

# The Gaslight

ISSUE 15  
2025

SOUTH ORANGE  
VILLAGE  
ACCESS IT ALL



WINTER  
EDITION

SOUTH ORANGE VILLAGE  
WISHES YOU A  
**VERY**

**HAPPY  
NEW  
YEAR**



## LETTER FROM THE MAYOR



Dear Neighbors,

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones well and that you enjoyed a joyful and restful holiday season! As we step into 2025, South Orange is gearing up for a busy and exciting first quarter. I'm pleased to share a few key priorities and updates that will shape our Village in the months and years ahead.

**Water utility transition:** Following the successful referendum, we have finalized the agreement with New Jersey American Water. After review by the Board of Public Utilities, we anticipate closing later this year, marking an important step forward for our community to stabilize costs and address critical infrastructure.

**Affordable housing obligations:** In compliance with the Fair Housing Act, South Orange has been assigned a prospective need of 163 affordable housing units over the next decade. With our aggressive 20 percent inclusionary ordinance, this means we will need to construct more than 500 new units to meet our requirements. By June, we will unveil a new Housing Element and Fair Share Plan that will guide us through 2035.

**Library construction:** Exciting progress is being made on our new 21st-century library! Bids were received in December, and we look forward to working with the library board to award a construction contract in early 2025.

**Pedestrian safety grant:** South Orange has been awarded a Safe Streets for All grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. This grant will allow us to develop a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan in partnership with Essex County and local stakeholders. I encourage you to participate as details are announced – your input will be invaluable as we address this critical topic together.

**River Greenway Project:** Phase two of the River Greenway Project is moving forward, and we expect construction to begin by summer 2025. This phase will complete a path from Third Street, through Waterlands Park, to Chyzowych Field near Parker Avenue, close to the Maplewood border.

**Cameron Recreation Area:** Thanks to a Green Acres matching grant, we're moving forward with construction plans for a reimagined recreation space. The new area will feature a resiliency adventure garden; a picnic grove; and paddle tennis, pickleball, basketball, and fitness equipment – creating an inclusive and vibrant space for residents of all ages to enjoy.

**Founders Park Community Center:** As part of negotiations with the new storage facility on Valley Street, we are pleased to offer a new community space next to Founders Park. This space is now available for public use, providing another valuable resource for our residents.

As we embark on the new year, I encourage everyone to consider volunteering in the community. South Orange thrives because of the immense talents and dedication of our residents, and your involvement makes a real difference. For more information on the topics above, or to get involved, please visit our website at [southorange.org](https://southorange.org).

**Wishing you a happy and healthy 2025, filled with promise and opportunity. Together, we can make this an incredible year for South Orange.**

*Sheena Collum*

Sheena C. Collum  
Mayor



### IN TOUCH WITH VILLAGE GOVERNMENT

#### MAYOR

Sheena Collum  
973.378.7715 x 2

#### VILLAGE COUNCIL

Bobby Brown  
Jen Greenberg  
Karen Hartshorn Hilton  
Bill Haskins  
Summer Jones  
Olivia Lewis-Chang  
973.378.7715 x 2

#### ADMINISTRATION

Village Administrator  
Julie Doran  
973.378.7715 x 2

#### GENERAL INQUIRIES

973.378.7715

**Clerk's Office,** x 1

**Building & Code,** x 3

**Tax Collector,** x 4

**Assessor,** x 5

**Finance,** x 6

**Engineering & Zoning,** x 7

**Parking Authority,** x 2037

**Health,** x 7710

**Water Service** x 7760

**Public Works**

973.378.7741

**Recreation & Cultural Affairs**

973.378.7754

**Fire Department**

973.762.3200

**Library**

973.762.0230

**Police, nonemergency**

973.763.3000

**Rescue Squad**

973.762.5647

**Animal Control**

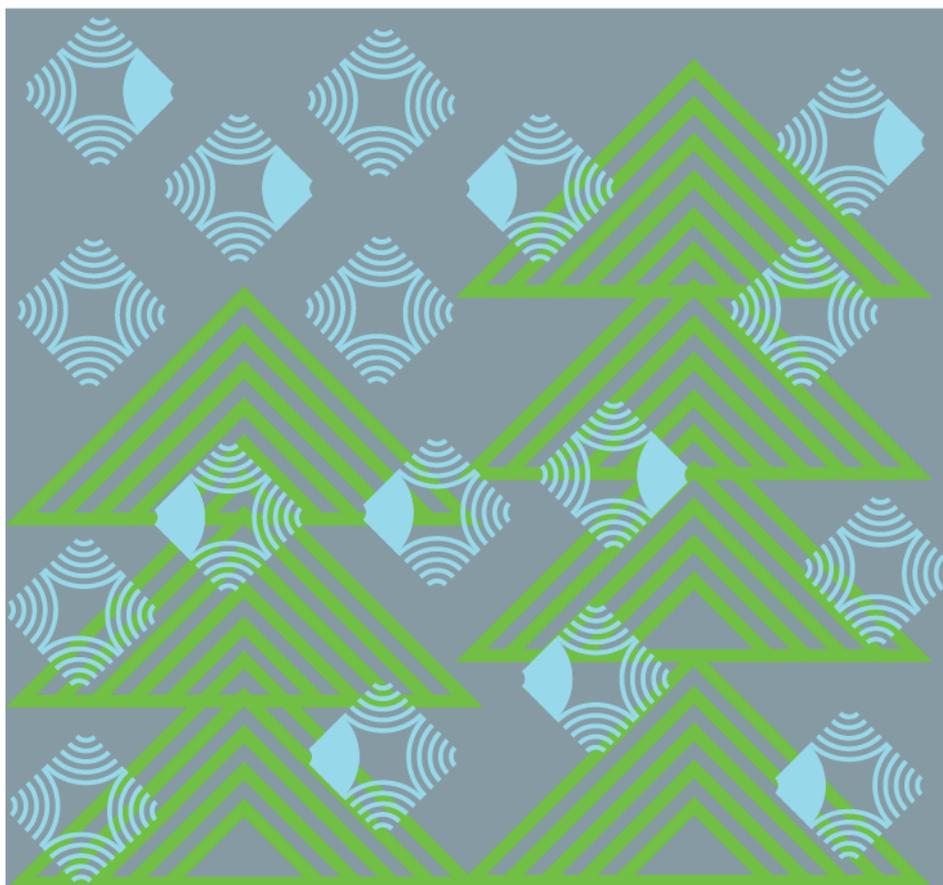
908.722.1271

## VILLAGE HAPPENINGS

### ATTEND A VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING

With one exception, Tuesday, May 27, Village Council meetings take place on Monday evenings at 6:15 p.m. Dates are subject to change. Please check [southorange.org/calendar](https://southorange.org/calendar) for meeting links and date/time confirmation. **2025 scheduled dates:**

|          |              |          |
|----------|--------------|----------|
| Jan. 13  | May 19       | Aug. 18  |
| Jan. 27  | (annual      | Sept. 8  |
| Feb. 10  | organization | Sept. 29 |
| Feb. 24  | meeting)     | Oct. 13  |
| March 10 | May 27       | Oct. 27  |
| March 24 | June 9       | Nov. 10  |
| April 14 | June 23      | Nov. 24  |
| April 28 | July 14      | Dec. 8   |
| May 12   | July 28      | Dec. 22  |



## VILLAGE HAPPENINGS CONTINUED

### 24TH ANNUAL DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. OBSERVANCE



With our nation facing a transition, many in our community are seeking opportunities for meaningful connection. The South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race (CCR) invites you to its 24th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Observance, volunteer fair, and luminary lighting on Monday, Jan. 20, at 3 p.m. at Columbia High School. This year's theme, "Upholding Dr. King's Legacy in Challenging Times," calls for a renewed commitment to racial equity and inclusion.

This free event, which historically has drawn hundreds of participants from SOMa and surrounding communities, will feature two keynote speakers: Saladin Ambar, senior scholar at the Eagleton Center on the American Governor and associate professor of political science at Rutgers University, and Ibi Zoboi, *New York Times* bestselling author and editor of *Black Enough: Stories of Being Young & Black in America*. The program will include interfaith readings, music,

and a call to honor King's vision of service and unity. It will be followed by a reception and volunteer fair, where attendees can explore community-building opportunities.

Those interested in participating in the SOMa Luminary Project can purchase luminary kits at local businesses; there will also be a luminary decorating party. The Meadowland Park Conservancy will host a community luminary lighting at the pond at Meadowland Park following the observance.

Looking ahead, mark your calendar for the CCR's Black History Month program, in collaboration with Durand-Hedden, on Sunday, Feb. 9. The program features Hettie V. Williams, director of the William Monroe Trotter Institute and author of *The Georgia of the North: Black Women and the Civil Rights Movement in New Jersey*.

Visit [communitycoalitiononrace.org](https://communitycoalitiononrace.org) for more details.

# VILLAGE HAPPENINGS CONTINUED

## SOUTH ORANGE PUBLIC LIBRARY



Bamberger-Fuld House

### LOCAL HISTORY AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

The South Orange Public Library's head of reference and library services, Lindita Cani, wants to make sure residents know that, while the library is under construction, they can access the library's local history collection online. "It contains primary sources, a collection of

documents, maps and atlases, photographs, postcards, and real estate records collected over time," says Cani, "which may be useful in researching property, homes, and historic events."

The library will be under construction — the Building Connections Project — for the next two years. During that time, thanks to generous grants from the Essex County Division of Cultural and Historic Affairs and the New Jersey Historical Commission, the physical local history collection is secured in a climate-controlled storage unit. Access to the digital version of the collection is critical at this time, while the physical collection is unavailable.

The grant has also made it possible for the library to grow the digital collection by scanning the physical archives. "We are striving to make as much of this collection digitally accessible as we can," Cani notes, "adding information about historical events, people, maps, and locations related to the Village, with the photo gallery and video recollections given special attention." These documents can be accessed at [localhistory.sopl.org/wiki](http://localhistory.sopl.org/wiki). If you have local documents or photographs that you think would benefit the community and preservation of its history, please contact Cani at [librarian@sopl.org](mailto:librarian@sopl.org).

The Building Connections Project includes plans for a climate-controlled Local History Room. The reconstructed and expanded library is anticipated to be completed in 2027.



Old Stone House

## VILLAGE NEWS



### NEW CRISIS INTERVENTION COUNSELOR

The Village's new crisis intervention counselor, Amber Poltricitky, has a Master of Arts in clinical counseling. In June 2024, Poltricitky started working for the Mental Health Association of Morris and Essex as a clinical co-responder in South Orange, where she works with both the South Orange Police Department and the Department of Health. Her job duties include collaborating with SOPD officers concerning mental health/social services training and education; developing systems to help community members in need of social services; conducting clinical assessments, including for suicide risk; performing clinical consultations through ongoing case discussion and evaluation; performing psychotherapeutic intervention and crisis intervention; and following up with identified clients and collateral contacts as needed.

Poltricitky utilizes a variety of modalities, including psychodynamic therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and existential therapy, so she can tailor her treatment to each individual.

### Community Day and Health Fair

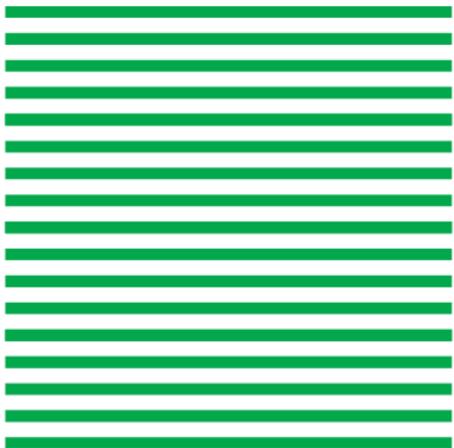


### Community Day 2024



### CHALLENGE MET!

In 2023, Linda Beck, then the chair of the South Orange Environmental Commission, brought the idea of participating in the NexTrex film plastics-recycling challenge to Joe Foligno, acting director of the Department of Public Works. Foligno successfully rolled out the program via collection boxes in three South Orange locations: the library lobby at 298 Walton Ave.; the Baird Community Center lobby at 5 Mead St.; and the South Orange Village municipal offices at 76 South Orange Ave., third floor. As a reward for collecting more than 1,000 pounds of film plastic in a year, South Orange recently received a bench made by Trex Company Inc. The bench is an example of how film plastic can be recycled into outdoor products.



### FROM THE TAX OFFICE

The 2025 1st quarter tax payment is due February 1. Please note that postmark dates are not honored as dates of receipt, and postdated checks will not be accepted.

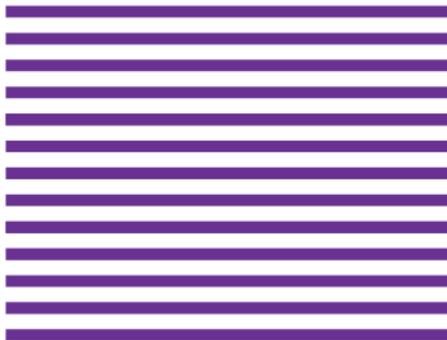
A 10-day grace period is granted every quarter. After 10 days, taxes are considered delinquent, and interest is charged from the original due date. As a reminder, tax payments are due quarterly, on February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1.

Taxes can be verified and paid 24/7 at [southorange.org/302/Check-Pay-My-Taxes-Online](https://southorange.org/302/Check-Pay-My-Taxes-Online):

- To verify taxes/sewer balances, click "Make an online tax payment," then fill out the "Tax information look-up" form.
- To pay tax and/or sewer balances, select the appropriate payment tab above the "Tax information look-up" section on the same page.

To receive text and/or email reminders prior to due dates, as well as other tax-related communications, sign up for notifications at [southorange.org/list.aspx](https://southorange.org/list.aspx) and select the "Tax collector" and "Tax collector news" options.

Feel free to contact the tax office with any questions at 973-378-7715 ext. 4.



### OCTOBER 2024: Nathaniel Kraemer

A lifelong resident of South Orange and Columbia High School sophomore, Nathaniel Kraemer is a teen library advocate at the South Orange Public Library, supporting community access to knowledge and reliable information. In a piece last April in the *News-Record of Maplewood and South Orange*, Kraemer wrote passionately about how a library impacts a community.

Kraemer has also been a YMCA camp counselor, and he participates in various school groups, including the pre-med club and Jazz Ensemble. His service to the community brings to mind these words from Anne Frank: "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." Kraemer sets a remarkable example for South Orange, showing the power of youth to support and uplift the community.

### Nominate a Villager of the Month

**Do you know someone who lives or works in South Orange who makes our community brighter and more vibrant?**

Celebrate their contributions by nominating them as a Villager of the Month. Embracing diversity of all kinds, this award honors individuals who embody the qualities that make South Orange shine. To submit a nomination, visit [southorange.org/756/Villager-of-the-Month](https://southorange.org/756/Villager-of-the-Month) and tell us why your nominee deserves this honor!





Photo credit: Matt Peyton Photography

## NEW TREE REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT ORDINANCE

South Orange is pleased to announce the adoption of a new tree removal and replacement ordinance designed to safeguard the community's tree canopy, enhance environmental sustainability, and promote responsible tree-management practices. This ordinance establishes clear guidelines for tree removal and replacement, and seeks to address critical environmental concerns such as air quality, stormwater runoff, and heat island effects. The idea is to maintain the visual character of South Orange, which is defined by its mature tree canopy.

With this ordinance, South Orange aims to protect its natural resources while advancing the goals of the Village Master Plan and complying with regulations established by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP).

The primary goal of the ordinance is to prevent the indiscriminate removal of trees while protecting the ecological and aesthetic benefits trees provide to the community. The development of this ordinance involved a thorough review process, with input from Councilmembers Bill Haskins and Olivia Lewis-Chang, the Environmental Commission, Village residents, and various Village staff members. Key steps in the process included:

- **Review of NJDEP requirements.** The ordinance was developed in coordination with NJDEP to meet state guidelines for tree management and environmental protection.
- **Best practices.** The Village consulted with leading arborists, urban planners, and environmental experts to establish a balanced approach to tree management that protects South Orange's natural resources.
- **Village Master Plan review.** The ordinance aligns with the long-term vision of the South Orange Master Plan, reinforcing the community's commitment to sustainability and green infrastructure.
- **Coordination with commissions, committees, and departments.** The Environmental Commission, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Engineering, the Planning Department, the Village administration, and the Planning Board worked together to ensure that the ordinance meets the needs of the community while complying with state and federal regulations.

We encourage all property owners and other residents to review the details of this ordinance to ensure compliance.

Visit [southorange.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2483](https://southorange.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2483) to view the ordinance and the presentation made to the Village Council in support of this ordinance.



## SOUTH ORANGE APPROVES WATER UTILITY SALE

On Nov. 4, 2024, South Orange residents made a decisive choice in favor of a referendum supporting the potential sale of its water system. A clear majority of voters supported the sale of the Village's water utility to New Jersey American Water (NJAW).

Over the past two years, the South Orange Village Council, in partnership with the Water Utility Task Force, consultants, Village staff, and community volunteers, worked diligently to assess the challenges facing the Village's aging water infrastructure. Councilmembers, staff, and residents were concerned about the rising costs associated with maintaining and upgrading the current system, which has been increasingly difficult to manage in the face of aging pipelines, environmental changes, and regulatory demands.

As Mayor Sheena Collum explained, "I'm grateful a clear majority of residents supported selling our water system to NJAW. Voters took the time to learn about the future challenges of the Village retaining ownership of our aging water infrastructure and the need to dramatically increase rates to address those challenges." Collum emphasized the importance of this decision, noting that, without this strategic move, the Village would face significantly higher rates, all while struggling to replace lead and galvanized pipes and meet modern water standards.

With the referendum now passed, the Village Council will consider moving forward with the sale, which is expected to take six to nine months to complete. Next steps include a review of the specifics of the sales agreement, to ensure that all negotiated terms are represented. The legislative and regulatory next steps include:

- Approval of the sales agreement by the Village Council
- Approval of municipal consent to allow NJAW to inspect the system
- Approval of the sales agreement by the state Board of Public Utilities
- Review of the sales agreement by the state Division of Local Government Services.

In the months ahead, South Orange will focus on ensuring a smooth transition and will work closely with NJAW to keep residents informed every step of the way.

For more information, visit [southorange.org/1009/Water-System-Potential-Sale-2024](https://southorange.org/1009/Water-System-Potential-Sale-2024).

## South Orange Water System Sale



## SOUTH ORANGE COUNCIL APPROVES HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE UPDATE

On Sept. 9, 2024, the South Orange Village Council unanimously approved significant updates to the historic preservation ordinance, marking a major step forward in efforts to protect the community's historical character. The changes come after extensive discussions during the Master Plan process, which highlighted the importance of preserving South Orange's historic districts and properties, while also considering the rights of property owners.

The updates are particularly timely, given the recent attention to proposed demolitions of historic properties in the area. As local officials explained, these revisions will enhance the preservation process, address gaps in the previous ordinance, and provide a clearer framework for managing changes to historically significant properties.



Historic Village Hall

According to Summer Jones, the South Orange Council liaison to the South Orange Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), the new ordinance introduces several key provisions that will help strengthen protections for historic properties:

- **Expanded review process.** While the previous ordinance provided some protection, it covered a limited number of properties (seven or eight landmarks) and had no clear procedures for adding new properties to the protected list. The updated ordinance establishes a formal process for adding new landmarks and historic districts. Importantly, no new properties are being added as a result of this ordinance.
- **Demolition and demolition by neglect.** The ordinance clarifies the procedures for reviewing demolitions, particularly those involving historic or contributing properties within designated districts. It now includes stricter enforcement measures and penalties for those who fail to comply with preservation rules.
- **Minor work permits.** For properties that are not subject to full review, the ordinance introduces a "minor work permit" system for less-intrusive changes, such as alterations that do not have a significant impact on a building's historic character. This is designed to make the process more flexible, while still ensuring that historic resources are preserved.
- **Public notification.** A key concern raised during the discussions was the need for better communication with property owners who might be affected by the new designations. Under the revised ordinance, property owners will receive formal notice if their property is being considered for inclusion on the historic register, giving them an opportunity to be heard in the process.

The updates to the historic preservation ordinance are designed to provide a more comprehensive and transparent process for preserving South Orange's historic fabric. They strike a balance between protecting historic resources and respecting the property rights of owners. Here's how these changes may affect residents:

- **Homeowners in historic districts.** If you own a property in a designated historic district or one that is considered a landmark, you may need to obtain approval from the HPC before making certain changes, particularly those affecting the exterior of your property. While the ordinance is designed to be flexible for minor alterations, significant changes to a building's facade or structure may require a review.
- **Property developers.** Developers interested in properties within historic districts or on the landmark list will need to navigate the updated procedures to ensure compliance with preservation rules.

Residents who have questions or concerns are encouraged to reach out to the HPC. To read the full text of the ordinance, visit [southorangenj.portal.civicclerk.com/event/2549/files/attachment/3205](https://southorangenj.portal.civicclerk.com/event/2549/files/attachment/3205).

## VILLAGE CONNECTIONS

Want to know what's happening in South Orange? Here's how to stay connected with news, announcements, events, and more.



### EMERGENCY ALERTS

Are you receiving emergency alerts and nonemergency notifications from South Orange? Communication is key, whether it be during a global pandemic or severe weather event, or about a street closure. You can create an account at [southorange.org/610/SO-Ale](https://southorange.org/610/SO-Ale) and personalize your account so you receive only the alerts and notifications you want, the way you want them, be it by phone, text, or email.



### 'NOTIFY ME' SUBSCRIPTIONS

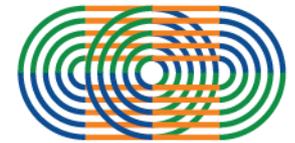
Create an account on our website and sign up for notifications tailored to your areas of interest, including calendar listings, news postings, bid postings, and employment opportunities. You can also subscribe to our weekly e-newsletter, The South Orange Digest, which includes updates about events, volunteer opportunities, government meetings, and changes to our municipal ordinances. Visit the "Notify Me" subscription page at [southorange.org/list.aspx](https://southorange.org/list.aspx).



### REPORT A CONCERN

You can report a nonemergency issue easily using either the "Report a Concern" link at [southorange.org](https://southorange.org) or the GovAlert app from your mobile device.

### VILLAGE CONNECTIONS



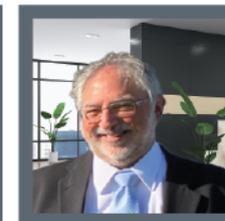
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## RECREATION & CULTURAL AFFAIRS



### BASEBALL REGISTRATION

Are your children ready to unleash their inner athlete, make new friends, and have a blast? The largest youth sports program in town is back, and it's better than ever! Our spring baseball program is for children ages 5 to 15. Registration is open through Jan. 31. The season will run from April through early June; each team will have two games per week. Additional details (including game days for each age group) can be found on the recreation page at [southorange.org](http://southorange.org). Registration can be completed online, over the phone (973.378.7754), or in person at the Baird Community Center. Spots are limited, so be sure to sign up early.

### SPECIAL EVENTS

The Department of Recreation & Cultural Affairs is thrilled to kick off another year of exciting events in South Orange Village. In 2024, we produced and co-sponsored more than 30 events and activities, including the grand opening of the renovated and expanded Baird Community Center, the reopening of the Pierro Gallery, and our ever-popular summer concert and movie series. As we look to 2025, we're committed to bringing you more engaging programs that honor the vibrant spirit, rich history, and cultural diversity of our community. Here's to another unforgettable year!

To keep in the loop about Recreation & Cultural Affairs' news and events:

- See all upcoming events at [southorange.org](http://southorange.org).
- Sign up for Recreation & Cultural Affairs' events emails at [southorange.org](http://southorange.org).
- Follow the Village's Facebook and Instagram pages @[SouthOrangeVillage](https://www.facebook.com/SouthOrangeVillage).



### COMMUNITY GARDEN

Are you ready to cultivate a green thumb and be part of our thriving community garden? This is your chance to secure a plot in the South Orange Community Garden. The garden, consisting of 48 raised-bed plots, each measuring 4 feet by 12 feet, is in Riverside Park, on West Third Street near Church Street, adjacent to the west bank of the Rahway River's east branch. This recreational community garden is a place for the residents of South Orange to learn about and grow organic and sustainable ornamental and edible plant culture. Registration is open and can be completed online at [southorange.org](http://southorange.org), over the phone (973.378.7754), or in person at the Baird Community Center, on a first-come, first-served basis. Proof of residency and orientation meeting attendance are required. Let's grow together and make our community garden flourish!

### RECREATION SUMMER CAMP

Get ready for an unforgettable summer full of adventure, learning, and fun at our Recreation Summer Camp. With half- and full-day options available, our camp is designed to meet every family's needs. Camp takes place in Meadowland Park and utilizes the athletic fields, playground, South Orange Community Pool, and Baird Community Center. Registration opens Jan. 13 and can be completed online at [southorange.org](http://southorange.org), over the phone (973.378.7754), or in person at the Baird Community Center. If you have questions or want more information, call 973.378.7754 x2324. We can't wait to welcome your children to a summer full of new adventures and lasting memories.

**PIERRO  
GALLERY**

*Voices in Color*

# Black Art Unveiled

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WINTER 2025

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Winter Edition:

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Sue Foley, Alexis P. Suter & Rae Simone

**FRI, FEB 7 AT 7:30PM**



**LEE ROCKER**  
of The Stray Cats  
**SUN, JAN 19  
AT 7:30PM**



**KIDS + FAMILY  
HEART & SOUL  
OF MAGIC**  
Sponsored by BGR  
**SAT, FEB 22 AT 1PM**



**MS. LISA FISCHER  
& GRAND BATON**  
**SAT, FEB 15  
AT 8PM**



**HEALING SOUNDS IN THE LOFT**  
**SUN, FEB 2 AT 5PM & 7PM**

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**RECREATION & CULTURAL AFFAIRS**  
**SOUTH ORANGE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**



**Dear South Orange residents,**

A new year is upon us, and we believe now, as we always do, that the arts are here to bring people together. As a cultural arts institution, SOPAC values connection and inclusivity, and art is a means to that end.

I'd like to extend a heartfelt thank-you to everyone who has stopped by SOPAC during the first half of our 19th cultural season. Our small but mighty team has been hard at work presenting new events and welcoming returning acts, and I can't tell you how much we appreciate your attendance and ongoing feedback.

There have been many moments to celebrate so far this season – on stage, in the gallery, with students, and in the community. From sold-out events, including an evening with Roger McGuinn, to a lovely, delicious, and musically inspired brunch in the Loft with Tracy Nelson, we are grateful to share in these artistic encounters with people from SOMa and the surrounding communities. On Sept. 26, patrons packed the Herb + Milly Iris Gallery for the opening reception of UNVEILED24: SOMa Studio Tour Artists.

Beyond the SOPAC stages and gallery walls, we're thrilled to have kicked off another season of arts-in-education programming with the South Orange-Maplewood School District and other surrounding districts. Students in this year's art residency programs are engaged and inspired by the esteemed teaching artists from the dance, classical, and jazz worlds. As our season continues, I invite you to attend more live performances, particularly those by performers who are new to you. And to those South Orange residents we've yet to meet, in the spirit of community-building, I encourage you to pay us a visit, tour the venue, and view the incredible works on display in our gallery.

We look forward to seeing you at SOPAC. Don't hesitate to connect with me at SOPAC or by emailing me at [listening@sopacnow.org](mailto:listening@sopacnow.org).

With warm regards,

Lana Rogachevskaya





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**SOUTH  
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VILLAGE

Municipal Offices  
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New Jersey 07079

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# How's the South Orange Market?

SCAN HERE FOR OUR LATEST MARKET REPORT



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COMPASS