http://beverlyhills.org/goldenglobes).



photo courtesy of the Golden Globes

The 83rd annual Golden Globes Award will be held on Jan. 11



## CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD CITY COUNCIL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the West Hollywood City Council will consider the following item:

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM PLANNING SUMMARY AND BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2026-27

**TIME/PLACE:** Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.  
West Hollywood Park Public Meeting Room –  
Council Chambers  
625 San Vicente Boulevard  
West Hollywood, CA 90069

The meeting may also be viewed on various platforms. Please visit [www.weho.org/wehotv](http://www.weho.org/wehotv) for all the viewing options.

**REQUEST:** To solicit input from the public on projects to be funded by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through the COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) Program. The CDBG program is designed to assist communities in revitalizing neighborhoods, rehabilitating housing, providing public services, and stimulating economic development. The City anticipates receiving an approximate amount of \$206,000 in CDBG funds for the fiscal year 2026-2027. The City proposes to use the funds to partially fund the Holloway Interim Housing Program which will provide assistance to homeless adults within the City of West Hollywood. Funding will also be used for permanent sidewalk repairs to eliminate pedestrian hazards within the City’s designated Low- and Moderate-Income Areas.

The City Council Agenda and Staff Report will be available on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, online at [www.weho.org/councilagendas](http://www.weho.org/councilagendas).

The City Council of the City of West Hollywood will hold a Regular City Council meeting and will conduct a public hearing, at which time it will hear and consider information concerning the proposed use of CDBG Funding.

Those wishing to comment on the proposed funding have several ways to submit comments. Please visit [www.weho.org/councilagendas](http://www.weho.org/councilagendas) and read the document entitled, “How to Participate in West Hollywood City Council Meetings”. You may contact City Clerk Melissa Crowder at [mcrowder@weho.org](mailto:mcrowder@weho.org) or at 323-848-6356 for more information or if you have additional questions.

For further information regarding the proposed use of CDBG funds, please contact Claudia Duncan at [cduncan@weho.org](mailto:cduncan@weho.org).

BY ORDER of the City of West Hollywood,  
Melissa Crowder, City Clerk



RESTAURANT NEWS

Descanso celebrates its birthday

It's hard to believe that Descanso has been in Los Angeles for one year. The unforgettable journey began last January, and on Jan. 22, the Miracle Mile's new favorite Mexican food restaurant will have a special night no one will want to miss ... more will be revealed soon. Stay tuned. In the meantime, keep enjoying meals from Descanso every time a craving hits. For information, visit [descansorestaurantla.com](http://descansorestaurantla.com) or call (213)672-2444. For information, visit 5773 Wilshire Blvd.

with the great taste of Langer's on the menu by ordering today from Goldbelly. Choose from our world-famous #19 sandwich, or pastrami and corned beef – recognized by the James Beard Foundation and noted by the Michelin Guide. For information and to order, visit [goldbelly.com/restaurants/landers-deli](http://goldbelly.com/restaurants/landers-deli) or call (213)483-8050. Langer's Deli is located at 704 S. Alvarado St.

Enjoy Nothing Bundt Cake this month

Nothing Bundt Cakes is ringing in the new year with a lineup of indulgent flavors crafted for treating yourself and delighting others. Beginning Jan. 5, the brand will celebrate the triumphant return of its record-breaking Biscoff Cookie Butter Cake, followed by its first-ever chocolate-frosted

Langer's hits that new year spot

Nothing will start off 2026 better than hot pastrami and corned beef on rye from Langer's Deli. Keep the celebration going

Japanese BBQ pushes boundaries at Starbird

Starbird, the super-premium fast-food brand known for pioneering better-for-you chicken, is once again pushing category boundaries by launching its Japanese BBQ promotion. This limited-time menu lineup introduces a vibrant blend of sweet, savory and umami flavors, layered with house-made sauces and authentic Japanese seasonings.

The Japanese BBQ Bird is a crispy chicken fillet drizzled with Japanese BBQ sauce and wasabi aioli, topped with shredded green cabbage, pickled ginger, fresh cucumber, green onion and togarashi spice, all served on a toasted brioche bun (\$10.97).

The Japanese BBQ Tender Box is crispy tenders drizzled with Japanese BBQ sauce and wasabi aioli, and finished with pickled ginger, togarashi spice, furikake and green onion (\$15.97 for 4 pieces).

The Okonomiyaki Fries are seasoned fries topped with a drizzle of Japanese BBQ sauce and



photo courtesy of Starbird Chicken

Starbird's new seasoning is spicing up its menu.

wasabi aioli, pickled ginger, togarashi spice, furikake, green onion and savory Bonito flakes (\$7.47). These fries are inspired by the Japanese savory pancake dish, okonomiyaki.

The Tokyo Sesame Crunch Salad is a romaine and cabbage blend tossed with wasabi aioli, cucumber, watermelon radish and grape tomatoes, topped with sliced crispy tenders featuring Japanese BBQ Sauce, togarashi spice, green onion and crispy wonton strips. It

is served with Carrot Ginger Dressing on the side (\$13.97).

The Japanese BBQ LTO also includes two seasonal beverages, the Pineapple Limeade – A house-made blend of fresh pineapple and lime juices (\$2.47/\$2.97) – and the Mango Green Tea – house-made green tea mixed with mango and fresh lemon juice (\$2.47/\$2.97).

Starbird Chicken is located at 7150 Beverly Blvd. For information, visit [starbirdchicken.com](http://starbirdchicken.com) or call (323)200-9443.



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**“The beginning of the year is filled with reasons to gather and opportunities to give the gift of our special cakes to anyone you love.”**

*Dolf Berle,  
CEO at Nothing Bundt Cakes*

The Biscoff Cookie Butter Cake’s comeback is thanks to unprecedented demand during its 2025 introduction. After selling out in 233 bakeries nationwide and receiving numerous requests from fans, the brand decided to bring it back in a bigger way. The comforting spice cake features Biscoff Cookie Butter baked into the batter and drizzled on top, as well as real Biscoff cookies baked into the base and layered on top. The cake will be available Jan. 5-Feb. 15 in all cake

sizes, while supplies last. Also joining the lineup is the New-Fashioned Marble With Chocolate Frosting Pop-Up flavor, marking the first time Nothing Bundt Cakes has offered a dessert with chocolate frosting. The classic yellow and chocolate marble delicacy is topped with rich chocolate ganache cream cheese frosting and finished with chocolate-coated wafers. The flavor will be available Jan. 12-25 in Bundtlet size only, while supplies last. “The beginning of the year is filled with reasons to gather and opportunities to give the gift of our special cakes to anyone you love,” said Dolf Berle, CEO at Nothing Bundt Cakes. “With this lineup, we wanted to make it easy for guests to bring something special – a bundt cake that fits every occasion, whether it’s celebrating with others or treating yourself to a moment of joy.” These flavors will be available for a limited time at Nothing Bundt Cakes bakeries nationwide. For information, visit [nothingbundt-cakes.com](http://nothingbundt-cakes.com) or download the Nothing Bundt Cakes mobile app. Nothing Bundt Cake has several locations, including at 3865 Overland Ave, Culver City.

**Firoelli gives 2026 a posh touch**

It’s a brand-new year, and Beverly Grove’s Fiorelli Pizza is partnering with Imperia Caviar for a fun DIY caviar pizza kit just for the occasion. Fiorelli Pizza is putting its own spin on ‘vodka and caviar’ with a vodka sauce pizza that comes with a side of crème fraîche, truffle potato chips, and a full ounce of Imperia’s caviar (\$140). The experience comes together by crushing truffle chips over the pizza with a drizzle of crème fraîche on top, and finishing with a dollop of caviar at home that still feels celebratory and special. This limited-time offer can also be ordered via delivery apps – while supplies last. Fiorelli pizza brings together the best of both worlds – the soul of a Neapolitan pie and the spirit of a New York slice. Yet its a style that feels right at home in Los Angeles For information, visit [fiorellipizza.com](http://fiorellipizza.com) or call (424)466-7161. Fiorelli Pizza is located at 8236 W. Third St.



photo courtesy of Fiorelli Pizza  
Nothing pairs with pizza quite like Imperia Caviar.

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## New Year’s Resolution

# 2026

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Strawberry Nutella

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# Robata JINYA brings sleek Japanese flair to Hollywood Boulevard

■ New restaurant offers sushi, small plates

BY TABOR BREWSTER

Of all the streets, avenues, free-ways and thoroughfares in Los Angeles, perhaps none is more replete with choices than Hollywood Boulevard. Of course, there’s the good kind, and the regrettable kind that usually comes in the form of an overpriced souvenir or a photograph with some guy dressed as Superman... if he really let himself go. But fear not, because the boulevard’s newest restaurant, Robata JINYA, is an excellent choice for any Hollywood outing.

The Japanese restaurant opened in December at 6529 Hollywood Blvd. – about halfway between the Chinese Theatre and the Pantages. The new location marks the second in L.A. after the original at 8050 W.

Third St. The restaurant, while modern in design and overall feel, blends traditional Japanese flavors and cooking methods with an elevated, club-like atmosphere.

Upon entrance, visitors are greeted by a lush green indoor patio space with floor-to-ceiling windows that serves as the buffer between hectic Hollywood Boulevard and the dimly lit dining room. There, murals of samurai come to life on the walls as bartenders vigorously shake shochu martinis and omakase chefs carefully plate fresh nigiri. The space feels intimate, with many tables for smaller parties, but still spacious. The kitchen opens to the dining room and features an omakase counter where guests gaze at the artful presentation of sushi up-close under massive Japanese bells that double as hanging lamps.

A full bar enlivens the room, with a wide range of beer, wine, spirits, cocktails, and of course – sake. The

aki martini marries the classic gin with subtle flavors from Japan – cherry blossom, sake and basil-infused olive oil. Ice-cold and poured tableside, it might be the second-best martini on Hollywood Boulevard.

The menu spotlights the Japanese tradition of robata-yaki – skewers with seafood, meats and vegetables slow-cooked over an open charcoal flame. Options include shrimp with garlic butter soy, tsukune chicken meatballs, pork belly, lamb chop, shitake mushrooms and Chilean sea bass. The sea bass, served with a chimichurri-esque spinach miso, balances a tender inside with a crispy fire-roasted crust.

Of course, no Japanese restaurant is complete without a sushi menu. An assorted nigiri plate that included yellowtail, bluefin tuna, salmon belly, uni and Hokkaido scallop is easily the star of the show. The sushi at Robata JINYA seemingly melts upon impact, demonstrating a



photo courtesy of Robata JINYA

The nigiri at Robata JINYA is very, fresh and beautifully presented.

peak freshness beautifully put on display for guests to enjoy. (Yes – everything at Robata is very much “Instagrammable,” if that’s your thing).

But Robata doesn’t sacrifice flavor for the sake of presentation. The hearty garlic rice topped with an egg yolk and tender morsels of grilled A5 Wagyu provides a familiar, umami-packed fried rice comfort that’s elevated to a new level with the world’s most tender cut of steak. Of the many small plates,

there are certain options that shine including the shrimp toast. Simple, delicious and crunchy, the shrimp toast still lives in my memories.

If you’re looking for a new way to experience the nightlife of Hollywood, try Robata JINYA for an unforgettable experience that brings classic Japanese fare into a chic and intimate setting.

For information, visit [robata-jinya.com/location/hollywood](http://robata-jinya.com/location/hollywood). Robata JINYA is located at 6529 Hollywood Blvd.



photo courtesy of the University of Michigan

Players on the Rose Bowl-winning University of Michigan Wolverines football team enjoyed a feast at Lawry’s The Prime Rib during the final Beef Bowl event in late 2023.

## College Football Playoffs benches Beef Bowl at Lawry’s

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

A beloved college football tradition that was a longtime favorite for players in the Rose Bowl Game has been sidelined at Lawry’s The Prime Rib on La Cienega Boulevard.

The Beef Bowl, where players sat down each year for a hearty prime rib dinner before facing each other on the gridiron in Pasadena on Jan. 1, was a pregame event that started in 1956. The opposing teams dined at the restaurant on different days leading up to the Rose Bowl Game, consuming hundreds

of pounds of beef (Illinois set a record in 2007 with 870 pounds) along with Lawry’s signature chilled spinning salad, mashed potatoes and gravy, and dessert.

The Beef Bowl, last held at the end of 2023, was discontinued due to changes under the College Football Playoff format, which started with the 2024 season.

“The Lawry’s Beef Bowl was a very important tradition for the Tournament of Roses. Unfortunately, with the changes to the CFP Playoff which the Rose Bowl Game is a part of as a quarterfinal host, our partici-

pating teams do not arrive to town until Dec. 29. Due to those schedule changes, we are no longer able to hold the event before game day,” said Karen Linhart, marketing and media director, Rose Bowl Game, for the Pasadena Tournament of Roses.

While the clock ran out on the Beef Bowl two years ago, members of the public can still dine like a champion at Lawry’s The Prime Rib, which is located at 100 N. La Cienega Blvd., in Beverly Hills. For information, call (310)652-2827, or visit [lawrysonline.com/lawrys-the-prime-rib-beverly-hills](http://lawrysonline.com/lawrys-the-prime-rib-beverly-hills).

## Grammy Museum presents blockbuster Selena exhibition

The Grammy Museum presents “Selena: From Texas to the World,” a special pop-up exhibition celebrating the enduring legacy of Selena, an icon whose impact on music, fashion and culture contin-

ues to inspire generations around the world. The limited-time exhibit runs from Jan. 15-March 16 and marks the first official display of Selena’s personal items outside of the Selena Museum in her home-

town of Corpus Christi, Texas.

Curated in collaboration with Suzette Quintanilla, Selena’s sister, CEO and president of Q-Productions and executor of the Selena Estate, the exhibit offers an intimate glimpse into Selena’s life, artistry and groundbreaking career. Beyond her chart-topping success, Selena was a fashion pioneer whose signature style, from shimmering bustiers and iconic stage outfits to bold red lipstick, continues to influence pop culture and street fashion today. Her charisma, determination and pride in her Mexican American heritage made her a symbol of empowerment for young women and Latin communities across the world.

The exhibit includes the outfit Selena wore on the cover of Amor Prohibido, complete with her signature gold hoop earrings; the white beaded Lillie Rubin gown Selena wore to the 1994 Grammy Awards; Selena’s Grammy Award and Lifetime Achievement Award; instruments played by Selena’s siblings Suzette Quintanilla (drums) and A.B. Quintanilla III (bass), as well as husband Chris Pérez (guitars). It also includes Selena’s microphone, still marked with her red lipstick, hand-drawn fashion designs from her teenage years and Selena’s personal cell phone.

The exhibition will be located in the Grammy Museum’s Fourth Floor Gallery, 800 W. Olympic Blvd. For information, call (213)725-5700, or visit [grammy-museum.org](http://grammy-museum.org).



photo courtesy of the Grammy Museum

“Selena: From Texas to the World” opens on Jan. 15, honoring the legendary singer and pop icon.

## Japan Foundation explores evolution of ‘Package Craft’

Japan Foundation, Los Angeles presents “Package Craft: From Candy Box to Sculpture,” an exhibition running through Feb. 18.

The exhibition showcases “Package Craft,” a creative form of papercraft that transforms empty boxes into 3D figures such as heroes, animals and Buddhist statues. Each piece follows strict rules – only one box can be used per work, all materials must be used with minimal waste and all printed text must remain readable – even if letters are separated.

The innovative craft highlights the beauty and potential of everyday packaging. Visitors can enjoy the final pieces and the original blueprints and animated videos featuring the crafted characters.

The exhibition focuses on creativity and encourages a playful, eco-friendly approach to artmaking.

Additionally, the exhibition presents “Project-Katagamika,” which reinterprets classical Japanese art forms such as ukiyo-e and family crests by deconstructing and reconstructing them into innovative visual expressions. The show celebrates sustainability, design and creativity, inviting viewers to perceive discarded materials in a new light.

The exhibition is open for viewing Monday-Friday from noon-6 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Japan Foundation, Los Angeles is located at 5700 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 100. For information, visit [jfla.org](http://jfla.org).



photo courtesy of JFLA

Learn how 3D figures are created using papercraft in the dynamic exhibition.



# AHF's Rose Parade float shows connection between food and health

AIDS Healthcare Foundation continues its decade-long participation in the Rose Parade on Jan. 1 with a Jack and the Beanstalk-themed float celebrating AHF's "Food for Health" program to alleviate hunger and food insecurity. In 2025, AHF's Food for Health program provided weekly groceries to more than 500,000 people across the country.

AHF's float features an oversized Jack and the Beanstalk character climbing skyward, surrounded by an assortment of enormous, larger-than-life vegetables – a pumpkin, carrots, tomatoes, eggplants, strawberries and potatoes – as well as a classic pickup truck decorated for a Food for Health farmers' market.

AHF's float celebrates Food for Health's ongoing weekly work hosting free food pantries and farmers' markets across the country, including "Heroes Pantries" for veterans and families at the West

L.A. Veterans Center. The float also honors Food for Health's swift and sustained partnership and collaboration with the Los Angeles Fire Department following the devastating Pacific Palisades wildfire last January. Within 14 hours of the start of the blaze, Food for Health worked with LAFD to deliver free hot meals to first responders on the front lines. Over the next several weeks, Food for Health delivered over 75,000 hot meals – more than 15,000 to LAFD and other first responders in the Palisades.

AHF and Food for Health were also among the first organizations on the scene at the Pasadena Convention Center following the Eaton fire, distributing free clothing from the Out of the Closet thrift store chain as well as 400 new blankets and 400 new pillows purchased specifically for fire evacuees. An additional 60,000 hot meals were distributed to Eaton fire

evacuees.

Riders scheduled to appear on AHF's Rose Parade float include labor, feminist and civil rights icon Dolores Huerta; Yesenia Contreras, of the Dolores Huerta Foundation; Commander Wendy M. Calderon, of the California Veterans of Foreign Wars; Bettye Randle, executive director of Champions of Caring Connections; Janet Lee and Christy Lee, co-owners of Fair Oaks Burger in Altadena; Los Angeles Fire Department Capt. Thomas 'Kit' Kitahata; Carlos Marroquin, national director of AHF's Food for Health program; and Tara O'Callaghan, deputy director of AHF's Food for Health program.

The parade starts at 8 a.m. on Jan. 1 at the corner of Orange Grove and Colorado boulevards in Pasadena. For information, visit [aidshealth.org](https://aidshealth.org) and [foodforhealthahf.org](https://foodforhealthahf.org).



photo by Edwin Folven

The colorful float features depictions of fresh vegetables and a farm truck.

# LA Art Show returns to City of Angels



photo courtesy of LA Art Show

More than 90 international exhibitors are included in the LA Art Show at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

The LA Art Show, the largest and longest-running fair in Los Angeles, returns for its 31st edition from Jan. 7-11 at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

The LA Art show features more than 90 international exhibitors under director and producer Kassandra Voyagis. Highlights include Ireland's first participant, Dublin's Oliver Sears Gallery, as well as Palm Beach's Provident Fine Art presenting Sylvester Stallone's abstract works and London's Pontone Gallery showcasing artist and drummer Chris Rivers.

Exhibitions include the first public showing in more than four decades of Karl A. Meyer's 1980s woodcut prints (LICHT FELD

Gallery, Switzerland) and Yigal Ozeri's cinematic figurative works (Corridor Contemporary). A strong Korean presence continues including J&J Art's "Elegant Freedom" by Jinny Suh, whose Hanji-based works reinterpret Korean tradition through a contemporary lens.

The fair also debuts a Latin American Pavilion, curated by Marisa Caichiolo, spotlighting memory, migration and identity while amplifying underrepresented Latin American voices.

DIVERSEartLA, also curated by Caichiolo, returns with "The Biennials, Art Institutions and Museums in the Contemporary Art Ecosystem," exploring how art circulates through global biennials and museums as engines of innovation, engagement and dialogue.

The Los Angeles Convention Center is located at 1201 S Figueroa St. Tickets start at \$40, and 15% of proceeds benefit the American Heart Association. For information, visit [laartshow.com](https://laartshow.com).

# The Wallis celebrates new year with Zodiac story

Celebrate the Lunar New Year with "The Great Race: The Story of the Chinese Zodiac" on Saturday, Jan. 17, at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts.

When the Jade Emperor needs a way to tell time, he decrees that there will be a Great Race. The first 12 animals to cross the mighty river will have a year named after them. The 12-year cycle will mark the passage of time. Which animals win the race? What are the traits that help them cross the river? Join the characters Po Po and Kung Kung as they celebrate Chinese New Year by sharing the story of "The Great Race" with their grandchildren Freddie and Ivy.

The show weaves a family celebration with a retelling of one of the most beloved tales in Chinese folk-




photo courtesy of The Wallis

Families will learn "The Great Race: The Story of the Chinese Zodiac" on Jan. 17 at The Wallis.

lore. Tickets start at \$20. The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is located at 9390

N. Santa Monica Blvd. For information, visit [thewallis.org/show-details/the-great-race](https://thewallis.org/show-details/the-great-race).



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# Police Blotter

The following crimes occurred in West Hollywood, Beverly Hills and the areas patrolled by the LAPD’s Wilshire and Hollywood divisions between Dec. 20 and Dec. 27. The information was compiled from crimemapping.com. To report a crime, call local law enforcement agencies: Los Angeles Police Department, Wilshire Division (213)473-0476, Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department West Hollywood Station (310)855-8850, and the Beverly Hills Police Department (310)550-4951.

## Beverly Hills Police Department

### Dec. 20

At 6:31 a.m., an unknown suspect committed a grand theft in the 9700 block of Wilshire.

A vandalism incident was reported in the 9300 block of Wilshire at 9 a.m.

At 6:17 p.m., an unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 9500 block of Wilshire.

An unknown suspect committed a grand theft in the 9700 block of Wilshire at 6:31 p.m.

### Dec. 21

A suspect was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs near Wilshire and Rexford at 1:51 a.m.

At 10 p.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 300 block of S. Elm.

### Dec. 22

An arson fire was reported near Wilshire and Stanley at 3:47 a.m.

At 1:27 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 100 block of N. Arnaz.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 700 block of N. Linen at 7 p.m.

At 7:36 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a grand theft in the 300 block of N. Cañon.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 600 block of N. Linden at 10 p.m.

At 10 p.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 700 block of N. Crescent.

### Dec. 23

At 4:05 a.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 700 block of N. Maple.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 9100 block of Alden at 7:30 p.m.

### Dec. 24

At 12:31 a.m., an unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 200 block of N. Cañon.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 100 block of N. Le Doux at 4:30 p.m.

### Dec. 25

At 6 a.m., an unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 9900 block of Santa Monica.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 9000 block of Wilshire at 5:37 p.m.

### Dec. 26

At 12:10 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 9000 block of Wilshire.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 9000 block of Wilshire at 2:40 p.m.

At 3:21 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a commercial theft in the 300 block of N. Rodeo.

### Dec. 27

At 1:38 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 9000 block of Wilshire.

## West Hollywood Sheriff’s Station

### Dec. 20

At 12:18 a.m., an unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 900 block of N. Genesee.

An unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 7900 block of Santa Monica at 12:30 a.m.

At 8:21 a.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 8800 block of Santa Monica.

### Dec. 21

At 12:45 a.m., an unknown suspect committed a grand theft in the 8900 block of Santa Monica.

A suspect assaulted a victim during a domestic violence incident in the 9000 block of Sunset at 12:52 a.m.

At 2:07 a.m., a suspect assaulted a victim during a domestic violence incident in the 600 block of N. Robertson.

An unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 8800 block of Santa Monica at 2:55 a.m.

At 3:20 a.m., an unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 7100 block of Santa Monica.

A suspect assaulted a victim during a domestic violence incident in the 7500 block of Fountain at 3:50 a.m.

At 3:41 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a grand theft in the 8500 block of Melrose.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 8900 block of Santa Monica at 4:30 p.m.

At 8:15 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 8300 block of Sunset.

An unknown suspect robbed a victim in the 8900 block of Sunset at 10 p.m.

### Dec. 22

At 2:25 a.m., an unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 900 block of Westbourne.

An unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 8400 block of Sunset at 3:57 a.m.

At 8:22 a.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 8800 block of Santa Monica.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 8600 block of Santa Monica at 11:49 a.m.

At 1 p.m., an unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 7600 block of Romaine.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked near Spaulding and Willoughby at 10 p.m.

### Dec. 23

At 1 a.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 900 block of N. Palm.

A suspect assaulted a victim during a domestic violence incident in the 800 block of N. Kings at 2:12 a.m.

At 4:10 a.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 700 block of N. Doheny.

A suspect assaulted a victim during a domestic violence incident in the 600 block of N. West Knoll at 2:40 p.m.

At 3:30 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 7700 block of Lexington.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 8400 block of Melrose at 5:20 p.m.

At 5:30 p.m., a suspect assaulted a victim during a domestic violence incident in the 8500 block of Sunset.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 1200 block of N. Orange Grove at 5:45 p.m.

At 7:30 p.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked near the corner of Melrose and Almont.

An unknown suspect committed a grand theft in the 8600 block of Santa Monica at 7:30 p.m.

At 9:45 p.m., a suspect assaulted a victim during a domestic violence incident in the 1200 block of N. Laurel.

### Dec. 24

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 8900 block of Santa Monica at 7:30 a.m.

At 8:25 a.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 8800 block of Santa Monica.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 8500 block of Beverly at 10:20 a.m.

At 10:20 a.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 8500 block of Beverly.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 8800 block of Santa Monica at 3:18 p.m.

At 6:15 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 8800 block of Santa Monica.

An unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 800 block of West Knoll at 7:45 p.m.

At 9:35 p.m., an unknown suspect

burglarized a vehicle parked in the 7300 block of Santa Monica.

An unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 8400 block of Sunset at 11:30 p.m.

### Dec. 25

An unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 7700 block of Santa Monica at 4 a.m.

At 6:50 a.m., an unknown suspect assaulted a victim near Santa Monica and Gardner.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 8300 block of Sunset at 11:27 p.m.

### Dec. 26

At 12:20 a.m., an unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 8800 block of Santa Monica.

An unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 1000 block of Havenhurst at 4 p.m.

### Dec. 27

At 1 a.m., an unknown suspect unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 8800 block of Santa Monica.

A suspect assaulted a victim during a domestic violence incident in the 1200 block of Alta Loma at 3:05 a.m.

## New judges appointed to L.A. County Superior Court

Gov. Gavin Newsom has appointed four new judges to the Los Angeles County Superior Court.

Judge Sarah J. Ellenberg has served as a commissioner at the Los Angeles County Superior Court since 2024. She worked as an indigent defense attorney at the Independent Defense Counsel Office from 2019-24 and with the California Appellate Project from 2012-13. She was the co-executive director of the LAW Project of Los Angeles from 2019-22 and served as a deputy alternate public defender at the Los Angeles County Alternate Public Defender’s Office from 2017-19 and from 2004-12. She also served as a deputy public defender at the Los Angeles County Public Defender’s Office from 2001-04.

Ellenberg received a juris doctor degree from New York University School of Law. She

fills a vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Juan C. Dominguez.

Judge Jonathan Eisenman has served as assistant general counsel at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power since 2025. Prior to that position, he served as a deputy city attorney at the Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office from 2018-25. Eisenman worked as an associate at Greines, Martin, Stein & Richland from 2015-18 and served as a law clerk at the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California from 2014-15 and 2011-12. Eisenman also served as a law clerk at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit from 2012-13.

Eisenman received a juris doctor degree from the University of Texas School of Law. He fills a vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Scott T. Millington.

Judge Erin Donovan has been a

Partner at Musick, Peeler & Garrett since 2012, where she also worked as an associate from 2003-11. Donovan received a juris doctor degree from Loyola Law School. She fills the vacancy created by the elevation of Judge Mark Hanasono to the Court of Appeal.

Judge Erin Reed has served as a senior appellate court attorney at the Second District Court of Appeal since 2017, where she also served as an appellate court attorney from 2014-17. Reed worked as an associate at Collins & Collins from 2013-14. She served as a judicial clerk at the New Mexico Court of Appeals from 2010-13.

Reed received a juris doctor degree from the University of California, Davis School of Law. She fills a vacancy created by the elevation of Judge Armen Tamzarian to the Court of Appeal.

## Police search for woman missing since Dec. 10

The Los Angeles Police Department’s Missing Persons Unit is seeking the public’s help in locating Christina Lynn Downer, who was last contacted by a friend via text message on Dec. 10.

Her last known location was in the Koreatown area. She has not been seen or been in contact with family since Dec. 10 and family and friends are concerned, police

said. The family wants the public to be aware that Downer has no known medical conditions and has not previously gone missing, police said. Downer is 38 years old, 5 feet



Christina Downer

## Authorities seek victims of alleged sex crimes suspect

Detectives from the Los Angeles Police Department’s Juvenile Division and Internet Crimes Against Children Unit, along with Special Agents from Homeland Security Investigations’ Child Exploitation Investigations Group, are asking the public for help identifying additional victims of a suspect accused of possession of child

pornography crimes. Julian Kurt Perez, 25, of Los Angeles, was arrested on Dec. 22 and booked for possession of child or youth pornography. Police said Perez is an after-school employee who worked at schools and after-school programs throughout the San Fernando Valley. He is accused of creating artificial intelligence-

generated child sexual abuse material involving at least two minor victims in L.A. Juvenile Division detectives and HSI special agents are investigating the alleged crimes and believe Perez is responsible for additional unreported victims. Anyone with information is asked to email [aticac@lapd.online](mailto:aticac@lapd.online), or call (877)LAPD247.



# This, not that: ‘The Housemaid’ faces ‘Anaconda’

## Not that: ‘Anaconda’

Who doesn’t like a meta premise? It worked for “21 Jump Street” at least once. But otherwise, it’s a gamble, deemed a win if it’s clever or funny. But if that’s not the case, it’s a grim reminder that Hollywood is out of original ideas, even while the film tries to poke fun at the dilemma, desperately trying to make itself immune to such criticism.

Sorry, but no. This “Anaconda” deserves no such amnesty.

In theory, Jack Black and Paul Rudd should be the perfect duo to pull it off, but “Anaconda” gets too bogged down with plot that it never lets a single joke or humorous

moment sneak in.

The premise, well, something. Struggling actor Ron (Rudd) can’t catch a break in Hollywood, while Doug (Black) never took the change, settling for a safe gig creating wedding videos. Then Ron returns home for his old bestie’s birthday with a special surprise: He acquired the film rights to “Anaconda,” the old horror film starring J-Lo and Ice Cube they once adored.

The plan is simple: A three-week production with minimal casting and a rented anaconda. They bring along their old friends (played by Thandiwe Newton and Steve Zahn) for the adventure and include the

## ON SCREEN

WITH  
TIM POSADA

snake trainer (Santiago Braga) and boat captain (Daniela Melchior), who’s running from someone for an unknown reason.

Little does anyone know, a massive anaconda will soon sabotage their last chance to escape dull, uneventful lives.

That’s the kind of premise that could set up a laugh factory. Not sure what this is. Nothing, absolutely nothing funny occurs. It’s easy to see where writer-director Tom Gormican (“The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent,” “Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F”) and his co-writer Kevin Etten want us to laugh. But it doesn’t work at any point.

### This: ‘The Housemaid’

Until now, director Paul Feig (“Bridesmaids,” “A Simple Favor”) had four duds in a row, and Sidney Sweeney can’t get out of her own way, along with three underwhelming films this year. That’s two strikes against “The Housemaid” before the opening credits even begin.

Luckily, Feig pulls off a fantastic thriller, delivering an incredible performance by Amanda Seyfried and



photo © CTMG. All Rights Reserved

“Anaconda” stars Jack Black and Paul Rudd in an all new adventure.

a passing one for Sweeney. This could’ve easily been a miss, but it’s a surprise win with plenty of satisfying twists.

The first half feels very straightforward: A crazy rich wife (Seyfried) terrifies the new live-in cook, cleaner and sometimes sitter (Sweeney). The man of the house (Brandon Sklenar) manages his wife’s explosive moods and still finds time to flirt with the new help.

It all seems headed one way, but it’s not. And when that shift occurs, “The Housemaid” becomes an entirely different experience that dances between romance, thrills and even a dash of horror, though it heavily relies on voiceovers to clearly, very clearly, perhaps too clearly guide spectators.

It pretends to be Sweeney’s film

with a narration explaining her background, motivations and current thought process. But that’s just the first half, which seeks to sway to one, and only one, outcome. Just remember: Seyfried is the real star.

Don’t call it the best film of the year or even the holiday season, but “The Housemaid” is a lot of fun, a thriller that invites guessing on how it will end. Don’t let Feig’s recent hiccups convince you otherwise. As for Sweeney, yes, her acting is often frustrating, particularly her flat delivery. (And she certainly appears to be a tone-deaf celebrity.)

If you can ignore all that, she’s a fine fit. Not amazing or even great, but adequate. Many other actors could’ve filled the role much better. No matter, Seyfried reigns in the surprise film of December.



photo by Daniel McFadden/Lionsgate

Sidney Sweeney and Amanda Seyfried star in “The Housemaid,” a new film by director Paul Feig.

# Academy Museum takes a closer look at ‘The Greatest Story Ever Told’

The George Stevens Lecture on Directing presents the premiere screening of the 4K restoration of “The Greatest Story Ever Told” (1965) with special guest filmmaker Guillermo del Toro on Saturday, Jan. 17, at 2 p.m. at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. The George Stevens Lecture series was established in 1982 in honor of the legendary director.

For the 2026 edition, three-time Oscar-winning filmmaker del Toro will speak before the screening about Stevens, the restoration of “The Greatest Story Ever Told” and the lasting impact of the film.

Amazon MGM Studios initiated the restoration of “The Greatest Story Ever Told” for the film’s 60th

anniversary. The restoration was done in collaboration with George Stevens, Jr. and The Film Foundation headed by Martin Scorsese. Del Toro is a member of the foundation board. Working from the original 65 mm Ultra Panavision Technicolor negative, Kostas Theodosiou, senior colorist at FotoKem, made 8K scans and digitally restored the film with keen appreciation for artistic quality. Audio restoration was made utilizing original six-track print masters and stems, digitally remastered in Dolby Atmos to preserve the original 70 mm format channel configuration. The restoration was supervised by Schawn Belston, Scott Grossman and Darren Gross.

The film, directed by two-time Directing Oscar-winner Stevens (“A Place in the Sun,” “Giant”), is a lavishly produced and unusually thoughtful look at the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, with Max von Sydow making his U.S. film debut in a subtly powerful lead performance. The lengthy location filming in the American Southwest presented its share of problems, including unseasonal weather and the death of the film’s cinematographer, William C. Mellor. However, the result was one of Stevens’s most ambitious and heartfelt projects, avoiding the sensationalism of most Hollywood Biblical epics while supporting von Sydow with an impressive cast that included Charlton Heston, Claude Rains, Dorothy Maguire, Jose Ferrer, Sidney Poitier, David McCallum, Martin Landau, Donald Pleasance, Carroll Baker, Telly Savalas, Shelley Winters, Ed Wynn and Van Heflin. The film received



photo courtesy of the Academy Museum

“The Greatest Story Ever Told” (1965) was directed by George Stevens and stars Max von Sydow, leading a blockbuster cast.

five Oscar nominations including Mellor and Loyal Griggs for Cinematography.

The program will be held in the

Academy Museum’s David Geffen Theater, 6067 Wilshire Blvd. Admission is \$5. For information, visit [academymuseum.org](http://academymuseum.org).

# Israel Film Festival spotlights culture through film



photo courtesy of the Israel Film Festival

The festival will include a screening of “A Letter to David,” directed by Tom Shoval.

Award-winning film and television producer Lawrence Bender will receive the 2026 Israel Film Festival Visionary Award at the 37th Israel Film Festival in Los Angeles Opening Night Gala on Feb. 4 at the Saban Theatre in Beverly Hills. The evening will also host the Los Angeles premiere of “A Letter to David,” directed by Tom Shoval, winner of this year’s Israeli Academy Ophir Award for Best Documentary, announced Meir Fenigstein, founder and executive director of the Israel Film Festival. The festival will take place from Feb. 4-19, with film screenings at the Regal North Hollywood and the Fine Arts Theatre in Beverly Hills.

“The Israel Film Festival in Los Angeles continues to express the enduring spirit of the Israeli people, and its creative arts and talented communities,” Fenigstein said. “As

we celebrate our 37th year screening outstanding Israeli feature films and thought-provoking documentaries, we recognize that our benefactors, sponsors and the diverse audiences of our city continue to embrace and support the very best that Israel offers. This includes Tom Shoval’s award-winning documentary ‘A Letter to David,’ a haunting and beautiful film about Israeli David Cunio, who was taken from Nir Oz kibbutz on Oct. 7 and held hostage in Gaza. We are also extremely pleased to honor film and television producer Lawrence Bender whose productions have enthralled and captivated people around the world.”

Bender has produced highly successful films over three decades, with a worldwide box office exceeding \$1 billion. His work includes “Pulp Fiction,” “Inglourious Basterds” and “Good Will Hunting,” earning 37 Academy Award nominations and nine wins. The climate change documentary “An Inconvenient Truth”

won the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature. In 2020, he produced the Peabody-winning “Cops and Robbers” and Oscar-winning “Two Distant Strangers.” He executive produced “Red Alert,” a Paramount+ series released in October 2025, dramatizing the terrorist invasion that turned southern Israel into a war zone. The action drama follows ordinary people forced to become heroes during the crisis. With partner Kevin Brown, Bender has produced numerous television projects, including “Roswell, New Mexico,” Emmy winning “Seven Seconds” and Golden Globe-nominated “Flesh and Bone.”

The Saban Theatre is located at 8440 Wilshire Blvd. The Fine Arts Theatre is located at 8556 Wilshire Blvd. Regal North Hollywood is located at 6150 Laurel Canyon Blvd., #200.

For information, visit [israelfilm-festival.com](http://israelfilm-festival.com).



## LACCD Board welcomes Hernandez as new president

The Los Angeles Community College District Board of Trustees has elected Sara Hernandez to serve as board president, Andra Hoffman to serve as first vice president and Steven F. Veres to serve as second vice president.

“I am deeply honored to serve as board president at this pivotal time for LACCD,” Hernandez said. “Our students are resilient, talented and determined – and they deserve a board that fights relentlessly for their success. My priority is ensuring that every student, regardless of background, has access to the resources and support they need to thrive. Community colleges are engines of opportunity, and

LACCD must continue leading with equity, innovation and accountability. I look forward to working alongside my fellow trustees, Chancellor Román, our college presidents, faculty, staff and community partners to build a district that truly serves all students.”

Hernandez brings extensive experience in education, public policy and community advocacy to the role. As a former LAUSD middle school teacher, she founded a non-profit that provides low-income students with exceptional educational opportunities and resources. After earning a law degree, she worked in Los Angeles City Hall, leading community revitalization efforts

through strategic economic development policies and investments in housing, homelessness, transportation and infrastructure. She currently teaches constitutional law at Los Angeles Valley College and serves on the California Library Resources Board, appointed by Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon in 2019.

As an attorney, Hernandez works with organized labor, community and business leaders on environmental, land use and housing issues. She has conducted extensive pro-bono work representing indigent immigrants in asylum proceedings and has assisted immigrant students with DACA renewals through the Southern

Immigrant Freedom Initiative.

“Congratulations to Board President Hernandez on her election. Her deep commitment to equity, education and community engagement aligns powerfully with LACCD’s mission. As someone who has worked directly with students – from middle school classrooms to community college lecture halls – she understands the challenges our students face and the transformative power of education,” LACCD Chancellor Dr. Alberto J. Román said. “I look forward to partnering with president Hernandez and the entire board to advance student success, strengthen our institutions and ensure LACCD remains a beacon of opportunity for all.”

For information, visit [laccd.edu/board](http://laccd.edu/board).



photo courtesy of the LACCD

Trustee Sara Hernandez will guide the L.A. Community College District into the new year.

## LAUSD board re-elects Rivas as vice president

The Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education has re-elected Dr. Rocio Rivas as board vice president, recognizing her continued leadership, collaborative approach and unwavering commitment to students, families and community dignity.



photo courtesy of EdSource

Dr. Rocio Rivas has served on the LAUSD Board of Education since 2022.

Under Rivas’ leadership, the board has advanced bold, values-driven action, most recently with the unanimous passage of the Upholding Our Constitutional Rights and Standing with Immigrant Communities resolution. The resolution reaffirms LAUSD schools as sanctuary spaces, condemns the militarization of immigrant communities and calls for full legal protections for all students, families and community members, regardless of immigration status.

Rivas’ re-election reflects the board’s trust in her ability to lead with clarity, compassion and courage, centering safety, belonging and constitutional rights in every school across the district.

“Serving as vice president of the board is an honor I don’t take lightly. I’m grateful to my colleagues for their trust and I am committed to leading with integrity, collaboration, and courage,” Rivas said. “Together, we will keep centering

students and families, strengthening our schools and advancing equity in every decision we make.”

“Congratulations to Dr. Rocio Rivas on her re-election as vice president of the Los Angeles Board of Education,” LAUSD Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho said. “Dr. Rivas is a dedicated advocate for students and families, and her leadership reflects a deep commitment to equity, access, and opportunity across our district. I look forward to continuing our partnership as we work together to support schools and strengthen outcomes for all students.”

“Congratulations to Dr. Rivas on her re-election as vice president of the LAUSD Board of Education. With consistency in our board and district leadership, we will continue to focus on improving outcomes and opportunities for kids to ensure that they are prepared for success in school and beyond,” Board Member Nick Melvoin added.

For information, visit [lausd.net](http://lausd.net).

## LAUSD observes National Mentoring Month in January

The Los Angeles Unified Board of Education approved the recognition of January as National Mentoring Month. The district commits to prioritizing the importance of mentoring as a key strategy in cultivating leadership and confidence in students as they prepare to enter higher learning and careers.

The resolution was authored by Board Member Sherlett Hendy Newbill and co-sponsored by Board President Scott Schmerelson, Board Vice President Dr. Rocio Rivas and Board Member Kelly Gonez.

“Mentorship helps ensure our LAUSD students are ready for the world. When students have trusted adults who guide, support and connect learning to real-world opportunities, they gain the confidence and skills needed to succeed in the classroom and beyond,” Hendy Newbill said.

“During National Mentoring Month, we honor the mentors who show up every day for our

students – listening, guiding and believing in them, sometimes before they believe in themselves,” LAUSD Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho said. “Mentorship changes lives, and we are grateful to the educators, staff and community members who help our students see their potential and shape their futures.”

“We are proud to recognize January 2026 as National Mentoring Month. Mentoring not only changes lives, but opens doors for our young people and strengthens our community,” Board Member Nick Melvoin said. “We urge our federal, state, and local partners to continue investing in the mentoring and college-access programs our students rely on. We reaffirm our commitment to expanding and supporting these vital opportunities so every student can realize their full potential and graduate ready to succeed.”

For information, visit [lausd.net](http://lausd.net).

## BHUSD, BHPD and PTA Council partner for record-breaking gift drive

The Beverly Hills Unified School District PTA Council leads a holiday toy drive that has brought the Beverly Hills community together for more than 50 years. In 2025, the project entered a new chapter through a meaningful collaboration with the Beverly Hills Police Department, transforming a long-standing effort into a true city-wide partnership.

This year’s Operation Gift Drop united BHUSD, the BHUSD PTA Council and the Beverly Hills Police

Department in a coordinated effort that expanded the reach, visibility and impact of the drive. Building on decades of leadership by the PTA Council, BHPD’s involvement helped extend the initiative beyond school sites and into the broader community through increased engagement, logistics support and a highly visible presence throughout the campaign. The program received more than 1,200 gifts, surpassing every previous holiday toy drive record.

The city extended special recog-

nition to the Beverly Hills Basketball League and Fred Farahmand and Phillip Asherian, whose generosity resulted in the donation of more than 600 toys – the largest single contribution to this year’s drive. The campaign concluded with a moment that reflected the strength of the Beverly Hills community. During the final portion of the program, the city’s police, fire and schools came together to prepare gifts for delivery. Beverly Hills Mayor Sharona Nazarian joined the effort and expressed appreciation for the community response and the remarkable number of toys collected.

For information, visit [bhUSD.org](http://bhUSD.org).



photo courtesy of the BHUSD

BHUSD and PTA Council representatives came together with students and BHPD officers for Operation Gift Drop.

## BHHS boys basketball team wins

The Beverly Hills High School boys varsity basketball team delivered a spectacular comeback win on Saturday, Dec. 27, rallying from an 11-point deficit in the final minutes to defeat Highland High School of Palmdale in the Rancho Mirage Holiday Invitational.

Down by 11 points with just under four minutes remaining in the

fourth quarter, the BHHS varsity team showed resilience, unity and focus, closing the gap until they took the lead in the final moments.

The comeback unfolded in front of a packed gym filled with families and supporters of both the varsity and junior varsity teams.

For information, visit [bhUSD.org/beverly-hills-high-school-](http://bhUSD.org/beverly-hills-high-school-)



photo courtesy of BHUSD

The BHHS varsity team showed resilience and focus during the Rancho Mirage Holiday Invitational.



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# Madame Tussauds unveils otherworldly wax figure

Madame Tussauds invites guests to journey to Pandora with the reveal of spectacular new wax figures inspired by “Avatar: Fire and Ash” and unveiled in celebration of the film’s global launch. Jake Sully takes his place at Madame Tussauds Hollywood and Sydney, and Neytiri debuts in Madame Tussauds Amsterdam, each showcased in a permanent glowing environment that captures the bioluminescent beauty and cinematic wonder of James Cameron’s universe.

Created in close collaboration with Lightstorm Entertainment and Wētā Workshop, the life-sized Jake Sully figure brings the Na’vi hero to life at Madame Tussauds Hollywood. Every detail has been meticulously crafted – from his deep blue skin with hand-painted markings to the braided hair and beaded accessories. Posing in a strong warrior stance, gripping his signature Na’vi blade, Jake embodies the determination and leadership that define the character, making him the hero moment of the experience.

At Madame Tussauds Hollywood, guests step into an immersive Pandora-inspired landscape filled with vibrant flora, alien plant life and otherworldly scenery that transports them straight into the world of the Na’vi. Every element of the environment has been

designed to inspire wonder and discovery, capturing the magic of “Avatar: Fire and Ash.” At the heart of the striking setting, the life-sized Jake Sully figure creates a powerful cinematic moment, allowing visitors to stand alongside the iconic hero as he appears on screen.

Working in close collaboration with Lightstorm Entertainment, a team of 20 studio artists created the new figures over the course of a year.

For information, visit [madame-tussauds.com](https://www.madame-tussauds.com). Madame Tussauds is located at 6933 Hollywood Blvd.



photo courtesy of Madame Tussauds

The life-size Jake Sully figure is now on display in an immersive Pandora-inspired landscape.

# Explore native artistry at The Autry

Visit the Autry Museum of the American West in the new year to view the exhibition “Creative Continuities: Family, Pride, and Community in Native Art,” an exploration of Native culture on display through June 17, 2027.

The exhibition features works from the Autry’s Native American collections. “Creative Continuities: Family, Pride, and Community in Native Art” explores the meanings embedded in three aspects of Native culture: “Knowing,” “Create” and “Transference.” Three contempo-

rary Plains Indian artists – John Pepion (Blackfeet), Brocade Stops Black Eagle (Crow) and Jessa Rae Growing Thunder (Dakota/Nakoda) – each curated a different section of the exhibition, framing works that originated within their respective communities behind one of the exhibition’s three primary concepts. Through cultural objects and stories, “Creative Continuities” educates visitors about the diversity of Native American culture, history and tradition.

The Autry Museum of the

American West is located at 4700 Western Heritage Way. For information, visit [theautry.org](https://theautry.org).



photo courtesy of The Autry

“Creative Continuities” at The Autry explores diversity of Native American culture.

# Program offers educational incubator for playwrights

PlayGround, a leading national playwright incubator, has announced new offerings as part of its revamped education program for adults. The workshops and masterclasses will be led by acclaimed playwrights Jonathan Spector (Tony Award winner, “Eureka Day”), Steve Yockey (Emmy nominee and multiple NNPN rolling world premieres) and PlayGround alumni Linda Amayo-Hassan, Andrew Crabtree and Howard Ho.

Stephanie Prentice, PlayGround’s education coordinator, created the educational offerings.

“PlayGround’s education programs are open to the entire community and designed to support artists at every stage,” Prentice said. “Offered in-person and online via Zoom, our winter-spring 2026 classes include multi-session workshops and one-night masterclasses led by celebrated PlayGround alumni and accomplished playwrights.”

The Masterclass with Tony Award-Winner Jonathan Spector, “Everything But The Writing,” will be held online on Jan. 21 at 6 p.m. Creating a life as a playwright takes a three-legged approach. The program will focus on the writing (and

all that leads up to it), the making (development, collaboration with directors, actors and designers, rehearsal, institutions) and the business (career, relationships, contracts, submissions, commissions and agents).

The Masterclass with Emmy-Nominee Steve Yockey, “A Deep Dive into Story Structure,” will be held on Feb. 22 from 6-8 p.m. at the Broadwater Studio. Yockey will lead an exploration of the use of structural prompts to develop a story, focusing on short form and how that can then be applied to full-length plays, TV and film.

“Intro to Screenwriting: The Craft, Navigating the Business and Surviving the Lifestyle with Andrew Crabtree” will be held online via Zoom in six weekly sessions on Tuesday, Jan. 20, from 6-7:30 p.m. Explore the craft of screenwriting, from story structure, character development and genre to formatting, storytelling techniques and the business of film.

Registration for each session is limited to 12-20 participants. All registration fees support PlayGround programs and teaching artists. For information, visit [playground-sf.org/education](https://playground-sf.org/education).

# State Superintendent announces initiative to address antisemitism

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond announced that registration is open for the second annual School Leadership to End Hate Winter Institute, co-hosted by the California Department of Education and the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education.

The second annual School Leadership to End Hate Institute, “School Leadership to End Hate and Inspire Courage,” will take place on March 2 in Sacramento.

The announcement comes amid a continued nationwide rise in antisemitism and hate, which has reverberated in California and includes a recent incident at Branham High School in San Jose where students formed a “human swastika” on a school field and posted it to social media with a 1939 quote from Adolf Hitler.

“The incident at Branham High School is a horrendous act that is appalling on every level. We must all condemn this clear instance of hate speech, which threatens the safety of students and staff alike,” Thurmond said. “We must prevent our young people from being co-opted by hate groups, and we must protect our schools as learning environments where students of all backgrounds, including our Jewish students, are safe to learn and thrive.”

Thurmond’s Education to End Hate Initiative includes outreach directly to district superintendents to offer resources in the aftermath of hateful or discriminatory actions such as the incident at Branham High School.

Thurmond first launched the Education to End Hate Initiative to combat bias, bigotry and racism in September 2020. Since that time, Education to End Hate has expanded to directly address rising antisemitism and all forms of hate.

“Educators are often asked to hold difficult history alongside present-day realities, and moments like this can feel especially heavy,” said Morgan Blum Schneider, director of the JFCS Holocaust Center, who leads the work of the California Teachers Collaborative. “We want California teachers and administrators alike to know that they are not alone. The California Teachers Collaborative is a statewide network for our school communities, whether they are addressing an immediate crisis or planning long-term strategies to foster understanding and confront antisemitism and hate.”

**“Educators are often asked to hold difficult history alongside present-day realities, and moments like this can feel especially heavy.”**

*Morgan Blum Schneider,  
director of the  
JFCS Holocaust Center*

The CDE and the California Teachers Collaborative invite local educational agencies to send teams of educators, including administrators and teachers, to the School Leadership to End Hate Institute. Teams are encouraged to apply early, as registration for the first School Leadership to End Hate Institute quickly filled to capacity.

California schools and districts serving grades 6-12 are encouraged to apply by visiting [holocaustcenter.jfcs.org/winter-institute-2026](https://holocaustcenter.jfcs.org/winter-institute-2026).

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# L.A. ensures families affected by raids have holiday gifts

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass announced on Dec. 19 that more than 1,000 toys and essential items were donated to families impacted by immigration enforcement actions across Los Angeles. The Holiday Donation Drive invited residents to drop off new toys, books, sports equipment, winter clothing, grocery gift cards and household essentials at city facilities.

The overwhelming response demonstrated the compassion, unity and generosity that defines Los Angeles, Bass said. “Angelenos showed up in a powerful way. Together, we collected more than 1,000 toys and countless essential items that will bring warmth, joy and hope to families who need it most,” Bass added. “This is what it looks like when a

city comes together, neighbors supporting neighbors and ensuring every child feels seen, valued and cared for during the holiday season.”

“We are grateful to Mayor Karen Bass and the city of Los Angeles for thinking of the day laborers, household workers and their families,” said Meagan Ortiz, executive director of the Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California. “In a year marked by climate and national political disasters, bringing joy to those most impacted is an important reminder of our shared humanity.”

Donations were collected at City Hall and city facilities across Los Angeles, with contributions coming from residents, city employees and community partners. The items were distributed by immigrant rights organizations such as CHIRLA, SALEF, IDEPSCA, ImmDef, Proyecto Pastoral, CARECEN, the Clean Car Wash Center and the YMCA to families affected by recent immigration enforcement.

“This effort was about more than gifts,” Bass said. “It was about reminding immigrant families that Los Angeles stands with them – not just during the holidays, but every day.”

For information, visit [mayor.lacounty.gov](http://mayor.lacounty.gov).



photo courtesy of Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass's office  
Mayor Karen Bass helped distribute donated gifts to families impacted by immigration enforcement in the city.

# Sen. Allen spreads holiday cheer through donations

California Sen. Ben Allen (D-Santa Monica) hosted his annual Toy Drive and Holiday Celebration on Dec. 11 at Santa Monica Place, bringing the community together to support children.

“This holiday season carries a little extra weight after the immense challenges many in the region have faced since the January fires,” Allen said. “Whether it is the simple spread of cheer or a tangible donation that will put a smile on a kid, this community has come together to uplift our neighbors in need time and again. It is always heartwarming to see.”

The donation drive collected more than 1,000 toys thanks to generous donors. The nonprofits Connections For Children and Safe Place for Youth will distribute the toys to local families in need.

The party included musical performances by students from the Santa Monica High School string orchestra and Elemental Music’s Chamber Music Institute. Allen also highlighted important achievements over the past year including tax relief for fire-impacted property owners and the modernization of California’s Film and TV Tax Credit Program to halt the runaway

production. Certificates of recognition were presented to Jennifer Smith, CEO of Connections for Children, and Martin Pimentel, outreach program supervisor for Safe Place for Youth.

“I want to thank our tremendous partners – Connections for Children and Safe Place for Youth – the live

musical performers from Santa Monica High School’s string orchestra and Elemental Music’s Chamber Music Institute, and our wonderful host, Santa Monica Place, all who helped us get into the spirit of the holidays,” Allen said.

For information, visit [sd24.senate.ca.gov](http://sd24.senate.ca.gov).



photo courtesy of Sen. Ben Allen's office  
Sen. Ben Allen joined representatives of Connections for Children and Safe Place for Youth during the holiday event at Santa Monica Place.

# Don't miss 'The Notebook' at Hollywood Pantages Theatre

Broadway in Hollywood presents “The Notebook” running from Tuesday, Jan. 6, through Sunday, Jan. 11, at the Hollywood

Pantages Theatre. Based on the best-selling novel that inspired the iconic film, “The Notebook” tells the story of Allie and

Noah, both from different worlds, who share a lifetime of love despite the forces that threaten to pull them apart. “The Notebook” is a deeply moving portrait of the enduring power of love.

Michael Greif (“Dear Evan Hansen,” “Next to Normal,” “RENT”) and Schele Williams (“The Wiz,” “Aida”) direct “The Notebook,” which features music and lyrics by multi-platinum singer-songwriter Ingrid Michaelson, book by Bekah Brunstetter and choreography by Katie Spelman.

Showtimes are at 7:30 p.m., Jan. 6-8; 8 p.m., Jan. 9; 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., Jan. 10; and 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., Jan. 11. The Hollywood Pantages Theatre is located at 6233 Hollywood Blvd. For information, visit [broadwayinhollywood.com/events/detail/notebook](http://broadwayinhollywood.com/events/detail/notebook).



photo by Roger Mastroianni  
Alysha Deslorieux and Ken Wulf Clark are included in the stellar cast of “The Notebook.”

# WeHo asks residents to go green by recycling holiday trees

The city of West Hollywood is providing information to residents about trash pickup service and Christmas tree recycling. The city’s solid waste hauler, Athens Services, will not pick up trash on New Year’s Day, Thursday, Jan. 1. Services will be provided one day later than the regularly scheduled pickup day.

Holiday trees are 100% recyclable. Athens Services will collect holiday trees on regular pickup days through Saturday, Jan. 10.

To ensure tree collection, remove stands, ornaments, lights and tinsel, and place the tree at the curb. Trees more than six feet in length must be cut in half. Trees with flocking or fire retardants are not accepted. Do not leave a tree in a plastic bag, as the bag can get caught in chipper blades. Trees not picked up during the recycle

window must be cut up and placed in yard waste containers.

Gift boxes, wrapping paper and other paper packaging can be recycled with regular paper and cardboard recycling.

During the holidays, many people replace electronics. Residents should take old electronics to a collection center such as the UCLA S.A.F.E. Drop-Off Center ((800)773-2489) or may schedule an e-waste pickup with Athens Services. For details, visit [weho.org/city-government/city-departments/public-works/environmental-services/trash-and-recycling](http://weho.org/city-government/city-departments/public-works/environmental-services/trash-and-recycling).

Bulky or large items such as refrigerators, carpet and wood can be picked up free for residents, limited to a maximum of two items. Call Athens Services directly at (888)336-6100 to arrange pickup.



photo courtesy of Athens Services  
No trash pickup service will occur in West Hollywood on Jan. 1. Services will be provided one day later than the regularly scheduled pickup day.

# VINTAGE PARKLABREA NEWS

# Rose Parade royalty comes together



The 1960 Tournament of Roses Parade Queen Margarethe Bertelson, left, joined 1980 Rose Parade queen Julie Deane Raatz in this photograph in the Dec. 27, 1979, issue of the Park Labrea News. The parade royalty was shown with a model depicting the Eastman Kodak float in the parade that year. The 137th Tournament Roses Parade starts at 8 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 1, and is televised on ABC and NBC. Basketball legend Earvin “Magic” Johnson serves as grand marshal. For information, visit [tournamentofroses.com](http://tournamentofroses.com).



# Metro will open its first Beverly Hills station in 2026

From page 1

the westernmost stop on the D Line. Additionally, Metro has announced plans for a daily rail cleaning service.

“As a result of temporarily being responsible for end-of-line operations, the city anticipates changes in pedestrian patterns,” Clark said. “This includes increased foot traffic during the day, and an influx of passengers entering the city late at night and early in the morning. These riders may include individuals experiencing homelessness, people in mental health crises, riders unfamiliar with the area or individuals disconnected from services.”

According to the city, observed challenges for end-of-line stations include early morning loitering, a greater demand for behavioral-health interventions, sanitation impacts and elevated calls for service from nearby businesses.

In response, Clark said the city will bring together various departments including the Beverly

Hills Fire and Police Departments, Department of Mental Health, Beverly Hills Outreach Team, contracted security teams, park rangers and public works to provide a comprehensive approach to provide services to unhoused individuals.

“It is really up to us to ensure that we have a safe community and also that anybody who may be homeless gets the help that they need,” Councilman John Mirisch said. “It’s sad that we’re faced with this overall issue in Southern California compared with other places ... [we’ve] looked at what happens in other end-of-the-line places like Santa Monica. For us, I guess this is going to be temporary.”

Existing programs including the Beverly Hills Outreach Team will be mobilized near the station to provide assistance to unhoused individuals and connect them with essential services. The BHPD will retain primary enforcement

authority for reports of criminal activity, in addition to preventing encampments and addressing safety concerns.

Additionally, before the station opens, the city’s Department of Human Services will conduct outreach to property owners in the area. The city is currently seeking trespass enforcement authorization from business and property owners in order to grant the BHPD the authority to enforce trespassing laws on private property.

“This is really a team effort, and we’re in new territory,” Mayor Sharona Nazarian said. “This is something that we need to continue to keep educating ourselves on, working together in different partnerships with all the various departments to be able to come to solutions that are going to be both empathetic, thoughtful and meaningful.”

Following the opening of the station, the city will collect data

including number of riders off-loading each night, the number of late night and early morning engagements, calls for service and sanitation and environmental trends. City staff will hold weekly collaboration meetings across several departments to review the data and adjust operations.

While the city is preparing to ramp up public safety efforts near the station, Metro said in a statement that it is “dedicated to making every ride on Metro a safe and welcoming experience.”

“Over the last two years, Metro has invested hundreds of millions to deploy a new safety and security strategy on the rail system, focused on engaged visible presence, access control and stepped-up outreach to people in need on our system,” the statement read. “Like all Metro stations, the new D Line stations will have security cameras installed throughout and will offer security coverage 24 hours a day, seven

days a week. All the new D Line stations will also have the taller fare gates with modern features such as precise motion sensors to reduce piggybacking, electromechanical locks to prevent forced entries and paddle-style doors that improve accessibility for customers.”

According to Metro, the taller faregates resulted in a 22% increase in paid station entries after they were introduced in North Hollywood. Additionally, reports made on Metro’s Transit Watch app declined by 70% at the station after the gates were installed. Metro also noted that violent crime decreased by 12% systemwide between January and September 2025.

Residents with questions and concerns about the D Line Extension project can call the 24-hour project hotline at (213)922-6934, email the project team at purplelineext@metro.net or visit metro.net.

# Rocco has been helping build the West Hollywood community for 18 years

From page 1

high school. From there, she went to UCLA, eventually earning a graduate degree in urban planning.

“It was during graduate school that I came to truly appreciate the uniqueness of West Hollywood, and I developed a lasting passion for planning and public service,” Rocco said. “Bringing to-



photo courtesy the city of West Hollywood  
West Hollywood’s new City Manager Jackie Rocco has worked in the city since 2008.

gether my academic background with nearly two decades of local government service here has been deeply meaningful.”

Before joining the city, Rocco worked in the private sector for over a decade. Paired with her long tenure within West Hollywood, she said that she is prepared to take the reins.

“[My] experiences have given me a deep understanding of how local government works and, just as importantly, how to build strong relationships with residents, business owners, employees and community partners. Collaboration is one of the most rewarding aspects of this work, and I truly enjoy working alongside the people who make West Hollywood such a special place,” she said.

Rocco was chosen by the West Hollywood City Council for her position. The announcement was made during the Dec. 1 council meeting.

“I’m deeply honored by the confidence the West Hollywood City Council has placed in me. I look forward to working closely with our council, city staff and the com-

munity to build upon our progress while addressing both current challenges and future priorities. West Hollywood is a remarkable city filled with creativity, energy and purpose, and I’m excited to help lead the next chapter,” Rocco said. “I remain committed to ensuring that West Hollywood continues to be a progressive, welcoming and thriving community, and I’m inspired by what we will accomplish together.”

She also emphasized how much she was able to learn from her predecessor.

“David Wilson has been a wonderful leader, mentor and steward of the city. I’ve had the privilege of working with David for nearly 18 years, and throughout that time he has consistently demonstrated what it means to lead with integrity, compassion and purpose. From him, I learned the value of steady, principled leadership, especially during times of uncertainty,” Rocco said.

She specified Wilson’s instrumental role in steering the city through the pandemic with “calm, clarity and an unwavering com-

mitment to public health, essential service and fiscal stability.”

“His steadfast focus on equity and inclusion, particularly his dedication to supporting LGBTQ+ and other historically marginalized communities, has been deeply affirming. I’m grateful for his mentorship as I step into the city manager role, and I’m proud to build upon the strong, forward-looking foundation he has established,” she added.

Rocco said that she was enth-

**“I remain committed to ensuring that West Hollywood continues to be a progressive, welcoming and thriving community, and I’m inspired by what we will accomplish together.”**

*Jackie Rocco  
Incoming-West Hollywood  
City Manager*

siastic about the years to come in West Hollywood, especially in advancing the organizational strategic planning initiatives and the implementation of the WeHo 40 plan to push the city forward. Referencing West Hollywood’s “vibrant, diverse and creative community,” Rocco professed that there is “no place anywhere in the world” like the city.

“There is truly no place anywhere in the world quite like West Hollywood. We are a small city with big, bold ideas and we genuinely celebrate inclusion, innovation and engagement. From our incredible small businesses to our character-rich residential neighborhoods, community members take great pride in being involved in civic life. West Hollywood is a place where people care deeply about one another, about progressive values and about creative expression. Residents consistently show up, support one another and work to make our city better for everyone. I am continually inspired by West Hollywood and its extraordinary community,” she said.

# Pawn Shop makes comeback after extensive restoration

From page 1

the Pawn Shop taking shape day by day.”

Torres-Palma and his company Ventana Ventures acquired the building at 5901 Melrose Ave. in February 2023 from brothers Rudy and Ernest Gintel, who operated the Brothers Collateral from 1980 until 2020. After initially opposing the project due to hours of operation and potential impacts it would have on neighborhood parking, the Hancock Park Homeowners Association sought concessions, which were eventually included when the project was approved by the Los Angeles Planning Commission. Under the rules approved by the Planning Department, the restaurant and bar is allowed to open from 9 a.m.-11 p.m., Sunday through Wednesday, and 9 a.m.-midnight, Thursday to Saturday.

“We did get a very favorable

CUP (conditional use permit) for the neighborhood,” HPHOA president Cindy Chvatal-Keane said. “I haven’t heard anything else from the neighbors. All of the things the neighbors were concerned about were addressed in the conditional use permit.”

Los Angeles City Councilman Hugo Soto-Martinez, 13th District, attended a groundbreaking for project and said he is eager to see the Pawn Shop open.

“We’re very happy to see what’s happening here. It’s going to change the whole street,” Soto-Martinez said at the June groundbreaking ceremony. “If you drive down Melrose Avenue, you’ll see it’s still changing. Hopefully, this will add to the change, and people will have a place, a small business, a neighborhood bar where they can watch the Dodgers or Lakers or LAFC or whatever. I think it’s a

great thing.”

The 1930 building’s Art Deco façade and brick interior are currently being renovated and restored ahead of the opening. Decorative 1930s-era brick and metalwork is being brought back to life. The 8,600-square-foot venue will have a central bar, communal tables and private mezzanine suites inspired by stadium luxury boxes. James Beard Award-winning chef Tony Messina leads the culinary program.

In addition to upcoming World Cup matches, the Pawn Shop is expected to be a destination for fans during other major sporting events in L.A. such as the Super Bowl in February 2027 and the 2028 Olympic Games.

“We feel that excitement on the ground, from the team working here every day to the community watching it come together,” Torres-Palma added.



photo by Edwin Folven

The Pawn Shop’s Art Deco exterior will come back to life under the new project.



# Beverly Hills OK'd several developments

From page 1

The builder’s remedy leaves little authority to municipalities to deny projects with affordable housing. In August, an L.A. County Superior Court judge ruled in favor of the developer of a 19-story builder’s remedy project 125-129 S. Linden Drive in a lawsuit that alleged the city unlawfully blocked the project from moving forward. The ruling mandated that the city process builder’s remedy applications.

Following the ruling, the Planning Commission approved nine builder’s remedy projects. Many of the projects were met with fierce opposition from neighbors, who argued that the developments are too large and will have negative effects on quality of life, including traffic and construction noise. However, the Planning Commission, citing the stringent nature of the builder’s remedy, often had no other choice but to approve.

“It does not bring us pleasure to have to deal with these projects and approve them,” Commission Chair Jeff Wolfe said at a meeting in which three builder’s remedy projects were approved. “We understand the impacts. We heard the concerns of the residents, and in most cases agreed with them. But once again, we are a legislative body. Just like we are bound to follow the laws that protect the

developer Max Netty and Wilshire Rodeo Company, LLC.

### 9229 Wilshire Blvd.

The mixed-use project at 9229 Wilshire Blvd., proposed by developer Alan Nissel and Wilshire Skyline LLC, will replace a two-story office building. The 14-story, 162-foot development includes retail space, a 60-room hotel and 116 residential units, with 24 reserved for low-income residents. Open space includes a second floor courtyard and interior-facing balconies on residential levels, totaling 4,456 square feet. Three levels of underground parking will contain 140 parking spaces. The project will replace a one-story medical/office building.

### 232 Tower Drive

The eight-story project at 232 Tower Drive, proposed by Oak Investment Company, LLC, will be 101 feet tall and contain 55 residential units, 11 of which will be reserved for low-income residents. Outdoor spaces include private balconies facing south and a rooftop common area. An underground parking structure will provide 13 parking spaces. The project directly borders the Carthay Circle neighborhood in the city of Los Angeles and will replace

and include 25 residential units. Five of the units will be reserved for affordable housing. A two-level parking garage will provide 14 parking spaces on the first floor and underground. The project includes 6,404 square feet of outdoor space on private balconies and a rooftop area. The development replaces a six-unit apartment building constructed in 1937.

### Olympic/Beverly projects

Four of the nine builder’s remedy projects approved in 2025 are located near the intersection of Olympic Boulevard and South Beverly Drive. The four projects were proposed by property owner Samuel Aflalo, and will replace office buildings and a Pavilions supermarket.

“We’re going to be removing old, obsolete office buildings that were built in a different time and don’t really service the community the way a new development will,” Aflalo said. “Same thing for the grocery store – it’s an older building. It’s not in the best shape. We’re going to build something that suits the needs of the community today. We’re also bringing both affordable housing and market-rate housing that’s much needed in the city of Beverly Hills.”

The following projects submitted by Aflalo were approved near the intersection of Olympic Boulevard and South Beverly Drive:

### 9430 Olympic Blvd.

The 13-story project at 9430 Olympic Blvd. will be 140 feet tall and contain 53 residential units with balconies and a rooftop terrace. Eleven units will be reserved for low-income residents. The development, which replaces an existing office building, includes three levels of underground parking with 23 parking spaces.

### 9441 Olympic Blvd.

The project at 9441 Olympic Blvd. is 13 stories and 143 feet tall with 75 residential units, 15 of which will be reserved for affordable housing. The development will have 4,092 square feet of ground floor commercial space, an underground parking structure with 52 parking spaces, balconies and a common outdoor space with a community room, courtyard and pool on the 13th floor rooftop level.

### 9467 Olympic Blvd.

The 9467 Olympic Blvd. project is eight stories, 85 feet tall and contains 105 residential units, with 21 units reserved for affordable housing. The project includes three levels of underground parking with 180 spaces. Private outdoor living space such as balconies, a common outdoor living space with a courtyard, gym and community room on the second



rendering courtesy of SPF Architects

A 14-story mixed-use project at 9229 Wilshire Blvd. includes retail space, a 60-room hotel and 116 residential units.

floor and a rooftop courtyard are added amenities. The development will replace the current Pavilions supermarket, and includes 17,085 square feet of ground floor retail, with space reserved for a grocery store that has yet to be announced.

### 333-353 S. Beverly Drive

The development located at 333-353 S. Beverly Drive will be eight stories and 85 feet tall. It will contain 135 residential units, with 27 reserved for affordable housing, and 16,099 square feet of commercial and restaurant space on the ground floor. A three-level underground parking structure will provide 263 parking spaces. The development includes balconies and an outdoor courtyard, gym and community room on the second floor, and a rooftop courtyard with a pool.

### Appeal pending: 8844 Burton Way

Although the Planning Commission approved nine builder’s remedy projects across the city, it also denied one builder’s remedy project at 8844 Burton Way.

The 200-unit project was created by developer Crescent Heights, Inc., and was initially proposed at 223 feet tall and 20 stories. However, changes in March and July by the developer increased the size of the project to 309 feet tall and 26 stories. The project would include 22 affordable housing units.

The Planning Commission voted 3-2 on Nov. 5 to deny the project. Commissioners expressed concerns over the project’s feasibility, reduction in affordable housing units and alleged fire safety concerns due to its size. Commission Chair Jeff Wolfe and Commissioner Terri Kaplan voted in favor of the development.

The denial has since been appealed by the developer, which argues the denial was unlawful, and that the City Council must overrule the decision under California housing law.

The City Council will vote on whether to approve or deny the appeal at a formal meeting in 2026. If the council does not grant the appeal, the developer plans to file litigation.



rendering courtesy of Crescent Heights, Inc.

Although nine builder’s remedy projects were approved, a 26-story project at 8844 Burton Way was denied and is now pending appeal to the City Council.



rendering courtesy of Ottinger Architects

The Beverly Hills Planning Commission approved an eight-story development at 9467 Olympic Blvd. that will replace the Pavilions grocery store.

residents, we also are bound to follow laws that unfortunately don’t protect the residents.”

The following builder’s remedy projects were approved in 2025 by the Beverly Hills Planning Commission:

### 145 S. Rodeo Drive

The 19-story building at 145 S. Rodeo Drive will rise 237 feet and include 30 residential units. Six of the units will be reserved for low-income residents. The development, which replaces a two-story commercial office building, will also include a ground-floor restaurant and a four-level underground parking structure with 54 parking spaces. Private balconies and a rooftop terrace will make up 12,795 square feet of outdoor space. The project is helmed by

an eight-unit apartment building constructed in 1940.

### 346 N. Maple Drive

The 12-story, 124-foot tall development at 346 N. Maple Drive, also planned by Oak Investment Company, LLC, will contain 65 residential units, with 13 reserved for affordable housing. A parking garage on the first floor and underground will provide 15 spaces. A total of 7,077 square feet of outdoor space is included with private balconies and a rooftop deck. The project will replace an eight-unit apartment building constructed in 1947.

### 401 N. Oakhurst Drive

The 11-story project at 401 N. Oakhurst Drive proposed by DK 1821 Daly, LLC, will rise 131 feet

## Los Angeles County joins lawsuit over federal homeless program funding

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a motion by Supervisor Lindsey Horvath, 3rd District, to support a multi-state lawsuit challenging the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s 2025 Continuum of Care Notice of Funding Opportunity.

The action reflects the county’s commitment to protecting critical housing resources at a moment

when the federal government is imposing unprecedented, unlawful restrictions that threaten the stability of thousands of households and families. The lawsuit seeks to overturn changes to the NOFO that many believe will lead to more people losing their homes. The changes limit the county’s ability to invest in proven solutions, undermine effective regional coordination and

destabilize programs designed to end homelessness.

“As this Trump administration plays political games from a place of comfort and privilege, our communities are left to deal with the fallout. In Los Angeles County, families are stretching every dollar to stay housed while Washington pushes policies that pull the floor out from under them,” Horvath said. “This HUD NOFO isn’t

leadership, it’s an attack on the very tools that keep people safe and stably housed. We know what ends homelessness: housing, care and real partnership across every level of government. And we will not stand by while an administration more interested in spectacle than solutions undermines proven pathways out of homelessness.”

For information, visit lindsey-horvath.lacounty.gov.

### Answers From Page 23

1	P	R	A	T	T	8	S	W	A	B	10	W	H	I	M
14	L	U	C	R	E	15	H	A	L	E	16	R	U	S	E
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31	C	R	U	E	32	T	E	E	U	P	33	I	G	O	
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Crossword Puzzle by Myles Mellor

Across

1. Big name in aircraft engines

6. Clean, as a deck

10. Fancy

14. Profit

15. Healthy

16. Feint

17. "All war is a symptom of man's failure as \_\_\_\_" John Steinbeck

20. Stephen King title

21. Charming girls

22. One may be picked up at a bar

23. Expiate

25. House style

29. Inner parts of a shoe

33. \_\_\_\_ premium

34. French river

36. Salad cheese

37. "The \_\_\_\_ is to subdue the enemy without fighting" Sun Tzu

41. Rock's Motley \_\_\_\_

42. Get ready for a drive

43. Billy Joel's "\_\_\_\_ to Extremes"

44. Out for dinner, maybe

47. Dolled up

49. Impolite dinner sound

51. Benz followers

52. Magazine distributor

55. Flowering vine

60. "The two most powerful war-riors are \_\_\_\_" Leo Tolstoy

62. Small squabble

63. Hit the road

Down

1. Surveyor's map

2. The Bambino

3. Throb

4. Wistful

5. Feeler

6. Climb, as a tree

7. "A Fish Called \_\_\_\_"

8. H.S. subject

9. Lighthouse

10. Deem unsalvageable

11. Leader of philosophical skepticism

12. "My word!"

13. Sitcom diner

18. Comic book blast

19. Women in habits

24. Arranged in layers

25. Maine's \_\_\_\_ Bay

26. Took \_\_\_\_ for the worse

27. Its capital is Port Moresby

28. Calorie counter

30. "The Chronicles of Narnia" author

31. French story

32. Indian instrument

64. Affliction said to be caused by worry

65. Selects

66. Cutlass Supreme, for one

67. Arctic explorer Robert

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62						63					64			
65						66						67		

35. "Call Me Maybe" singer Carly \_\_\_\_ Jepsen

38. Hearts and diamonds

39. Serving dish

40. Cut surgically

45. Opposite of aweather

46. Get advice from

48. Arbitrate

50. False combining form

52. \_\_\_\_ jure (by law)

53. Former defensive tackle Warren

54. Doctor's order

56. Major conflicts

57. Type size

58. Like a 911 call, abbr.

59. Unsubstantial

61. Military rank, for short

answers on page 22



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