

Article by Christopher Nyerges



Photo by Christopher Nyerges

You can find Sandra Pena with Me Gusta Tamales, Every Tuesday at the Old LA Farmers Market.

Sandy Pena was working at a gas station in San Fernando in 2017 and she got to talking with a woman who worked at the nearby Mexican restaurant. The restaurant was looking for extra help, especially someone who was bilingual in English and Spanish. Pena went and talked to the owner of the Mexican restaurant, Roberto Ortega, and was soon working for the Me Gusta restaurant.

Me Gusta has a restaurant in Pacoima, and a factory in Santa Clarita where 40 to 50 employee make thousands of tamales every day. Most of the tamales are sold at about a hundred farmers markets throughout Southern California.

Pena began by selling the tamales at one farmers market a week, and then that was increased to two markets when it was clear that Pena did a good job. Today, she works six days a week selling tamales at seven different farmers markets, including the Old LA Farmers Markets and the Old LA farmers market in Highland Park.

Pena, who is the mother of two boys, sometimes also works at the Santa Clarita factory packing tamales. In addition to the many tamales made at the factory for the farmers markets, they make burritos, salsas, and other Mexican foods which

Me Gusta Tamales

are sold at the Pacoima restaurant. The restaurant is located at 13754 Van Nuys Blvd. in Pacoima. Only tamales are sold at the farmers markets.

Me Gusta makes and sells seven different types of tamales: beef, pork, chicken, pineapple, vegetable, corn, and cheese, something for everyone, even vegetarians.

Though most of her customers are very familiar with tamales, some have never heard of or eaten a tamale. "Those who have never heard of tamales are mostly tourists to Los Angeles who are visiting from other countries," says Pena. "Most of them like our tamales, and then come back for more," she adds.

There are many styles of tamales from Mexico, Guatemala, and other countries. The Me Gusta tamale is a style that is most popular in Puerto Vallarta. The founder of Me Gusta, Roberto Ortega, is from Guadalajara.

Many of her customers at the farmers market in Highland Park are regular customers who look forward to purchasing several tamales for their families each Tuesday at the market on North Figueroa and Ave 58.



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Besides being a hard worker for the Me Gusta tamale company, Sandra Pena also likes to go hiking as often as possible. She hikes on the trails in the Santa Susana Pass, and around Calabassas. She hikes often, usually with friends. She also enjoys bicycling when she has the time.

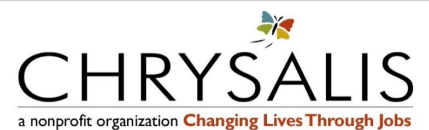
Old LA Farmers Market is open every Tuesday from 3 pm to 8 pm, at North Figueroa and Avenue 58. SNAP/EBT cards are accepted, Market Match offered. Masks are required.



Security

3rd Quarter '21

Patrol calls for service	29
Patrol BID contacts	505
Public contacts	830
Vehicle patrol hours	1,474
Bike patrol hours	0



Maintenance

3rd Quarter '21

Trash Bags (removed)	2,436
Trash weight lbs	56,028
Graffiti tags removed:	350
Bulky items:	160
Pressure Washing hrs	24

NFA Goals

- Provide Educational, Cultural, Artistic, Charitable, Social Service and public improvements.
- Increase economic well being for property owners, employees and businesses.
- Provide improvements and activities to assist in economic and commercial revitalization.
- Provide clean, safe and beautification programs to improve economic prosperity for property owners, businesses and the community.
- Bring about investment of public and private capital within the Business Improvement District and surrounding area for public benefit and charitable purposes.

Mission Statement

North Figueroa Association is the management organization for the Highland Park Business Improvement District and is an advocate for the North Figueroa Property owners by empowering and aiding in the stimulation of growth, development, revitalization and maintaining the historic value of the North Figueroa Corridor.

The North Figueroa Assoc. will support an environment in which stakeholders can conduct commerce, live and play.

North Figueroa Assn. Board of Directors

Tom Wilson, President
Property Owner

Stuart Rapeport, Vice President
Property Owner

Amy Inouye, Secretary
Future Studio

John Harb, Security Chair
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Property Owner

Dennis Hernandez
Property Owner

Alex Rudisky
Property Owner

Misty Iwatsu, Executive Director

Contact: 323-255-5030
website: www.oldla.org.

Annual Budget 2021

Public Right of Way	\$376,854.64	(65%)
Corporate Identity & Organization	\$110,000.00	(35%)
Total Annual Budget	\$486,854.64	(100%)

How You Can Help

You can help keep the district clean, safe and pedestrian friendly by:

- Making sure your businesses do not place their trash in the sidewalk receptacles. These receptacles are for pedestrians only.
- Keep windows & awnings clean
- Take down any old, torn or faded signs or banners.
- Sweep your store front. While the crews sweep the streets, they do not sweep private property
- Post store hours in windows.
- Call security with concerns. The number is: 800-350-1944. Report to LAPD, as well.