



THE MULTI-GENERATIONAL neighborhood west of USC has become a mix of bungalows and new apartment buildings.

# From permanent residents to a come-and-go population

Only a year ago, the little gray-and-yellow house on 35th Place was nestled among similar early 20th century homes, interspersed with a few postwar apartments.

Today it is flanked on one side by two four-story buildings and on the other by three buildings under construction.

Scenes like that are playing out on almost every block in the neighborhood west of the USC campus. A building boom is transforming a historic Black and Latino neighborhood into a village of modern student housing, unchecked by planning constraints that were enacted more than a decade ago specifically to hold off such a boom.

## Developers are buying out homeowners around USC, transforming a historic neighborhood into student housing

BY DOUG SMITH  
AND ANGIE ORELLANA HERNANDEZ

Similar development occurs over large portions of South Los Angeles where small firms have learned to max out the area's underutilized multifamily zones that allow much more density than the single-family zones that are the bedrock of the city's suburbs.

But nowhere are the buildings as large, or the transformation occurring faster, than in the mile radius around USC. The drastic change is raising concerns that working-class families are being displaced — either lured by cash offers that aren't enough to buy housing elsewhere or forced from affordable rentals — and replaced by a well-to-do transitory population.

[See Transformation, A8]

## Border debate could sway key districts

Control of Congress may hinge on tougher stances by Democrats since GOP backed off bipartisan reforms.

BY ANDREA CASTILLO

WASHINGTON — The Republican effort to solidify immigration as a decisive issue in the November election promises to influence the rematch between President Biden and former President Trump, and has already intensified the pressure on swing-district Democrats as their party fights to win control of Congress.

Seeking a political advantage, Trump continues to hammer Biden over his administration's border policies and stoke anti-immigrant sentiment — vowing mass deportations of people residing in the country illegally, dehumanizing them as “animals” and accusing them of “poisoning” communities.

Biden has adopted a stricter tone in recent months as he urges House Republicans to pass a bipartisan border security bill, saying he would shut down the border immediately if given the chance.

[See Immigration, A11]

## From pot darling to token failure

MedMen closes shops as federal codes and a glut of sellers take toll on many dispensaries.

BY MARISA GERBER

In the summer of 2018, MedMen opened a boutique cannabis dispensary on Abbot Kinney Boulevard in Venice — “the coolest block in America,” as the company hyped in a news release at the time.

With natural light pouring through floor-to-ceiling windows and spacious display tables dotted with sleek tablets, company executives weren't shy about where they'd drawn design inspiration for their high-rent storefront: They saw themselves as the Apple store of weed.

MedMen was an early darling in California's recreational pot market, drawing attention from the media, politicians eager to align themselves with the burgeoning legal industry and a growing consumer base curious about the trendy new locations selling products with names such as L'Orange, Grape Gasby and Highuasca.

Flush with investors' cash, the Culver City-based

[See MedMen, A7]

## THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF A SPORTS GAMBLER

David Leong helps those whose lives were like his

BY THOMAS CURWEN

David Leong had a hunch, but that's how it is for most sports gamblers. Luck is mistaken for skill, and skill, it is believed, can make you a killing.

On a Saturday morning, Sept. 3, 2016, he and a friend flew to Vegas, scored an 8-ball of coke and checked into a suite at Bally's.

Leong had an \$18,000 credit, and it was time to make it rain.

“There is no way USC can beat Alabama,” he remembered thinking as he visited two sportsbooks to spread the wager.

Kicked up with adrenaline and nerves, he didn't touch the coke. A win would double his bet. A loss would ... he pushed the thought away and settled in to watch the game.

[See Gamblers, A18]

LEARNING CURVES: Ohtani blunder turns into a teachable moment. SPORTS, D4

**Hot springs battle gets heated**  
Forest Service's closure of illegal soaking spots in Sequoia angers those who just want to chill. CALIFORNIA, B1

**Race, ethnicity choices change**  
U.S. updates categories to reflect those identifying as Middle Eastern and North African or Hispanic. NATION, A7

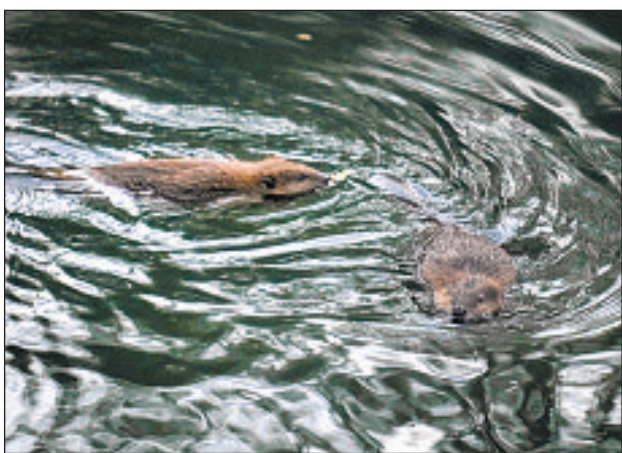
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ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

### BASEBALL ALIVE AND WELL

Allison Arizmendi, on her dad's shoulders, calls for a preseason autograph. The game's demise is greatly exaggerated, MLB officials say. SPORTS, D3



GODOFREDO A. VASQUEZ Associated Press

**BEAVERS** in Napa Creek in Northern California. A movement aims to restore them to state waterways.

## Dam right, beavers can allay wildfires

Rodents' aquatic activities result in resilient oases that don't burn

BY ALEX WIGGLESWORTH

A vast burn scar unfolds in drone footage of a landscape seared by massive wildfires north of Lake Tahoe. But amid the expanses of torched trees and gray soil, an unburned island of lush green emerges.

The patch was painstakingly engineered. A creek had been dammed, creating ponds that slowed the flow of water so the surrounding earth had more time to sop it up. A weblike system of canals spread that moisture through the floodplain.

Trees that had been encroaching on the wetlands were felled.

It wasn't a team of firefighters or conservationists who performed this work. It was a crew of semiaquatic rodents whose wetland-building skills have drawn attention as a natural way to mitigate wildfires.

A movement is afoot to restore beavers to the state's waterways, many of which have suffered from their absence.

“Beavers belong in California, and they should be part of our fire management

[See Beavers, A10]



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