

NEWS

West Pasadena Residents' Association

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

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SPRING 2008

Attend the WPRAs Annual Meeting May 13

By Marilyn Randolph

The WPRAs Board looks forward to greeting you at our annual meeting where you will be able to hear an intriguing panel of city officials and a city commissioner lay out their vision for Pasadena. And, you can contribute to the Pasadena vision by offering your opinions and questions.

The meeting will be held Tuesday, May 13 at the beautifully appointed U. S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, 125 S. Grand Avenue (cross-street is Del Rosa).

Prior to the panel and business meeting you can join us at 5:30 p.m. for refreshments and for exhibitors' presentations in the dining room and adjacent terrace, and to enjoy exquisite

vistas of the Courthouse gardens, the Arroyo, and the Colorado Street Bridge.



The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. in Courtroom 3 and includes a discussion with our distinguished Pasadena panel:

- Bernard Melekian, Interim City Manager
- Fred Dock, Transportation Director
- Christopher Vicino, Acting Police Chief
- Carolyn Naber, At Large Planning Commissioner

The WPRAs annual meeting will offer you refreshments, information and a chance to offer your opinions and express your concerns. Even more appealing – you have a chance to win unique and community-related door prizes. Don't miss it! ■

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Mayor Bogaard Visits San Rafael School

By Alyson Beecher

What do you want to be when you grow up? Such a typical question that we ask children. Sometimes as adults, we still wonder what we will be "when we grow up!" During the month of March, the fourth through sixth grade students got to explore this question in depth. They were visited by Superintendent Diaz, Board of Education Member Scott Phelps, a Fire Inspector, a Police Officer, a School Psychologist, and an Attorney just to name a few of the careers represented. However, the highlight of



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APPROACH TO EXCELLENCE

A Plan to Improve Pasadena's Schools

By Superintendent Edwin Diaz

March marked the end of my first year as Superintendent of Pasadena Unified School District, and over the past year, we have laid a foundation for District wide improvement that extends to every student, teacher, classroom and department. I spent my first few months in Pasadena listening and learning. I am very grateful to the individuals representing parents, students, community organizations, educational institutions, employers and public agencies who offered their insight, recommendations and support to me during that period.

Those conversations combined with my own observations helped define the Approach to Excellence blueprint which provided a roadmap for our efforts over the past year. The Board of Education unanimously approved a plan to focus on seven priorities and immediate actions to focus on and accelerate improved student achievement, close the achievement gap, build internal capacity, plan for the future and involve stakeholders in decision-making.

Progress on Seven Priorities

As a result of this narrow focus on our priorities, we have made significant progress in each of the key areas over the past year. We designated the Schools Pursuing Excellence to improve student performance at schools lagging behind District improvement rates. We adopted proven methods to accelerate educational improvement beyond elementary school by reconfiguring John Muir High School and combining college preparation with career and technical training. We have supported the success of every student

by implementing strategies to close the academic achievement gap between groups of PUSD students.

We improved our ability to support the work in the classroom by reorganizing the District Central Office structure for improved efficiency, effectiveness and cost savings. We began to plan for the future by developing a plan to strengthen middle school programs and launching the process for developing facilities and technology master plans to provide better service to school sites.

Over the last year, we laid the foundation for District wide improvement by establishing an accountability system that evaluates the District's performance based not only on test scores, but also according to data collected from students, parents, staff and community members. We also acted immediately to implement the recommendations from the Gibson Management Audit.

As a result of this work, we are seeing rising confidence in the potential for significant District wide improvement as well as a greater willingness to partner with the District to improve student achievement. Examples of this new environment for partnership include private funding of the Chief of Staff position, grants for professional development, inclusion of the PUSD Superintendent as an ex-officio member of the Pasadena Educational Foundation board, and ongoing, regular meetings with City officials.

Community Assets

I continue to be impressed by the tremendous educational, cultural and financial assets of the PUSD community. The neighborhoods, organizations

and businesses of Altadena, Pasadena and Sierra Madre offer incredible resources and I am excited by the potential for these entities to enhance the educational experience of all children. However, I am more aware now of the persistent challenges that exist and threaten to slow the District's forward momentum. Some of these challenges include the academic achievement gap, student performance at secondary schools and some elementary schools, building the right systems, technology and accountability, leveraging and targeting community assets and state funding cuts that not only threaten our current programs but thwart our plans for the future.

The State fiscal crisis has placed our reform agenda at risk. California is \$1,900 below the national average in per-pupil spending. Our state is 43rd in the nation in education spending, and PUSD receives even less funding per student than other districts throughout the state. We can not continue to improve the quality of education in PUSD by relying solely on state revenues that are unstable and insufficient.

Closing the Gap

In this area of such tremendous community assets, we should no longer base our investment in student achievement on the state's economic cycles. This year, I will focus on closing the gap between the community resources available and the needs of our public schools. Organizations such as the Pasadena Educational Foundation, Pasadena Community Foundation, the Webster Foundation, the City of Pasadena and several large businesses in Pasadena have stepped up to partner

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Profile: Bernard Melekian, Interim City Manager

When City Manager Cynthia Kurtz stepped down January 2008, the city was challenged to find someone to fill her position until a permanent manager could be hired. The “powers that be” turned to Pasadena’s long-time Chief of Police, Bernard Melekian.

This was a surprising and somewhat improbable choice to some who felt Melekian might not have the requisite qualities for the City Manager position. Melekian has a reputation for personal integrity and has been a highly regarded Chief of Police. But the City Manager position is a different animal altogether, with a broader range of operation with many, often conflicting, civic needs to be addressed.

Nevertheless, Melekian quickly stepped up to the challenge and then just as quickly determined that he would be interested in working for Pasadena as its permanent City Manager. But on April 7, a little over three months into his interim term, he announced he would not apply for the permanent position and would accept the position of President of the California Police Chiefs’ Association in March 2009. Nevertheless, given his years of service in Pasadena, we thought it would be worthwhile talking to Melekian as he navigates through his new role as interim City Manager to get some insight into this man who has offered years of service to this city.

Salute to Service

By Audrey O’Kelley

The first thing that strikes one about Bernard Melekian is his easy going manner; affable and soft spoken, he appears to be a man comfortable in his own skin. And, he appears to love his new job. He relishes the proactive nature of the city manager position, its challenges and broader purview.

Melekian is thoughtful, well educated and intelligent. Talking with him one discovers firmly held convictions formulated over a lifetime spent in public life. Yet he does not appear to have an intractable disposition. He is open to and quite comfortable with having his opinions honed by reality. Further, he declares he is never vested in existing processes or systems. So, his city manager tenure, albeit brief, could be a positive turn of events for many citizens who are displeased with some city procedures.

Melekian posits leadership ability as the number one characteristic for a successful city manager. And while he gives a nod to skillful administration, he is not a micro manager averring that successful leaders set a course and clearly communicate goals to allow those who do the work to do it happily and competently. Melekian believes that good city government is transparent and responsive. That is

how he has run his jurisdictions in the past and he is doing so now.

Pasadena’s Challenges

Melekian is very concerned about the many unfunded city projects vying for attention. All are considered to be a high priority by various factions. He thinks it is vital that they be addressed within the next couple of months and he hopes to convene a workshop for city department heads and city council to prioritize these projects.

Public education is number one on Melekian’s list of priorities. He wants the Pasadena Unified School District to focus on education in order to provide a sense of common purpose. He is concerned that for too long attention has been paid to other ancillary objectives. Melekian gives high marks to Superintendent Edwin Diaz in his first year here. He thinks Diaz is on the right track and supports his plans for PUSD. Hopefully, over time, “...we just might be able turn around a situation that has seemed intractable.”

The city’s building boom has much broader community interest because of its effect on Pasadena’s quality of life which many feel is slipping away. Changes are causing citizens’ discomfort due to noise, dirt, traffic – the usual suspects accompanying urbanization. Melekian is committed to



maintaining the quality of life in the city’s neighborhoods and puts parks, open space and traffic concerns on his list of priorities.

Regarding our development boom, he thinks “...we have focused on the individual project to the exclusion of the surrounding area.” He believes that the city’s planning staff has complied with what has been asked of them. However, he thinks their work has been structured in such a way as to create “a bit of an academic environment.” He would like to see planning jump off the paper and into the “citizens’ space.” The measure of success with the planning process should be a satisfactory outcome and not simply adherence to the process itself. He is keenly aware that the ideal solution would be to bring citizen, city staff and city council development goals into alignment.

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Update from San Rafael Library

By Leonard Lane, San Rafael Branch Librarian

Greetings from the San Rafael Branch Library! We thought we'd take this opportunity to give you an update on what's happening at your neighborhood library.

First of all, I'm sure you have seen the many classes going in and out of the library. We average nine to twelve class visits each week from San Rafael Elementary School. Our staff enjoys sharing the excitement of reading with the students.

On March 7, Mary Wilde, San Rafael's faithful Library Tech was honored by the school, which invited her to participate in the annual Dr. Seuss "Read Across America" program. She had a great deal of fun reading to the children.

Mary conducts our Pre-school Storytimes each Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. Our storytime and Barks and Books programs are both extremely popular. Barks and Books is a partnership program with the Pasadena Humane Society where elementary school-age children read books to a gentle dog. Barks and Books is held monthly throughout the school year on the 2nd and 4th Monday at 2:30 p.m.

April is National Poetry Month and we have two writing contests for students in grades 1-6 – StoryTubes and Limericks Out Loud @ Your Library! Be sure to bring your children and participate!

We will once again have the Summer Reading Program for children. This year's theme is "Catch the Reading Bug!" We have lots of great activities planned so pass the word. It's going to be fun!

Our ongoing adult programs include the Knitting Group on Thursdays from 2-4 p.m. and a new Book Discussion group which meets the 4th Thursday of the month at 4 p.m. This month's book is *The Thirteenth Tale* by Diane Setterfield.

Our volunteer group, The San



Rafael Associates, continue to offer us tremendous support. Last year they sponsored our beautiful new landscaping. They are now working on Phase Two of the library upgrade. Phase Two is the refurbishment of our Community Meeting Room, which should be completed in the near future. A celebratory event is being planned and we will be sure to

invite our neighbors to join us for this festive occasion!

Finally, the staff at the San Rafael Branch Library would like to express its gratitude to our neighbors, the West Pasadena residents, for their continual support, as we endeavor to provide you with the best library service possible! ■

Cell Tower Placement: Private and Public Property

By Dorothy Lindsey

West Pasadena residents in proximity to the privately owned property of Hillside Education Center can claim a victory of sorts. For almost two years, the neighbors have been opposing the installation of a cell tower, which would have been sited on a hill directly behind the Hillside facility. AT&T pulled their application for the installation in late February of this year stating that the tower was no longer needed.

The opposition to the cell tower began in 2006 when Cingular Wireless inked an agreement with Hillside to use the hill behind the school as a location for a cell tower. The neighbors opposed the installation because of concerns about health hazards and

possible destruction of fragile open space in the area. Their opposition continued after AT&T merged with BellSouth and their Cingular wireless division became a part of AT&T.

AT&T repeatedly postponed hearings before City Council. Meanwhile, in June of 2007 Pasadena City Council adopted an ordinance that imposed "a moratorium on permits for Ground-Mounted Commercial Wireless Facilities in residential zones." That ordinance was extended through June of this year while the City Planning Department conducted a city wide mapping of all cell towers. The Planning Department is still working on the city wide ordinance and will be having meetings with Pasadena

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Development and Design – the Pasadena Process

By Mic Hansen

Most construction in Pasadena's seven specific plan areas is subject to design review. The seven specific plan areas are West Gateway, South Fair Oaks, Fair Oaks/Orange Grove, North Lake, East Colorado, East Pasadena and the largest, the Central District. Mic Hansen outlines the approval process that developers must go through before beginning construction; and very importantly, how citizens can have input.

Much concern has been expressed in the past few years about the design of new buildings—mostly multiple family and commercial—that are being constructed in our city. The City of Pasadena municipal code does require design review for new construction as well as rehabilitation and additions. Major projects in Pasadena's seven specific plan areas are subject to design review, as are multi-family developments and new construction or remodels/additions in landmark/historic areas. All multiple family projects that are three units or larger are subject to the "City of Gardens" ordinance which we discussed in the fall 2007 WPRAs newsletter.

Often citizens express dismay when, seemingly out of nowhere, a development project is begun. However, there are four steps in the development process and citizens can follow projects as they go through "the pipeline" and, at appropriate points, can offer their insights and concerns. Where does design review come in and how can you participate in the process?

Development Process:

The first step in the development process is the preliminary application conference (PAC). This is a meeting between the applicant and City Staff to discuss project issues and requirements. PAC meetings are not public hearings. The City Council is informed when a PAC is submitted for a project that has community-wide significance.

The second step involves the environmental review process. At this point, city staff evaluates whether the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and prepares an initial study. If the

project is exempt from CEQA, then a hearing is scheduled in front of a hearing officer. If the project requires an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), then the EIR process is put into place, with community involvement. A "negative declaration" for a project means that the project will not have significant environmental impacts.

During the third step, zone changes, master plan amendments, and General Plan amendments are subject to a legislative process—which means being heard by the Planning Commission and City Council. Developments requiring conditional use permits, variances, tract map revisions, etc. go through a quasi-judicial review process, which means a meeting with a hearing officer, with the option of appeal to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Once a decision is rendered, entitlements are communicated to the applicant.

The fourth step is the Design review process. New construction over 25,000 square feet as well as major rehabilitation and additions over 25,000 square feet, and developments along a major corridor undergo review by the Design Commission. Smaller properties are reviewed by staff.

Citizens Do Have Input

Throughout the review process, there are opportunities for public input and comment. If the project is exempt from CEQA, a neighborhood meeting is required for zoning, master plan, and general plan changes, prior to being heard by the Planning Commission. If the project is subject to an EIR, then public input may be provided during the scoping meeting, and during the posting of the Draft EIR, when public comments may be

submitted in writing. The public also has the opportunity to comment during Planning Commission and City Council meetings. Agendas for all city council, planning commission, and design commission meetings can be found at least three days prior to the meeting date on the city of Pasadena website (cityofpasadena.net.) Once the project reaches the design review process, public may attend and/or submit comments at Design Commission hearings. For those who believe current design is not in keeping with Pasadena's "sense of place" and built environment, please take the opportunity to make your voices heard. ■

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Please consider taking a few moments now and email the City Council with your concerns.

A Vision of Beauty

March, 2008. Blue lupine are up and swaying. Blooming western redbud, Texas white redbud, purple lilac verbena, various blue ceanothus, red and purple sages, yellow California sunflowers and tidy tips, white irises surrounded by Snow in Summer, lavenders, Pride of Madeira, kangaroo paw, wisteria and climbing roses, many floating on a two acre sea of California Poppies. A fragrant grove of Washington Navel oranges and a section of blue-green, yellow, orange, and black succulents, overseen by a statue of St. Francis.

Where are you? Lancaster? Up the coast of California? A private preserve?

Good guesses, but you are wrong. You are at Arlington Garden in Pasadena. Yes, at the corner of Arlington Drive and Pasadena Avenue, on the Caltrans site that stood vacant for 40 years, a garden has sprung forth that is showing people how attractive and effective a drought tolerant Mediterranean climate garden can be.

Arlington Garden is a seasonal garden and so during the hot summer many plants are aestivating or resting, but it holds some color. In the fall, leaves turn bright colors and fall from the pomegranate, sycamore and Chinese Pistache, and it is at its barest during the winter. But Arlington Garden comes to life during the spring, and in spring 2008, it is a wonder of color.

Beauty Comes to a Neglected Corner of Pasadena

Since its inception in 2005, Arlington Garden has grown fitfully but steadily.

In partnership with the City of Pasadena and Pasadena Water and Power, Betty and Kicker McKenney and a small band of "Constant Gardeners" have planted a wide variety of trees and plants that do well in our cool, wet winters, temperate springs and falls, and hot, dry summers. In less than three years, the



McKenneys have planted thousands of Mediterranean climate and California native plants. Benches, tables and chairs with umbrellas, pots, and paths nestle between them to make the garden a place where one can learn about drought tolerant gardening and can linger and find peace of mind and a little serenity in our increasingly urban community.

In 2004, Councilmember Steve Madison asked the community what, if any, public development it would like to see on the three-acre, weed filled Caltrans owned site. The consensus was that it should be passive, with no parking lots or restrooms. However, there was no consensus about what should be on the site.

Betty McKenney suggested a drought tolerant Mediterranean climate garden.

As the McKenneys "shopped" the idea, more people thought it just might work. Cal Poly students did some conceptual drawings, people began to visualize a garden, and the City and Pasadena Water and Power joined in the effort. Pasadena Beautiful Foundation and the Mediterranean Garden Society gave their support, and neighbors began to donate funds, plants, and garden furniture to get it going.

Arlington Garden in Pasadena was

incorporated as a 501c3 organization and designer, Mayita Dinos, was hired to develop a complete garden site plan with distinct "rooms" where plant communities will thrive.

The Vision Recognized

With Steve Madison's championing the cause and with the support of Bill Bogaard and Sid Tyler, the garden moved forward step by step, as money and manpower permitted, so that today, Arlington Garden has been recognized as a major public garden in numerous articles in the Los Angeles Times and the Pasadena Star News. The garden was featured in the recently published book *At Home Pasadena*. Arlington Garden has been visited by the Garden Conservancy during its Open Days garden tour, Pasadena Heritage, Mediterranean Garden Society, Pasadena Garden Club, the Arboretum, and in June, Arlington Garden will be on the tour of the Washington DC headquartered American Public Garden Association. The City has twice recognized Arlington Garden, and the WPROA has recognized Betty and Kicker McKenney with its inaugural Community Service Award.

How Does Our Garden Grow?

The garden has had great support from the neighbors and community.

It has received benches and a birdbath from friends and neighbors, many pieces of furniture from local stores and from Ken Colburn, who helped build the fence around the garden and built the herb beds and comfortable Adirondack chairs. A donated bench, set under a trellis supporting a Don Juan Rose, faces Mt. Baldy, which is spectacularly visible on clear days.

Mayfield Senior School, Sequoia School and Westridge School have performed community service at Arlington Garden. Westridge uses the garden as part of its regular curriculum and its summer program for students from the Pasadena Unified School District. Pasadena High School InterAct Club will also help this spring.



Arlington Garden is a spectacular example of often sought community collaboration. But Kicker says that it has been Betty's vision and perseverance that has seen it through. "I can guarantee you that for all the indispensable collaborations we have had, without Betty, this would still be a great idea waiting for something to happen."

"Gardens help sustain us physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually," says Betty McKenney. "They differ from parks in that plants and trees provide the focal point in a garden. You won't find play structures or merry go rounds here. You don't need to run to see what's here. It will wait for you to discover it. Of all the positive comments we have heard, one by a PUSD middle school student following a summer class at Westridge captures it perfectly. When asked by the teacher what she liked about Arlington Garden, the student wrote that she likes the garden 'because I can hear my thoughts here.'"

Memories of Pasadena Past

Kicker notes that the garden has brought back memories from the days of Pasadena's Millionaire's Row. "It is on the site of the fabled Durand House, a 17,000 square foot, 50-room mansion built in 1904 as the largest home in Southern California at the time. In digging to create the garden's rudimentary irrigation system, we have found a multitude of tiles, fixtures, and large Arizona sandstone bricks that provided much of the facing of the Durand House. We have incorporated several pieces of sandstone into the small amphitheater built along Arlington Drive next to the oak tree."

Many people have driven by Arlington Garden. They see an attractive garden, very different from the lot that had stood vacant for the 40 years since the Durand House was demolished. But those who stop, take a brief "timeout" and walk through see much more. And those who stay a little longer, sit a while, smell the flowers, and see the butterflies and bees, and listen to the birds can truly appreciate what Arlington Garden provides for them and our city.

A Hopeful Future

Betty has high hopes for continuing to develop the garden according to the plan created by Mayita Dinos. Working

with the City and Pasadena Water and Power, an irrigation system has been designed and they hope to install one or two sections of it before summer. A California plaza near the orange grove and pepper trees will include a palm quadrant with a water element. They have plans for an arbor big enough to sit under and walk through, perhaps supporting a green roof, and some sitting walls made of hay or straw/adobe construction around the Craftsman Commons plaza.

A wire frame bonnet on the amphitheater supporting vines for shade is in the planning stages. The McKenneys hope to have identifying signs for the plants and trees by next year. They would love to increase their volunteers and be more self-sufficient, so let them know if you would be interested.

They invite all to come by any time, sunrise to sunset, seven days a week.

You can contact the Constant Gardeners at: arlingtongarden@mac.com

Editor's Note: Betty McKenney is on the Board and is Past President of the Mothers' Club Family Learning Center. Kicker McKenney is a lifelong Pasadena resident, represented District 6 on the Pasadena City Council during the 1970s, and now sits on the Pasadena Recreation and Parks Commission, Hahamongna Watershed Park Advisory Committee and the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee. ■



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Joan Hearst, Director of Membership membership@wpra.net

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A “Great Park” for Pasadena

By Mark Persico

Perhaps you’ve already heard of the “Pasadena Great Park” project, a proposal to deck over a one and one-half mile long section of the 210 Freeway to create up to 50 acres of new parkland. The driving vision is the creation of a vibrant grand urban park that dramatically transforms downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods, including West Pasadena. By reclaiming land lost through construction of the 210 freeway in the late 1960s and early 1970s the park will reconnect the City and repair the damage caused by freeway construction. While the project will take time and energy to complete, we have the opportunity to leave a legacy for future generations of Pasadenans.

There is an old adage stating that the only thing that cannot be created is land, but this project does just that by creating land from the airspace above the 210 freeway. According to a recent Trust for Public Land report there are at least 20 highway parks in existence throughout the nation and another dozen or more in various stages of planning and design. Over the last thirty years cities such as Seattle; Chicago; Phoenix; Trenton,

New Jersey and Duluth, Minnesota have built freeway deck parks. No doubt the costs of building a deck over the freeway are high, but the City’s ability to purchase significant new parkland in the center of town is nonexistent.

The idea for a deck over the freeway was initially discussed during the community charrette process for the Fuller Seminary Master Plan. Discussion at that time focused on decking over a small portion of the freeway adjacent to the campus using Memorial Park in La Canada Flintridge as a model. While a five to six acre park would be nice, we need a bold vision that creates energy and enthusiasm, and one which significantly improves the quality of life for residents across the

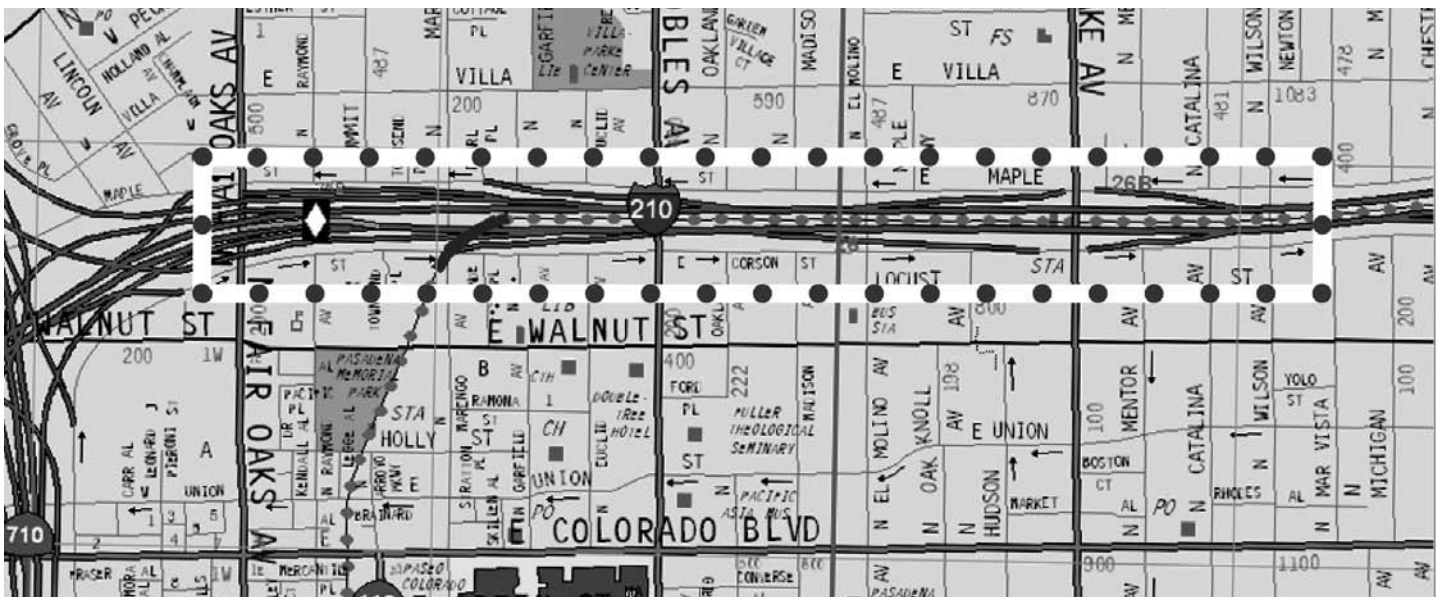
City. Imagine a 14-block long park, stretching from the Fair Oaks Avenue bridge to the Wilson Avenue bridge. (See accompanying diagram.) The park would be accessible to everybody and within walking distance of many neighborhoods and businesses – a place to gather a recreate with family, friends and neighbors.

Urban parks are a key factor in a cities quality of life and they have quantifiable economic benefits. At City Council direction public works staff is working on a report outlining a process to move the freeway park plan forward, and they are scheduled to report back in early spring. The construction technology to build the deck is readily available as other communities have shown. All we need is the vision and passion to make the Great Park a reality – two commodities that Pasadena has in large supply.



Editor’s Note: Mark Persico works as an urban planner and serves as Chair of the Recreation and Parks Commission. He is an active parent in PUSD and serves on the Board of the Pasadena Education Foundation. He lives within District 2 with his wife and two daughters. You can contact Mark via email: persicoplaning@earthlink.net ■

The project area would reconnect and repair 1 mile of community along the 210 freeway and create 50 acres of parkland.



“Great Park” Existing Conditions Along the 210

On the Wilson overpass looking west.



On the north side of the 210 at El Molino looking west.



On the south side of the 210 at Fair Oaks looking east.



“...a 14-block long park, stretching from the Fair Oaks Avenue bridge to the Wilson Avenue bridge.”

Salute to Service - Bernard Melekian

Continued from page 3

Opportunities for Service

Melekian is analytical, decisive, contemplative, and he likes challenges. He understands Pasadena defining it as, “...a small city with big city issues where people know your name.” He is a Pasadenan through and through. His father was born and raised here and Melekian has lived and worked in Pasadena since 1996.

After accepting the interim position, Melekian didn’t dither over winning the permanent position. Knowing the importance of prioritizing numerous civic needs and desires he began the process immediately. “This job is fascinating and I will be doing it for several more months. There will be no slowing down until

Council determines who will fill this position on a permanent basis.”

“Pasadena should be a ‘beacon on the hill’ for other American cities to emulate. I love working for the city. It provides great opportunities to be of service.” The only difference now is that he will do so as Chief of Police and President of the California Police Chiefs’ Association, capping a career of public service in the field of law enforcement that has spanned more than 35 years.

Editor’s Note: Bernard Melekian welcomes your comments and questions. You can contact him via email: bmelekian@cityofpasadena.net ■

Cell Tower Placement

Continued from page 4

residents concerning the ordinance in the near future. City Planner Jennifer Paige-Saeki is heading this effort.

The West Pasadena residents in the Hillside neighborhood should know, however, the possible limitations of the ordinance being developed by the City. Like the moratorium, the new ordinance on installations of commercial wireless facilities in residential zones might apply only to public rights-of-way and not to installations on private property. A member of the Save the Hill Neighborhood Alliance, Joan Dooley, was quoted in the *Pasadena Star News* as saying “...our biggest concern is that even if AT&T disappears, another company could come in and try to put their own tower there.” And, one has to ask, if one tower goes up could more follow?

Editor’s Note: Senior Planner, Jennifer Paige-Saeki can be reached by phone at 626 744-7231. ■

Make Your Voice Heard in the Selection of the Next City manager

You can provide input on a special web page at www.cityofpasadena.net. Bob Murray & Associates, an executive search firm, will conduct a national recruitment for the position, which was vacated by Cynthia J. Kurtz and is being filled on an interim basis by Bernard K. Melekian. A final list of candidates is expected for council consideration by early summer.

Updates of Interest

There has been some movement on issues we have addressed in newsletters past. As always, Chairman Vince Farhat, fills us in on Transportation Advisory Commission. And guest columnist Ann Schied and board member Bill Jernigan update us on Desiderio and Westridge School respectively. Lastly, there is growing concern about the Ambassador West Campus. While Maranatha and Harvest Rock Church are established and Sunrise Senior Living commences with their project, the housing project planned by AACP Properties, LLC and Ambassador Acquisition Coalition Partners II is struggling. Board member Audrey O'Kelley gives us the latest.

West Pasadena Transportation Update

By Vince Farhat

Fight to Prevent Increased Speed Limits Continues

Late last year, the Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC) rejected a proposal to raise speed limits on selected residential streets throughout Pasadena. In West Pasadena, City staff originally wanted to increase speed limits on the following residential streets, among others: La Loma Road (western City limit to Arroyo Boulevard) from 25 mph to 30 mph; Lida Street in Linda Vista from 30 mph to 35 mph; Pasadena Avenue from 30 mph to 40 mph; and Columbia Street from 30 mph to 35 mph.

More than 85 Pasadena residents contacted TAC regarding staff's speed limit proposal. After considering public comment at a special meeting in September, TAC unanimously voted to oppose raising speed limits. TAC opposed staff's proposal because of concerns that increasing speed limits would negatively impact safety, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists, and negatively impact neighborhood quality of life. The proposed speed limit increases also are inconsistent with the City's adopted General Plan and the General Plan Mobility Element. TAC believed that further study was needed to address speeding issues, including how the Police Department should enforce existing speed limits.

TAC and staff formed a joint committee to study the issue and to examine the City's options in enforcing

existing speed limits. In December, staff presented a revised speed limit proposal to TAC. The revised proposal eliminated speed limit increases on a number of streets. Specifically, under the revised proposal, the City would not increase speed limits on La Loma Road and Lida Street. However, staff still wanted to raise speed limits on Pasadena Avenue, Glenarm and Columbia Street.

On January 29, TAC held a special meeting to review and comment on staff's revised speed limit proposal. More than 30 residents joined Huntington Hospital, the Ronald McDonald House, Westridge School, Waverly School and Sequoyah School in expressing their opposition to speed limit increases. After considering public comment, TAC rejected staff's proposal to raise speed limits. Instead of raising speed limits, TAC voted to recommend that the City Council direct staff to investigate and implement traffic calming and safety measures aimed at reducing speeds on neighborhood streets with the goal of keeping speeds at the posted speed limits.

On March 25, the City Council's Legislative Policy Committee considered staff's proposal to raise speed limits. Mayor Bill Bogaard and Councilmembers Sid Tyler and Margaret McAustin serve on the Committee. (Tyler was absent on March 25.) The Committee expressed its appreciation for staff's work, but ultimately concurred with TAC's

recommendations and rejected the proposal to raise speed limits.

At the April 14 City Council meeting the issue was set aside to allow the City Attorney to investigate questions raised by Councilmember Steve Madison. The proposal will be reviewed in approximately six weeks. For more information, please send an e-mail to update@wpra.net.

Central District Residents Are Well Educated and Well Paid

On March 7, City staff presented TAC with the results of the Planning Department's recently-completed "Central District Residents Survey."

Survey respondents were evenly distributed in age, and highly educated. Over 83% of respondents reported having college degrees, with 47% having post graduate degrees. Central District residents apparently are well paid, with 49% of survey respondents earning over \$75,000 annually and 32% earning over \$100,000 annually.

Rents in the Central District were varied but balanced. 59% of the rents were reported to be under \$1,500, with the majority of those rents in the \$1,000 to \$1,500 range for 35% of the total. Rents in the \$1,500 to \$2,000 range made up 25%, and those over \$2,000, 15% of the total.

The number of vehicles per household is generally synonymous with the number of adults in the household. 34% of households reported having two cars, and 56%

reported having one car. Of those survey respondents who live in Pasadena and are employed elsewhere, 78% use their automobile for work. Of those who live and work in Pasadena, 58% use their automobile to get to work. Citywide, 71% of those employed drove their car to work, according to 2000 census data.

Some survey respondents commented that they use their cars to get to work because transit service is still lacking or infrequent, but that weekend or local trips were often done on foot. "Walkability" was often cited as a reason for moving to Pasadena's downtown. Moreover, the Central District is perceived by survey respondents as safe and enjoyable with mature tree canopies. In terms of the top three reasons for moving to Pasadena, comments such as Beautiful, Convenient (for both walking and commute), and Cultural were the dominant responses.

Planning staff sent surveys to all residential mailing addresses within the Central District, for a total of 10,283 surveys. Over 1,200 surveys were returned, resulting in a response rate greater than 12%. The Planning

Department will use the information to better understand who lives and works downtown, their reasons for living there, and how residents use downtown.

For more information on the Central District survey, please contact the Pasadena Planning Department at (626) 744-4009 or visit www.cityofpasadena.net.

Easier Walking in the Central District

Last month, TAC published a report to the City Council regarding recommended pedestrian improvements for the Central District. The pedestrian report discusses TAC's activities with respect to improving the pedestrian experience of our City, as well as the rationale for recommending specific improvement measures for the Central District.

One of TAC's pedestrian improvement recommendations is the development of a dedicated, 'L'-shaped trolley car loop with minimal headways to service the Colorado Boulevard and South Lake Avenue corridor. The favored route would run approximately from Pasadena Avenue eastward along

Colorado, then southward on Lake to California. The "loop" would link the business districts within the Central District, further implement the "park once & walk" paradigm, and increase the number of visitors. Additionally, through the use of open-air, traditional-looking vehicles (e.g. resembling San Francisco cable cars), riding "the loop" could become an entertaining and recreational experience in itself, which would increase ridership. TAC also recommends amending Pasadena's design guidelines to create a comprehensive signage program in the Central District oriented to guiding pedestrians effectively through downtown, modeled after the excellent program in Downtown Philadelphia.

For more information, and to get a copy of the report, please contact the Pasadena Transportation Department at (626) 744-TRIP.

Editor's Note: Vince Farhat is Chairman of the Transportation Advisory Commission. Vince has been on the WPRA Board of Directors since 1997, and served as President from 2001 to 2003. He can be contacted at vince.farhat@sbcglobal.net. ■

New Master Plan for Westridge School

By Bill Jernigan

A new master plan for Westridge School was approved by the Pasadena City Council on September 24, 2007. The plan retains the enrollment cap of 502 students and a faculty and staff of 105 members.

The first phase of the master plan adds 1066 South Orange Grove to the campus. This 4900 square foot residence will be demolished and replaced by a, two-story science building. The building will be 21.5 feet high and will be set back from the west sidewalk equal to the existing neighboring properties along South Orange Grove. The new Upper School Science Center will be approximately 14,000 square feet with an elevation

design similar to other buildings on the campus.

Phase two calls for demolition of the existing Gertrude Hall Lecture building that is 1,155 square feet and the Gertrude Hall Classroom building that is 1,896 square feet. Construction of a new Middle School complex of 21,040 square feet will be erected on the existing site. During this phase the Joan Irvine Smith Library will be remodeled.

Phase three involves demolition of the existing Ranney House of 8,376 square feet and the State Street parking lot. The new Lower School complex of 17,436 square feet will be built on that space. An underground

parking structure will be placed below the area.

Overall, the campus will grow to 9.54 acres from the existing 9.15 acres. Phase one of the Westridge expansion is planned to begin in the spring of 2008.

Editor's Note: Westridge School was founded in 1913 as an independent, day school for girls grade 4 through 12. Plans for expansion have been underway for a number of years and after completion were presented to the Pasadena City Council. For information, please contact Francesca DeMarco at 626-799-1153, ext. 252. ■

Desiderio Update

By Ann Scheid

Last June the City of Pasadena forwarded an application to the Department of Defense (DOD) proposing that the Desiderio Army Reserve base be deeded to the City. The City is asking that the 5.1 acres on South Arroyo Boulevard, under and south of the Colorado Street Bridge, be used for open space/parkland and nine units of affordable housing to be built by Habitat for Humanity.

On February 27, 2008, the Planning Commission scheduled a status report on the Desiderio site. Stephanie Dewolfe, Deputy Director of Planning, reported that the City has been negotiating with the federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) since receiving their August 3, 2007, letter questioning the extent of Pasadena's commitment to providing housing for the homeless in connection with the Desiderio site application.

While the Habitat project is not intended to serve the homeless HUD does have input into this process and requested that the application provide "sufficient information . . . to deter-

mine whether the Plan balances . . . the needs . . . for economic redevelopment . . . with the needs of the homeless." HUD also found that the application "does not discuss the economic impact of the homeless assistance under the plan. . . ."

Dewolfe stated that the City had difficulty in finding out exactly what HUD wanted, but once receiving clarification on the concerns, the City began developing a plan for "transition housing" for homeless people/families, who need "permanent supportive care," such as counseling, assisted rent and other services. The City is looking for buildings with small numbers of units (duplexes, fourplexes, bungalow courts) suitable for rental units for this purpose, in order to satisfy HUD's requirements.

As for HUD's involvement in the Desiderio application, HUD is interested in the city's overall commitment to homeless housing which can be anywhere in the city. HUD cannot recommend an entirely new plan involving using Desiderio for homeless housing but could recommend that the DOD

(in this case, the Army) not approve the city's application. The DOD has to consider HUD's recommendation but is not required to follow it.

The City has been granted a 90-day extension, until early May, to develop this plan and return to HUD with more substantive proposals and information. Habitat has submitted all required documents for its proposal for self-help housing. It should be noted that the city is committed to the Habitat/open space combination project for Desiderio. Watch for further Planning Commission updates on this issue.

Editor's Note: Ann has her Master's from Graduate School of Design (GSD) Harvard in History and Theory of Landscape Design. She also worked for the City in Planning as Former Senior Planner: Design and Historic Preservation City of Pasadena. She is a Former Architectural Historian for State of California and has authored 3 books on Pasadena history and several articles on architecture and planning. ■

Ambassador West Housing Project is in Receivership

By Audrey O'Kelley

The former Ambassador West Campus, bounded on the east and west by St. John and Colorado Boulevard and on the north and south by Green and Del Mar, was sold several years ago to a development consortium headed by Dorn Platz. And while most projects within this development have proceeded as planned, the housing project is struggling.

Currently, owners of the housing project, AACP Properties, LLC and Ambassador Acquisition Coalition Partners II, are working with New York-based lender Drawbridge Special Opportunities Fund, Ltd to restructure the project.

Last November Drawbridge filed suit against the owners claiming they

had defaulted on a \$44 million loan. According to the suit, New York-based Fortress Lender Corp. loaned the money to AACP in January 2005 to purchase and develop the property and then assigned the loan to Drawbridge. This loan has been extended several times. In December 2007, Los Angeles Superior Court honored Drawbridge's request and appointed William J. Hoffman, Trigold Incorporated, as receiver to manage the property.

On a positive note, former project manager Dorn Platz continues to own the Rankin House and the Villa Francesca Apartments. Maranatha High School and Harvest Rock Church have settled in to become good neighbors. And Sunrise Senior Living

is moving forward with their portion of the Ambassador West project for a 248-unit development, some of which will include assisted living

The housing development is a key component of the Ambassador West project. Many people worked diligently to broker the project so that many of the historic structures and gardens would be preserved in the context of a relatively low-density project.

The WPRA will closely monitor developments at Ambassador West. Our goal is unchanged: to make sure the intent of the original partners is realized and ensure that the historic gardens and walkways are not threatened by future development plans. ■

Mayor Bogaard Visits San Rafael School

Continued from page 3

the month was the visit by Pasadena's Mayor Bill Bogaard. Imagine our excitement when we received word from the Mayor's office that Mayor Bogaard had accepted our invitation to visit and speak with students.

On Wednesday, March 19, 2008, Mayor Bogaard shared with 150 eager and enthusiastic upper grade students at San Rafael about his education, work experiences and responsibilities as the mayor of Pasadena and even that his daughter had been a student at San Rafael. Students had an opportunity to ask the Mayor a variety of questions. In addition to typical questions like "Did you always want to be mayor?" or "What kind of training and education do you need to be mayor?" Students had questions about "How did you campaign for office?" and "What are your goals for the City of Pasadena?" and "What do you believe to be your biggest accomplishments so far as mayor?" Mayor Bogaard spent nearly an hour speaking with the students. For all of the students and teachers present, this was an event to remember.

Editor's Note: You can contact, San Rafael Principal, Alyson Beecher, via email: abeecher@pusd.us or phone: 626-793-4189. ■



Pasadena Beautiful, an organization probably best known for its annual Golden Arrow Awards for single family residences throughout Pasadena, is reviving another award program. In late spring Design Awards will be given for outstanding commercial, industrial and multifamily projects which exhibit exceptional beautification in their structures or landscapes.

Pasadena Beautiful is an organization formed to protect and enhance Pasadena's urban forest and streetscape by encouraging beautification and sustainable landscapes, both public and private. If you would like to learn more, check out their website:

www.pasadenabeautiful.org.

Approach to Excellence

Continued from page 2

with PUSD. I will be seeking more organizations to follow their lead and invest in the PUSD educational movement so we can continue to improve student performance and provide a challenging, engaging and relevant education for every child.

I am seeking those who share my belief that every child can achieve educational success and my sense of urgency about seizing this unique opportunity for change. The time is now!

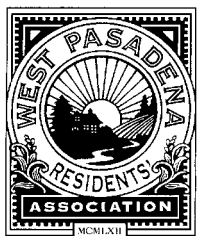
Editor's Note: The Superintendent may be contacted at: Ediaz@pusd.us; (626) 568-4501. ■

WPRA Wants You!

The WPRA is looking for volunteers to serve on committees and to get involved in neighborhood issues. Whatever your interests, we have many opportunities for involvement and are looking for dedicated West Pasadena residents committed to preserving our neighborhood quality of life. Here are some of the areas where we need your help:

- Parks and Open Space
- Air Pollution
- Education – San Rafael School
- Crime
- Noise

The WPRA wants you and needs your help! For more information, please contact WPRA board member Vince Farhat at vince.farhat@wpra.net. ■



Join the WPRA Today

All membership dues are tax-deductible, and donations of \$100 or more are acknowledged in this newsletter. Please take a moment to complete this form and mail it with your check today!

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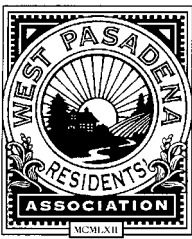
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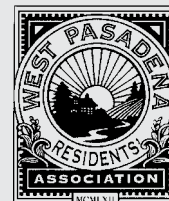
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