

THE OAKS

Fall 2009



Newsletter of the
Oaks Homeowners Association

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT The Temporary Ordinance Becomes a Permanent One...

The goal of containing out-of-scale development in The Oaks enters a very important phase this month as the city's Planning Department holds two events intended to solicit residents' opinions and consolidate community support for the new permanent regulations on development now taking shape. On October 7th, Planners hosted a Public Workshop at the American Film Institute (see our report of that meeting on page 4) to present the new draft regulations to neighbors and hear comments, questions and ideas for improvements. On Wednesday October 28th, the Planning Department will host a second, more formal gathering, also at the AFI – an open house where residents can pick up handouts and maps explaining the new regulations, followed by a Public Hearing at which a Hearing Officer will take public testimony (oral statements as well as written communications) about the draft "D" Development Limitations for the Oaks Hillside Neighborhood.

The two meetings this month are the culmination of several years' work by the Planning Department which initially responded (several years ago) to concerns voiced by many residents of The Oaks about new construction of large homes. These homes – usually built by developers – were larger than the homes around them, out-of-character with their neighborhood, and oversized for the lots on which they were built. Based on these early meetings with residents of The Oaks, the Planning Department designed an Interim Control Ordinance (ICO), a temporary regulation that put a halt to any new construction that exceeded certain maximums of floor area ratio (FAR, the ratio

of a home's interior square footage to its lot size). These maximums were based on a statistical survey of all the existing homes in The Oaks.

That ICO is set to expire in May of 2010 and the Planning Department has created a draft of several simple permanent regulations that attempt, in a similar way, to limit the construction of homes that are out of scale to the lots they are to be built on. On any lot, no matter how small, one can build a 1,400 square foot house. Then from that starting point, the larger the lot, the larger the home that can be built.

If you'd like to read the draft of the new permanent regulations, you can access them on the Oaks Homeowners Association's website, **OaksHome.org**, or you can attend the meeting on the 28th and pick up a copy.

In the end, the new regulations will preserve the character of The Oaks as all of us who live here know it and have come to appreciate it.

And a big part of the character of The Oaks are our two traditional (and much anticipated) holiday events. We hope to see all of our Oaks friends on the Halloween Walk this year. We've worked with the city's Department of Transportation to get approval to close Park Oak Drive from Spreading Oak to Spring Oak to all cars from 5:30 to 8:30 to make the Walk safer and more fun for all the little kids in costume and their parents. And we also hope to see you at The Oaks Holiday Party on Sunday, December 13th from 5:30 to 8:00 (it's at my house as it happens).

Happy Fall!

Bob Young
President

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VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT
www.oakshome.org

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE OAKS HOLIDAY PARTY!

SUNDAY DECEMBER 13, 2009

5:30 pm to 8:30 pm

at the home of
Bob and Joan Young
2419 Park Oak Drive

SCHEDULE

DWP Light Festival in Griffith Park

Vehicle Free Nights:

Fri., Dec. 4 - Thurs., Dec. 17
5pm - 10pm

Parking will be at the zoo

Traditional Festival Route

(drive-through)

Fri., Dec. 18 -

Wed., Dec. 30

5pm - 10pm

Griffith Park Welcomes Dogs...On Leash By Gerry Hans

Our Park Rangers and the Office of Public Safety are the two authorities that patrol Griffith Park. As busy as they are with their many responsibilities, they have recently ramped up enforcement of municipal law pertaining to off-leash dogs, especially in our nearby Bronson Canyon Park and Brush Canyon above. Some may think there are more important issues to address in the Park. However, there are convincing reasons why keeping dogs leashed is so important, and educational outreach is slated to increase in the near future along with enforcement.

Protect habitat and Park resources

Dog owners are fortunate that their “best friends” are allowed in our City parks, even on-leash, when you consider the fact that many State and Federal Parks place much greater restrictions on dogs due to their impacts on wildlife. A dog’s presence and its lingering scent can disturb nature’s balance for mammals such as our Park’s bobcats, foxes, raccoons and deer. Many dog breeds have been intentionally bred for “bird flushing” behavior, so their presence may naturally disturb nesting sites of the gorgeous California quail species, for example, in Griffith Park. In addition, when a dog is off-leash, there is less chance that droppings will be picked up (City code for that, too). Dog waste presents problems for our watershed (both the LA River and the Pacific Ocean) not only in regards to pollution, but also disease transmission. Veterinarians tell us that, even before dog waste is washed down our streams, the disease and parasites it carries may be passed on to wildlife since pets are immunized while wildlife are not!

Safety and enjoyment

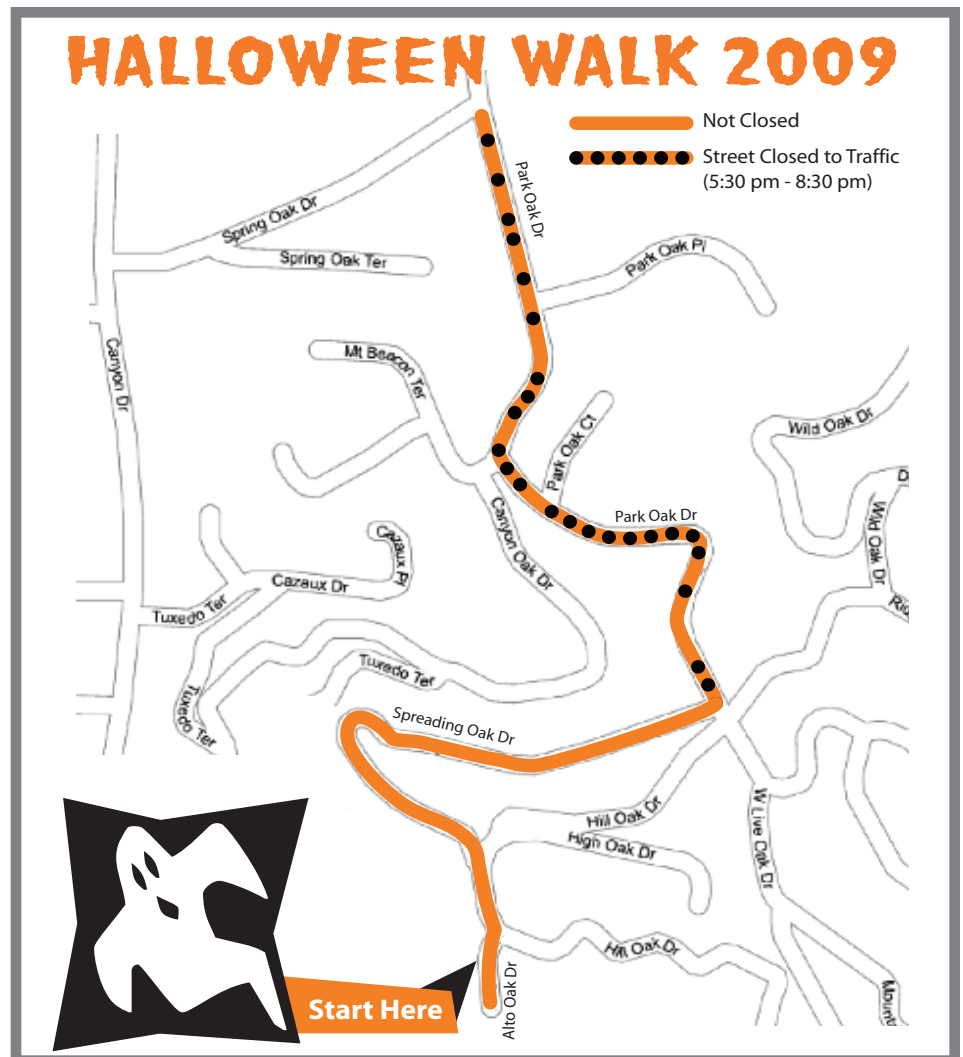
A family with young children should not have to worry about dogs intimidating them (whether through their over-friendliness or aggression) while in Bronson Canyon Park or strolling the trails above. Runners in the Park occasionally are tripped and injured by off-leash dogs, most commonly by active little dogs that are otherwise totally harmless. Most obvious is the inherent danger any dog may impose upon equestrians and their horses. A dog’s natural instinct when encountering other animals cannot always be predicted and riders can be thrown off horses as a result.

Protect your dog and yourself

Every year dogs are bitten by rattlesnakes in Griffith Park, often fatally. Ticks, poison oak, and thorny plants pose potential hazards to both your dog and your family. And recently, small dogs have been nabbed by coyotes which are becoming disturbingly habituated to human presence.

Many dog owners regularly travel by car via Canyon Drive to exercise their pets in the Park, and most come from outside The Oaks. It’s really important that we, as responsible dog owners, set a good example and spread the word to others. Let others know that there are areas

specially designated for off-leash exercising of dogs within easy driving distance; but Bronson Canyon Park and Brush Canyon are not suitable for that activity.



Around Griffith Park

By Gerry Hans



Rangers... Endangered in Griffith Park?

As of this writing, our Chief Park Ranger Albert Torres has been given notice of reassignment to a downtown desk job with Recreation and Park's "Emergency Preparedness Group." Torres has been a ranger for almost 30 years. This is not what he wanted and his effectiveness as our Chief Ranger will be sorely missed. We have also learned that nearly half of the remaining Park Rangers will be relegated to "interpretive duties only," while other Rangers will be assigned to patrol and security/patrol duties only. It's as if suddenly the Rangers are being told the things that they can't do, rather than allowing them to do all the things they can. What these changes mean for Griffith Park users and Oaks residents is not clear yet, but we are gravely concerned.

The whole genesis of rangers for our City parks lay in the idea of having generalists in the field who react according to the day-to-day and hour-to-hour needs of the parks and park users. Historically our rangers have nearly always been the first responders to Griffith Park fires. They give first aid, respond to wildlife problems, patrol, direct traffic when there's a traffic-jam, and provide interpretive guidance to park patrons. There is a need for all rangers to have a depth of knowledge and an array of skills so they can respond and perform the multiplicity of tasks that need to be done. Further, the chain of command in directing those tasks needs to be on the same hierarchy so that priorities and effectiveness are optimized. These views have been strongly communicated to City

officials by the Oaks Homeowners Association based upon our longstanding experience and relationship with the Park Rangers.

The changes occurring presently are disturbing enough that Councilmember Tom LaBonge placed the issue on the agenda of a recent meeting of the Arts, Parks, Health and Aging Committee. After significant public comment questioning the new direction of the Department, Councilmember LaBonge decided to continue the agenda item for 30 to 60 days to allow the Recreation and Parks Department to report back about specifics of their ideas for the Park Rangers and the Rangers' current/future roles.

DWP Light Festival This holiday season the DWP Light Festival will include fourteen "Vehicle Free" nights, which is an increase over last year's thirteen. Considering the total event schedule is being reduced by more than a week, it's a happy outcome as a steady trend has been made over three years now, with hopes of having an event completely free of cars someday. Community advocates have pressed DWP to transition the event to a 100% vehicle-free event in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage families to enjoy a stroll in the open air. The vehicle-free nights have been hugely popular, and we don't quite understand the holdout on the car drive-through nights, especially with occasional wait times of 60-90 minutes (with hundreds of car engines idling and exhaust spewing)! See the new schedule and go with the family and neighbors on the vehicle-free nights!

Coyotes The recent problem with coyotes on the north side of the Park is a reminder that feeding coyotes or allowing them any available food source (including fallen fruit, remains from barbeque grills, and accessible bird feeders) encourages behavioral changes. Coyotes are naturally fearful of people, but when we allow coyotes to be at ease in our presence while they satisfy their hunger, that natural fear behavior is altered.

Eight coyotes were euthanized as a result of two people who reported being nipped or bitten, possibly while asleep, in the Park. Nipping is a common behavior among coyotes and is referred to as "feeding aggression". It's the way coyotes say "I want some food" to each other.

As it turns out, Recreation and Parks was not even advised of the extreme action that was taken -- which was under the direction of California Department of Fish and Games utilizing the services of Federal Wildlife agents with rifles -- until after it was over. However, Recreation and Parks has now reacted decisively, announcing a three-point plan to avoid similar occurrences in the future: 1) signs are being erected to warn Park patrons that it is illegal to feed or leave food scraps for wildlife; 2) a *zero tolerance* policy has been enacted with patrols to issue citations to violators; and 3) a program to use paint-ball guns is being adopted to discourage coyotes seen as too habituated to human presence.

Residents having concerns about coyotes at or near their homes, are urged to contact Animal Service Department and ask for Officer Greg Randall at (213) 485-8855.

At Home in the Oaks

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Oaks Development Regulations Make Their Way Through the Process

By Rainer Standke

By now you've surely heard about the new development regulations for The Oaks as they have been in the works for quite a while now. Recently, you received a notice from the city's Planning Department about two meetings this month: the first a workshop held on October 7th, and the second a hearing on October 28th. Before I report on the first meeting and then explain why you should attend the second, here is a brief look at the overall process.

The idea behind the proposed permanent regulations, as well as the Interim Control Ordinance currently in effect, is to preserve the character of the neighborhood by discouraging development that is out of scale with its surroundings. Generally speaking, in the Oaks we have relatively modest homes on relatively generously sized lots. This is what makes the Oaks special and it's also what needs protection. You'd be shocked if you knew how massive a house your neighbor could build in the absence of these proposed regulations.

About three years ago the Planning Department set out to develop new rules that on the one hand would preserve the residential character of our neighborhood more or less the way it is right now, and on the other hand would be flexible enough to accommodate the wide variety of existing

home sizes, lot sizes, architectural styles and topography found in The Oaks. The decision was made early on to create a simple set of regulations that did not require hearings for individual projects and involved no design review process. The only thing to be regulated would be the size of a new home or the size of an addition to an existing home.

The purpose of the October 7th workshop was to introduce the draft of the new permanent regulations to Oaks residents. The Planning Department's Blake Lamb and her colleagues explained to the roughly fifty people in attendance that the regulations have three principal components.

The first component is lot coverage -- the percentage of the lot that can be built upon, a.k.a. the home's *foot-print*. Ms. Lamb described the restrictions of lot coverage as relatively loose, meaning that they won't be the most restrictive factor in most cases.

Secondly, depending on the steepness of the lot there are restrictions on building height. These are designed to encourage 'stepping back' homes so that they 'hug' the slope, rather than piling up massively in a "towering" structure.

The third and most significant component is Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR), the ratio of the lot

size to the square footage of the house. FAR is the main component of the Interim Control Ordinance (ICO). The Planning Department looked closely at all existing homes and their lot sizes in the Oaks and arrived at a formula for the regulation of FARs that closely reflects what currently exists in The Oaks. In fact, the FAR component of the proposed regulations is a refined version of the formula used in the ICO.

There is, however, an exemption that allows an addition of 400 square feet to any existing home, even if its floor area ratio exceeds the proposed regulations.

The draft regulations are available online and you can easily get to them from our homepage at www.oakshome.org. At the meeting on October 7th, Blake Lamb and her colleague Jon Tanury emphasized that the Planning Department is eager to hear our questions, comments and concerns about the proposed regulations. Mr. Tanury can be reached at 213-978-1214.

Next up is a public hearing on October 28th, again at the American Film Institute. Oaks homeowners and the public are encouraged to get their comments on the record. If you can't attend this hearing you can also submit your comments in writing by mail. Send them to Department of City Planning, attn. Blake Lamb, 200 N Spring Street, Room 667, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Subsequently the permanent regulations will go to the City Planning Commission and to City Council.

At the October 7th meeting many neighbors and homeowners asked detailed questions, attempting to gauge how the proposed regulations would affect their specific plans for construction. Overall, the draft was received well, which shouldn't be surprising as it is reasonable in its design, narrow in its scope, and strives to preserve the character of The Oaks as it is right now, preventing oversized development or what is known as 'mansionization'.

We hope you agree with the board members of your homeowners association that the proposed permanent regulations are a positive step for the neighborhood, and we urge you to support them. See you on October 28th at the hearing!

Crime Report

By

Two of the most common and perplexing questions related to Oaks security is when to call police and on what phone number. Is an incident serious enough to phone authorities? Does the event merit 911 treatment?

Naturally sensitive to police burdens, Oaks residents have been understandably reluctant to pick up the phone every time they see something suspicious. But police are clear on this issue.

Don't be shy.

Call.

It's helps them and the neighborhood.

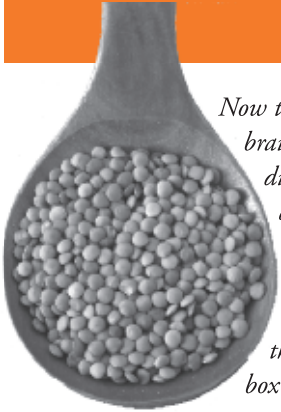
Police log calls in a computer database, even those in which they determine that no crime has been committed. The number of calls is part of a monthly report that precincts use to assign patrol cars and other resources.

A spike in calls may reflect increasing criminal activity and prompt police to boost its coverage. For example, when the Wilcox precinct, which covers the Oaks, noted a rash of car break-ins and petty burglaries in the community 18 months ago, lead officers added patrols and stationed unmarked cars at hot spots. Their efforts led to at least one arrest and the mini-wave waned. In recent years, they've responded similarly to surges in assaults near the Franklin Gulch, petty theft from yards and mail theft. The common denominator for each: People complained and police had proof that there was a problem.

Ever sensitive to the burdens faced by our protectors, a number of Oaks residents have reported their reluctance to call in incidents.

Braised Lentils in Merlot Vinaigrette

By Joan Young



Now that the weather is cooling down, it's time to start thinking about braised, warming dishes that seem so appropriate in the Fall. This dish can be served as a vegetarian entrée with some rice, or as a side dish. I often serve it as a bed for a piece of grilled salmon. If you want to keep the dish vegetarian, eliminate the bacon and use olive oil. It isn't absolutely necessary to use Merlot, but its softness is a nice complement to the dish. Le Puy lentils from France hold their shape very well in cooking. They're available in a little green box at Gelsons and other grocers.

4 slices smoked bacon, cut in one-half inch pieces

1/3 cup olive oil

1 medium fennel bulb, finely diced

1 medium onion, finely diced

1 large carrot, finely diced

1 large celery rib, finely diced

1 cup Le Puy lentils

1 1/2 cups Merlot or other red wine

2 T red wine vinegar

Salt and pepper

In a large saucepan, sautee the bacon until crisp. Leave the bacon grease in the pan and remove the bacon.

Add the fennel, onion, carrot and celery and cook, adding olive oil if necessary and stirring occasionally until the onion has softened, about 5 minutes.

Add the lentils and stir to coat with the oil. Add 2 1/2 cups water and the bacon pieces. Bring to a simmer. Cover partially and cook over moderately low heat until the liquid is absorbed and the lentils are tender. If necessary add more water.

Meanwhile in a medium saucepan, boil the wine until it is reduced to 6 T. Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in the vinegar, 1/3 cup olive oil, 1 1/4 t salt and 1/2 t pepper.

When the lentils are tender and all water is absorbed, add the vinaigrette to the lentils and simmer stirring occasionally for another 5 minutes.

MAKE AHEAD. These lentils can be made a day ahead and re-heated. I also think they're pretty delicious eaten cold.

Oaks Homeowners Board of Directors 2008

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www.oakshome.org

Update on construction of Fire Station 82

By Ann Debello

Recently the city came to the current Fire Station 82 to update and show drawings of the future buildings.

The current construction of the new regional Fire Station to be located at Hollywood and Van Ness should be completed spring of 2010.

The new station will be a 3 story structure. Accommodations will be made to Van Ness and Hollywood for easy access in and out of the station.

After the new regional station is completed construction will then begin on the current station 82 located on

Bronson Ave. The main station which has been designated historical will be renovated and the inside will be upgraded. The back building will be raised and a new building will go up there. This will serve as a training area for LAFD and will also include a community room on the second floor. How and when it would be made available to the community is uncertain yet as they are looking how other stations are integrating community involvement.

Construction on this will begin in 2010 and should be finished early 2011.

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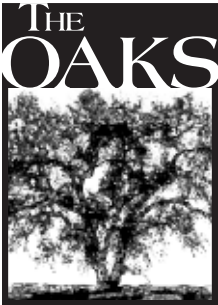
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THE OAKS CALENDAR



THE OAKS HOLIDAY PARTY

Sunday, December 13th, 2009
5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

at the home of Bob and Joan Young, 2419 Park Oak Drive