

Cheviot Hills News

Cheviot Hills Home Owners' Association

www.cheviot hills.org

Autumn 2011

Please attend our General Meeting

Tuesday
November 1, 2011
7:30 pm

Vista Del Mar, 3200 Motor Blvd.
Up for discussion: home burglaries;
light rail; sidewalk liability issues.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends and Neighbors:
There is a lot going on right now in Cheviot Hills!
This newsletter will provide information on
recent increases in crime, local school
happenings, EXPO Light Rail, a new mandatory
sidewalk repair policy, and more. For further
details of local issues impacting Cheviot Hills, we

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NFSR Files Appellate Brief in Expo Case

Neighbors for Smart Rail (NFSR) filed its
opening brief in the California Court of Appeals
on September 15, 2011 claiming that the Expo
Light Rail Construction Authority failed to
comply with the California Environmental
Quality Act (CEQA) in its evaluation of

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Cheviot Home Burglaries Rise - APS Patrol Update

Between February 1 and October 9 there have
been 14 reported burglaries in the Cheviot Hills
area and another 5 in California Country Club.
The Monte Mar Drive area has been especially
hard hit which prompted a group of concerned
homeowners to convene a neighborhood meeting
for Monte Mar neighbors and other invited
Cheviot residents. The well attended meeting
hosted speakers from LAPD and Councilmember

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CHHOA Guest Speaker - “Luck rewards the well prepared”

In every natural and manmade disaster there are
stories of tragedy, heroism, irony, and just dumb
luck. Where you and your loved ones will end up
on that spectrum when the next disaster
challenges Los Angeles (and it will) can be more
easily influenced than you realize. One thing we
know for sure is that many of the government
services we expect to rely on will likely be taxed
to the limit and prioritizing responses. Self-

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invite you to visit our newly refurbished (and still evolving) website: www.cheviot hills.org. Additionally, we invite each of you to attend our monthly HOA meetings, held the first Thursday of each month at the Riddick Center, 7:30 9:00pm.

In every community, resolving problems requires an overall awareness and involvement from engaged residents. One of the best ways to remain informed is to become involved in the Cheviot Hills Home Owners' Association, which costs only \$70 per year. Annual dues fund community specific issues, such as safety (the HOA provides APS security patrols throughout the neighborhood), traffic mitigations, Pico/Olympic One Way, Expo Light Rail, Rancho Park Golf Course, Century City development, local schools, and building an overall sense of community (we help offset some of the costs of Cheviot Hills block parties - yes, block parties!). The all-volunteer CHHOA Board of Directors does a tremendous amount of work, but it is CHHOA members who ultimately set the association's agenda. Please become a member today! Why not become a board member? All are welcome.

Our CHHOA General Meeting is scheduled on November 1, 2011 at Vista Del Mar (Social Hall). The hall will open at 7:00pm for refreshments and the general meeting will be from 7:30pm to 9:00pm. Our special guest speaker will be John Bwarie, the Strategy and Communications Officer for the Multi-Hazards Demonstrations Project at the U.S. Geological Survey. Mr. Bwarie will be presenting information for planning and coping in the face of regional disasters. Please take advantage of this opportunity to become more informed, meet your neighbors, and address issues impacting our community. We hope to see you there - invite a neighbor to come along!

Marc Roggenkamp
President, CHHOA

Cheviot Hills Burglaries... Contd. from Page 1

Paul Koretz's office, as well as a representative from ADT Security and Vernon Rosado, owner of CHHOA's security patrol service, Alexander Protection Service (APS). CHHOA Board members Stan Arcader (Police Liaison), Irv Sitkoff (Security Patrol Liaison), Kathy Griffis (Secretary), Bob Keehn (Traffic Co-chair) and Greg Pulis (Vice President) also attended.

Neighbors at the meeting received an update on crime trending in our area, strategies for increasing protection, and the help of CHHOA who requested APS to temporarily increase patrol coverage on Monte Mar Drive. All paid members of the CHHOA receive APS security patrol lawn signs to display which police say is a deterrent for opportunistic criminals, although some of the houses robbed did have alarm systems. APS chief Rosado reports the following information on the recent crimes in Cheviot:

1. Based on trending reports the most active days are Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays between the hours of 11am and 7pm. 90% entered homes from the rear.

2. There appear to be two groups working in the immediate area which includes Beverlywood.

a) Group 1 enters the home through a rear door, breaking out glass to gain access. Once inside they rip the alarm system keypads from the walls in the hopes of disabling the system, then spend time looking for items to steal such as jewelry and cash.

b) Group 2 enters the home from the same rear but checks for unlocked points of entry such as sliding door or windows, once inside they do not tamper with the alarm system, but begin looking for small things to take as well.

In both cases suspects looked for home safes and tried to remove them but were unable to do so because proper installation had them anchored to floors and walls.

To help you protect your home and valuables the
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CASTLE HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SOARS



While most of Cheviot Hills lies in the Overland Avenue Elementary School district, Cheviot Hills homeowners east of Motor belong to the Castle Heights Elementary School district. Here's an update on the great news at Castle Heights by Lilli Lee, co-president of Friends of Castle Heights and a Cheviot Hills resident:

No one can say with absolute certainty why Castle Heights Elementary is suddenly the school everyone is talking about. For years it was known as the quaint school down the hill from Cheviot Hills. A few years ago Beverlywood parents decided to change that. They walked door to door encouraging neighbors to send their children to Castle Heights and started raising money to improve the programs the school offered. Neighborhood kids and their families began returning to the school and they, together with their families, really started taking the school to new (Castle) heights! Ten years after those parents went knocking on doors our school is enjoying an academic and artistic renaissance and the resurgence of neighborhood family enrollment.

Since arriving at Castle Heights just one year ago our new principal, Brian Grass, has helped to usher our students to greater academic achievements. Test scores rose over 30 points to hit an unprecedented 903 API. Thanks to highly enthusiastic teachers, smaller class sizes and an influx of after school enrichment programs the news at our local public school is all good! Castle Heights is now a School for Advanced Studies and was recently recognized as an arts prototype school for our commitment to encouraging the arts at every level.

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A Walk on the Wild Side Cheviot Sidewalks at Critical Stage

Cracked, crumbling concrete, buckling and splitting from the pressure of tree roots below - it is an increasingly familiar sight in our neighborhood. The danger is obvious and the accidents inevitable but the liability is not so clear. Is it the City's responsibility or the property owners' responsibility to repair and maintain the miles of City concrete that are in critical need of repair? And who is liable for accidents resulting from the upended pavement?

Our City Council members have been in disagreement. Some favor the responsibility falling to the property owners as it does in most of the rest of the state. Others feel that since the City assumed the responsibility in 1974 in order to receive a federal sidewalk repair grant that they should continue to do so, especially since there is American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) money available for sidewalk overhaul. That federal stimulus money for shovel ready infrastructure projects is available but LA has not applied for it or for any other federal sidewalk money for over 30 years! Instead, our City seems to have adopted the cynical policy of settling recurrent sidewalk injury lawsuits to the tune of \$5 million annually because it is cheaper than fixing the walkways.

Councilman Bernard Parks says the responsibility should revert back to the homeowners because the City money should be spent on support of more critical services like fire and police. Councilman Koretz offered that although it is cheaper to pay out the slip and falls, it didn't seem logical for residents to be injuring themselves all the time he favors having homeowners pay. Bill Rosendahl says we need more study but doesn't favor dumping the costs on homeowners.

Our City sidewalks are crumbling but not from neglect of its property owners. The sidewalks are

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The beauty of a local public school, in addition to diversity, is that most children can walk or bike to school and they sit in classrooms with children who live nearby. Boys and girls go to each other's houses after school and parents become friends. Castle Heights' parents are so chummy our principal actually has to remind us to leave campus once in a while!

Whatever the reason for Castle Heights' emergence as an A+ academic institution, one thing is clear: the students, parents, principal and staff are proud to be part of this period in Castle Heights' history. Great public schools are considered important cornerstones for their communities and our campus is a shining example of why this is so.

Come get acquainted with what we are doing at Castle Heights. Bring your friends and family to join the fun at our Fall Festival on October 23.

Information on all of Cheviot Hills' excellent public schools is available on their websites: www.castleheightselementary.org; www.overlandschool.org; www.palmsmiddleschool.org; www.hamiltonhighschool.net

**CHEVIOT HILLS
HOMEOWNERS'
ASSOCIATION
WEBSITE**

Please visit our website:

www.cheviot hills.org

A Walk from the Wild Side... Contd. from Page 3

buckling from the pressure of improperly maintained street trees belonging to the City for years homeowners could not even fix the sidewalks without a permit, they couldn't trim parkway trees nor could they remove them without getting a City permit!

At this printing a City Council Committee is reviewing several options in hopes of reaching a solution which would place all responsibility and liability for sidewalk, curb, and driveway repair to the property owners. This will be likely done by the repeal of the "tree root exception" that allowed the City to use those 1974 federal funds for sidewalks damaged from tree roots. Whichever option is adopted will come with fines and penalties for non-compliance, but so far no commitment has been included by the City to trim their parkway trees which are causing the damage.

While the citywide sidewalk decline has been ongoing for years the increased pressure to resolve the issue in the City's favor at this point in time is driven in part by an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) lawsuits against the City which seek to require handicap accessibility on all curb cuts and "transitional" areas (sidewalks). With LA looking at a potential price tag approaching \$1 billion which it doesn't have, and a time limit for repairs which it can't meet, the City must explore other sidewalk repair options.

To express your opinions on the sidewalk issue, please e-mail your message and maybe even a picture of a disintegrating sidewalk on your block to the staff at Councilman Koretz's office: Christopher Koontz <Chris.Koontz@lacity.org>; Joan Pelico <joan.pelico@lacity.org>; Paul Koretz <paul.koretz@lacity.org>
For more on LA's sidewalks see link here: http://www.kcet.org/shows/socal_connected/content/politics/show-me-the-money-sidewalks.html

Colleen Mason Heller
CHHOA Board Member

Cheviot Hills Burglaries... Contd. from Page 2

LAPD and APS suggest the following important measures that will increase your security:

- Be aware of people on your street gardeners, housekeepers, parked vehicles, construction workers. Who belongs and who does not? If you are comfortable doing so, ask them questions.

- Dial 911 if you see what appears to be a burglary or crime in progress. In Cheviot Hills if you see something that looks or just feels unusual but aren't really sure what it is, call the APS patrol staff via our security dispatch at (310) 606-2727, pressing Option 2 for a live operator, or you can call directly to the lead patrol person at (310) 303-9301 (Please note the lead patrol person might not always be available to answer the cellular phone.)

- Always turn on your alarm system when leaving and at night, even if it is not being monitored by a security company. Cut back shrubbery which might create hiding areas or block windows from the view of police and private patrol staff driving by. Install padlocks on side gates to slow intruders and limit access to the rear of your home.

- Get to know your neighbors and communicate with them. Let them know if you are planning a construction project or vacation, and encourage them to let you know their plans as well. Watch over your neighbor's home as you would your own.

- Join the CHHOA for just \$70 per year. You will receive an APS lawn sign from the CHHOA-supported neighborhood security patrol. If you are not displaying an APS lawn sign, or don't appear on the APS roster of CHHOA members, APS is not allowed to go on your property to check out suspicious activity. The more members we have the more patrol cars will cruise our area. Your membership ensures that you will receive CHHOA e-mail updates and that we can help follow up on any security issues with the responsible agencies.

- Please note, the APS security patrols paid for by your dues are not intended as a substitute for

home alarm systems. APS or another alarm company should be contacted directly for information and installation of a private home alarm system.

Though news of any home intrusion is distressing and a sign that we should all redouble our efforts to take the steps necessary to maintain security, we are reminded by the LAPD that we still live in one of the safest communities in Los Angeles. Working together to improve vigilance and communication among residents will fortify our sense of well-being and protection, but it also just feels good - the world is a smaller place when you know your neighbors!

Irv Sitkoff
CHHOA Board, Security Patrol Chair

CHHOA Guest Speaker... Contd. from Page 1

reliance and preparedness will be essential. To enhance your chances of luck smiling on you, the CHHOA will present a special guest speaker on disaster preparedness at the next General Meeting on Tuesday, November 1.

In a program planned by CHHOA board member Stan Arcader, our speaker for the evening will be John Bwarie, the Strategy and Communications Officer for the Multi-Hazards Demonstrations Project at the U.S. Geological Survey. Mr. Bwarie is also currently Coordinator at the L.A. Heritage Alliance and Deputy District Director for Los Angeles Council District 12. Following his presentation on the necessary strategies for survival and well-being in the face of disaster, Mr. Bwarie will preside over a question and answer period.

Please don't miss this opportunity to learn what you don't know and to remember what you've forgotten about disaster preparedness. How old are the granola bars in your earthquake kit?

Colleen Mason Heller
CHHOA Board Member

environmental impacts, its mitigation plan, and in its design.

NFSR president Terri Tippit said, “NFSR is looking to prevent West L.A. gridlock by protecting access to the 10 freeway through West L.A. Trains blocking Overland and Westwood 24 times per hour will have a devastating impact on the existing area traffic, and all evidence shows that Expo didn't properly study it.”

NFSR's brief, available on its website (www.smartrail.org), cites the precedents of the recently published Sunnyvale and Madera cases in support of their contention that Expo failed to study present-day traffic impacts of at-grade rail in already-crowded West L.A. Not studying the additional traffic congestion caused by the trains against the existing conditions would have implications for traffic safety and mobility, but also for emergency responders and air quality.

Moreover, NFSR claims that Expo failed its CEQA obligation by “deferring” mitigation for impacts such as excessive noise, parking intrusion, cut-through traffic, and safety until some later time. They neglected to detail, in some instances, what the mitigation might be, whether it would be effective, or if it was even possible.

Next Steps

Expo's Response to the NFSR Appeal is due October 17. However, there is an automatic 15-day grace period for the filing of these briefs. Expo can file their Response as late as early November. NFSR's Reply to Expo is due 20 days after Expo's filing. Subsequent to the filing of briefs, the Court will notify the Parties regarding the date and time for oral argument which typically occurs within 2-3 months of the last brief filed. Following oral argument, the matter will be taken under submission by the Court who must issue its decision within 90 days thereafter.

During the pendency of the Appeal, Expo performs work on the train project at its own risk. If, as hoped and expected, NFSR is successful Expo would be required to undo any completed work.

“NFSR is confident that this appellate court will find, as other appellate courts have found, that the way Expo studied the impacts of the train through West L.A. was flawed,” said Tippit. “We should not be spending over a billion and a half tax dollars on a poorly studied, poorly planned, and highly impacting project. Poorly designed transportation projects fail to fulfill their own objectives when they increase traffic congestion. Our communities deserve better.”

Key cases:

Madera Oversight Coalition, Inc. v. County of Madera (Sept. 13, 2011, F059153) _Cal.App.4th_ Sunnyvale West Neighborhood Ass 'n. v. City of Sunnyvale (2010) 190 Cal.App.4th 1351
Save our Peninsula Comm. v. Monterey County Bd. a/Supervisors (2001) 87 Cal.App.4th 99,128.

Colleen Mason Heller
CHHOA Light Rail Chair

