

STUDIO CITY NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE - MEETING MINUTES

FOR MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025, at 6:15 PM

RADFORD STUDIOS

MPR 3

ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT

Committee Members: Tony Knight (Stakeholder, Chair) PRESENT

Adele Slaughter (Boardmember) PRESENT

Teri Austin (Stakeholder) PRESENT - arrived 7:00 PM

Aaron Justis (Boardmember) ABSENT

Heather Lee (Boardmember) ABSENT

Jesse Sanford (Stakeholder) ABSENT

Susan Schalbe (Stakeholder) PRESENT

Boardmember/Youth Seat), VACANT

Chip Meehan (Boardmember & President, ex-officio) PRESENT

Laurie Rittenberg (Boardmember, Stakeholder) PRESENT

Quorum reached at 7:00 PM with 5 Present (Chip Meehan does not count toward the quorum)

1. Meeting called to order by chair, Tony Knight, at 7 pm when quorum reached.
2. Announcements from the Chair that he has read and provided the “code of conduct” to the Committee and has reviewed the Brown Act and the SCNC By-laws so that we will follow all rules required. Although committee meetings are informal, they must follow these guidelines.
4. a. Report from Susan Schalbe—there has not been a Sustainability Alliance meeting since we last met. Susan called our attention to the tree trimming flyer generated by the Alliance and on their website. Susan brought our attention to the fact that the city has been trimming and topping trees during nesting season.
5. Public Comment
Scott Mantell suggested several ways that the Sustainability committee could be more active. Including: posting on NextDoor to bring more people into the meetings and participating in sustainability events such as River Nature Walks, Invasive Species events, Shredding events, City and State bills, Franklin Canyon gate issue, and the toxic waste dumped into the LA River.

Tony responded that he is in talks with the Nithia Raman’s office regarding the opening of Franklin Canyon to Studio City, and that the Committee has agreed on a series of goals for the year, which include some of these matters.

7. Chip Meehan read and presented his motion in support of the Plan Review Board to revise the Ventura-Cahuenga Streetscape Guidelines.

Adele Slaughter seconded

Laurie Rittenberg suggested an amendment

Adele Slaughter suggested an amendment

The discussion was positive regarding changing the Streetscape plan as per the report to the PRB review board by August L.

The vote was 6-0 to send the motion to the board for a vote.

MOTION:

The Board of the Studio City Neighborhood Council supports the effort by the Plan Review Board to revise the 23+ year-old Ventura-Cahuenga Streetscape Guidelines. The guidelines are dated and create unintended and negative consequences for Studio City in 2025. The mandated plant palette of alternating palms and pistache trees provide limited shade, which discourages pedestrian traffic much of the year with negative implications for commerce and community. The trees also do not provide the same level of air filtration and acoustic buffering as a species with better canopy would provide. The palms and pistache are not climate-adapted. The palms are expensive to maintain and create a public safety hazard in fire season, as we all saw too plainly during the recent Altadena and Palisades fires. We need the flexibility to plant drought-tolerant California Native species where opportunities currently exist, in empty tree wells, and when replacement of existing trees is required. The SCNC does not advocate the removal of existing trees or palms unless necessary, but encourages the increase in diversity of species as we enhance the urban tree canopy moving forward. The Analysis of Ventura-Cahuenga Streetscape Guidelines compares existing standards to existing best practices and offers many worthwhile suggestions, from improved planting and culture practices for streetside plantings, improved stormwater management, a focus on Pedestrian-Oriented Areas (POA), microtransit, and Smart City considerations. None of these practices were in broad usage when the plans were created at the turn of the century, and we need to catch up quickly. We are at an important crossroads for Studio City, with multiple significant developments under consideration and review that will dictate the nature of the lived experience for the next fifty years. We can't create the city we want to live in with outmoded standards.

RELATED ATTACHMENTS:

PRB May 1, 2025 AGENDA

https://drive.google.com/file/d/18YxH2S1_R1s5kCytalENEAUET-E4Awcu/view

Streetscape Design Analysis Studio City-Cahuenga Pass Plan

https://drive.google.com/file/d/11SEDr2GBLbdQbkgX6_MdfDb0gtHZpBQO/view

8. Chip Meehan moved and presented the motion to request that CD4 require Recreation and Parks to perform a cost-benefit analysis of the use of Artificial turf versus natural turf at the VNSO Recreation Center. Adele Slaughter seconded

The vote was 6-0 to send the motion to the board for a vote.

MOTION:

The Board of the Studio City Neighborhood Council requests CD4 require Rec and Parks to perform a cost/benefit analysis to determine if replacing the deteriorating artificial turf at the Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks site is preferable to reverting to a natural turf playing field. The surface at VNSO has continued to deteriorate, and at this point, small blade fragments up to an inch in length are being shed constantly by normal activity on the site. These fragments wash and blow across the park, streets, and neighborhoods where they continue to break down until they become part of the toxic trail of microplastics that are a part of artificial turf decomposition. There have been multiple opportunities for public comment on the replacement of this play surface, and many stakeholder voices object to the replacement of the artificial turf on ground of heat island issues associated with superheated plastic coverings in our climate, the negative environmental effect of killing all the natural soil and plant activity beneath artificial turf, concerns about aerosol and water column leaching of toxins from the petrochemical product, and the difficulty of disposing of acres of plastic debris which cannot be recycled but instead diverted to landfills where the material never breaks down. We think the current City fiscal crisis adds another layer of concern, because we just don't have the money for the large capital expenditure required to remove and replace this plastic turf. We ask that further work be undertaken to move us to a place where natural turf is installed, and we ask that we proceed with urgency based on the dangerous condition VNSO presents in its current state of decay.

Related ATTACHMENTS:

VNSO Turf 24-054 https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gCVfRT_cJ3ErXO6ntZlvS62XOLvdUWEw/view

RAP Agenda - 3-7-24 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LjYByTiUOOW8bBxhnXJrxSDDERvqrK7/view>

9. Discussion of the Brush Clearance issue. It was decided that Adele Slaughter would write a motion in keeping with the CFAC Letter and Dr. Travis Longcore's letter in response to Council File: 25-0002-S17 to be submitted to the whole board at their next meeting.

10. Discussion of Demonstration gardens and empty tree wells in Studio City. The Committee agreed that the planting palettes in the City need to change to drought-tolerant California Native plants. Adele read Jesse Sanford's email in response to #10—discussion on starting a tree well planting program in Studio City.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35