

Privacy Rights Go Out With Trash

By Rob McCarthy

Strangers rummaging through garbage cans at the curbside have generated discussion on social media lately. Residents are understandably concerned about protecting their homes from opportunistic thieves lurking about. Are scavengers who dig through your barrels breaking the law?

The household trash placed at the curb isn't protected by law, but that doesn't mean it's okay to take the contents of the barrel either. That's the consensus, based on comments left at the neighbor-to-neighbor website called Nextdoor.com. Homeowners lose all rights over trash when it's put out at curbside, according to a U.S. Supreme Court case that sent a drug trafficker to prison in 1988.

However, the recyclables in the blue barrels and bins belong to the cities...and removing bottles and cans is breaking the law. That is the opinion of several city attorneys in Los Angeles County and a belief shared by several residents who took part in an animated discussion on Nextdoor.com.

Before getting to their comments, here's a brief review of the 30-year-old Supreme Court case back when trash barrels were metal -- not plastic -- and before recycling was a common household term.

The justices in a 1988 California case decided that any right to privacy or from unreasonable search and seizure is defined by a homeowner's property line. If the garbage cans are on private property, they're off limits to police without a search warrant as well as to scavengers. Since the case was decided, identity theft has become a huge problem, giving South Bay residents another reason for concern.

It is common knowledge," the justices wrote, that "garbage left on or at the side of the public street are readily accessible to animals, children, scavengers, snoops and other members of the public."

South Bay residents posting on the social media report seeing cars pull up in front of their houses in daylight and at night. Occupants of the vehicles get out of the car, lift the lids on the green and blue trash bins, and pick through the discards before the garbage collector arrives. Neighbors say it makes them nervous knowing that prying eyes are going through their once-personal property.

One resident found a solution. She places her green and blue trash bins at the end of her driveway, so they're on private property. She warned the scavengers they were trespassing and they haven't come back since the encounter, she wrote on Nextdoor.com.

Other residents are empathetic to the plight of the scavengers who come looking for aluminum cans, glass and plastic bottles they can redeem for cash. Residents admit to feeling

torn about wanting to help the less fortunate versus the homeowners' lack of privacy and security in plain sight. "They're just trying to make a living," one resident said in a post. "And frankly, they are recycling stuff [scrap metal] that would end up in landfills."

Still, there is a sense of uneasiness among neighbors who report regular weekly visits ahead of the garbage collection trucks. Not even using a shredder to eliminate the risk of identity theft takes away the feeling that comes with knowing that remnants of your life are on public view at the curb. "It's still oddly invasive having someone go through your trash," one resident wrote on Nextdoor.com.

Some residents said they're willing to look the other way when scavengers go through the recyclables set out at curbside. Others insist it's stealing and the loss of revenue from the redemption of cans and bottles ultimately will lead to higher trash pickup rates for everyone.

One resident added that welcoming that kind of activity would increase property crimes, including residential burglaries and other crimes of opportunity committed by outsiders coming into the city. "I'm just as worried that these people are also casing houses, seeing whether you're home during the day or night, what you have parked in your driveway, what's in your car, etc.," the poster wrote. "It's naive to think someone who is already stealing wouldn't take the opportunity to grab something off your property -- or worse, load it in their car and leave."

The Los Angeles County District Attorney advises residents to shred their unwanted mail before tossing it into the trash barrel. Unsolicited offers for credit cards or personal loans contain sensitive information, including a person's name and address that identity thieves use in their crimes, according to the DA's office.

A South Bay legal expert says that privacy rights are thrown out with the weekly garbage unless a homeowner takes precautions to keep prying eyes from seeing what's inside those barrels. "Keeping trash bins closer to your home before a scheduled pickup may offer less exposure of your personal information during that time," said a column about the subject co-written by Donie Vanitzian, a mediator based on Marina del Rey. "But as the [Supreme] court stressed, it is unlikely anything can prevent other owners -- especially nosy ones -- from snooping through your trash bins once they are subject to public access."

Vanitzian added there's little to do to prevent police and determined snooping neighbors from getting into your curbside trash and learning something about you that you'd prefer to keep hidden. •

Community Briefs

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Smoky Hollow Specific Plan Update

Tentatively, the El Segundo Planning Commission was scheduled to take action on the Smoky Hollow Specific Plan (the Plan) on May 24, 2018. However, further review and analysis of the plan and its environmental impacts will now postpone Planning Commission action to a later date. The public will be

notified in advance when the Smoky Hollow Specific Plan is scheduled for a hearing before the Planning Commission.

For further information or questions, please contact Paul Samaras, AICP, Principal Planner at (310) 524-2340 or psamaras@elsegundo.org.

– Source: City of ES

Open Seat on Recreation and Parks Commission

Becoming a member of the Recreation and Parks Commission is a great way to get involved and represent the community in all areas related to the programs, facilities and services provided by the Recreation and Parks Department. The Recreation and Parks Commission meets on the third Wednesday

of each month at 6 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. Applications are being accepted now and or can be downloaded at the link below and emailed to mjennings@elsegundo.org or can be obtained by contacting the City Council's Office at (310) 524-2300.

– Source: City of ES •

SBWIB Honors 35 Fit For Gold Cadet Graduates at Ceremony



Thirty Five high school and college students were honored May 17 during the 15th Annual Fit For Gold Tutoring & Fitness Academy Graduation Ceremony held at Rogers Park in Inglewood. The program is operated by the South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB).

Family members, training partners, educators and local elected officials attended the ceremony including El Segundo Mayor Drew Boyles; Gardena Mayor Tasha Cerda; Hawthorne Councilwoman Olivia Valentine; Inglewood Mayor James T. Butts, Jr. and Councilman Alex Padilla; Lawndale City Councilmembers Pat Kearney and Bernadette Suarez; and Lomita Mayor Pro Tem Henry Sanchez. State Senator Steven Bradford was represented by Brenda Baker, and Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi was represented by Andrew DeBlock. Centinela Valley Union High School District Superintendent Dr. Greg O'Brien also participated in the awards presentations.

SBWIB Executive Director Jan Vogel opened the ceremony and thanked the training partners and business partners that provide financial support and tutoring. After presenting an inspirational address, Mayor Butts joined with Mr. Vogel to present two \$500 scholarships provided by West Basin Water District and the

SBWIB to Cadets Giovanna Gutierrez from Inglewood Animo Charter High School, and Imani Bush of Gardena High School.

The Fit For Gold Tutoring & Fitness Academy is an after-school program that trains high school seniors to provide homework assistance, nutrition information and physical fitness activities to students, grades 3-8, while participating in 36 hours of enrichment and mentoring training and college – readiness activities.

"The effectiveness of this program is shown in the fact that of the 98 percent of the students who complete the program, 90 percent of them go onto post - secondary education," Mr. Vogel said.

Fit For Gold was established in 2003 as an intervention program to help raise declining student test scores and reduce the rate of cardiovascular disease among elementary and high school ages students living in the SBWIB's service area comprised of the cities of Carson, Gardena, El Segundo, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Lawndale, Lomita, Manhattan Beach, Redondo Beach and Torrance. It is funded through various federal, state, county and foundation grants.

For further information, call (310) 970-7700 or visit www.sbwib.org

– Source: SBWIB •

"The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves."

– STEVEN SPIELBERG

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