

Westwood South Newsletter

Westwood South of Santa Monica Homeowners' Association

April 2011

www.westwoodsouth.org

Annual Meeting

Wednesday, May 11, 2011 at
St. Timothy's

Please join us for our Homeowners' Association Annual Meeting and Dinner on Wednesday, May 11, 2011. It will be at St. Timothy's Church on Pico near Beverly Glen. Our guest speakers will include City Attorney Carmen Trutanich, Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Councilperson Paul Koretz and Senior Lead Officer Rashad Sharif with a status report on crime in our community.

Buffet Dinner

Prior to the meeting, members and guests may enjoy an Italian buffet dinner in the Social Hall catered by Pastina Restaurant, starting at 6:30 p.m. The dinner will include three kinds of pasta, meatballs, salad, and dessert. Cost of the dinner is \$8 a person. Come meet your neighbors and shmooze. There is no charge for the meeting, beginning at 7:15 p.m., featuring the election of board members and the speakers' presentations. Dessert donations would be welcome.

Please **RSVP** for the dinner by leaving a message on our Reservation Line at **(310) 475-3826** by May 8. If you have a question, call Bob Cimiluca at (310) 475-3826.

* * * Special thanks to realtor Mike Cockinos of Coldwell Banker's Brentwood office for his contribution to help underwrite our Annual Meeting, and for supplying our mailing labels. Mike is at (310) 442-1399.

Membership Dues

Annual Dues for 2011 for Westwood South membership are \$25.00 per household or condo association, and are due now. Dues may be paid at the door or by mail. See the enclosed membership form.

Please join now ! Your contributions support WSSM's work on behalf of our community.

WSSM Board Election

In preparation for the Annual Meeting, the Nominating Committee is preparing a slate of candidates for election to the Board. Board members serve a two-year term, and the terms are staggered, so that half of the Board is elected each year.

Everyone is welcome to attend the WSSM Board Meetings which are held at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at St. Timothy's Chapter Room, under the stairs off the alley.

Sign Up for WSSM Email Newsletters

Send an email to wssmhoa@gmail.com requesting to be added to the WSSM email list.

The newsletters provide timely updates on important community information.

EXPO Update

Phase I of the EXPO Light Rail Line from downtown to Culver City is projected to open on November 15. Testing of the trains started in April. Initially pulled by trucks along the line, the trains are now operating, albeit slowly, under their own power.

The contract for Phase II has been awarded, and the design and construction are set to begin this year on the seven-mile, seven station segment from Culver City to Santa Monica. The expected completion date for Phase II is 2015.

WSSM's efforts are focused on:

- Ensuring that the train does not disrupt travel on north/south arteries
- Seeking community improvements around proposed local stations
- Ensuring that there will be public transit connecting riders with their final destinations
- Reducing negative impacts on the area (eg. seeking additional parking at the Sepulveda station)
- Supporting local neighbors' efforts to get needed protection from noise intrusions and secure replacement parking for any lost street parking near their homes.

Request City Services Online

There are important city services which you can request online, such as filling potholes, repairing inoperative street lights, or removing graffiti. It is easy and quite efficient, though occasionally you may have to repeat the request.

Go to the City website: www.ci.la.ca.us/

Select "Services Online"

Select "e-requests"

Select from the menu of available services and complete the easy online forms.

Subway to the Sea Update

Numerous community meetings have been held to present possible subway routes and station locations between Century City and Westwood.

There is considerable support for the Century City station to be located on Constellation because:

- It would provide closer proximity for office users and residents.
- The earthquake fault along SM Blvd. would present problems for an alignment along Santa Monica.
- It would be a shorter route, which would impact both construction costs and travel time.

Beverly Hills has threatened to file a lawsuit if the Constellation station is selected, because they do not want the subway to run under Beverly Hills High School.

There were three alignment options discussed. The most direct route between the two stations appears to have the most public support.

Stations are built from the top, and tunneling takes place below ground, thus the major disruption occurs with the construction of the stations. Issues of safety, noise, construction impacts, costs, and the potential consequences of earthquakes were discussed.

Electronic Waste Disposal

There is ongoing hazardous and electronic waste disposal available at UCLA, 550 Charles E. Young Drive West. Toxic materials are accepted Thursday - Saturday, 8 am - 2 pm.

Electronics are accepted only on Saturday.

WSSM Offers CERT Training

Disasters, such as earthquakes or fires can overwhelm conventional emergency services. The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program is an all-risk, all-hazard training course designed to help you protect yourself, your family, your neighbors and your neighborhood in an emergency situation.

In an effort to enhance personal and community safety in emergency situations, WSSM is sponsoring a CERT class.

CERT offers training for emergency and disaster situations where citizens may initially be on their own, and their actions can make a difference. People will respond to others in need, but one goal of the CERT program is to help them do so effectively and efficiently without placing themselves in unnecessary danger. In the CERT training, citizens learn to:

1. manage utilities and put out small fires
2. treat the three medical killers by opening airways, controlling bleeding, and treating for shock
3. provide basic medical aid
4. search for and rescue victims safely
5. organize themselves and spontaneous volunteers to be effective
6. collect disaster intelligence to support first responder efforts.

Having the CERT training increases your ability to help yourself, your family and your neighborhood.

CERT members receive 17 ½ hours (one day a week for seven weeks) of initial training. The 7-week course is followed by full-day biannual refresher drills, and an opportunity to assist the LAFD at local incidents.

CERT is provided free of charge within the city of Los Angeles to anyone 18 or over. Over forty WSSM residents have signed up for the current class.

Interested? Please call Pat Tobias (310) 474-4223 or Margaret Healy (310) 474-7937 for more information about a future class.

Crime Update/ Neighborhood Watch

Until this month, WSSM has experienced a decrease in residential burglaries. The current spike involves intruders who determine that no one is at home, and break in via a rear door or window. They have been seeking cash and jewelry in bedrooms, closets and vanities.

The major crime in our area, however, remains burglaries from motor vehicles, which are essentially preventable crimes. If we do not leave electronic gear, wallets, purses, cash or other valuables visible in our cars, we can virtually eliminate this category of crime.

WSSM has created a growing network of nearly 100 block captains in our area, neighbors who have volunteered to create block rosters, distribute timely information, and serve as community liaisons. If you would like to volunteer, or to learn who are your block captains, please contact Pat Tobias (pattobias@msn.com) or Margaret Healy the healyfamily1@verizon.net. We need block reps for about 30 more blocks. Please contact Pat or Margaret for additional information.

Some of the block reps keep in touch with the residents of their block via email or phone. Some blocks have yearly potluck dinners, block parties or meetings to address local issues. The more engaged and connected we become, the safer our community will be.

Advertising in Our Parks?

The Los Angeles Parks Foundation proposed a plan to allow advertising in our public parks as a revenue-generating strategy. The president of both the Parks Commission and Parks Foundation, a retired attorney from a powerful, politically-connected LA law firm, maintained that the signs would not be considered ads if they thanked a corporation for its sponsorship.

After citizens across the City protested, and an influential SoCal Connected report aired, materials promoting the marketing plan were removed from the Foundation's website.

San Diego Freeway Widening Project

The project will add a 10-mile HOV lane and improve supporting infrastructure such as ramps, bridges and sound walls on the San Diego Fwy. (I-405); while widening lanes from the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10) to the Ventura Freeway (US-101).

The goals are to reduce existing and forecasted traffic congestion on the I-405, add freeway capacity in an area of heavy congestion, improve existing and future mobility, and enhance safety throughout the corridor.

The scope of the project will:

- * Add a 10-mile HOV lane on the NB I-405 between the I-10 and US-101 Freeways
- * Replace the Skirball Center Dr, Sunset Bl and Mulholland Dr bridges
- * Realign 27 on- and off-ramps
- * Widen 13 existing underpasses and structures
- * Construct approximately 18 miles of retaining wall and sound wall

There will be continuing lane closures and reconfiguration of some streets. For current information about closures, check our email newsletters or www.metro.net/projects/I-405 .

Sign Up For Email Newsletters

WSSM sends email newsletters to alert the community about road closures and detours, crime updates, calls to action for issues to our neighborhood.

You can sign up for these newsletters by sending us an email to wssmhoa@gmail.com .

JMB Seeks Approval for 37-Story Office Skyscraper in Century City

On a parcel at Avenue of the Stars and Constellation Boulevard, originally approved for condos in two 47-story towers and a 12-story building, the developer is now seeking to build the first office skyscraper in nearly a decade.

WSSM appealed the original approval of the massive condo development, seeking to trim the size and density of the project. The newly-proposed office building will certainly generate more traffic than the original residential project. WSSM will review the impacts with our traffic engineer and land-use attorney.

Speed Humps Are Coming . . . Soon

WSSM coordinated the distribution of petitions in 2010 for speed humps in response to concerns for traffic safety on a number of our blocks, and in response to impacts from the SM Boulevard Project. A number of our blocks secured the required number of signatures, and WSSM submitted the petitions to LADOT for review. Those blocks were approved for speed humps just as the City was disbanding the street hump program due to budgetary constraints.

Note to residents of those affected blocks: The speed humps have not been forgotten. The DOT staff responsible for preparing the vendor contracts was cut from 10 to 3 employees, causing delays. They have a bidder, and are in the process of evaluating the vendor's ability to deliver the services. We should know the status shortly. Thanks to all of the residents responsible for circulating petitions, and thanks to all of you for your patience.

Cellular Telephone Antennas

The Masonic Lodge on Westwood Boulevard has, sadly, not lived up to the noble goals of their founding members. To generate revenue, they have rented out the lodge for unsupervised parties, often involving under-aged drinking, loud music, and a general nuisance for residential and commercial neighbors, occasionally even resulting in shootings by rival gangs. The Lodge has been unresponsive to neighborhood concerns.

Now they have submitted an application for a cellular antenna installation. Although coverage maps indicate that the area is adequately covered, their application was approved. WSSM is appealing.

Because of expected increases in cellular demands, companies are increasing the number of antennas. WSSM and other community groups are urging the City Council to adopt new measures to rein in unsightly antenna installations, including poles installed next to homes, and those towering over homes and yards.

Planning Department Proposing Changes

There are a number of plans being proposed, some prompted by the City's desire to streamline its planning process due to staff changes, some as a result of policy changes. When adopted, these changes will impact the quality of life in the community, and will shape the future look of our city.

Citizen input is vital in the review of these initiatives. WSSM will be involved in the review and the hearings, and we invite you to join us in helping us to formulate our comments and responses to the City.

Sober Living/Community Care Homes

WSSM has been a strong supporter of the City's proposed ordinance to regulate for-profit sober living facilities, parolee homes and licensed community care homes. We are working to maintain the quality of our neighborhoods while balancing the needs of the disabled. The unregulated operation of these facilities in residential areas has created often disastrous conditions for neighboring properties.

Many of these facilities in single family homes offer leases by the bed, with 20 or more residents. Parking, density and unacceptable conduct issues have been some of the problems endured by neighbors.

The new ordinance will outlaw the operation of such boarding houses in single-family zones, and require that those in a group living situation do so as a family-type unit under a single lease.

The ordinance has been approved by the PLUM (Land Use) Committee and will be heard by the full City Council shortly.

Please notify WSSM of any of these facilities in our area which are causing problems for the neighbors.

Proposed 10000 Santa Monica Boulevard Condo Project

While construction is stalled on a number of already-approved projects in Century City, the developer Crescent Heights has filed development applications to construct a high-rise condo project on the former Fox Sports/Jimmy's Restaurant property bordering Beverly Hills.

WSSM is in negotiations with the developer to address traffic impacts of their project.

Digital Sign Update

WSSM, along with two neighboring associations, asserted that three of the digital signs in our area were illegally approved and installed. The signs violated the NOD and POD Overlay ordinances on Westwood Boulevard and the Scenic Highway designation of Santa Monica Boulevard. We doggedly appealed these illegal signs through the City's byzantine appeals process, and we prevailed at each level.

The giant, politically-connected billboard companies claim that their constitutional rights are being violated, and that community groups should have no standing in these matters. While their signs remain, and they collect massive revenues, they have now filed a lawsuit against the City. And, in a true David v. Goliath match, they have also sued the three homeowners' associations who prevailed in the appeals process.

Do the digital billboards impact our quality of life? Property values? Are the distractions of moving, brightly-lit billboards a safety hazard for drivers? And how do you assess the environmental impacts? We would appreciate hearing from you on this issue.

Wssmhoa@gmail.com

Pico Beautification Project

WSSM submitted a strong letter of support to the MTA for this project which is designed to improve safety on Pico with improved crosswalks and lighting, traffic islands and additional sidewalk improvements. This project is competing with other proposals from around the county, and we are hopeful that it will rank high enough to receive the requested \$1.5 million funding. WSSM pledged \$1000 as part of a matching grant, and special thanks go to Councilmember Koretz for providing the bulk of the matching funds.

Modified Parking Requirement Districts

The Planning Commission will hold hearings on a proposal to establish new requirements.

The ordinance would offer seven optional modification tools: (1) Change of use parking standards (2) Use of new Parking Reduction permit (3) Off-site parking within 1500 feet (4) Decreased parking requirements (5) Increased parking requirements (6) Commercial parking credits (7) Maximum parking limits

Recently issued staff recommendations reveal that many of the concerns raised by the community at staff hearings have been ignored. The burden would be on communities to fight against inappropriate districts. For example, parking protections on residential streets adjacent to commercial corridors may be compromised.

WSSM will review the proposal and seek to provide neighborhood protections. We encourage thoughtful discussion of shared-parking solutions, but any new policy must protect our residential interests. The current proposal does not provide that balance.

WSSM-Sponsored Metro Gold Line Tours in the Works

WSSM sponsored three tours of the Metro Gold Line in 2010 so that local residents could ride on LA's latest light rail line to learn what the EXPO line in our area will be like. Participants in the recent tours were able to get off and on at various stations to observe the crossings, experience the sounds and impacts on nearby properties. They received free one-day passes to travel throughout Metro's transit network after the tour ended. Tours last approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours. We think that it is important that as many residents as possible become familiar with the existing lines so that they can participate knowledgeably in the design process of the local stations.

To participate in a future tour, contact us at wssmhoa@gmail.com

Westwood South of Santa Monica Blvd
Homeowner's Association
Incorporated November 8, 1971
P. O. Box 64213, Los Angeles, CA 90064-0213
www.westwoodsouth.org

Dear Neighbors,

This has been one of the more active years in the history of our homeowners' association. As the City has struggled with deficits, we find that we are often in the position of working with residents to resolve problems not addressed by overwhelmed City agencies.

We continue to inform our community about hearings, street closures, crime, and other relevant issues, via our email newsletters. In addition to our database of about 1000 recipients, many block captains send out the newsletters to the residents on their blocks, and many representatives of neighboring associations look to us for important information. (You can sign up to receive those email notices at: wssmhoa@gmail.com.)

Some of you contact us to report a local problem and others may drop in at one of our monthly board meetings held the first Tuesday of each month. Our organization enjoys a long history of community activism since it was incorporated in 1971 and now represents an area of about 3,800 homes. We strive to protect, maintain and improve the quality of life in our community and find that to do so we must become well versed in issues pertaining to land use, zoning, traffic management and environmental regulation. And, in the absence of good citywide policy, we find that we must challenge individual project proposals as they arise.

Our efforts at City Hall rarely result in a perfect outcome; however our contributions can lead and have led to significant improvements in measures being adopted. As we all know, there is strength in numbers that politicians cannot ignore. Please take a moment to send in your membership dues which help us to demonstrate our strength. Mark May 11th on your calendar and plan to join us at the Annual Meeting so that our policy makers will see for themselves that our community is engaged and interested in what happens in our city and our neighborhood.

We invite you to attend our monthly meetings, to volunteer to track an issue, to serve as a block captain, to champion a project in the community. There are many needs; there are many opportunities. In this time of budget cutbacks at all levels of government, it will likely be up to the residents to do more and be more involved. This is, after all, our community. Through WSSM we can build a stronger community not just by reacting to City proposals, but by having our own vision for what we want our community to be.

My thanks to all those who have participated during the past year --- to our board, block captains, CERT participants, those who have attended hearings, sent in comments or testimony, and/or paid dues. We appreciate YOU!

Sincerely,

Barbara Broide, President

**Westwood South of Santa Monica Blvd.
Homeowners Association**

P.O. Box 64213
Los Angeles, CA 90064
wssmhoa@gmail.com

Membership Application

- *Please complete the following application.*
- *Enclose a check for \$25.00 payable to the Association for annual membership dues*
- *Return them to the address above*

Please print:

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

E-Mail _____

Comments, concerns or suggestions:

Thank you for supporting your homeowners' organization.

_____ I would like to participate. Please contact me.

_____ I would like to make an additional donation to support the work of the Association in the amount of \$_____.

_____ I would like to receive WSSM email blast messages.
_____ I already receive WSSM's emails.

Visit us at: www.westwoodsouth.org