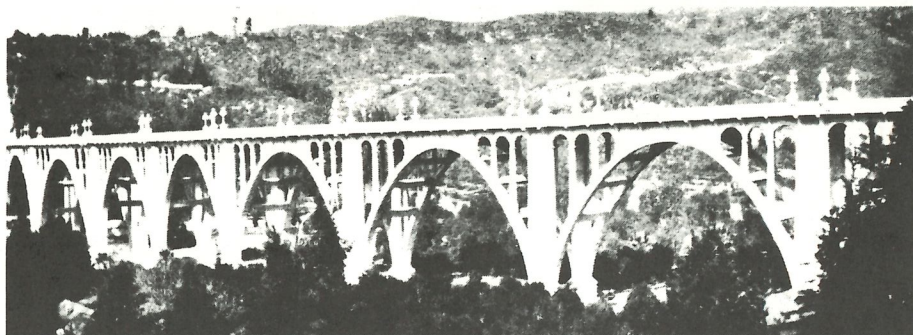


West Pasadena
Residents' Association
Est. 1962



Photograph Courtesy of Pasadena Historical Society

No. 13

WEST PASADENA RESIDENT'S ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

October 1983

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform the residents of the West Pasadena and San Rafael areas about issues of possible concern. It is the hope of WPRA to publish this newsletter four times a year. I'd like to keep the newsletter informal, and I would welcome any news articles, suggestions, comments, and help.

WPRA Meetings are held monthly at various homes. Residents are always welcome. Please call Diane Philipbosian, WPRA Secretary, for the date, time, and place (441-3589).

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Virginia Kimball (258-3524)

REPORT FROM JIM GAMB, President of West Pasadena Residents' Association

Over the past several months, three issues have occupied most of the time of your Board of Directors. These issues include the Urban Design Plan, the Colorado/Orange Grove Special District, and the Huntington Hospital Helicopter Use Permit.

Urban Design Plan

On Tuesday, September 20, a public hearing was held by the City Board of Directors in order to provide every concerned organization or individual with the opportunity to comment again on the proposed Urban Design Plan.

At the request of the Board of Directors, I attended this hearing in order to reaffirm our confidence in the three year process which has produced the current plan. We believe that the design guidelines which are reflected in the plan are critically important to the future growth of Pasadena. Even so, we remain concerned about the impacts which the significant growth that is allowed under the plan will bring to our City—particularly higher levels of traffic and air pollution. So we will continue to urge that the undesirable impacts of individual projects proposed under the Urban Design Plan be carefully addressed during the project review process and mitigated to the extent possible.

Colorado/Orange Grove Special District

On Tuesday, September 27, at 2:30 p.m. the City Board conducted another public hearing on this issue. The WPRA was represented at the hearing by Lewis Kimball, who once again strongly urged passage of the special district criteria on behalf of our Association. In an article elsewhere in this newsletter, Planning Commissioner Ron Kinder eloquently argues the case for formation of the district.

Huntington Hospital Helicopter Use Permit

As many of you know, the Huntington Hospital applied for and was awarded a use permit which will govern the operation of the helicopter facility which has been constructed at the hospital. We have worked closely with the hospital on this issue since early this year. Our purpose was not to oppose the hospital in their desire to establish a heliport, but rather to help insure that the guidelines under which the heliport will be operated address the concerns of the surrounding neighborhood. Our

dialogue with the hospital in this regard included joint sponsorship of a public information meeting which was held at the hospital. In August, the Zoning Committee granted the hospital a use permit which incorporated guidelines for operation which, at least for the time being, adequately address our concerns.

* * *

During the summer, two active directors of the Association resigned. Delphine Breese has traveled to Oxford, England with her husband, who is spending a sabbatical year away from his career as a law professor at UCLA, while Walt Cochran-Bond has purchased a home in Altadena. We regret losing the participation of both Walt and Delphine. Each has contributed a great deal of time and thoughtful effort to issues which are important to the WPRA and they will be missed.

REPORT FROM

WILLIAM J. BOGAARD, VICE MAYOR

The City Board is studying a proposal that an ordinance be adopted requiring disclosure of political action committees' contributions and imposing limits on campaign contributions.

The proposal was made to the City Board by a coalition of Pasadena community organizations headed by the League of Women Voters in the wake of municipal elections earlier this year in which two candidates spent approximately \$50,000 each in campaigns for membership on the Pasadena City Board.

Although each of the candidates lost, one being an incumbent and the other a challenger, many citizens expressed concern about the escalation of campaign costs and the manner in which the campaigns were conducted. In lieu of volunteer support which is traditional in Pasadena campaigns, the high budget election bids called upon professional campaign management organizations and compensated precinct walkers.

Among the concerns expressed were that incumbents would become beholden to business and other economic interests in the community; that campaigns would be devoted entirely to fund-raising and fail to address important policy issues; and that able candidates would not seek office due to the requisite financial pressures involved. There is also concern that unqualified persons could be launched into office through excessive expenditures that improperly influence the vote of the people.

Following presentation of the proposals by

the League of Women Voters, the City Board requested staff and legal review and then conducted a public hearing for comments from the community. After the hearing, the City Board deliberated on various proposals and established a committee of City Directors consisting of myself and Directors Heckman and Cole to formulate a proposal for subsequent consideration by the Board.

In my view, it is important to the future quality of City leadership that the grass-roots character of Pasadena political campaigns be continued. Our political tradition of volunteer citizen participation in campaigns should be preserved and nurtured.

* * *

Urban Design Plan Will Guide Downtown Development

After nearly three years of studies and public hearings, the City Board received on September 20 the proposed Urban Design Plan. The proposal establishes development standards for new construction in the central business district.

The Urban Design Plan, which has its origins in the controversy about high-rise development in 1980, is designed to answer a question of historic importance: What kind of community do you want Pasadena to be?

The plan will be considered by the City Directors at a workshop session in Council Chambers on *October 22* at 9:00 a.m.. If adopted, the plan will be referred to the Planning Commission for further studies and for the drafting of appropriate zoning ordinances.

The proposed plan allows approximately 1.5 million square feet of new construction annually through the year 2000. Importantly, it requires that environmental and fiscal impacts be taken into account in connection with the approval of new projects.

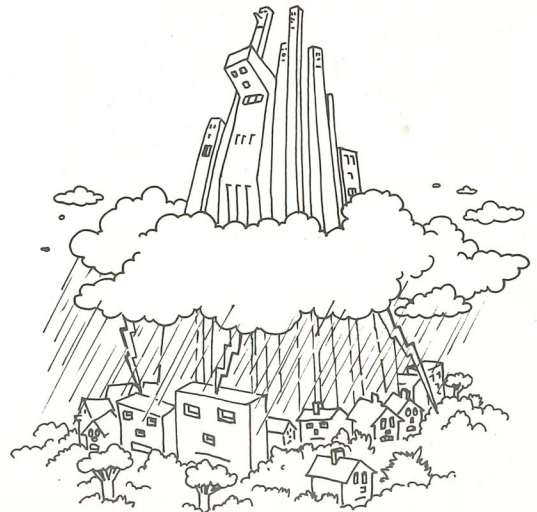
The Plan has been opposed by persons who argue that new construction in Pasadena should not be restricted by such factors as traffic congestion, adequacy of public streets and other facilities (which are paid for with public funds), the cost to the public of additional municipal services, the increase in air pollution, and the availability of parking.

The Plan is intended to retain the character and cultural heritage of Pasadena while preserving a robust local economy. Its adoption is important to the shaping of our community in the 21st Century.

OUR LOCAL SCHOOLS

This school year brings a new configuration to the Pasadena Unified School District. Students in grades Kindergarten - Six who live on the west side of the Arroyo are assigned to San Rafael School on Nithsdale Road. Students in grades K - 6 on the east side of the Arroyo are assigned to Linda Vista School.

"Bringing People Together" is Linda Vista PTA's theme for 1983-84. One community event which is being planned as part of the Linda Vista History Book Project is a tour of the Art Center College of Design on Thursday, October 20 at 7 p.m. Your \$7.50 ticket includes wine, cheese, and the tour, and is a contribution to the expenses of compiling and producing a book on 100 years of Linda Vista history to be published in 1988. Funds from the sale of the book will be used by the PTA to create an endowment fund for ongoing support of the school. Please mail your reservation request to Linda Vista PTA, 1259 Linda Vista Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91103. Make checks payable to the Linda Vista PTA History Book Project. For further information, call Henrietta Finnegan, 795-0940, or Alice Butler, Principal, Linda Vista School, 793-2197.



AN OPEN LETTER

August 29, 1983

Dear Neighbor:

An historic gateway to Pasadena is being threatened by over-development.

Most Pasadenans would agree that Colorado Boulevard and Orange Grove is a unique corner and entrance to downtown Pasadena. Probably all of us have driven down the hill on Colorado from Orange Grove with the City Hall, downtown Pasadena and mountain vista in front of us and thought "what a beautiful City."

Now, and historically, this intersection is the grand entrance to Pasadena. No other entry into Pasadena comes close to matching this corridor. It is the terminus of the Colorado Bridge, the starting point of the Rose Parade; in years past, a traffic circle surrounded a flag pole at this corner.

Pasadenans have demonstrated a long-standing concern for this area. Note the low height, setbacks and low lot coverage of the Norton Simon Museum on the north side of Colorado. Ambassador College has had strict height limitations and in fact is located in an RR zone which allows a maximum height of 36 feet. South Orange Grove also has a 36 foot height limitation.

The Pasadena Board of Directors at the September 27th meeting at 2:30 p.m. will consider placing this area (both sides of Colorado from Orange Grove to the Long Beach Freeway) in a special district which would impose various regulations and development guidelines on future development.

The Planning Commission recommendation to the Board, adopted unanimously, includes a major setback of 100 feet at the top of the Colorado hill, graduated heights from 3 to 6 stories and a maximum floor to area ratio of 2-1. The proposal also discourages above ground parking structures. This would result in the potential of buildings totaling over 1,000,000 square feet in this area of 15 acres.

With the setback restriction and development guidelines, the Planning Commission felt that a reasonable compromise between the rights and desires of the property owners and the wish of the Commission to preserve this unique entry to Pasadena had been achieved.

The major property owners, however, are not satisfied with the Planning Commission proposal. They still advocate and will push for higher heights and greater density at the

September 27 Directors' meeting.

To give some comparisons, the theoretical density proposed by the Planning Commission would allow over 1,000,000 square feet of development (excluding the Norton Simon Museum and the Wells Fargo building currently under construction). This equates to building more floor area than contained in *all* the office buildings on South Lake from Colorado Boulevard to California.

On the Elks property (Lodge and parking lot), the Planning Commission proposal would allow a theoretical maximum density of 308,000 square feet of building which is equivalent to 3 Avery International buildings or the total density of the 15 story Corporate Center building on South Lake plus the Los Angeles Federal building at Lake and California.

Even these densities do not satisfy the potential developers of these properties.

Pasadena has not run out of other locations for office buildings. If the Downtown Urban Design Plan development plan controls are adopted, there will be development potential for 23 million square feet of office space remaining in just the Urban Design District.

An often raised point when you discuss the potential development of an area is that potential is rarely reached because of the problems of assembling enough properties under common ownership for a development.

This is not the case in the proposed Colorado-Orange Grove Special District; 72% of the privately held land is owned by two owners (6.72 acres - Norton Simon, Inc. and 3.54 - Pasadena Elks Lodge). In this district, potential development is probable development.

If you share the concerns of the Planning Commission for over-development in this historical grand gateway to Pasadena, an area that over the years many Pasadenans have worked to preserve, contact the City Board before or at the September 27th meeting.

Sincerely,

Ronald L. Kinder, Member
Pasadena Planning Commission

(Editor's Note: On September 27th the City Directors approved the Planning Commission's proposal with the slightly higher floor-to-area ratio of 2.25-1. The proposed height limits were approved.)

VISTA DEL ARROYO . . . YESTERDAY AND TODAY

As a relative newcomer to Pasadena (only 12 years . . . not long in so well established a community as this), I've admired and wondered about the old hotel perched on the edge of the arroyo at the end of the Colorado Street Bridge.

To satisfy my curiosity, I spent an afternoon recently in the library of the Pasadena Historical Society (on the corner of Walnut and Orange Grove) and sifted through old clippings and other memorabilia of the Vista del Arroyo Hotel.

* * *

The Hotel opened in 1882, when Mrs. Emma C. Bangs bought the property, built a two story wood-frame building, and opened a "semi-private boarding house and hotel." She built up a successful business, and the Arroyo Vista soon included several other buildings, including a "physical culture lodge for the sports-minded Gay Nineties girl."

After Mrs. Bang's death in 1903, the hotel changed hands twice. By 1917, the Hotel Vista del Arroyo consisted of the original buildings plus 6 bungalows and 6 annexes. In 1919, Mr. D. M. Linnard (of "Pasadena's leading hotel family") bought the hotel and additional property to include 1000 feet of South Grand Avenue frontage, and land from the Colorado Street Bridge over the bank into the arroyo.

An old clipping from the Pasadena Star News (1920) observes, "The Vista del Arroyo has one of the finest stretches along the east bank of the Arroyo Seco obtainable. Its grounds are rapidly becoming the Mecca of tourists."

A million dollar price tag sold the 12 acre complex to H. O. Comstock in 1930. He immediately ordered construction of a new building including a main dining room, kitchens, morning sun lounge, several shops, and the main ballroom, doubling the capacity of the hotel to more than 400. The grand opening was held on December 5, 1930, four months and seventeen days after construction began. Despite the Depression, the Hotel flourished, and was popular with tourists as well as permanent guests.

World War II brought the end of the Hotel Vista del Arroyo . . . at least as a hotel. The War Department condemned the property under the War Powers Act in February 1943. The Pasadena Hotel Corporation was award-

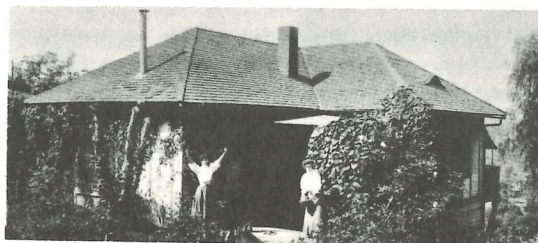
ed the fair market value of the property, \$650,000, and the federal government refurbished the hotel as a hospital. The Vista del Arroyo Hotel became McCornack General Hospital, accepting wounded from the Pacific Theatre of Operations.

When the war ended, the hospital was no longer needed. In 1949, the hospital was closed and was vacant for 2 years. Then it became a Navy office building, and was used as a government office building until 1967 when it was left vacant again.

Now the historic Vista del Arroyo is being refurbished for a new role—home of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit, which serves 9 western states and Guam. When completed, it should include 3 courtrooms, a law library, judges' chambers, and a cafeteria. The plans are to preserve the ballroom with its vaulted ceilings, the central dining room and the lobby. The building has been reinforced for seismic safety.

Work is proceeding on the tower building, and the building which burned in the fire last year is being rebuilt using the original plans. The bungalows have been declared excess property by the General Services Administration of the federal government. That means that other government agencies have an opportunity to make bids for the bungalows. The City of Pasadena has expressed an interest in them, with the probable intent of allowing them to be refurbished for residential use.

The latest controversy over the project, at this writing, is that bulldozers very recently bulldozed almost all of the original landscaping. Trees were left standing, but the mature camellias and other plants were ripped out. There is also controversy over the interior design plan. We can still hope that when the job is done, the Vista del Arroyo will again be one of "the crown city's jewels."



"Physical Culture Lodge", Vista del Arroyo