



Westdale VILLAGER

✦ QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION ✦ FALL 2023 ✦



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

NATURE IS HOME

• Jerry Hornof

Our 2023 theme is *Westdale - Homeward Bound*. This considers our home as both the physical structure that offers protection from the elements and facilitates daily activities and home as a supporting and loving space and community. Recently I visited the Living in a Wildlife Corridor exhibit at the Boddy House at Descanso Gardens. This exhibit highlights Descanso Gardens' place in the Hahamongna to Tujunga Wildlife Corridor, a series of passageways being established for wildlife to safely travel between the San Gabriel Mountains and the isolated open space of the San Rafael Hills, Verdugo Mountains and Griffith Park. The quote "Nature is not a place to visit, it is home" by Gary Snyder from *The Practice of the Wild* captured my attention. Nature is home to ourselves as well as the numerous animals and flora that we connect with and are part of our community. Our Villager naturalist M. Umar highlights these connections in her articles.

The corridor exhibit motivated me to research the Liberty Canyon Wildlife Crossing (also referred to as the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing). It will span eight lanes of the 101 Freeway connecting the Simi Hills and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. "As the largest wildlife crossing of its kind in the world, it will provide lifesaving habitat connectivity to a broad array of animals for decades to come," Wade Crowfoot, California secretary for



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natural resources, said in a news release from the National Wildlife Federation. The project was a collaboration of Caltrans, the National Park Service, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains, and the National Wildlife Federation. Philanthropist Wallis Annenberg and The Annenberg Foundation issued a \$25 million challenge grant to help fund the project, and it is expected to be finished in 2025.

During the peak of the pandemic many of us found walking outdoors to be a way to get exercise and still be safe. My wife and I used these walks to explore neighborhoods and nearby open spaces. As we think about nature as our home, I thought I would highlight four of our favorite open space walking areas located within 30 minutes of Westdale. The first is Will Rodgers State Historical Park off Sunset Boulevard in the Pacific Palisades. Besides Will Rodger’s historic home and stable, the Inspiration Point trail affords a scenic 2.2 mile loop with opportunities to see many plants and animals. The second is Bluff Creek Trail above Playa Vista that traverses the hillside below Loyola Marymount University. There is easily accessible parking on Centinela Avenue just south of Jefferson Boulevard. The final two areas are excellent daytime hikes since they afford abundant shade. The Franklin Canyon Park, Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority is accessible off of Coldwater Canyon Drive and Beverly Drive in Beverly Hills. We usually park in the lot near the Franklin Canyon Ranch (south end) and hike north around the lake. The walk is well shaded and about 2 miles in length. The final area is the Sullivan Canyon Trail located off Queensferry Road above Westridge Road and Mandeville Canyon Road. Having hiked this trail before and after last year’s rains, it is amazing to see the changes that the torrent of water in the canyon created. Hope you enjoy exploring these natural areas.

The Westdale Homeowners Association Block Party is back in the neighborhood. Please plan on joining us for the 2023 Westdale Homeowners Association Annual Block Party on Saturday, October 7th. This year's location will be on Colby Avenue. Activities include food (you are welcome to add your own favorite potluck item or dessert), visits by community leaders, LAPD & LAFD, bounce house and more. Looking forward to seeing everyone. Also, our neighbors on Purdue Avenue between Stanwood Drive and Kingsland Street are again organizing The Boo on Purdue, a fun Halloween event (October 31st). The street will be closed to car traffic with planned activities occurring between 6pm and 8pm. Families are invited to show off their costumes and enjoy trick or treating in a fun and safe environment.

In closing, please participate and engage in making our neighborhood a home that is welcoming, safe, and supportive of each other.



CRIME AND SAFETY REPORT



•David Konell

First and foremost, many thanks to Leah Oye for her years of dedication and enthusiasm as our LAPD Community Representative. Although I’m only an interim representative (we’re relocating to my wife’s hometown next year) I’ll do my best to keep things moving along and provide a channel of communication between our Westdale neighborhood and the Pacific Division of LAPD.

Speaking of communication, by the time this Villager is published, there will have been a Block Captain meeting with LAPD on August 23rd. I’ll be taking notes so that I may relay any pertinent information in the following Villager, and of course also relay information to our Block Captains via an email blast.

What I can report on is the success of the 2023 NNO (National Night Out) sponsored by LAPD on August 1st. This is an evening when all police departments nationwide hold an event for the community. The LAPD Pacific Division leadership along with the Senior Lead Officers and representatives from local organizations were present. There was free food and entertainment. I attended the event with my two daughters, and we had a great time meeting with many of our first responders in addition to our Senior Lead, Officer Villery. If you haven’t been to one of these events, I highly encourage you to do so. You may even win a raffle prize!

Getting down to business, unfortunately I don’t have good news regarding crime in our neighborhood:

Here are some crime stats for our basic car 14A25:

Our burglaries are up 67%
(we currently stand at 141 burglaries for 2023)
Burglaries from motor vehicles are up 25.5%
Robberies are up 23.1%

Total Property crimes are up 11.0%
Total Part One crimes are up 12.0%

Although garage burglaries have been hot, criminals are still smashing rear sliding doors or prying/smashing windows. There are still people leaving windows and doors unlocked as well.

Catalytic converter thefts are still at a high with Toyota Prius's being the most targeted vehicles. SUVs and pick-up trucks are also popular amongst burglars due to them being elevated and easy to go underneath to remove the converters.

We’ve had many extremely suspicious “solicitors” ring our doorbell recently. Most don’t carry any form of identification, and one was in plainclothes carrying nothing but a water bottle offering “window services.” He would pretend to be counting windows while he waited to see if someone would answer the door (I watched him while walking our dog). If you see activity like this, please call the non-emergency crime number and report it so that the police can stop and question these individuals. You may also want to notify your neighbors if possible. If they jump a fence, break a window, or climb through an open window, then it’s time to call 911.

Abandoned vehicles attract crime. Because only a few of our streets have restricted parking, many vehicles are abandoned here for various reasons. Some are dumped here by towing companies that have no more space in their storage lots. These are usually in the vicinity of Butler and National. Some of the vehicles are stolen, and many use our neighborhood as long-term free storage or as an alternative to long term parking at LAX. Kingsland and Stanwood seem to be the preferred streets for long-term storage and UCLA overflow. Abandoned vehicles can be reported using the lacity-parking.org website or by calling 1-800-ABANDON (1-800-222-6366).

We all need to stay very aware of our surroundings these days. A quick message to your immediate neighbors regarding suspicious activity can spread the word rapidly and possibly prevent someone from becoming a victim. Another suggestion is to let your neighbors know when you are out of town so they can pick up any packages, deliveries and fliers left on your doorstep. A home with a pile of boxes and papers at the front door is a welcome mat for thieves and burglars.

On a happier note, Santa’s Sleigh is looking like it’s coming together, and our Pacific Division is coordinating with neighbors who have graciously offered to host. So far, we have two locations: 3200 block of Granville, and 3200 block of Purdue. No dates set yet, and I know this is early notice, but sometimes our Villager doesn’t get out on time in December due to the mad rush of massive holiday mailings at the post office. Keep an eye open for signs around the neighborhood in the days prior.

For non-emergency advice, contact our SLO (Senior Lead Officer) Karwon Villery (310) 622-3973, 38717@lapd.online

- Non-emergency crime (877) ASK-LAPD, (877) 275-5873



MAR VISTA SCHOOL NEWS

•Andrea Ebert Lowerre

Welcome back to school to all our Mar Vista Elementary Families! Our school year is underway and our families have been busy getting to know their teachers, meeting new faces and signing up for volunteer opportunities. We’ve kicked off our MVSEG (parent-run booster club) and PTA meetings, held our annual First Friday Picnic, and are planning lots of fun activities for the year ahead.

With so many MV Families and Alumni in our neighborhood, I want to share some information on how you can help to support Mar Vista Elementary. Did you know that MVE ranks in the top 2% of elementary schools in California and 8th among 487 ranked elementary schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District with a Great School score 9/10? Not only is our school a source of pride for our neighborhood, but property values continue to thrive with interest from young families that want to send their children to MVE. As district funding decreases for our school, we are reliant on support from our current families and from our broader community that benefit from MVE's achievements. Please consider supporting MVE so we can continue to offer programs like science, art, music, computer, PE, Spanish, and teachers' aides. We also have our New Family Outreach events, child advocacy support, Heritage Week celebration and Staff Appreciation events (and more!). Here's how you can help:

Make a donation — support our Friends of Mar Vista campaign by making a donation and supporting programs that enrich our

MAKE A DONATION

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Include Annual Giving in notes

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FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

students' educational experience. Even the smallest donation makes a difference. Scan the QR codes below to contribute.

Attend Tasty Tuesday — support local businesses AND Mar Vista Elementary by attending one of our Tasty Tuesday restaurant nights. Scan the QR code below to follow our PTA and Booster Club on social media and learn about community events.

Attend the Big Boo Festival — our annual Halloween carnival is fun for the whole community. Mark your calendar for October 28th and come join us for games, crafts, delicious treats and our haunted house!

Become a MVE Sponsor — consider sponsoring the Big Boo, our Annual Auction Gala or become one of our Annual Sponsors. Reach out to MVSEGsponsors@gmail.com for more information.



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I want to fix the home up, making it as nice as possible and then reevaluate the situation.

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I would come up with the money to buy everyone's share in the house, if we can agree on a price.

KEEP IT AS A FAMILY TIMESHARE
I think we should keep the house as a family timeshare for us and see how that works out.



COMPASS

WANTED

Are you interested in getting more involved in the neighborhood? We need a new advertising manager for the Villager, and we need a new treasurer.

Ina Lee is retiring after many years of service. The job takes only a few hours each quarter to contact the advertisers for their ads and to collect their checks. Mostly the new advertisers approach us, but some low key discussions with potential local vendors is a plus. If you are interested, contact Margie Templeton at mpt@rwtia.com or 310-390-4507.

Jay Swerdlow would also like to retire after his years of service. The treasurer job involves a relatively few hours a quarter and requires a basic understanding of reconciling bank accounts, renewing our insurance coverage and paying a handful of invoices. Checks that come in for dues and ads need to be deposited. If you are interested, contact Jay Swerdlow at jay.swerdlow@gmail.com or 310-398-9744.

NATURE REPORT: FUN FUNGI

•M.umar

As the days get shorter, mushrooms start popping up around Westdale. You've probably seen them, sprouting from lawns and then disappearing days later. Other mushrooms stay attached to trees for months afterward. Lots of them look strange, like orbs or tentacles. Many are poisonous. There's something inherently mysterious about them.

So, what are mushrooms? All are part of the fungus kingdom. While all mushrooms are fungi, not all fungi are mushrooms. Other members of this kingdom are molds, mildew, and yeast. All of them reproduce through little spores, and most of them decompose dead matter. Some are complex, like mushrooms. Others have just one cell.

When we think of mushrooms, we don't usually think of the whole organism. Instead, we picture the fruiting body- the part that grows aboveground. A lot of fruiting bodies have the archetypal "mushroom" structure- a base, a stem, and a cap with gills. But plenty of them come in diverse shapes and colors; from rubbery lumps to fan-shaped parasites to clusters that can glow in the dark. No matter how fancy, a fruiting body's purpose stays the same- to spread spores, making more mushrooms.

A mushroom's actual body is the mycelium, an underground network made of little white threads called hyphae. Although it sounds like a root system (it also absorbs nutrients), the mycelium is the actual "mushroom." It waits until rain to grow the fruit, and it gets nutrients from decaying matter. That's why autumn is so often associated with mushrooms.

This fall, you can try to spot some mushrooms



yourself. One of them is the Western hardwood sulphur shelf, a parasitic mushroom that grows from the side of trees. It resembles the more well-known chicken-of-the-woods, with its slablike, wavy ochre fruiting bodies. Although it is technically edible, it's not recommended and can cause stomach upsets. The sulphur shelf gets its food from living trees, and it causes brown rot on their trunks. Its hosts include oak and eucalyptus. In Westdale, sulphur shelves are easiest to spot around the Mar Vista Recreation Center. At the Woodbine and McLaughlin corner, these fungi tend to grow from the trees. Their colors often have a striking resemblance to candy corn.

Another common mushroom is the green-spored parasol. True to its name, it has the classic umbrella shape. Underneath its scaly whitish cap, its gills disperse spores. Gills are an important way of figuring out which mushroom is which (the sulphur shelf doesn't have them, instead using tubelike pores.) The green-spored parasol is unique because its spores are olive green. Although it's fairly big and common, eating it is a terrible idea. It's very poisonous, causing severe

vomiting and diarrhea. In some cases, that could land you in a hospital. The mushroom is interesting to look at, though.

Unless you know exactly what species they are, eating wild mushrooms is a bad idea. Many species look similar (the green-spored parasol has often been confused with more benign, edible mushrooms). Any mistakes can be dangerous, as many cause vomiting, headaches, or an upset stomach. Others are even worse, though they're not common in Westdale. If you find mushrooms growing in your lawn, don't eat them unless you're a skilled mushroom hunter.

Besides fungi, you can also spot the aptly named dog vomit slime mold, which might need an article thanks to how weird it is. If you're not particularly interested in that, autumn is also monarch butterfly season. There won't be giant groups of them, but they're still easy to find. Westdale has something for everyone.

Keep looking for nature this fall!!

**COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO
REAL ESTATE CONSIDERATIONS
WHEN SPOUSES DIVORCE**

•Ron Wynn

Divorce brings forth complex challenges, none more intricate than splitting property and evaluating real estate assets. This process demands a thorough understanding of numerous variables to ensure a fair and equitable division. In this comprehensive guide, we will explore the intricate realm of property division in divorce, addressing key concerns and potential pitfalls, while also detailing the process of obtaining accurate asset values.

1. Family Residence: Balancing Emotional and Financial Considerations When one spouse values owning the family residence more than other assets, careful analysis is required. Owning 100% of the home can result in being real estate rich and cash poor, placing the responsibility of maintenance and property taxes on a single individual. Couples must evaluate the financial feasibility of this arrangement.

2. Cash Buyouts and Financial Fluidity Opting for a cash buyout offers financial liquidity and mobility, enabling a spouse to adapt quickly to new circumstances. While this flexibility is advantageous, it's important to weigh the long-term potential of retained real estate assets against the immediate benefits of liquidity.

3. Navigating the Capital Gains Maze Anticipating capital gains on future real estate sales is crucial. Couples must decide whether these gains will be shared, impacting the overall divorce settlement. Addressing this issue proactively can prevent future disputes and ensure a smoother transition when the property is eventually sold.

4. Tactical Property Ownership for Children's Stability Divorcing parents might consider retaining the family residence until a specified age or life milestone, ensuring stability for the children. However, this strategy requires meticulous planning to facilitate a seamless transition when the property is eventually sold.

5. Strategic Timing for Divorce The timing of separation can significantly impact the financial outcome. Waiting until retirement or another life milestone can provide financial security and harmony during the transition. Effective communication and shared goals are crucial for a successful arrangement.

6. Business Ownership Trade-offs In certain scenarios, one spouse might exchange business ownership for the primary residence. This trade-off necessitates careful valuation of both assets and consideration of long-term financial implications.

7. Property Tax Reassessment in California In cases where one spouse buys out the other in California, property tax reassessment may or may not occur. Familiarity with local regulations and professional advice is essential to avoid unexpected financial burdens.

8. Mortgage Liability and Loan Qualification Divorce does not automatically absolve both parties of mortgage liability. Even after a buyout, both spouses may still be liable for the mortgage, affecting the ability to secure new loans. Couples must consider this potential obstacle when making decisions.

9. The Art of Accurate Asset Valuation Accurately assessing the value of assets, including the primary residence, is paramount. This process involves obtaining professional appraisals, which aim to provide an objective estimate. However, there can be variations of up to 20% between appraisals due to different methods and data used.

10. Factors Influencing Appraisal Variability Appraisals involve complex considerations, including adjustments for positive and negative aspects. Factors like proximity to a busy street, airplane noise, school yards, deferred maintenance, or floor plan issues can influence adjustments differently. The disparity in how appraisers perceive these adjustments can lead to significant valuation differences.

11. Guarding Against Biased Appraisals Appraisers can be influenced by external factors, leading to a skewed valuation. Spouses may attempt to sway an appraiser's assessment by providing information that either inflates or deflates the property's value. It's crucial to ensure the integrity of the appraisal process and seek unbiased professionals.

In the intricate landscape of property division during divorce, every consideration matters. As spouses venture on separate paths, it's imperative to have a knowledgeable and empathetic guide by your side. I, Ron Wynn, specialize in assisting couples facing the challenges of parting ways, especially in the context of divorce. While I cannot provide specific legal or tax advice, I offer a wealth of experience and resources to address concerns, questions, and considerations that often leave individuals feeling vulnerable.

With years of harmonious collaboration, I understand the emotional and financial complexity that accompanies such life-changing decisions. My commitment to your well-being goes beyond transactions – it's about caring and going the extra mile to ensure your interests are safeguarded. You don't have to navigate this journey alone. Reach out to me, Ron Wynn, at (310) 963-9944. I genuinely care about you, even when you're not in the process of selling. Let me be your advocate and partner as you navigate these important transitions.



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MAR VISTA PARK REPORT

• Jerry Hornof

In the president's message I talked about "nature is home". Enjoying nature can involve a walk at Mar Vista Park. A walk around the park perimeter is approximately 8/10 of a mile. Walking is a great way to improve or maintain your overall health. Just 30 minutes every day can increase cardiovascular fitness, strengthen bones, reduce excess body fat, and boost muscle power and endurance. It can also reduce your risk of developing conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers. Unlike some other forms of exercise, walking is free and doesn't require any special equipment or training.

As reported in the summer edition, the Department of Recreation and Parks' Municipal Recreation (MRP) Funds for Mar Vista Recreation Center (basically the operating revenue for the park) is being successfully rebuilt after the loss of funds due to the pandemic and reduced programming over the last few years. The challenge continues to be staffing. Currently MVRC has only two fulltime staff: Keith Rice (Park Director) and William Rivas (working at MVRC to assist with programs during the summer). The part-time staff have been very dedicated. Currently the LA Recreation and Parks (RAP) has not approved fulltime permanent hires beyond the two positions. In the current labor market this has resulted in a difficult situation attracting new staff and keeping existing staff. Keith Rice is working to maintain the needed staffing. There is an emergency opening for the second fulltime staff position which Keith is trying to fill. The salary for the position is not very competitive for the Los Angeles labor market especially since it requires a four year college degree for eligibility. Keith has been able to hire 7 part-time staff (restricted to 20 hours/week). The positions were: Tennis Instructor (2); program staff (3); and office staff (2).

The Mar Vista Recreation Center (MVRC) pool opened on June 18th. Discussions at the Park Advisory Board (PAB) meeting noted how much the pool is a wasted resource given the very short season it is open. There is a tremendous demand for pools in the area, and it would be outstanding if the MVRC pool could be refurbished, heated, and available year-round. Although LA city pools are managed by the LA RAP Aquatics Division, the MVRC Park Director has significant input. The PAB continues to investigate how to improve and better use this resource.

The new batting cage at MVRC is ready for use, and the park has already received rental requests from Venice HS, Windward, and the North Venice Little League. The cage, located near the tennis courts, will be rented for \$35/hour. Windward School has generously donated an electronic pitching machine to the park for use in the cage.

Please enjoy the park and its mission to provide and support the vital and enjoyable recreational opportunities for our community.

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And on the seventh trip to the fridge,
God found half a sandwich he'd missed
all the other times, and it was good.



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