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## What's Cookin' on Redondo and 3rd?

By Theresa J. Marino

**W**hat happened when there was an explosion at the boarding house? Roomers were flying!

Rumors have been circulating for the past several weeks as construction activity has been occurring in the vacant storefronts next to the 7-Eleven at the northwest corner of Redondo Avenue and 3rd Street in Bluff Heights. The storefronts have been empty for the past three years with a giant “For Lease” sign sitting atop them. About two months ago, the big sign came down. “What’s going in?” has been a frequent question among residents of Bluff Heights and customers of 7-Eleven. When you peer through the windows and see the numerous trenches recently cut into the cement floors and the piled dirt, the rumor of a super laundromat seems possible. Other neighbors have been wishing for a noodle shop. Both of these sound reasonable, but the most prevalent rumor is that the storefronts are going to be a Popeye’s fast-food restaurant. Thank goodness the parking lot can’t sustain a drive-through!

As Secretary of the Bluff Heights Neighborhood Association (BHNA) Board and someone who lives just a few houses down from the supposed Popeye’s, I called 2nd District Council Member Cindy Allen’s office and 3rd District Suzie Price’s office and talked to their staff. They informed me that they didn’t know about a Popeye’s going into that location but would try to connect with city departments and the Planning Commission. As of writing this article, I haven’t heard back yet. The BHNA Board members also brought this up with District Council staff who came to the Bluff Heights Neighborhood Clean-up on June 26th. We all want to

make sure that grease emissions, odors, and litter won’t become issues for those living in proximity of the location and adjacent neighborhoods. One of the BHNA board members even found posts from other communities about taking Popeye’s smell and grease emission violations to their city councils and using legal action to make Popeye’s comply with city ordinances and environmental regulations. We were assured by District Council staff that they would look into it, and we expect to hear back from them soon.

I walked over to the 7-Eleven on June 29th and talked with Manager Lakena and Assistant Manager Neane, asking them if they knew what was coming into the vacant storefronts. Neane said that there were so many trenches that she thought it might be a laundromat, but that she’s heard it’s going to be a Popeye’s. Lakena said, “It will be a Popeye’s and it should be finished within two to three months.” So, there you have it. This is no rumor: Popeye’s is coming to Bluff Heights and it’s a done deal, with no neighborhood or community input. Stay tuned as this “hot” issue is not going away; we will keep you all posted.

On a positive note, 7-Eleven will celebrate three years in the neighborhood in September 2021; our worst fears back then did not manifest. Look for a story by me in the BHNA September newsletter about living with a Popeye’s in the neighborhood.

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*Theresa Marino, Retired Bureau Manager, City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services, sits on the Marine Advisory Commission and is the Founding Executive Director of Conservation Corps of Long Beach, where she is President of the Board. She was a community organizer from CSULB during the 1970s War on Poverty era. She lives in Bluff Heights with her house and gardening mate Mingo and their two cats.*