

SCNA board candidates voice their achievements and plans for the next term

On Dec. 10, SCNA members will elect directors to the board. The SCNA Board of Directors is responsible for making key decisions about the operation of the Sierra 2 Center for the Arts and Community, addressing neighborhood concerns and planning and putting on community events. Each year, half of the board is up for reelection. Below are brief statements from the incumbents and new candidates for 12 open seats on the board.

Incumbents

Madelyn Gelpi: As a director, I believe in accountability, building community trust and tackling issues head-on. Through my expertise in nonprofit management, policy analysis, and equity and inclusion, I want to uplift all the voices within our Curtis Park community through innovative and transparent approaches that highlight shared values, needs and concerns.

I developed a tool for gathering community input about their needs and priorities. I put forth a comprehensive plan to accomplish this goal and worked with the board to identify the most effective implementation method. Next year, we will open the survey and utilize this data to ensure our key decisions represent and align with our community.

The board can represent the community better through increased transparency and data-driven decisions informed by community input. As a neighborhood association, it's important to ensure we constantly have our finger on the pulse of what's working in the neighborhood, what's not and how we can build stronger communities together every day.

Lily Harris: I'm running for reelection to the SCNA board because I'm committed to continuing the work we've started to improve our community. Over the past term, I've gained valuable insights and built strong relationships. My work on the Executive and Bylaws Committee was impactful. We hired our new and wonderful executive director, Danielle Whitmore, and we passed much-needed revisions to our bylaws. My goal is to ensure our neighborhood remains a vibrant, connected and welcoming place for everyone.

Alex Moos: I want to run for reelection because I believe in the work that neighborhood associations do to improve the lives of their residents. We have two small children and own a small business in the neighborhood (Capitol Optometry), so we are invested for the long term.

This is my second stint as a SCNA board member. I was part of the board in 2017-2019 and rejoined the board in October. In my first few board meetings, I've begun building board relationships and finding areas where my expertise can best assist in our projects and initiatives. Additionally, I'm enthusiastic to help with SCNA events.

I believe SCNA is the heartbeat of the neighborhood. Not only is it the catalyst that brings neighbors together at events, but it serves as a voice for the concerns we need to raise with the city. Our neighborhood culture wouldn't be as great without the SCNA.

Shannon Motley: When I joined the board, it felt like everything was on hold because of the pandemic. As Development Committee chair, I knew we had to get creative. With the support of Kathy Les and Mimi Budd, we pulled off Porch Picnic, Gather at the Long Table and the Centennial Celebration, and we restarted the Home & Garden Tour, grew Curtis Fest, held Music in the Park and introduced Kids Music in the Park.

On the Executive Committee, I helped recruit our new executive director. With her support and that of our amazing staff, we have a strong events calendar going into 2025. Our dedicated board will ensure the Sierra 2 Center thrives.

We listen to the community; the community wants more family and kid-friendly events. We all want the fall wine event back and look forward to spending time with neighbors in Curtis Park. The 2025 calendar will not disappoint, and I'm excited to be part of the board again next year.

Matthew Royal: Knowing the SCNA finances, it's clear that even when we're not in survival mode, most of our money goes into maintaining buildings. I'd like to increase our impact by growing our non-building revenue to sponsor new educational and community-building events and expand existing programs such as the Learnery and Senior Center.

I served as a moderating voice on the dog-park issue, advocating for reason and respect. I also worked to promote the health, safety and welfare of our residents by arguing successfully against two initiatives that overstepped the SCNA's role. In the shadow of the city's dog park ruling, I worked on SCNA's Bylaws Committee to ensure our organization operates efficiently and transparently.

The board has risen to the challenge of resuming fundraising and planning community events. Even so, the SCNA represents only 10% of all Curtis Park residents. The board must become more representative of the neighborhood and listen to 100% of the community and its needs.

New candidates:

Janet Irene Hecsh: I have lived in Curtis Park since 2000 with my late husband, Robert Lipelt, and want to do my part. I want to be engaged productively so that Curtis Park continues to be a great place to live for all our residents.

As a Sacramento State administrator, I have skills and experience managing large and complex budgets in HR and student service, and I work well with university stakeholders on boards, and as chair of the faculty senate. As an SCNA board member, I would support the mission of SCNA and participate in consensus-based decision-making.

I want to participate and support SCNA because of the sense of community here. It feels natural to give back in the form of service, and I would appreciate the opportunity to do so.

Garrett Jensen: I want to continue to build community through events, develop city and county relationships and grow fundraising efforts. With a background in policy and politics, I am well-positioned to advocate for our neighborhood with local elected leaders.

If elected, I would grow our membership, create opportunities for new and diverse small businesses, support landscapers' transition from gas-powered to electric yard equipment, add art-filled public spaces and make sure we improve road safety and stop reckless drivers speeding through our streets.

Since moving to Sacramento, I have been passionate about finding ways to engage more in my community. I love being the *Viewpoint* paperboy for my neighbors, strengthening my sense of belonging. SCNA would allow me to engage more deeply and give back to make our city even better.

Nicole Kite: I want to serve on the SCNA board to become more actively involved in my community and neighborhood. I value arts organizations and community resources such as SCNA, and I hope that my professional background in fundraising and arts management will support the organization.

If elected, I would like to support the SCNA in deepening its community of support and diversifying its revenue streams.

I am a relative newcomer to Curtis Park – I purchased a home here in April 2023 – and value the character and amenities of our neighborhood. I believe that high-quality, accessible arts experiences and opportunities for lifelong learning are an essential resource that strengthens our social fabric and improves quality of life. I am grateful to have SCNA and the Sierra 2 Center in my neighborhood and am eager to see these organizations thrive.

Michael Oates: I can bring a fresh perspective and positive energy to the board, as well as some new ideas. I want to create volunteer events and opportunities for the community to not only give back but create lasting bonds between neighbors. As a human resources professional, I can lend my expertise to help Sierra 2 manage its staffing needs, find compromise and build trust.

I want to find new ways for our community to engage with the Sierra 2 Center through events, fundraisers and community service. For example, we have many talented gardeners in the community; we could help improve and maintain the grounds. There's also ample opportunity to keep our neighborhood parks and major thoroughfares clean.

I'm committed to preserving and enhancing the Sierra 2 Center, as well as the SCNA. As someone who intends to spend the next 30+ years in Curtis Park, I'm invested in ensuring its valued presence in our community.

Nicki Ruszczycky (pronounced like resist-key): Living east of Franklin Boulevard, in what I call "Oatis Park," since we are technically in Oak Park, I sometimes feel excluded from the events

and services hosted by Sierra 2 and the SCNA. I feel like a portion of the community is being left out of decisions, events and activities, and I want to represent their voices.

I want to volunteer my creativity, organizational skills and can-do attitude to expand and/or revitalize our community programming and ensure that it includes and represents the surrounding areas of Curtis Park within the SCNA boundaries.

I love living here. Curtis Park is a very walkable neighborhood with friendly people and fun businesses. I am committed to living here for the foreseeable future and would love to have a voice in the community's culture.