



Westside Village News & Views



President's Report

By Richard Saltsman, President

In this mid-year newsletter, I have the opportunity to look both backward and forward on our past and future successes of 2009.

Our Annual WVCA meeting was held on February 24th and attended by about 150 people. As always, it is an opportunity to bring some of the important issues directly to our community and this year was no different. Dennis Hathaway of "Ban Billboard Blight" spoke about the vast number of billboards that have been showing up all over our City—including the electronic/digital billboards and huge, supergraphic signs that are being draped across many of our buildings. Residents who are concerned about the proliferation of these signs should go to BanBillboardBlight.org and ask Dennis how to get involved in saving our City from visual blight.

Our other speakers were Councilmember Bill Rosendahl and his deputy Len Nguyen, (CD11), and Mark Davis from outgoing Councilmember Jack Weiss' office (CD5). All three answered questions submitted by attendees.

Our Senior Lead Officer, Juan Ceja, was introduced and presented with a gift basket in appreciation of his dedication to Westside Village. He was also given a letter of commendation from the WVCA Board of Directors; a copy of which was sent to Joseph M. Hiltner, Captain, Area Commanding Officer of the Pacific Community Police Station. This letter has been acknowledged by Captain Hiltner and placed in Officer Ceja's personnel file.

Along with Officer Ceja, our Neighborhood Watch coordinators Guita Farin and David Graue were introduced and thanked for their tireless efforts in revitalizing our Westside Village Neighborhood Watch. They in turn acknowledged the block captains who are an integral component of the "Watch".

Also, the members discussed and voted to approve a plan to rename the Westside Village Civic Association to the Westside Village Homeowners Association. We believe this name better reflects our Bylaws and our organization's goals. The Bylaws have been in effect for decades and have prevented apartment and condo residents from becoming members. WVCA has stood for reduced density, maintaining our zoning laws and encouraging members to join our Neighborhood Watch to reduce crime. We believe that our homeowners have an important stake in seeing that these goals are met. There have been increasing pressures by builders to produce higher-density developments and we have been vigilant in our response to these plans. We have also been watchful of plans for the next phase of the "Expo Line"—and have worked with other neighborhood groups to request that safety be at the top of the list in the planning. Efforts toward our name change are moving along and should be finalized by the end of the year.

Looking ahead to October we will have our fabulous Fall Festival on October 10th on the grounds of St. John's Church at National and Military. Boardmember Andy Comins has once again agreed to chair the event and it promises to be another big success. We always need help from volunteers—it's a great way to get involved in our community whether you are a long-time resident or new to the neighborhood. To volunteer, please email WestsideVillageBoard@yahoo.com.

Finally, I am asking that those of you, who have not yet sent in your \$10.00 annual dues, please use the attached envelope and sign up. It is very important that we represent all of our residents and the best way of doing this is by having your membership. We cannot run our organization, including our vibrant Neighborhood Watch, without your participation. Please join us!

Mandatory Water Conservation Now In Effect

By Brian Considine

In May, 2008, The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa unveiled a new plan known as "Securing LA's Water Supply". It is a long-term plan for the management of the city's future water demand that involves both short-term steps to conserve water and long-range initiatives for improving water efficiency technology, water recycling, and improvements to ground water supply. We are now in the third year of a water supply shortage and ground water reserves are far below normal. Responding to this situation, the Metropolitan Water District, which brings water to Los Angeles from northern California and the Colorado River has declared a Level 2 water supply allocation, which calls for extraordinary conservation. It's time for us to do our part to help.

watering station or 10 minutes for other irrigation systems. Hand watering with a hose with a shutoff valve is permitted.

- You may not water on any hard surfaces such as sidewalks, walkways, driveways or parking areas.
- You may not allow water runoff onto streets and into gutters from excessive watering.
- You may not allow any leaks from any pipe or fixture to go unrepaired.
- You may not wash any vehicles without using a hose with a shutoff valve.
- And for restaurants, you may not serve water to any customers unless requested.

A complete list of prohibited uses of water is available on the DWP's website (www.ladwp.com). First time violators will receive a written warning, but for subsequent violations, fines can be as much as \$600. The DWP has asked customers to notify them



The New Ordinance which went into effect on June 1 calls for the following:

- *Lawn sprinklers are now restricted to use only on Mondays and Thursdays and you MAY NOT use them between the hours of 9:00am and 4:00pm. We are limited to running sprinklers for 15 minutes per*

of non-compliance either by calling 800-342-5397 or emailing waterconservationteam@ladwp.com. The DWP's goal is to get customers to reduce their use of water with a combination of restrictions and financial incentives, but this is not a rationing program, which would involve restricting each customer's use of water to a certain amount.

The restrictions are accompanied by a new pricing structure. Currently, customers pay one rate for their base allotment of water, known as Tier 1. Usage in excess of this quantity (Tier 2) is billed at a higher rate. Under the new pricing system, the Tier 1 allotments will be reduced by 15% and the rates for Tier 2 will go up dramatically. Customers can go to www.ladwp.com for more information on their Tier allotment either using your customer number and address or you can search the "First Tier Charts for Single Dwelling Residential Units" using the link at the bottom of the blue-outlined box with the heading "Mandatory Water Conversation is Here." This information is also available by calling: 1-800-DIAL-DWP and using the CAN number from your bill.

Conserving Water

Both the DWP and the MWD's websites (ladwp.com and bewaterwise.com) have lists of ways that we can save water. Among the measures that we can adopt indoors are:

- *Turning off the water when we brush our teeth*
- *Shorten showers by a couple of minutes*
- *Fix leaky faucets (which is required under the new ordinance)*
- *And wash only full loads of clothes and dishes.*

Their suggestions for outdoor water conservation include:

- *Water your yard before 8:00 AM to reduce evaporation and interference from the wind*
- *Install a smart sprinkler controller*
- *Check your sprinklers for leaks, over spray and broken sprinkler heads.*

These measures can save over 500 gallons per month.

Michael DeHart, horticulturist at the Getty Center offers some more advice for conserving water in the garden:

- *If you have runoff from sprinklers, you cycle your watering. This means running the sprinklers half the regular time and then allowing the water to percolate into the soil before completing the cycle. The sandier the soil is, the quicker the cycles will be; the goal is to make them just long enough to prevent run-off.*
- *Water turf in the evening to prevent evaporation, mowing only every other week and letting your grass grow to three to four inches. The extra leaf surface will make the plants healthier and more drought-tolerant. However, mold and mildew will grow after ten hours of moisture on the leaves, so evening watering should be avoided during the June gloom.*
- *Mulch can also play an important role in water conservation to reduce evaporation. DeHart suggests spreading four inches of mulch (wood, gravel or plastic*

chips) and watering through it. Free mulch is available from the department of Sanitation at 6000 W. Jefferson Blvd. Los Angeles, 90016 from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm seven days a week. It is also available at other locations, see: www.ci.la.ca.us/SAN/services_all.htm. Tree trimmers will also give you mulch, but DeHart cautions that they will sometimes leave you their entire load if you're not careful.

- *Avoid using fertilizer during a drought because it encourages new growth, which increases a plant's water requirements.*
- *Another suggestion is to use soil additives that can hold moisture. For containers, there are products by Miracle Gro and Broadleaf P-4; for lawns there is a product called Profile, but DeHart points out that the lawn should be renovated first. This consists of cutting the grass very short and removing all of the clippings and dead grass. Doing this before top-dressing with an additive will allow it to work itself into the soil where it will hold water around the roots.*
- *DeHart also points out that hand watering will take much longer than sprinklers because you have only ½" diameter of water delivery, so you have to go over everything at least twice, until the water has percolated to a depth of two inches, which you can check with a stick.*

Rebates

Both the DWP and the MWD offer rebates for a number of water and energy-saving devices. The DWP offers a \$300 rebate for a high efficiency clothes washer, \$100 for upgrading 1.6 or greater gallons per flush toilets to 1.28 gallon models and \$200 for a weather-based irrigation controller. To learn more, consult the DWP's website or call the SoCal WaterSmart Program at 888-376-3314. However, there is a rebate reservation system, so you may have to plan ahead.

The MWD offers similar rebates on washing machines, toilets, weather-based irrigation controllers, rotating nozzles and synthetic turf. Like the DWP, you have to have a rebate reservation. For more information, consult www.bewaterwise.com/rebates03.html or call 1-888-376-3314.

Finally, there is advice available on drought-tolerant plant selection from the MWD at www.bewaterwise.com/ww_landscaping.html and even a range of courses for both home gardeners and landscape professionals offered both online and in person. For more information, go to www.bewaterwise.com/training01.html or call Christel Webb at 213-217-6633. And if all else fails, we can always call the city's information line: 311.

Information from www.ladwp.com and www.bewaterwise.com was used for this article.

Real Estate Update: Property Tax Reassessment Scams

By Andy Comins

Does the letter pictured here look familiar? Well, continue because we have information that you'll want to read...

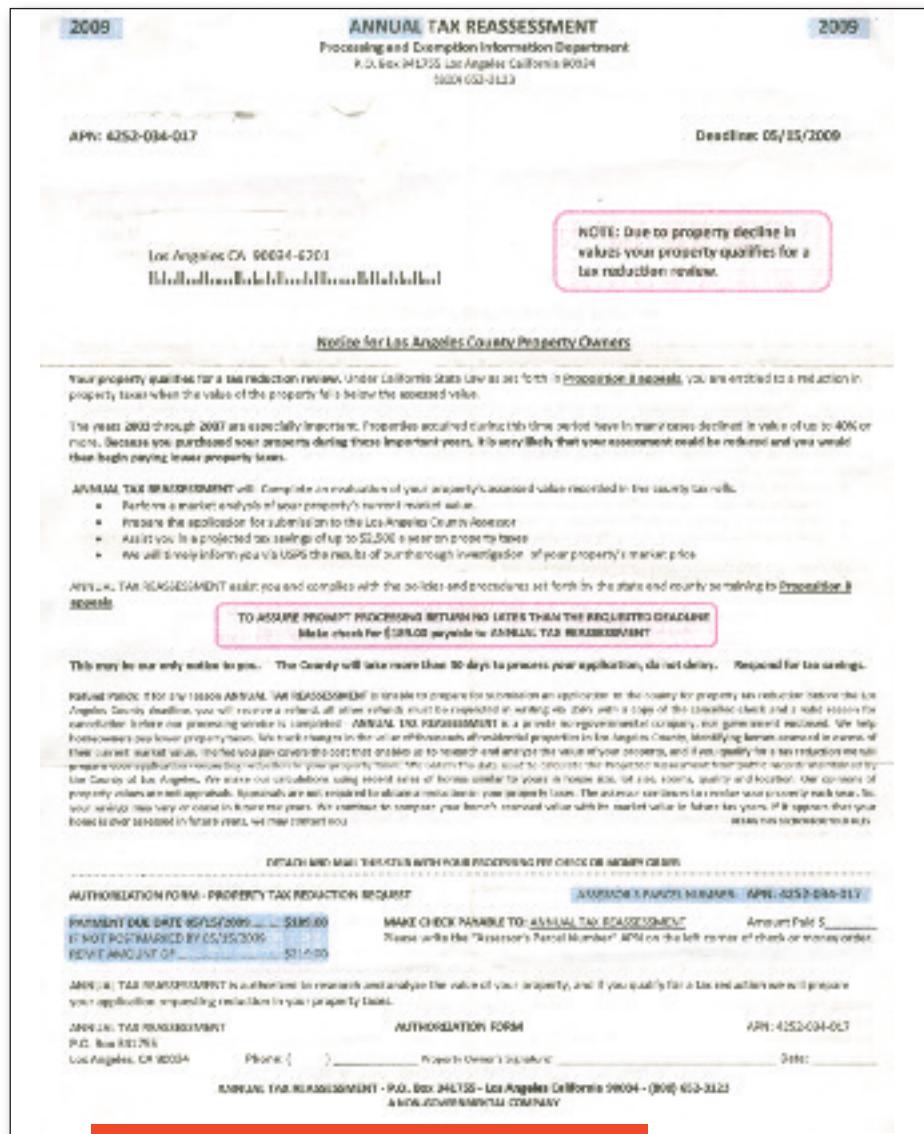
As has been widely reported, the property values of single-family homes throughout most of the State have been declining. While the declines in Los Angeles County have not been as dramatic as those in other parts of the State, property values have dropped in most areas of Los Angeles County.

How does this impact your property taxes? In 1978, California voters passed Proposition 8, a constitutional amendment that allows a temporary reduction in assessed value when a property suffers a "decline-in-value." A decline-in-value occurs when the current market value of your property is less than the assessed value as of January 1. The assessed value is the value shown on your most recent property tax bill.

Typically, an application is required to initiate a review of your property's value by the Assessor. However, in 2008 the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office did a proactive review of those single-family homes and condominiums that were purchased between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2007. As a result, 318,000 properties were reviewed, resulting in lower assessments on 128,000 homes and condos. The average reduction in assessed value was about \$73,000, amounting to an average property tax savings of \$750. With the market still declining, the Assessor's office

has initiated a further review in 2009. The number of properties in this review may approach 500,000 homes that sold between July 2003 and June 2008. In some areas, earlier purchases will be looked at. Since April 1st, owners have been able to check at the Los Angeles County Assessor's website (<http://assessor.lacounty.gov>) to see if their home is part of the review.

This review will be completed by June, 2009 and property owners whose properties were included in the review will be notified. While Decline-In-Value



BEWARE!
Pretending to look like
an official government form.

applications are accepted from January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009, if you purchased a house in 2003 or later, the Assessor's office urges homeowners to wait to submit their applications until July, when results of the proactive review are known.

Now, back to the key point. Various private companies are sending “fishy” mailings like the one pictured here to property owners throughout LA County offering their services to pursue a reduction in their property taxes. These companies may charge hundreds of dollars to file for a reduction in value on behalf of the property owner. Some companies are even imposing late fees if the application is received after an arbitrary deadline. Be aware that solicitations from private companies offering to pursue a reduction in property taxes must clearly indicate that they are NOT a government agency and that their services are NOT approved or endorsed by any government agency. Failure to provide such notice is a violation of California law. If you or someone you know receives an illegal solicitation, please contact the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer Affairs by phone at 800-973-3370 or by visit their website; <http://dca.lacounty.gov>.

There is no reason to pay for a review that will be done for free!

Information from <http://assessor.lacounty.gov> was used for this article.

Transportation Update On The 405 Project And The Expo Line

By Ken Alpern

The economy might be going nowhere, but our transportation efforts are actually moving! Although our State is facing titanic financial struggles, the federal government is increasingly focusing on funding transportation projects. L.A. County’s recent sales tax increase via Proposition R make for a perfect partnership in establishing new infrastructure for our region.

Although the state-hired contractors for the 405 freeway widening project between the 90 and 10 freeways seemed to slow down, it does appear that they will finish the project by the end of summer 2009 to avoid incurring financial penalties. Although crossing National and Sepulveda is a dreadful obstacle, progress on the widening project is evident. The nearby construction of the DWP Substation on National and Bentley—and all along National—is also moving forward.

The final portion of the 405 HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) Lane/Widening project is the northbound HOV lane between the 10 and 101 freeways. Despite the problems in Sacramento, Los Angeles County’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) took a slight gamble by fronting the local funding for that project to ensure a federal funding match. Initial designs and construction north of the 10 freeway will begin in late 2010 and in 2011.

With regard to mass transit, the Expo Line Westside

Phase Draft EIR (Environmental Impact Report) (Phase 2) was completed with the Expo Line Construction Authority Board favoring the Exposition Rail Right of Way (ROW) route that passes through Rancho Park and skirts Cheviot Hills, instead of the alternative route along Venice and Sepulveda Blvds. In Santa Monica the route will be on Colorado and not Olympic Blvd. A Final EIR that addresses issues such as traffic mitigation, environmental mitigation and the need to possibly elevate or trench the line across critical north-south thoroughfares such as Overland, Westwood, Sepulveda, Barrington and Centinela will be voted upon in the fall.

The WVCA Board has and will continue to weigh in on issues such as traffic, safety and environmental mitigations, and individual input is also encouraged by both the WVCA Board and the Exposition Construction Authority. The future Exposition Line will have stations near us at Palms/National, Exposition/Westwood, Exposition/Sepulveda and Olympic/Bundy. It is anticipated that construction efforts can begin as early as 2010, and it is almost certain that it will proceed on the ROW route.

Freeing The Tree

By Roberta Schiller

Since 2006, a group of us have been working with Councilmember Jack Weiss’ office (Council District 5), the DWP and other City departments to “free” the Moreton Bay Fig tree (at Military and National) from the overhead wires that are running through its canopy. Finally we are seeing the successful conclusion to this effort. We have heard from Weiss’ Field Deputy, Mark Davis, that “the conduits are in and the overhead removal will be taken care of right after the DWP Substation is energized, probably after Summer 2009.”

There are many people to thank for their continued efforts to encourage the DWP to protect this City of Los Angeles Historical Landmark (so designated in 1964). Councilmember Jack Weiss and staff members Katherine Hennigan and Mark Davis have continued to work with the DWP on our behalf. The Supervisor of this DWP project, Marvin Moon, deserves our appreciation. But the other community members who came together with one voice really deserve our greatest thanks—Annette Mercer (Westwood Gardens Civic Association), Terri Tippit (West of Westwood), Rob Kadota (Mar Vista Community Council), Steve Spector (Westside Neighborhood Council) and Jim Lamm (St. John’s Church).

I was the Area 1 Director of the Mar Vista Community Council and Board Member of the Westside Village Civic Association when we started down this path and I truly thank everyone who has shown their love and support of this neighborhood landmark.

Westside Village Civic Association – www.westsidevillage.org

The Joys And Pitfalls Of Wildlife In Westside Village

By Michelle Moyer

One bright and sunny day about three months ago, I was cleaning the mirror in my master bathroom when I heard the sounds of scratching and digging directly behind me. After scrambling atop the counter—certain that some small, furry creature was about to climb up my pant leg – I stopped to listen more closely and realized that these sounds were coming from underneath my bathtub. I knew immediately that an animal was underneath my house, burrowing around for reasons I didn't know and didn't want to think about. I made a conscious decision then and there to pretend that it was no big deal, and that whatever it was would go away soon after it had its fun.

The scratching and digging sounds didn't abate, however. They continued for over a week. Then, while I was in the bathroom getting dressed for work, I heard a series of tiny squeaks that made me stop in my tracks. I realized immediately that whatever was underneath my bathtub had given birth to a litter of... something. I was initially revolted, because the first image to enter my mind was that of a dozen baby rats, growing up and each giving birth to another dozen baby rats, with the cycle continuing until my home was utterly overrun, like that scene in "Ratatouille"; you know the one...

It was then and there that I decided I could no longer ignore what was happening. My husband, John and I agreed that we needed to call someone to remove the animals—whatever they were—from underneath our house. We agreed, however, that we did not want traps set, because we had no interest in harming a mother and her newborn babies. We were able to locate a company that helped us identify the animals as raccoons (based on the sounds the animals were making). A company representative told us that, per standard procedure, he would lure the mother into a small cage using food as bait; and once she was trapped, he would climb underneath the house, remove the nest, and relocate the entire raccoon family to a rural area nearby.

The trap meant for Mother Raccoon was placed in our backyard near an opening that led underneath the house. It remained there for six days, consistently empty, and with the food regularly and totally consumed. Mother Raccoon was smart. She'd obviously dealt with these devices before, and she knew how to work them. She ate well that week, believe me.

Ironically, as she continued to avoid the trap for six days, I grew more and more fond of both her and her children. So did my husband, and even my children once I convinced them that no monsters were lurking under the bathroom tiles. I heard Mother Raccoon and her babies wake up every morning as I sauntered

into the bathroom at daybreak to start my day. I began leaning down near the bathtub once I'd turned on the light, whispering good morning to them, and assuring them that it was ok—it was just me. As time wore on, I secretly began hoping that we wouldn't trap Mother Raccoon; and that the family would leave our humble abode when they were ready. Within a few days, they did; and within hours, our neighbors reported seeing a family of raccoons tooling contentedly around the neighborhood.

As sweet as the experience ended up being, we learned a couple of important lessons. To begin with, we learned that animals can cause serious damage to a home. We hadn't fully secured crawl spaces and other vents around the exterior of our home; so it was very easy for animals to take up residence underneath or within the walls or attic of our home. (We'd heard them before; they'd just never stayed so long!) We learned that, among other things, these animals burrow, dig, scrape and chew, and in the process, can interfere with items such as plumbing, wiring, and heating and air conditioning systems. We also learned that animals can become extremely aggressive when protecting their nests and newborns if they feel threatened. We're fortunate that our children didn't wander into the vicinity of the nest that Mother Raccoon guarded so closely.

Without a doubt, one of the best things about living in Westside Village is the natural environment, and the amazing array of wildlife with which we live side-by-side, including (but certainly not limited to) squirrels, possums, raccoons, and mice. (Yes, I know I'm leaving out the rats; I haven't yet become open-minded enough to consider them a blessing). That said, the bottom line is that it's important that your home not become a magnet for them; and that if you notice animals taking up residence (or sense that they're thinking about it), you address the situation by making necessary repairs, and calling a professional to help, if necessary.

Money Matters

Attached to this newsletter is another dues payment slip and return envelope. If you mislaid the first dues notice, or didn't get around to sending in your dues, you have a second chance to contribute to the WVCA.

To those of you who already sent in their dues, and especially those who gave an extra donation, we sincerely thank you.

A special congratulations goes to Block Captain Jeanne Parker, whose efforts resulted in not only the largest number of paid members, but also the largest amount of donations. Well done, Jeanne!

Volunteers Urgently Needed For Clover Avenue Elementary School's "Wonder Of Reading" Program.

Do you have an hour a week to spare to help a child at Clover Avenue School who is struggling with reading? Clover is urgently looking for neighborhood volunteers to become a partner in the WONDER OF READING program. This inspiring program trains volunteers to assist children who are having difficulty with reading. Volunteers are then matched with Clover students and they spend just one hour a week reading together. It is wonderfully enriching for both the reading partner and the child. Clover's teachers love the WONDER OF READING program and will tell you it works. Parents agree. But if the school doesn't find more local volunteers then the program will be lost and some of Clover's students will continue to struggle. Please get in touch and help us to save this incredible program.

For more information you can call Gail at 310-475-6549 or go to www.wonderofreading.com.

Calendar Of Events

Every Sunday – Mar Vista Farmer's Market
9 am – 2 PM Grand View Blvd. at Venice

September Newsletter – Article submissions must be received by August 1. Please send them to WestsideVillageBoard@yahoo.com.

October 10 – 6th Annual Fall Festival



MVCC Board Meetings
Second Tuesday of every month
Mar Vista Rec Center
11430 Woodbine
June 9 at 7 PM
July 14 at 7 PM
...

Visit us weekly at the
Mar Vista Farmers' Market
EVERY SUNDAY
9 AM – 2 PM
Corner of Venice & Grand View

WVCA is served by MVCC Zone 1 Director
Babak Nahid, babak@marvista.org.
Sign up to receive email announcements at
www.MarVista.org

Neighborhood Watch Update

We've had five Home Burglaries and one Grand Theft Auto reported in Westside Village so far in 2009. Plus, we're happy to say that we've had several lost pets

reunited with their owners. We are hopeful that our crime stats will continue to go down, but we must stay vigilant to lock our doors and windows

when we leave our houses, secure our cars and keep valuables out of sight and watch out for each other. Thanks to our Neighborhood Watch Coordinators David Graue and Guita Farin for helping make Westside Village safe. If you have any questions regarding the Neighborhood Watch program, please don't hesitate to email WestsideVillageWatch@gmail.com or contact your block captain. We wish everyone a happy and safe summer.



Please let us know what you think.

If you wish to contribute to News and Views, please email us at westsidevillageboard@yahoo.com. Visit us at www.westsidevillage.org

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Greg Severson

2009 Annual Meeting

Photographs by Andy Comins



Homeowners participating at our 2009 Annual Meeting.



Los Angeles Police Senior Lead Officer, Juan Ceja



Councilmember Bill Rosendahl

Save the Date
Fall Festival
Saturday
October 10, 2009

