

Vision plan for North Fair Oaks, with tacos to boot

OPINION

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"VISION PLAN FOR N. FAIROAKS with Tacos to boot" STAR NEWS 9/13/23

Participating in creating a new city-planning vision for one of the oldest neighborhoods in the San Gabriel Valley — plus tacos?



Larry Wilson
Columnist

That sounds to me like a fine way to spend a Sunday.

And that's what's on offer from affordable-housing advocates Jill Shook

and Anthony Manousos this coming Sunday, Sept. 17 from 12:45 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. at Pasadena's La Pintoresca Park, 45 E. Washington Blvd.

The event is themed "Let's Create a New Vision for the North Fair Oaks Avenue Community," which for these purposes is defined as from Washington and Fair Oaks north to the border with Altadena at Woodbury Avenue.

Fair Oaks, in its great north south stretch, has always been one of the most important thoroughfares in Altadena, Pasadena and South Pasadena since it was first created in 1874 as the center of town during the early days of the Indiana Colony. It was named after one of Pasadena's earliest ranches, the Fair Oaks Ranch, which was in turn named by the widow of General Albert Sidney Johnston for her Virginia home.

From the Wikipedia history: "The road led up from Raymond Hill and north to Washington Boulevard where it met the Painter Hotel. There being little reason to travel more northward, the road dwindled to a watery footpath and meandered through about three miles of scrub growth until a similar road picked up in the Altadena community. At that time, the road was the divider between the Indiana Colony and Benjamin D. Wilson's Lake Vineyard settlement. As the original Indian Colony and the Vineyard colony became friendly economic rivals on each side of the avenue, it became known as the Mason and Dixon line."

Mmm. With that reference to the historical dividing line between slave and



PHOTO BY SARAH REINGEWIRTZ

Isaiah Montalvan, 5, of Hawthorne, plays in La Pintoresca Park on North Fair Oaks Avenue in Pasadena in 2018.

free states, we are introduced to an aspect of contemporary Fair Oaks as well.

When I was a cub reporter in the 1980s, I wrote a long cover story for the Pasadena Weekly in which I traveled from where Fair Oaks dead-ends at its Altadena north at the Zorthian Ranch and the Angeles National Forest for many miles down through its three communities until it dead-ends at Huntington Drive in South Pas. And let's just say that the avenue of the fancy and fine Fair Oaks Pharmacy with its fancy shakes to that of the Kings Villages subsidized housing project cater-corner from La Pintoresca represent very different demographics.

One of the zoning items that will surely come up on Saturday is that the area north of Washington to Woodbury has long been designated for nursing homes. During the pandemic, they were the site of many of the first deaths from COVID-19. A panic ensued as both convalescent health care workers and the relatives of residents tried to figure out what to do in those pre-vaccine, even pre-mask days.

I drove down those blocks the other day and I would say that cosmetically at least, architecturally, there has been an effort on the part of all the managements to spiff up the nursing home buildings and landscaping.

Jill and Anthony write in their invitation for Saturday:

"You are invited to provide your ideas — how do we restore with justice what was a thriving residential and business community? Let's explore together how to slow traffic and make the area safer for pedestrians. What about public art? Murals? Bring your imagination."

Oh: "And a taco stand will provide us with great tacos!"

RSVP and questions: info@makinghousinghappen.org

Wednesday at random

Talking of housing, it was a huge crowd that developer and Pasadena City College Trustee Jim Osterling drew the other morning to the opening of the Pasadena Studios, the 180 micro-unit apartments at 280 N. Oakland Ave. that I reported on a few months ago after taking a hard hat construction tour. A who's who of local politicians and activists were there, including Congresswoman Judy Chu. It's all because the scheme there is fascinating: tiny places, Murphy beds, but each with its own city-view balcony. Great public spaces throughout, including rooftop barbecues. All for entry-level workers earning 30% to 60% of area median income. It's a welcome vision for affordability in our region.

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