At-Large Representative Candidate

Himanshu Agrawal

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
My name is Himanshu Agrawal, and my friends affectionately call me Shu. I went to UCLA Anderson School of Management, where I got my MBA, and I currently work in finance focusing on the food and beverage industry.

What is your stake in SORO?
My wife and I own a house in SORO. We live in the neighborhood with our one-year-old daughter.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
There are many things I love about this community. What stands out is how much families who live in the neighborhood care about and look out for each other.

I have seen this come across through my neighbors who have always looked out for my family; the several posts on Nextdoor, whether they are about found pets, potential safety threats or simply welcoming families to the neighborhood; and most importantly in current Board members of the SORO neighborhood council who devote so much of their time towards the betterment of our neighborhood.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
My hopes and goals for SORO are threefold. In no particular order:

Number one: To further develop and maintain the parks so our families and children can enjoy the outdoors;
Number two: To continue the focus on safety and security for the well-being of our community
Number three: to make SORO a more walking-friendly neighborhood with access to quality dining, shopping and entertainment options like our friends in Beverly Hills and Culver City.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
I bring strong analytical and communication skills from my electrical engineering, business and financial services background. I combine my abilities as a problem solver and organizer with my interpersonal skills and believe that consensus building is a way towards achieving greater outcomes.

I hope to work collaboratively with my fellow Board members and the SORO community to accomplish our common goals.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
Most people don’t know that I received flight training on hand gliders and single engine turbo-prop planes. I hope to complete my flight training in the near future and get my FAA private pilot’s license.

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Vote in person at the SoRo Festival, Sunday June 5, 11:30-3pm.
At-Large Representative Candidate

Ken Blaker

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
I’m Ken Blaker. I am SORO’s At-Large Representative 1, my term is expiring and I am running for an At-Large Representative seat. I am married and a father of 3, living in Southern California for over 24 years. I have an eclectic background and currently work in cutting-edge software and hardware development.

What is your stake in SORO?
I live and work in Pico Robertson.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
As an observant Jew my favorite thing about SORO is the Pico Robertson Jewish community. Our Jewish community has an incredibly diverse and extensive concentration of people, organizations, businesses and services – it is unique. With that said I feel like we are a city within a city, comprised of distinctive sections (of which the Jewish community is just one) – with a surprising variety of things to explore and experience.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
I would like to see a movement toward business gentrification on several of our major streets (I am specifically thinking of Robertson, Pico and La Cienega). I believe this can happen through a 2 prong outreach to the local community and to the various departments of city departments which affect urban planning through permits and zoning.
I would also like to reach out to city planners to figure out how to make our streets more bicycle friendly.
I want to begin a rethink of how parking works on our streets. Parking is a mess, and the current systems of meters and permits is not working well.
Because of our location on the map, I believe our neighborhood is well situated for growth in retail and services, and to serve as more than a pass-by, drive-through area for people getting around LA. In 5 years I would like to see tangible improvements in our becoming less industrial on our big streets, and greener, cleaner and safer.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
According to my co-workers over the years, the thing that most differentiates me is my ability to gain deep understanding of issues and to communicate deep understanding in simple clear ways. My strongest leadership ability is best demonstrated by the fact that so many of my subordinates over the years have gone on to become leaders themselves.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
Since I put everything there is to know about me on my campaign website – www.kenblaker.com – there is hardly a thing to mention here. My parents, however, are another story. What most people don’t know is that shortly after they got married they headed a campaign in Philadelphia to get the city library system incorporated into city government, which was accomplished when Philadelphia’s Home Rule Charter was adopted. (By the way, Philadelphia was the first city in the US to do that). When I went to Philadelphia libraries as a kid, they usually had a photo of that library’s groundbreaking ceremony, many of which featured my dad shoveling the first shovelful.

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At-Large Representative Candidate

Gloria Dioum

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
My name is Gloria Dioum. I am running for the “At-Large Representative” seat. I work in the finance industry.

What is your stake in SORO?
My husband and I are current home owners here in SORO and we are thrilled to be integrated into the fabric of this wonderful community.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
SORO is a very enchanting place to live. Although SORO is in a big city, it feels like a small community. It is centrally located making many city landmarks easily accessible. Most importantly, SORO is diverse. The current housing reflects a right mixture of single and multifamily residences and a right mix of people across economic spectrums.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
I will create an ideal community through affordable and strategic improvements by doing the following:
• Design/Create activities and meeting places that would enable stronger bonds between neighbors.
• Ensure that Robertson is more walkable, and beautiful by planting trees and by inviting “selective” businesses to contribute to SORO economic development that are frequented and supported by members of the community
• Work to make parks safer and more family friendly.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
I have directed successful collaborations in cross functional teams domestically and worldwide. This experience provides me with the ability to manage current issues facing our community. I will bring a unique edge to support SORO’s economic revitalization because of my background in implementing both short and long term strategies to achieve both financial and quality of life goals. Also, I have the enhanced ability to identify strengths in others and to create work teams with a goal oriented consensus. Lastly, I was integral in the creation of a successful investment club and have the financial wherewithal to solve many financial challenges.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
I was born on the beautiful island of St. Lucia (Caribbean). I love frequenting local restaurants, eating foods from various countries and sampling exotic cuisines throughout LA.

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At-Large Representative Candidate

Gary Kasbarian

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
My name is Gary Kasbarian and I am running for the At-Large Representative position. I have three adult daughters and two grandkids and have been in the automotive industry for 45 years.

What is your stake in SORO?
I am a business partner for a small business called Carotech Automotive. I’ve owned/operated a small business for 45 years, but have been working with Carotech for a total of 3 years.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
It's part of a big city (Los Angeles, CA) but has a very small town feel with a tight knit community.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
SORO will look different 5 years from now by actively engaging small businesses in the community to get involved in SORO’s future. I will help by encouraging fellow small business owners to participate as much as possible to continue to help the area prosper.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
I believe my strongest skill is networking and I have been a leader my entire life. Bringing my network of people as well as building a new network around SORO will provide many opportunities for the community. I proved this out in Pomona and am planning on committing to making these changes in SORO.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
I am very active in the community and when I owned a business in Pomona I was the on the Board of Directors for the City of Pomona Chamber of Commerce. I was a member of the Pomona Sunrise Rotary Club and I’d love to start giving back to SORO the way I did the City of Pomona.

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At-Large Representative Candidate

Albert Khashky

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
I, Albert Khasky, am running as an at-large representative. I’m the CTO and co-founder of a technology company.

What is your stake in SORO?
I own a duplex and operate a business, both of which are in SoRo.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
The diversity in SoRo is what I appreciate most. It’s a true melting cultural melting pot.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
SoRo suffers from some obvious issues that I hope to remedy including but not limited to, an overall lack of police presence, rampant disregard for traffic laws, seedy motels on La Cienega, mansionization, and lack of parking for residents. I hope to address these issues and more in building a safer more illustrious SoRo community.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
Being able to formulate a cohesive vision and rally those around you to believe and work to achieve that vision is a skill I have cultivated as an tech entrepreneur. I will use it to invigorate our community and inspire positive change.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
I’m a Spanish speaking, Jewish, native Angeleno. I’m intimately familiar with a variety of cultures and values and would be honored to represent them all.

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At-Large Representative Candidate

Ellen Lanet

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
Ellen Lanet, At Large Representative (1 of 3 available seats): I’m a local Architect & Urban Designer. Most proud of being mom to 2 lovely & creative 20-something daughters and 1 adorable, wacky Dalmatian. My daughters were born and raised in SORO and have returned to live here after college similar to myself. We enjoy the personal relations we have made here, the community amenities, the neighborhood diversity, our personal connection to the Jewish community and our Kundalini yogi teachers & friends.

What is your stake in SORO?
I’m a 28 year homeowner. Previously renter. My architectural practice is also based in SORO.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
I appreciate the garden residential quality and proximity to unique neighborhood businesses, parks, schools, library and diverse life long friends. I love running into neighbors & friends, especially enjoying memorable social and community events together. We are lucky to be in the heart of LA’s Cultural Center and close to our best natural features: the Beach and the Santa Monica mountains.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
a) South Robertson will return to being a neighborhood magnet for unique neighborhood oriented businesses. Encouraging the neighborhood to be internally more pedestrian and to frequent local establishments to engage with neighbors. The sidewalks will be widen to allow people to easily congregate and enjoy meeting, eating and chatting with neighbors while slowing the traffic for drive through cars & trucks. Community gardens, Parklets and other Green Spaces will be incorporated to improve our community’s sustainability and residents’ well being.
b) Our 1 & 2 story commercial buildings along Pico & Robertson Blvds. will add additional stories to provide much needed affordable housing for young adults, families and senior citizens wanting to live, work and go to school in our diverse and neighborly community.
c) Negotiate an end to Mansionazation of single family residences and the demolition of our lovely historical Spanish duplexes and mid-Century garden apartments.
d) Our local public schools will once again be the BEST in Los Angeles. Our residents will want their children to enroll in our local public schools, encouraging greater community participation, neighborhood pride and strong property and business values.
e) Coordinate with Council Members, Metro, EXPO, Cal Trans and shuttle services to provide a variety of public modes of transportation to and from major commercial zones (ie: Century City, Culver City, Beverly Hills & W. Hollywood) eliminating cut through traffic and improving SORO’s quality of life.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
a) Creative planner, thinker and doer.
b) Ability to listen to opposing ideas at the same time and still retain the ability to function, analyzing information and coordinating collaborative win-win solutions.
c) Friendly, accessible and supportive neighbor interested in building community consensus. Supporting unique neighborhood characteristics over generic City mandates.
d) Ability to read development and building plans, to interpret local planning & building codes and to evaluate a project’s benefits or detriments to our community’s desired quality of life.
**What is one thing most people don’t know about you?**
I speak Spanish and am an advocate for Latino students to stay engaged in education and to reach their full potential in American society. I founded an architectural & urban design mentoring program for at risk Middle School students at Para Los Ninos. I’m a volunteer tutor for several Latino students.

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At-Large Representative Candidate

Jesse Mays

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
My name is Jesse Mays. I am running for an At-Large seat. I am a graduate student at UCLA and full time father of two kids (ages 4 and 2). My wife works as a physician at Cedars-Sinai.

What is your stake in SORO?
I live here with my family and send my two kids to preschool at Beverlywood Montessori.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
The diversity and friendliness of the people who live here.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
Robertson Park will have new playground equipment. The business district along South Robertson will be more pedestrian friendly. We will have stronger neighborhood watch throughout the district to help reduce petty crime. I will advocate for all of these things and work to make them happen.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
I am empathetic and see things from other’s point of view. I care deeply about people. I enjoy listening as much as talking. These will make me an effective board member with whom people will enjoy working.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
I am second oldest of five children. Also, I used to play keyboard in a rock band in high school!

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At-Large Representative Candidate  Krystal Navar

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
My name is Krystal Návar and I am running as an At-Large Representative. I am a mom to a 4-year-old daughter and 8-year-old dog and I work as a Senior Architecture Manager at Modative, an architecture firm in SORO.

What is your stake in SORO?
I have lived in SORO’s Zone 6 for 9 years. My husband’s business, Modative, where I work, has been in Zone 6 for the same 9 years.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
My office is in the Helms Bakery complex. I love that I can walk to work, walk to restaurants, art galleries, and parks. Most of all, I love that I’ve found my place in this city.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
Zone 6, while technically part of SORO, is cut off from the rest of the neighborhoods, sandwiched between the 10 freeway and Culver City. The development, new and planned, surrounding the Expo Culver City station is drastically changing the surrounding neighborhoods. Zone 6 is primed to take advantage of this growth. The streets that connect the rest of SORO to Zone 6 are National and Cattaraugus. Cutting under the 10 freeway, these connections are currently dark and dismal, discouraging pedestrian activity. I will work with the Neighborhood Council and the Council District office to identify funding to improve these underpasses, with public art and adequate lighting, connecting the pedestrian to the rest of SORO.

This Neighborhood Council is currently discussing developing three Business Improvement Districts in SORO: Robertson, Pico, and La Cienega. Having lived and worked on Venice Blvd for 9 years, I am keenly aware of the challenges businesses on Venice Blvd face. I will encourage the Board to pursue developing a Business Improvement District on Venice Blvd. Street trees and street furniture, stemming east from the Culver City metro stop will help activate Venice and connect the metro to the other areas of SORO.

I lived directly on Venice Blvd for 8 years. In that time, I witnessed numerous life-threatening car accidents (one just last week) — and those are only the ones that occurred directly in front of my house. People speed in their cars or on their motorcycles as if Venice Blvd is a freeway. When elected, I will work with the Neighborhood Council, the Council District office, and the Department of Transportation to employ methods aimed at reducing the speed of vehicles on Venice Blvd and to improve the pedestrian crossings on Venice, particularly at Cattaraugus and National.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
Currently, I sit on SORO’s Land Use and Economic Development committee where I have the opportunity to donate both my time and my knowledge of LA’s zoning and municipal codes, land use and planning regulations, entitlements, and conditional use permits. I am a designer and a problem-solver. I am also an excellent communicator, both verbal and graphic. More important than any of the above-listed qualities, I believe that a key tenet of leadership is listening. As a board member, I will listen to the community and other members of the board, I will exercise my knowledge of LA’s codes, critically think of solutions, and I will inject this board with
fresh ideas and optimism. I believe that, with my skills and experience, I will be an asset to this board and our neighborhood.

**What is one thing most people don’t know about you?**
I am always learning. Currently, I am learning Spanish and guitar. (Do not quiz me on either. They are a work-in-progress.)

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At-Large Representative Candidate

Benjamin Schultz

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
My name is Benjamin Schultz and I am running for At-Large Representative. I moved into the Crestview last year and am excited to bring my experience as a field organizer in Oakland, CA to our local community. I realize that this community is undergoing many changes with an influx of new residents, growing businesses and a complex relationship with our greater Los Angeles neighbors.

What is your stake in SORO?
My fiancé and I purchased our first home in Crestview after long searching for a diverse, walk-able, community-focused and centrally located neighborhood. I am a frequent customer at a number of local small businesses, and work in nearby Culver City.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
As I touched on before, I love feeling like a part of a tight-knit community tucked into the larger fabric of Los Angeles. Our neighborhood is diverse and welcoming; a place where a newcomer like myself quickly developed friendships with neighbors and strangers alike.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
As many of you know, our community, like the rest of LA, is changing. I look forward to being a voice for our community as we continue to pay homage to the SORO community’s past and evolve with the changes around us. If I am elected, I hope to preserve the historic feel of our neighborhood by working with City Hall to regulate the unfettered construction of new homes. Furthermore, will strive to improve and upgrade the numerous community spaces, such as parks and community centers, to ensure the next generation of SORO youth have a beautiful and safe space to grow up. Finally, I will work with the community to attract new small businesses and encourage SORO stakeholders to spend within their community, for the community.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
My time spent as a field organizer in Oakland, CA has left me uniquely qualified to engage with our community and voice their needs. This includes organizing actionable neighborhood campaigns for the issues that are most important, and marshalling the power of the people to drive change. I have long been an outspoken, meticulous, and driven person in my professional life, and these skills easily translate to working within the city bureaucracy.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
I would say the one thing people don’t know about me is that for several years, I worked at an international peace camp that brought together Israeli and Palestinian teenagers to have conflict resolution dialogue. It was an amazing experience that taught me how to be patient, and how to listen and accept a different viewpoint than my own.

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At-Large Representative Candidate

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
I'm Linda Theung, and I'm running to be an At-Large Representative in the SORO NC. My background is in the arts and history. I've worked at the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Getty, and LACMA. Currently I'm a research editor at the RAND Corporation, a global think tank that prioritizes objective research for national and global issues. I am married to an architect who works in Culver City, and both of us are interested in urbanism and helping to make the city more vibrant and livable.

What is your stake in SORO?
I own a home with my husband on Gibson Street in Reynier Village.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
From what I've encountered from my neighbors so far, I like the open-mindedness of the people who live in the community. There is an embrace of opinions and a willingness to discuss diverse perspectives in a civilized manner, all in the shared objective of finding an effective solution that pleases all parties involved. The warmth and generosity I've experienced from my neighbors also is a great positive element of this neighborhood.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
In five years, I want to see South Robertson experience a renaissance, similar to what's happening along Broadway in downtown L.A. I want to do everything I can to team up with businesses looking to open shop along South Robertson. I want to see our neighborhood of South Robertson thrive; there is no reason it should not, as nearly every main drag in Los Angeles is host to businesses large and small. Given the expansion of the Metro Expo line, I want use that as a drawing point to bring businesses to the neighborhood in an effort to create a walkable, attractive, and thriving place full of boutiques, restaurants, and coffee shops. A way to make this happen is through public awareness: If businesses know that South Robertson is affordable in terms of rent, supportive in terms of permits, and embraced by residents who will consistently patronize their establishments, they will be more likely to consider South Robertson as an opportunity. I’d like to mount a campaign to brand and identify South Robertson as a distinct neighborhood to raise awareness of the possibilities.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
I am a thoughtful and effective writer, editor, and communicator. I’ve used my skills in multiple capacities, from speaking with high-level donors to collaborating with politicians and members of the armed forces. I also value objective research (it’s my job!) and the consideration of all sides of an argument before coming to a conclusion. I will bring both things to the table as a board member of SORO NC. I’ve witnessed the activity of current board members, and I think I can add greatly to the collective of people who are invested in making our neighborhood—and city!—a better place to live.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
This is hard to say. I'd like to think I'm a pretty open book, but perhaps I seem pretty social on the outset, but I really enjoy being a homebody on the weekends. So, that's another reason why I'm invested in making South Robertson great: I plan to relax in the context of it a lot!

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Business Representative Candidate

Susan Burden

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
My name is Susan Burden and I am running as a Business Representative with the SORO Neighborhood Council. I am Chief Financial Officer and Chief Administrative Officer of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and of the Museum of Tolerance, the educational arm of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

What is your stake in SORO?
The Simon Wiesenthal Center has been located on Pico since 1978, and I have been employed with the Center since 1983.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
This community is one that embraces the idea that quality of life is enhanced when neighbors know each other. Residents and businesses alike understand that everyone benefits when neighbors are involved in shaping the community by supporting growth, development, local businesses, and by actively participating in local government.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
In five years I believe SORO will be strengthened (rather than different) by focusing on the needs of the neighborhood and identifying necessary program improvements that reflect our community's priorities. We will work to empower residents and stakeholders by increasing communication between the SORO community, government departments and elected officials to move SORO forward and to develop relationships with other neighborhood councils on common issues. Through my participation in SORO I can focus on the needs of the neighborhood by providing useful information, and connecting residents and community partners with City government.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
As a longtime stakeholder I am interested in participating in the process of shaping public policy to express the values of the South Robertson neighborhood. I have been heavily involved with the planning and development of the Museum of Tolerance, and because of this experience I understand the local situation, as well as the importance of regular interaction between neighborhood groups and the larger local government.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
My husband and I are wine aficionados and we own a vineyard.

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Business Representative Candidate

Terrence Gomes

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
Terrence Gomes, Business Representative. Terrence is a wealth advisor for Trilogy Financial in Torrance, California. He sees financial planning as a not one-size-fits-all solution and takes a custom approach to helping clients meet their financial goals. Mr. Gomes boasts a history of achievement and awards, and was bestowed the award of Rising Star in Management by Trilogy Financial in 2009 and is a Five Star Wealth Manager Award Winner as seen in the January 2016 Los Angeles Magazine. Mr. Gomes has earned a BS in Business Administration and awarded a MBA with Distinction the Keller Graduate School of Management.

What is your stake in SORO?
Terrence has been an active member of the SORO community for over thirteen years and owns a local business. He is currently the Business Representative and an Executive Boardmember for the South Robertson Neighborhoods Council (SORO NC), Treasurer, and the Chair of the Land Use and Economic Development Committee. Mr Gomes is also the Chair of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Coalition (LANCC) which includes the membership of the ninety-six neighborhood councils for the last three years. Terrence also mentors councils on funding and leadership issues and is a founding member of Council4Councils (C4C) which was created to help the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) with training needs to the Neighborhood Council (NC) system during the budget crisis of 2009-2010. He is a founding member of the SORO NC’s Green Team (GT). The GT has been used as a model for best practices by the DONE and many NCs have implemented the concept to increase environmental awareness for their community and policy development. In addition, he has been called upon as a guest speaker to speak on environmental awareness and best practices in an urban environment for the City of Los Angeles.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
As real estate brokers would state, “Location, Location, Location.” We are centrally located in the City which has its advantages. We also have a diverse culture and a booming restaurant corridor, that foodies and tourists are starting to discover.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
In five years, all the vacancies on Robertson, La Cienega, and Pico need to be filled with vibrant businesses that the community would need. We talk about a walking community, but how can we offer that if you have to get into a car to meet your shopping needs. As to the look and character of the community, that is why people moved to this community. They bought the idea and feel of tree-lined streets with single family homes that their children could play out in front of and not six story apartments, small lot sub-divisions, or McMansions with sterile exteriors and no place to feel the outdoors..

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
Mr Gomes provides leadership on community issues that affect the quality of life in Los Angeles. Homelessness is an ongoing issue that he has been at the forefront of. In cooperation with the Neighborhood Councils, he directed the motion that created a state of emergency on homelessness in Los Angeles by the Los Angeles City Council and the corresponding $138 M of funding for fiscal year 2016-2017. Terrence also worked with the Downtown
Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC) and the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration (WLAVA) to identify seventy-one homeless veterans in Skid Row while directing twenty-five veterans into supportive housing and getting them off the streets. Since 1982, he has been a volunteer and the current transportation coordinator for the Westside Thanksgiving that targets 5000 meals each Thanksgiving. He collaborates with local, elected officials to implement policies to address quality of life issues and public safety.

**What is one thing most people don’t know about you?**

Since most people see me after work and always in a suit, most people do not realize I own four pairs of 501s.

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What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
My name is Barry E. Levine and I’m running for the business seat. I have been a photographer for over forty years and work from my home. I am currently a SORONC Board member and chair the education committee. We created and run a program at Shenandoah Street Elementary School to help the young students with literacy and mathematic skills. This is just one of the many programs created to benefit the community we all share.

What is your stake in SORO?
I am running as a business owner but my stake in the community is much larger. I have lived in the neighborhood for over sixty years. I attended SORO public schools. I reared my children here. I love LA!

What is your favorite thing about this community?
My favorite thing about the community is the people. There is a variety of folks like no other neighborhood.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
Like all communities in Los Angeles, SORO will become more diverse, more futuristic, more traveled and generally busier. I would like to see the progress benefit those of us who live and work here. I am happy to help move us in the right direction to see that progress together.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
I have several skills to move the agenda along. As a photographer, I can share my visions with others, easily. I am not adverse to sharing my opinions verbally as well. I do tend to listen more than I speak but I think that is why we were given two ears and one mouth.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
The one thing most people don’t know about me is I want to be the best father I can be.

Register to vote online (until May 31) at soronc.org/vote
Vote in person at the SoRo Festival, Sunday June 5, 11:30-3pm.
Organizational Representative Candidate

Dan Fink

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
My name is Dan Fink and I am running for an Organizational Representative seat on the SoRo NC board. I grew up back and forth between Westside Los Angeles neighborhoods and back-to-the-Earth communities in northern California. I’m a computer nerd, a social justice advocate, and a lover of all the diverse foods we are fortunate enough to have in Los Angeles.

What is your stake in SORO?
I’m the Deputy Director of The Relational Center, a non-profit community center at 2717 South Robertson Blvd with a variety of offerings to improve the holistic wellbeing and quality of life for residents in SoRo and greater Los Angeles:
• Counseling for individuals, couples, and families
• Support groups for a variety of topics and struggles
• Yoga classes and meditation groups
• A variety of workshops, including storytelling, civic engagement, and poetry
• Clinical training for aspiring mental health professionals

What is your favorite thing about this community?
Some of my favorite things about this community are the small town feeling, the big city diversity, and so many residents that genuinely want to improve their community for all of the residents that live and work here.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
Five years from now we will have a thriving and locally supported business community. Community members will gather frequently to support each other personally, professionally, and in the pursuit of solving shared neighborhood problems.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
I have a great deal of personal and professional experience in different contexts. I been an organizational leader in large corporations, academic institutions, and non-profits. I have lived in communities that are rich and poor; urban and rural; homogeneous and diverse. My skillset is in facilitating teams with diverse perspectives, supporting them to appreciate each other’s viewpoint, and finding collaborative solutions to shared problems.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
I am a serious fan of camping. Spending a week in Big Sur or Sequoia is my ideal vacation. Hiking during the day, campfires in the evening, and sleeping near the sounds of a creek or the ocean. Who could ask for more?!

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School Representative Candidate

Yvette Edidin

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?

YVETTE EDIDIN
SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE
I am a mom with 2 sons (ages 12 and 10) and a daughter (age 7). I have had careers in both business and government-the most recent stint being as a local Mayor in NY. My daughter has Type 1 Diabetes. My husband and I are very active in related charities to try to find a cure for Diabetes.

What is your stake in SORO?
My family moved to SORO 4 years ago. We own our home in the Beverlywood HOA. I have become active in local nonprofits (mostly school-related) as a consultant and Board member. I am running as School Representative stakeholder.

I started JCEP-Junior Civic Engagement Project- a program for local schools to increase civic awareness and activity among students and parents and to bring public servants and politicians into schools to speak about the important work they are doing.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
I love the sense of community and diversity in SORO.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
I would like to see SORO’s business districts beautified, more local parkspace, more efficient and environmental flow of traffic, and safer streets. To use my lens as School Representative, I hope to build stronger bridges into our local schools to bring more volunteer resources, and increase scholarships for after school and before school programming.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
I was a community activist and two-term local Mayor in New York for 8 years. I REDUCED TAXES, BUILT A PLAYGROUND, RENOVATED TOWN HALL, UPGRADED PUBLIC ROADS, PIPES, DRAINAGE SYSTEM, & STREET LIGHTING, INTRODUCED PRIVATE SECURITY, & ADDED 3-Day/week MUNICIPAL GARBAGE & RECYCLING SERVICE.

I want to bring this NO-NONSENSE PROBLEM SOLVING & BUDGETING expertise to SORO. Let’s Get To Work, SORO!

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
I grew up in a home in NY that was part of the Underground Railroad. There is a bell at the top of the house that would warn people to use a secret escape tunnel underground.

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Zone 1 Representative Candidate

Charles Stein

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
I’m Charlie Stein and I am running to be the Zone 1 Representative. My wife and I live in SORO with our 2 kids, a 5 year old son and two year old daughter, and I work in Beverly Hills as an attorney.

What is your stake in SORO?
I have lived in SORO for the last 8 years and I also belong to a synagogue in SORO, where I attend regularly.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
My favorite thing about living in the area is the strong community ties and how my family and I have many friends a short walk away, and given that everything in L.A. is so spread out, it is nice to live in an area where walking is a possibility.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
As this community continues to grow despite the high cost to live here, I foresee more restaurants and businesses opening up in the area to address the specialty needs of the community. As a result, I believe it is the neighborhood’s council’s role, and as a board member, mine as well, to encourage people to patronize these businesses and be a bridge to the local government to push for incentives so that the community continues to get the best possible businesses.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
One of my leadership aspects that I take great pride in is being able to take many different approaches to a common problem and mesh them together in a compromise. Mediation is a skill that is commonly used in my career and I look forward to using it within Neighborhood Council activities and meetings.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
I ran my first marathon this year (L.A.) and despite the fact that I had never run more than 1.5 miles before I started training, I have since become a dedicated long distance runner and my favorite time to run is in the early morning before sunrise.

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Zone 5 Representative Candidate  

Bryan Warman

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?  
Bryan Warman, running for Zone 5 Representative 
I have been a resident in SORO since 2011. I work in the entertainment industry in digital marketing.

What is your stake in SORO?  
I am a homeowner in SORO.

What is your favorite thing about this community?  
The diversity and culture of the area, the beautiful homes, and the people in the community.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?  
I’d like to work to continue to bring more small businesses to the SORO area, and improve life for the residents, especially as it relates to quality of life (crime reduction) and parks improvement.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?  
My strongest skills are bringing people together and being a calm, collected voice in the face of crisis. I’d hope that I can help find common ground and resolutions on tough issues where there could be disagreements.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?  
I have been with my wife for 17 years and am a father of 2 young twin girls.

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Zone 7 Representative Candidate

(Martin) Jon Liberman

**What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?**
- M. Jon Liberman
- Zone 7 Representative
- I am 71 years old. I have lived in Soro all of my life. I have graduated from Shenandoah Street Elementary School, Louis Pasteur Junior High School (now LACES), Alexander Hamilton High School and Cal State University Los Angeles.

**What is your stake in SORO?**
I reside in Zone 7

**What is your favorite thing about this community?**
Aside from the fact that the local Taco Bell is outstanding, I appreciate the uniqueness of the community. It is a true microcosm of the Los Angeles melting pot.

**Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?**
I have been on this Board since it was Chartered by the City of Los Angeles in 2004. As such I have a unique perspective as to how the community might change and the influence I might have in that change during the next 5 years.

Being completely candid and wanting to be transparent, you need to understand that I am running unopposed for this seat. This means that if I vote for myself (and I will be voting for myself) I will win this seat and have some measure of influence on the community for four of the next five years.

There are approximately 45,000 Stakeholders in this Neighborhood Council. About the only constant in life is that change is inevitable. This is an extremely diverse community. That which is precious to some is intolerable to others. The value of a Neighborhood Council is that if it functions well it allows for change to be managed to improve the community. There are times that change is not necessarily good. Your vote and the votes of the other Stakeholders will determine whether this body functions well. This in turn will influence what the community will look like in the future.

All of the above is a lengthy preamble to something that I care about. Your vote is important and will influence what this community will be in the future. The job of being on this Board of Directors is one that should not be determined by a popularity contest. Rather you should consider the realities of the position and ask how each candidate for the position will be able to handle the skills needed to function. Following is a list of traits that I think are necessary to function as a successful Board Member:

a) The willingness to serve. This job requires long hours. I typically put in ten to fifteen hours per week. Some Board Members put in more hours. You may be able to put in less hours but candidates need to be realistic about time commitments,
b) The ability to see both sides of an issue. As an elected official you represent both those who voted for you and those who voted against you. Your goal is to improve the community for all. This may require you to vote against the side of an issue you would prefer be successful if you genuinely believe that the other position would be of greater benefit to the community.

c) The ability to work with others whose background, perspectives and interests are different from yours. Our community is diverse. That is a good thing. You need to understand that the Board makeup is structurally designed to reflect that diversity.
d) The ability to disagree on a point without being disagreeable. Civility goes a long way towards a successful experience as a Board Member.

Your vote is important. Read the candidates platforms to see what they say. If they have not been on the Board are the candidates specific as to what and how they plan to achieve their stated goals. If they are running for re-election see what they accomplished in their current term of office. I’m biased but I think several existing Board Members have done outstanding jobs this term. I think you owe them a second look to see what they actually accomplished before determining to vote for a fresh face.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
I think that the four traits I mentioned in my response to question # 5 are reflective of my view as to the strengths I admire and try hard to emulate.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
I can’t answer the question. I feel that I’m an “open book” and what you see is what you get.

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Zone 9 Representative Candidate

William P. McKenna

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
Name: William Patrick McKenna, everyone calls me Bill
Seat: Robertson Neighborhood Council Zone 9
Personal: Retired chief financial officer, married 47 years, 4 adult children, resident of Beverlywood for 43 years, very family and church orientated.

What is your stake in SORO?
Own home and resident for 43 years

What is your favorite thing about this community?
Centrality of neighborhood, caring and friendly neighbors

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
Five Year Difference: Larger and more modern homes, better and safer traffic arrangement, improved environment for business along Pico and Robertson, Improved freeway conditions, better access to Beverly Hills and Century City.
How to make that happen: Hard work, dedication to good ideas, willingness to compromise, Pushing hard with city council members and city departments, strong justification for change

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
Strongest skill and leadership qualities: Very focused and proactive on problems, good written and communication skills as evidenced by my international involvement in business, very organized, Demanding of performance
Usefulness as a board member: Critical skills as a board member would be communications, leadership, motivation, ability to make things happen, desire for social interaction, energy, work ethic, self-confidence and desire to help others, all of which fall into my resume.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
Addicted to See’s candy especially scotch mellows and Granddaughter thinks I’m funny.

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What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
My name is Adam Rich. I’m married and have a 3 year old daughter. I work as a Software Engineer.

What is your stake in SORO?
I own a house here, I live here, and I attend synagogue here.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
The great people! It’s a friendly place, and a great place to raise a kid. It’s also close to nature (10 minute drive to Franklin Canyon) while still being in the heart of the second largest city in the country!

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
I think that more young families will move here as they discover how great SORO is. I think we need to modernize our parks and schools to better serve them. I also think that as Los Angeles grows its problems of crime and traffic will grow too. We need to take steps like improving public transportation, etc. to help mitigate those issues. I would collaborate with the board, the community, and experts to come up with plans to make these improvements and help advocate for the city to implement those plans.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
I am a software engineer specializing in web development. I love technology. I hope to improve the board’s utilization of technology, websites, social media, apps, etc. to better engage with the community. I work in a very collaborative environment. I have to work with many different departments that have different ideas and work with them to achieve consensus. I hope to do that here as well.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
I’ve recently taken up gardening. I started a small vegetable garden in my backyard, last season I grew peas, carrots, lettuce, and more, this season I’m trying my hand at melons. Wish me luck!

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Zone Representative Candidate  Paula Waxman

What is your name, the seat you are running for, and one or two lines about you personally?
Paula Waxman, Zone 9. I'm a former director of an art foundation, retired high school history teacher, mother of two sons, and wife of a television writer. My love of gardening has led to activism in environmental work.

What is your stake in SORO?
I reside in Beverlywood and manage a learning and community garden on the campus of Hamilton High School. I've been the Zone 9 Representative since February 2009 and am responsible for the rebirth of the SORO Green Team.

What is your favorite thing about this community?
I love its diversity and beauty.

Five years from now, how might SORO look different, and how would you make that happen?
Eight years ago, while teaching at University High School, my students alerted me to their anxiety over the challenges facing our environment. Five years from now, I'd like to see our community serve as an example of how we can come together to assure all young people that we are progressing toward a sustainable environment. I am confident that our community can find common ground on ways to use resources responsibly and improve the quality of life for all.

I can make this happen by continuing to educate our community on environmental issues and connect them to resources provided by the city to help them to live as responsible stewards of the earth. I will continue to support city legislators and other neighborhood councils in their efforts to make LA one of the greenest large cities in the world.

What are your strongest skills and leadership qualities, and how will they be an asset to your work as a board member?
I am organized, follow through on my commitments and I carefully research and listen to all sides of an issue to find compromise and common ground. In the seven years I've been on the board, I've worked hard to establish strong relationships with city officials and help fellow board members on their projects whenever possible.

What is one thing most people don’t know about you?
I was Director of the Department of Prints and Drawings for the West Coast division of Sothebys, auctioneers of fine arts, for over 15 years.

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