



# The Riviera Association

October 2022 [www.rivieraassociation.org](http://www.rivieraassociation.org) P.O. Box 4235 • Santa Barbara, CA 93140-4235

## President's Letter

Dear Neighbors,

As I write this note in late August, I am welcoming the thick fog bringing much-needed moisture to our trees and plants and the little creatures who live among them. We still have time before any measurable rain may fall and a couple of interim months when the scorching sundowner winds may threaten. Even so, it feels a bit like winter when the fog obscures the city and the sea and shrinks the world. I may be an anomaly here in Southern California, but I prefer winter's imperfect days to those relentlessly sunny summer ones. Jacket weather and little green shoots coming to life after a good soaking make me feel fresh, too. And if there's enough rain, the promise of a successful chanterelle hunt spurs me to explore hidden oak woodlands. Change and surprise beckon when the dry season finally ends.

Not all of the pleasures of fall and winter, however, are outdoor. As the sun recedes, as rain falls, and as night comes early, it becomes time to turn to indoor pleasures: concerts, plays, and shows. We in Santa Barbara are blessed with such an array of cultural events and institutions that space aliens seeing the city's roster might think they have landed in New York City. Okay, maybe not quite. But culturally speaking, Santa Barbara is probably unequalled for its size. Once the UCSB Arts & Lecture programs com-

mence in fall, as well as CAMA's, the Santa Barbara Symphony's, the Santa Barbara Opera's, Camerata Pacifica's, the Ensemble Theater's, and the plays and shows of the Granada, the Arlington, and the Lobero, hardly a day goes by without some world class performers gracing our city.

Nor are all of the indoor, world class performances live. We also, luckily, have movies. Here, in our very own Riviera neighborhood, either a pleasant walk or a short drive for most of us, we have the city's venue for "art" films: the Riviera Theatre. As many of you know, the Riviera Theatre is located in a building that dates from the 1920s when it was built to house a theater and the library of a branch of the Santa Barbara State Teachers College. The state continued to own the campus even after the college evolved into what is now Santa Barbara City College. UC Santa Barbara briefly occupied the site, too, as did the Brooks Institute of Photography, a lessee. In the 1960s, the state sold the campus, and the city zoned it as "research and development," allowing a movie theater on site on the condition that it show "art" films. The objective, of course, was to avoid bringing the kind of traffic to a residential neighborhood that Hollywood films might attract.

In spite of the city's mandate, for years the Riviera Theatre was included in the group of Metropolitan movie theaters in town, and the art film mandate was forgotten. How that now has changed! In 2016,

with enormous help from private donors, the Santa Barbara International Film Festival (SBIFF), a nonprofit organization, acquired the facility and began a \$5 million renovation. Now billing itself as "Santa Barbara's Non-profit Arthouse," the SBIFF Riviera Theatre is dedicated to "showing new international and independent films every day."

I am pleased to announce that the head of SBIFF, Roger Durling, will be our featured speaker at our upcoming October 23 meeting. Roger has been the executive director of the Santa Barbara International Film Festival for twenty years. During his tenure, SBIFF has garnered a reputation among industry professionals as one of the top film festivals in the U.S. Roger teaches Film Studies at Santa Barbara City College, has been awarded as a Santa Barbara Citizen of the Year, and has programmed a series of panels and conversations for the American Pavilion at the Cannes Festival, among many other activities. Roger will speak to us not only about the theatre and the film festival itself, but about the work that goes into selecting films for showing in our community. It promises to be a lively and informative meeting. See you there.

Sincerely,

Shelley Bookspan  
President, Riviera Association

## Riviera Association Fall General Meeting

**Sunday, October 23 • 4–6 p.m. • Riviera Ridge Campus, 2130 Mission Ridge Road**

*Follow the signs, check in at the courtyard area*

- Keynote Presenter: Roger Durling, Executive Director, Santa Barbara International Film Festival
- Enjoy appetizers and drinks • Get Riviera Association activities update from President Shelley Bookspan.

# Santa Barbara Housing Element Update: Addressing Our Affordability Crisis

The City of Santa Barbara recently released the Housing Element Update (HEU) plan, which outlines the steps the city plans to take in the next eight years to meet new state-mandated housing construction targets, referred to as our Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). A second draft that includes public feedback has been sent to the state’s Housing and Community Development Department for review, and is available in both redlined and updated form at [www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/HEU](http://www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/HEU).

The HEU describes a set of goals and supporting policies aimed at prioritizing, funding, and creating more housing affordable to our workforce.

While the city’s Average Unit Size Density (AUD) incentive program successfully increased the production of market-rate, multi-unit rental housing, local housing affordable to low-to-middle income families remains in short supply. Astonishingly, six years into the latest state-directed new housing buildout cycle, the city is more than 2,240 units short of meeting its affordable housing goals (*see chart below*).

## The Costs of Living Far From Work

Today many of our service workers must endure long commutes to their jobs in Santa Barbara, taking away from family time and clogging local roadways each

morning and afternoon. Just as importantly, the daily number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is imposing an increasingly large cost on our local environment, elevating greenhouse gas emissions and on some days creating a layer of haze over our city.

An analysis of VMT will be a part of the HEU’s upcoming Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR), which will evaluate the potential impact of new housing on a wide range of resources, including water, biological, and historic, as well as adverse effects on infrastructure. The PEIR will be released later this fall and the public will have at least thirty days to comment.

## City of Santa Barbara Progress in Building Affordable Housing Units (2015–21)

RHNA Income Category	2015–22 RHNA	2015–21* Progress	Remaining Allocation	Percent Remaining
Very Low	962	120	842	87.5%
Low	701	112	589	84.0%
Moderate	820	4	816	99.5%
Above Moderate	1,617	1,356	261	16.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,100</b>	<b>1,592</b>	<b>2,508</b>	<b>61.2%</b>

\*One more calendar year is left in the planning period.

Source: HCD Review Housing Element Draft 2023, City of Santa Barbara, August 2022.

## Potential Sites & Programs

The city’s HEU analysis found that there are a sufficient number of suitable parcels of land to meet the state’s RHNA target of 8,001 additional housing units without having to further increase zoning. Potential housing sites

and approaches include:

- The former retail space at La Cumbre Plaza, which the HEU states could provide up to 1,900 multi-housing units, some of which should be allocated to low-to-moderate income renters.
- Repurposing existing vacant buildings.

An adaptive reuse program could offer a faster and more environmentally friendly path to new housing.

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) or “granny flats.” These are not likely to be affordable to low-to-moderate income

renters, since the rental price is determined by private owners and is susceptible to the vagaries of local market conditions.

**Worth Noting: The Housing Element Plan does not propose that any new multi-unit housing be built in Very High Fire Hazard Severity (VHFHS) zones, in which most of the Riviera is located, nor in ecologically sensitive areas such as marshes and creeks.**

## Deed-Restricted Affordable Housing: A Critical Unmet Need

The most significant sticking point is how new deed-restricted affordable housing

(DRAH) gets funded and who will build it. DRAH is considered the “gold standard” of affordable housing because inhabitants must be income-eligible and housing costs stay affordable by covenant, usually for a period of ninety years or in perpetuity.

Unfortunately, far too little DRAH has been included in the recent boom of market-rate rental apartments. For-profit developers resist proposals to increase inclusionary affordable housing beyond the current 10% requirement for moderate income units, and claim requirements to include DRAH units are cost-prohibitive, given the local price of land and construction.

Meanwhile, nonprofit providers, such as the Housing Authority, have historically built (*Continued on page 3*)

## Maintaining Alameda Padre Serra, the Riviera Thoroughfare

From the time Alameda Padre Serra was first born in 1911, it has been an instrumental gateway through the Riviera neighborhood. It was first created as a trolley streetcar line to carry passengers to the new hillside schools (now Riviera Park and the El Encanto Hotel).

The roofed platform for waiting passengers still exists today at the Lasuen intersection. As times changed and motor cars started to appear, the trolley tracks were removed in 1930 and APS was then configured as a cross-town bus line. Traversing it offered amazing views of the city and ocean vistas, as well as the beautiful homes beginning to line it.

As the Riviera continued to get developed, the padres at the Old Mission were invited to name the winding streets on the Riviera. The main thoroughfare, which divided the “upper” from the “lower” Riviera, became Alameda Padre Serra (or APS to those living on it) in memory of the founder of the California missions. Other names out of our Hispanic past were perpetuated: Jimeno, Ferrelo, San Carlos, Oramas, Lasuen, Rubio, Paterna, and Arguello. Dover, we assume, honors the master stonemason Joe Dover, who oversaw the Italian artisans imported to build many of the stone walls and terraces in our neighborhood.

The Riviera Association has always tried to be a good caretaker of this important thoroughfare and its environs. Over the years, as water restrictions occurred and ever dwindling city budgets



Recent work with the City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department led to weed abatement as well as the planting of succulents along APS’s more barren areas. The Riviera Association is looking to find other ways to improve the look of the scenic roadway.

withdrew funds from the upkeep of APS, its medians began to look a little forlorn. The Riviera Association recently worked with the City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department, which is responsible for much of its upkeep, to get some long overdue weed abatement completed. We were also able to convince the department to plant some additional succulents in some of its more barren areas. These efforts only further motivated us to continue to look at ways that we—the Riviera Association and the neighbors of the Riviera—along with the responsible city departments, can

continue to improve the “17 Mile Drive” of Santa Barbara. It starts at Mission Park and also abuts Orpet Park, Sylvan Park, and the drainage watershed at Loma Media, which will also be factored into future upkeep plans.

If you have any additional suggestions, want to get involved in volunteer maintenance projects, or have ideas on joint private/public partnerships related to APS care and feeding, please reach out to Michael Erickson at [michael@rivieraassociation.org](mailto:michael@rivieraassociation.org).

—Text and photo, Michael Erickson

### DRAH, cont.

*Continued from page 2*

almost all of Santa Barbara’s DRAH. But they also face significant cost barriers and are at a disadvantage when bidding against the for-profit sector for developable land. In 2010, the city lost millions in state Redevelopment Agency funds, and nonprofits must now scramble to find increasingly scarce and competi-

tive state and federal grant subsidies or private donations to build affordable housing.

This leaves the funding burden primarily to cities and counties, which are often strapped for resources. The HEU proposes several types of taxes as potential funding sources for DRAH, but none of these come up for voter approval until at least 2024.

If you are concerned about this issue, you can write to our local, state, and federal representatives, nearly all of whom are concerned about the affordable housing crisis. Without more public funding for DRAH, however, little progress will be made to ensure the workers who contribute daily to Santa Barbara’s quality of life can also afford to live here. —Jeff Byrne and Lisa Carlos



## The Enchanted Place, El Encanto Hotel

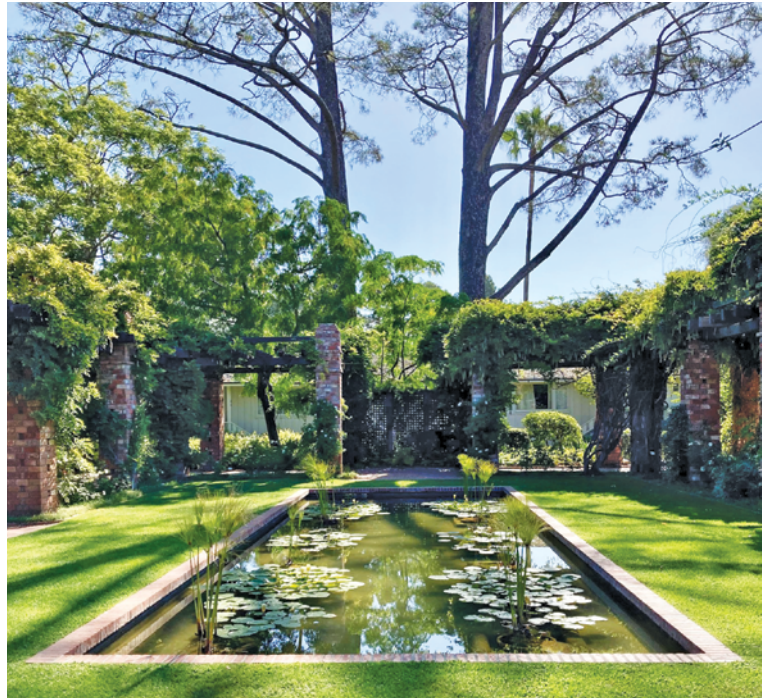
Nestled among Eucalyptus trees high on the Riviera is one of Santa Barbara's oldest hotels, El Encanto, which translates to "Enchantment," or more roughly, "The Enchanted Place." The hotel definitely lives up to this moniker, sitting stately on a hillside overlooking Santa Barbara, the Channel Islands, and the Pacific Ocean.

El Encanto was not always a hotel. The land where the hotel currently sits was acquired by entrepreneur Charles A. Storke in the 1870s for \$1.25 an acre. The purchase was ridiculed as "Storke's folly" because of the lack of water, difficult access, and the rocky soil. Storke eventually sold his folly in 1887 for \$25,000, a considerable sum at the time.

Once the trolley service was installed on APS and the State Normal School of Manual Arts and Home Economics (currently Riviera Park) was opened, things changed. In 1912, James Warren, president of County National Bank, saw the potential for Storke's folly and purchased the property from then owner Walter Hawley. Warren built dormitories and several ten-room houses and cottages, which he intended as housing for faculty and students from the Normal School.

This venture did not work out for Warren, so he decided to take advantage of the new tourist trade in the area and build a hotel. He hired E. Russell Ray and Winsor Soule to design the hotel, with lovely gardens designed by well-known landscape architect Charles Frederick Eaton. The first dinner was served on New Year's Eve, 1917. In 1928, twelve new bungalows were added in the popular Spanish Colonial Revival Style, which you can see on the property today.

The hotel soon became a playground for the rich and



powerful, including the tycoon founders of *Time* magazine and Pepsi-Cola, and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to name just a few. The hotel also became a hideaway destination for Hollywood celebrities. You might have spotted Clark Gable and Carole Lombard, Hedy LaMarr, or more recently, Gwen Stefani, Barbara Streisand, or Leonardo DiCaprio.

Currently owned by Belmond, which is in turn owned by the French luxury group LVMH, the hotel has been beautifully renovated with a new dining room, bar area, spa, and pool area. The piano bar area, a local favorite, is open to neighbors and hotel guests. Enjoy a cocktail, listen to some music, and watch the sunset over Santa Barbara.

Who knows whom you might run into?  
—Text and photos by Diana Washburn



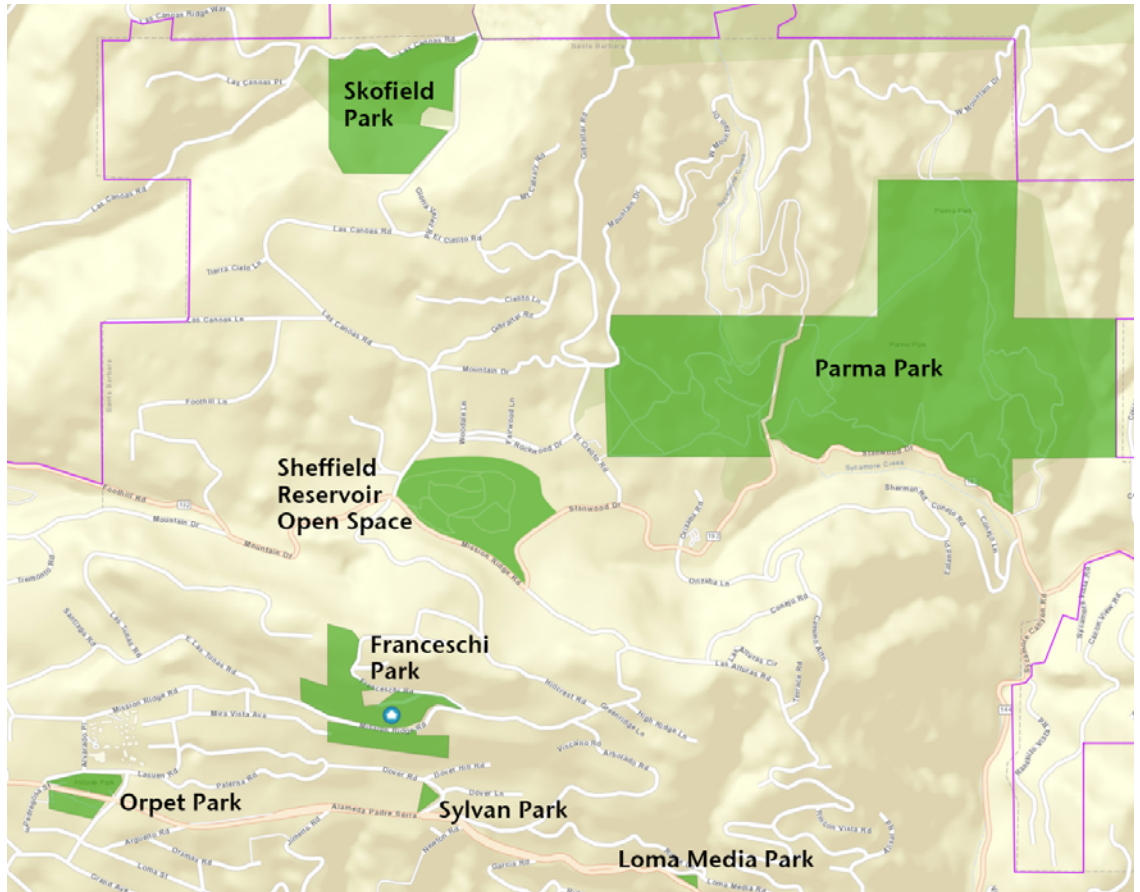
## An Update on Riviera Parks

Jill Zachary, director of the Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department, gave us an update on Riviera parks at our spring general meeting.

*We have posted Jill's presentation to the Riviera Association website ([www.rivieraassociation.org](http://www.rivieraassociation.org)).*

A number of Riviera Association members have reached out over the past couple of years asking whether and when specific parks in our area would be more thoroughly cleaned and maintained. Usage of Riviera and other city parks increased significantly during the pandemic, but Parks and Recreation Department resources were stretched thin, due both to staffing and funding cuts, and the extra time and care required to abide by Covid health and safety protocols. As a result, the Parks and Recreation Department is now trying to catch up on deferred cleaning and maintenance.

Some progress has been made over the past nine to twelve months, including vegetation clearance (courtesy of some hungry goats) at Parma Park, brush



A number of parks, large and small—managed by the Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department—are located in the Riviera Association area.

removal and cleanup at Franceschi Park, and weeding, clean-up and mulching at Sylvan Park. Parks and Recreation has also been quite involved in the clean-up and planting of APS medians (*see related article, page 3*).

The department is planning for replanting and pathway improvements at Orpet and Sylvan parks, and for accessibility improvements, restroom and picnic area renovations, and parking lot upgrades at Skofield Park. Assuming budget dollars are available, Parks and Recreation is also hoping to begin work on preliminary design of a new interpretive pavilion at Franceschi Park, to honor both Dr. Franceschi's and Alden Freeman's legacies. Given current staffing levels and the projects backlog, these planned



Goats have recently been used by the Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department to aid in vegetation clearance at Parma Park.



Franceschi Park has been preliminarily approved to have a new interpretive pavilion installed.

improvements and renovations will likely take time.

If you have comments or suggestions for Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department, you may email Jill Zachary at [JZachary@santabarbaraca.gov](mailto:JZachary@santabarbaraca.gov) or call 805.564.5431. —Jeff Byrne

# Riviera Park Sold to the Yardi Family

## No Major Changes to the Campus Are Expected

As we've shared on the Riviera Association website ([www.rivieraassociation.org](http://www.rivieraassociation.org)), the Yardi family purchased the Riviera Park property in late July. The property has been a fixture on the Riviera for over a century, formerly housing a small college that would later become UC Santa Barbara. Today, the nearly nine-acre parcel features just over 90,000 feet of commercial space, including the Riviera Theatre and a number of small and local businesses as tenants.

The Yardis are long-time residents of the Riviera with strong local ties and a philanthropic track record. According to a family representative, the Yardis understand that Riviera Park is a community treasure that is appreciated by many, and their intention is to keep it that way. In particular, they plan to maintain the lovely landscaping and preserve the historic architecture, to ensure the campus remains an asset that is attractive to tenants and the neighboring community alike.



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