



THE NEWS

Pasadena, California

Celebrating 63 years
of community service

Fall 2025

WPRA IN MOTION

CITY IN MOTION

ON PASSING

LAND USE/PLANNING

PUBLIC SAFETY

DONORS

OPEN SPACE/CONSERVATION

COMMUNITY

Wildfire prevention challenges

Arroyo Seco or Arroyo Incendio?

By Jacky English
Director, WPRA

The Eaton Fire opened on Jan. 7 with a hurricane-speed winds and closed with a conflagration that took 19 lives and destroyed more than 9,000 buildings including 6,000 homes in Altadena and north Pasadena. The event — considered the fifth most deadly fire in California history — was not a one-off.

That fire nearly reached the upper Arroyo Seco, which could have wiped out La Cañada Flintridge and the communities west of Altadena. The increasing frequency and severity of destructive fires in Southern California, makes fire season a more predictable and dangerous reality.

Keeping our city safe requires multiple efforts from multiple groups as well as applying the lessons learned from past fires. To manage these risks, we must address several short-comings:

- Overgrown vegetation in the lower Arroyo Seco and other “natural areas”
- Insufficient water availability and fire hydrant capacity
- Incomplete emergency evacuation procedures
- Inability to quickly mobilize equipment and personnel

For example: the **Pasadena Fire Department** needs to plan for wind-driven fires by ensuring the appropriate resources and infrastructure are in place. The **City of Pasadena** must do its part by evaluating its readiness for future fires, ensuring that water supply, hydrant capacity, evacuation

alerts and routes and firefighting resources are sufficient. And finally, **property owners** must do their part to maintain their landscape and clear brush, according to CAL-Fire recommendations, and use fire-resistant features like tempered glass windows and 1/8th inch wire mesh vents to protect their homes from embers that are the cause of 90% of home fires in a wind-driven event.

Pasadena values its trees, but limited resources mean many grow unchecked; dead, dying, or non-native trees need removal, which is a significant task for the understaffed forestry department. Despite nearly a third of the city being a high fire-hazard zone, the issue remains largely disregarded.

The large amount of combustible fuel in the lower Arroyo Seco must be cleared to reduce risk to nearby residents and their homes. Events like last January’s wind-driven fire threaten these properties. Firefighters face limited access from the west due to housing and gated walls. Strong winds also hinder aerial firefighting. Despite the cost, residents adjacent to the Arroyo Seco must prioritize brush clearance.

We need clear guidance and city cooperation when residents are required to remove hazardous trees and brush for fire safety. City processes should be streamlined so those directed by fire authorities or insurance companies to remove a dead tree, for example, do not face excessive fees or permit obstacles.

Many neighbors want to start Firewise communities, which can guide residents in hardening their homes. Several have

City Council approved a new five-year, nearly \$1 million contract to reduce the risk of wildfire from weed and brush in the Arroyo Seco. The contract, with Greenfield Management, calls for clearing debris from roads and trails, applying mulch in designated zones, and collecting litter and debris in assigned areas. *Source: City of Pasadena*

already formed along the Arroyo and elsewhere in the city — a positive step.

We need a thorough evacuation plan for wildfire threats. Many west Pasadena streets are narrow and lined with flammable trees. In the Pacific Palisades canyons last January, abandoned cars showed how jammed roads and burning trees forced people to escape on foot.

Many appear resistant to clearing the brush in the lower Arroyo Seco citing the Lower Arroyo Seco master plan.

Continued on page 7

Screened background photo: Overgrown vegetation abounds in the lower Arroyo Seco.

Nina Chomsky, a Linda Vista resident, West Pasadena Residents’ Association director and chair of its Land Use and Planning committee, died in a home fire on Aug. 30. She had worked tirelessly for more than 40 years to help maintain the character of our neighborhoods and enhance the quality of life across Pasadena. *For more about Nina and the legacy she has left us, turn to page 4.*

Project updates for two focused initiatives; a third is coming soon

By Pete Ewing
President, WPRA

The 710 ditch

Coincidentally, the WPRA was founded at the same time Caltrans began the demolition of the existing structures for the now-abandoned 710 freeway extension between El Serano to Pasadena. We (and many others) were engaged in a 60-plus year struggle to prevent what most considered an inappropriate freeway. That project would have, at the least, heavily and negatively, impacted much of the WPRA service area and beyond.

So how will the planning process to develop the ditch and solve the traffic issues move forward? The planning process for the 710 project has now run on for more than two years. Input during this period has largely come from City staff and master planner Perkins Eastman. Unfortunately, the planning has not substantially included participation by the City's Planning and Community Development Department.

This exclusion appears contrary to a number of provisions of the City's Charter, Municipal Code, and General and Specific Plan provisions, and does not reflect the norms and expectations of the "Pasadena Way." Further, residents of west Pasadena thus far have not been given a

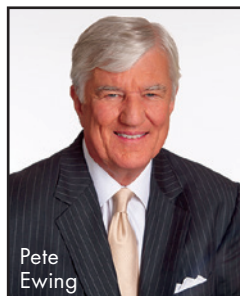
meaningful voice in the planning process.

Fortunately, the Planning and Community Development Department has just recently been appointed as the lead agency for articulating and implementing a Specific Plan for the ditch area. The WPRA is hopeful that prior extensive community-driven efforts, such as the Connecting Pasadena Project, will now be considered, and that the timeline for the effort will be extended.

Fire abatement in the lower Arroyo

Carlos Javelera, WPRA Public Safety chair, has been working with his team to develop a detailed plan to reduce fire hazards in the Arroyo Seco and to promote home "hardening" plans. That team comprises representatives of the WPRA; the Pasadena Fire Department; One Arroyo Foundation; Firewise USA; and the City's Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department. The team is also helping to create a plan that would permanently fund removal of wildfire hazards.

In another step forward City Council has allocated approximately \$1 million over



Pete Ewing

five years to support removal of wildfire fuel in in Arroyo Seco. Stand by.

Upcoming WPRA initiative: vehicular noise

We are hearing increasing levels of complaints from west Pasadena residents about daily noise coming from trucks, cars and motorcycles. This issue isn't unique to Pasadena. Many communities around the globe are registering similar complaints. For example, in Australia, the violators are referred to as "hoons" — drivers who deliberately drive in a reckless manner.

Thankfully, California has implemented a trial program (2023-2027) for camera automated exhaust noise enforcement. The trial will be evaluated in six different cities across the state and will focus on decibel levels of more than 80 for cars, and 95 for motorcycles. Seems way too lenient for my fragile ears! Pasadena does have existing noise ordinances, and we'll look into why those ordinances are not being broadly.

The WPRA needs you!

Want to make a real difference in your community? By contributing as few as three hours a month you can help the WPRA be more efficient and effective — and no special skills are required. If we've piqued your interest, please send an email to president@wpra.net

2025 - 2026

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Mission: Founded in 1962, the West Pasadena Residents' Association is dedicated to maintaining the character of our community and enhancing the quality of life in west Pasadena.

Service area: The WPRA service area is bounded on the north by Colorado Boulevard, on the east by Fair Oaks Avenue and on the south and west by the city limits.

All WPRA activities are funded through membership dues and contributions. The WPRA receives no public funding and has no paid employees. The WPRA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit public benefit corporation. Contributions and donations are fully deductible to the extent permitted by law.

THE NEWS

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THE PASADENA CITY COUNCIL APPROVED:

- its fiscal year 2025-2026 operating budget of \$1.5 billion. *Source: City of Pasadena*
- a \$195 million contract to retrofit and repair the Pasadena Central Library. *Source: City of Pasadena*
- a \$32 million contract to purchase 17 hydrogen fuel-cell electric buses to replace aging natural-gas models. Although conservationists opposed the decision, a recent pilot battery-electric bus study concluded that meeting daily service levels with battery buses alone would require doubling the fleet. *Source: Pasadena Now*
- a request by the Pasadena Fire Department to add three new 24-hour-shift battalion chiefs and a second command vehicle for a total of \$1.3 million. *Source: City of Pasadena*
- a \$1.6 million contract for engineering and design work on the seismic retrofit of the historic San Rafael Bridge. *Source: City of Pasadena*
- a review of pay for councilmembers and mayor. The panel postponed a decision and directed staff to return with a full menu of options that includes cost-of-living catch-ups and new supports to make public service more accessible for parents and caregivers. *Source: Pasadena Now*
- a two-year study of Pasadena Water and Power (PWP) electric rates. *Source: City of Pasadena and Pasadena Now*
- appointment of **Matt Hawkesworth** as a new assistant city manager, having most recently served Pasadena as acting assistant city manager and, since 2015, director of Finance. *Source: City of Pasadena*
- sale of 127 vacant properties previously in the northern S.R. 710 corridor for no less than appraised value. *Source: Pasadena Now*
- approved an ordinance that lowers

the quorum requirement for City committee meetings from three to two. *Source: City of Pasadena*

THE PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT:

- welcomed an estimated 13,600 students — down from 23,600 students in 2000-2001 — across 34 campuses, launching the new academic year under the theme “The Power of Pasadena Unified School District: Rising Together.” *Source: Pasadena Now*
- faces a projected budget shortfall of about \$30 million in the 2025-2026 fiscal year. The district attributes the gap to sharply rising costs — including employee health benefits, utilities, and property and liability insurance — combined with declining enrollment that reduces state funding tied to average daily attendance. *Source: Pasadena Now*

U.S. REP. LAURA FRIEDMAN (D-30)

announced that Pasadena will receive more than \$1 million each for Rose Bowl water and wastewater improvements, and upgrades to the city’s 9-1-1 dispatch hub. *Source: Pasadena Now*

THE CITY OF PASADENA CELEBRATED the launch of a new groundwater well. The [Villa] Parke Groundwater Well, which replaces the 104-year-old Garfield Well, can pump up to 1,500 gallons of water per minute. *Source: Pasadena Now*

EIGHT YEARS AFTER BREAKING GROUND, THE NINE-MILE EXTENSION of the Metro A Line (through Pasadena) to Pomona was put into service for passengers. The \$1.5-billion project takes what Metro says is the world’s longest light-rail line eastward from its current terminus in Azusa, with stops in Glendora, San Dimas and La Verne. *Source: Urbanize LA*

PASADENA WATER AND POWER IS MOVING FORWARD with a \$44 million infrastructure project to replace over 200,000 feet of underground power transmission cable. *Source: Pasadena Now*

THE CITY ACCESSIBILITY AND DISABILITY COMMISSION WILL ASSESS

current City emergency preparedness practices for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. The initiative proposes to develop specialized resources for disabled community members. Current resources proved inadequate during the Eaton Fire. *Source: Pasadena Now*

THE ROSE BOWL STADIUM recorded the **FIFA Club World Cup** tournament’s highest attendance in June with 80,619 fans for the Paris Saint-Germain vs. Atlético Madrid match. This contrasted sharply with attendance struggles at other locations with an attendance of 34,773 for each of the first 16 matches. *Source: Pasadena Now*

THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

- **RE-ELECTED** Juliana Delgado as chair and elected Marie-Claude Fares (at-large/District 7z) as vice chair for fiscal year 2025–26. *Source: Pasadena Now*
- **BACKED A PLAN** for N. Lake Avenue to revitalize the corridor with strategies modeled after Old Pasadena’s successful redevelopment. City staff has already secured a \$10 million grant to jumpstart the improvements. *Source: Pasadena Now*

PASADENA WATER AND POWER (PWP)

ENCOURAGES citizens to report the presence of life-saving, home-based medical equipment to enable it to better respond in emergencies and power outages. Qualifying residential electric customers can also receive \$13.46 per month credit on their bill. *Source: Pasadena Water and Power*

THE PASADENA POLICE DEPARTMENT HAS POSITIONED 61 Flock license-plate readers across the city and plans to install 12 more at three intersections, citing investigative benefits and promising strict data retention policies. The expansion is funded by grants. *Source: Pasadena Now*

Screened Water Color Painting by Joseph Stoddard

Nina Chomsky: A force of nature, a champion for a better Pasadena

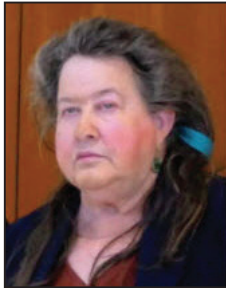
Editor's Note: Nina Chomsky — a Linda Vista resident, a former president of the Linda Vista-Annandale Association, West Pasadena Residents' Association director and Land Use and Planning committee chair — passed away at age 78 in a house fire on Aug. 30.

She worked tirelessly for more than 40 years to help maintain the character of our communities and to enhance the quality of life across Pasadena. What follows are comments from those who are witnesses to the legacy she leaves behind.

NINA WORKED

TIRELESSLY for more than 40 years as a champion of better land-use and lifestyle policies in Pasadena.

She was detail oriented, selfless, brilliant, fearless and, yes, sometimes irascible, but never bashful when it came to challenging authority. The city is better for her efforts. It was an honor to work alongside her. — **Pete Ewing**, WPRA president



Preparing to right the next wrong.

purpose and her fierce defense of the community we share. — **Geoff Baum**, former WPRA president

FOR DECADES NINA CHOMSKY was a forceful advocate for Pasadena's neighborhoods and their high quality of life. Her strong intellect and voice always got the attention of decisionmakers and frequently resulted in a better outcome as a result of her input. — **Steve Madison**, District 6 councilmember

NINA WAS A FORCE OF NATURE.

Committed, articulate, knowledgeable and determined, she valued her neighborhood, her city, and its way of life — passionately believing that it was her duty to protect them. Nina and I crossed paths as fellow preservationists and neighborhood advocates many years ago. Her respect for good planning and design, her love of trees and open space, her reverence for the many architectural treasures that abound in Pasadena, and most of all her strong need to safeguard and preserve not only Linda Vista but many other Pasadena neighborhoods benefitted us all. As a land-use attorney, she had prodigious knowledge of legislation, zoning, CEQA, and code-related issues, which made her an expert voice and a fount of information. She was a powerful advocate for so many planning and design causes, and was tenacious, outspoken and persistent. She always had the best interests of her community at heart. Over the years, she influenced many projects, among them our Police headquarters, the Playhouse Plaza, the Rose Bowl renovations, the 90's slow-growth initiative, ArtCenter's expansion, our hillside ordinance, Linda Vista Park, the Arroyo, and participated on city commissions, general plan and specific

plan update committees, as well as many others. Nina had a sense of humor, loved good food, current events, watching PBS Masterpiece, her alma mater, and the cartoon Shaun the Sheep. She was also a caring and loyal friend. May "Flights of Angels sing thee to thy rest." (Hamlet-Act 5, Scene 2) — **Mic Hansen**, WPRA board member

WITH NINA'S SUDDEN DEATH,

those who follow city affairs were reminded of not only her significant impact on Pasadena, but the long period of time she was an active and influential advocate for the city. She has consistently been a supporter of policies and action — and inactions — that make Pasadena unique community today. One example is the Pasadena Playhouse. In the late 1970s, the Playhouse found itself in the ownership of a bank which years before had foreclosed on a loan and put the property on the market for sale and ultimate demolition. The bank had given up on saving the property, but Nina was among activists in the city who set out to save this historic landmark and joined others who gathered to determine how to save the building. As a tax lawyer, Nina had a special role to play in developing a feasible financial plan, and she devoted many hours to that effort, which has in the last few years proved itself to be a success. — **CLAIRE BOGAARD**, co-founder of Pasadena Heritage and former WPRA board member

NINA WAS AN ATTORNEY, AN

EXTRAORDINARILY intelligent leader, and a tireless volunteer who poured her heart into protecting the Arroyo, championing the neighborhoods of the lower Arroyo, and preserving Pasadena's historic beauty and legacy. For decades, she was a constant presence in our community and in our City Council chambers, always speaking up for the preservation of open space, thoughtful architecture and design, planning, diversity, and improving the quality of life for all who call Pasadena home. Her persistence and determination pushed all of us to do better and to think more deeply about the decisions we make for our city. — **Victor Gordo**, Pasadena mayor

IN AN ERA WHEN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

often feels muted, Nina's activism stands out. Our neighborhoods need voices like hers. Brilliant, passionate, sometimes contrarian, always committed. I respected her clarity of

LIKE SO MANY FRIENDS AND

NEIGHBORS IN PASADENA, we were shocked to learn of the sudden death of Nina Chomsky. Immediately, we all



District 6 Councilmember Steve Madison just recently honored Nina with flowers, praise and much-deserved recognition for her community work.

spoke of Nina's drive, her talents, her intelligence and her dedication to many causes through the years. Nina carefully studied issues and was quick to voice her views, most often at public meetings. Then, of course, Nina was never hesitant to disagree, too, with friends, neighbors and even elected officials. Yet, we all recognized Nina Chomsky as an amazing activist. We are so grateful for her many contributions and her strong affection for our built environment, our neighborhoods, the Arroyo Seco, the Rose Bowl and more. Our city is a better place thanks to her tireless work. — **BILL BOGAARD**, former Pasadena mayor and former WPRA board member

NINA CHOMSKY WILL BE DEEPLY and sorely missed. I grieve the loss of such a remarkable person. Nina was and is a legend. No one was a more passionate Pasadena defender. An attorney with a brilliant mind and unmatched tenacity, she spent much of her life championing Pasadena as a one-of-a-kind community with so many valuable assets to protect. She was meticulous, relentless, and creative in seeking to prevent a wrong or find a right solution. She worried about the Rose Bowl endlessly and the impacts of its increasing use on surrounding historic neighborhoods. She assisted Pasadena Heritage in developing arguments or crafting language on

important preservation issues countless times through the years. She was an expert on CEQA law and shared her knowledge. Nina had a heart of gold, though she seldom spoke of her pro bono work or the financial contributions she made. I count on her spirit staying with us, reminding us to be courageous, thorough and tough, and to never give up the good fight. — **SUE MOSSMAN**, former executive director of Pasadena Heritage

WHAT A FIGHTER SHE WAS. I knew Nina for 45 years -- brilliant with deep conviction and not afraid to speak truth to power. Nina and I were on the same page most of the time, mainly about the core values of Pasadena and what made Pasadena the great city it is. She was a legend among those who fought alongside her. She touched so many parts of Pasadena and leaves in her wake a much better city than it would have been without her. What a profound loss and what gaping hole she leaves. What will we do without her and her brilliant voice? — **MARSHA ROOD**, former City Development administrator

NINA IS OF COURSE MOST WIDELY KNOWN for her years of advocacy on behalf of neighborhoods, historic preservation, civic character, greenery, and beauty. But I hope the tributes don't

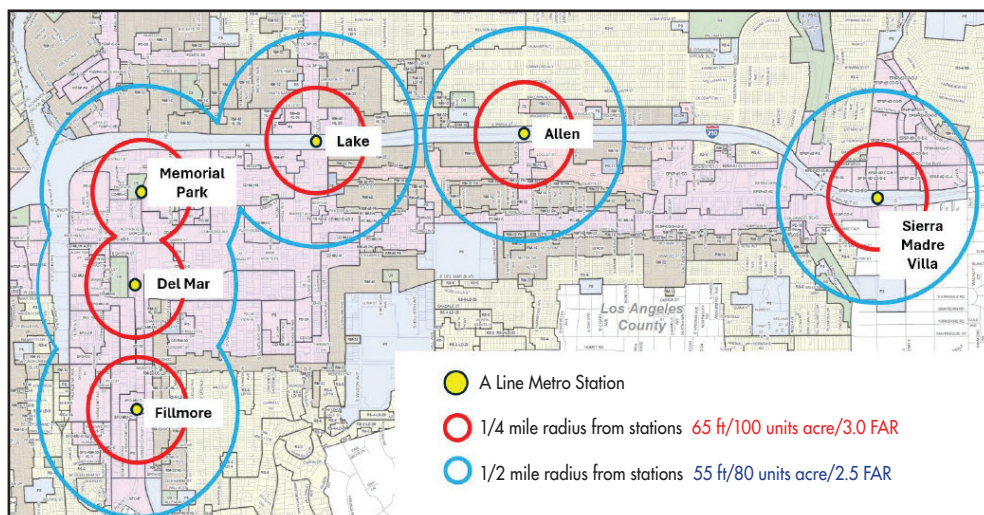
overlook the tangible achievements of her advocacy — and the fact that she was not only a fervent fighter, but also a constructive builder. She worked with others, found common ground and helped sustain the civic fabric and institutions of Pasadena. Her fingerprints are on countless laws, policies and critical decisions that touch the lives of every Pasadenan. — **RICK COLE**, District 2 City councilmember.

I BEGAN MY TENURE WITH THE CITY OF PASADENA in January 2011. About a month into the job, I was asked to meet with 'someone' from Linda Vista. That 'someone' turned out to be Nina — a land-use and CEQA attorney who had helped write the very regulations we were about to discuss. Looking back, that meeting was one of the most important of my 13 years in Pasadena. For nearly an hour, Nina meticulously pointed out technical errors in the approval, oversights in basic planning principles, inconsistencies with Hillside design guidelines, and misapplications of CEQA. And she was right — on every point. Nina was passionate, persistent, and deeply committed to her city. She exemplified what community engagement should look like. — **DAVID M. REYES**, general manager, Pasadena Water and Power Department. —

WHEN I STARTED WITH THE CITY OF PASADENA IN 2005, Nina Chomsky was certainly a name of influence at City Council meetings. She regularly spoke during public comment, and was passionately focused on every major development project on the west side. She was tireless in her advocacy of maintaining the character of the city, and was not shy to take opposing positions from the City staff or City Council to protect her vision for Pasadena. Nina used her knowledge, experience, and legal background to do battle on some of the most contentious development projects. — **MARK JOMSKY**, Pasadena City Clerk

I'VE KNOWN NINA FOR 25 YEARS. Whenever we would meet, I would ask how she was doing. Her response was

Continued on page 10



This map shows the Metro A Line (formerly Gold Line) light rail route and stations, including a summary of development limits surrounding the light rail stations, as proposed by SB 79. Source: City of Pasadena

WPRA shares its objections to SB 79

Editor's Note: The following presents the key portions of a letter the WPRA Board of Directors sent to Assemblymember John Harabedian and State Senator Sasha Renee Perez. It cites the WPRA's objections and concerns about Senate Bill 79, formally labeled the *Abundant & Affordable Homes Near Transit Act*. As of this writing the bill has not yet gone to the Governor for enactment.

The WPRA's opposition to SB 79, is based on the following five concerns.

PASADENA'S CERTIFIED HOUSING

ELEMENT. The WPRA agrees with the City of Pasadena's opposition to SB 79 sent to Bay Area State Sen. Scott Wiener, and supports the City's opinion that SB 79 would be a massive, state-mandated up-zoning that disregards and undermines Pasadena's Housing Element of its General Plan.

Pasadena has spent hundreds of hours and enormous staff effort ensuring compliance of its Housing Element, including the provisions of the recently adopted Pasadena Specific Plans and Zoning Ordinances, with state housing policies. Pasadena's compliance includes increased emphasis on the production of Transit Oriented Developments (TODs). Pasadena's Housing Element combines compliant policies with numerous

creative solutions and approaches to producing new and preserving existing housing, including affordable housing. WPRA supports Pasadena's Housing Element and Pasadena's successful and sustained efforts to facilitate housing, particularly affordable housing, in targeted and appropriate areas of the city while preserving its neighborhoods, commercial areas, and historic character.

PASADENA'S LIGHT RAIL IMPACTS. SB 79 adversely applies to Pasadena's L Line light-rail route and its six "Tier 2" stations. The light rail route runs purposely through the heart of historic Old Pasadena and the Central and other commercial districts. The bill runs adjacently to various forms of housing including multi-family and economically and sociologically diverse neighborhoods, as well as single-family homes in Pasadena's diverse neighborhoods.

Why did Pasadena choose this route and choose to include six stations? The answer is to encourage transit ridership and facilitate transit-oriented housing, commercial and mixed-use development. Instead, without any public review, including protection of commercial areas providing jobs and tax-base, historic resources, and single-family neighborhoods, SB 79 will automatically increase housing density for large areas

around Pasadena's light rail stations and residential neighborhoods and commercial areas, many of which are historic. In the case of SB 79, one size does not fit all, and SB 79 does not "fit" Pasadena.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION. The WPRA joins others who have expressed much community concern about SB 79's impact on historic preservation, a vital aspect of Pasadena's character. It is now clear that the relationship between SB 79 and SB 35 would include prohibiting the demolition of a historic structure that is located on a national, state, or local historic register. SB 79 does not apply to current historic and landmark districts in Pasadena and listed historic resources. Does this solve the problem? No, and, in effect, it adds to the confusion.

Historic and landmark districts such as Old Pasadena and Bungalow Heaven include non-contributing structures subject to SB 79. Plus, Pasadena has many eligible historic resources subject to SB 79. It appears that SB 79, if enacted, would create a patchwork

Continued on page 10

CONTROVERSY OVER CALIFORNIA'S FOUNDATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL

law has resulted in comprehensive legislation. Amendments to the 2025-2026 state budget bill, which Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law, nullifies the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for most urban housing projects, releasing infill developments from environmental review. Developers are no longer required to assess how projects impact traffic, air quality, or historic resources. Even the ambiguous category, "advanced manufacturing," is now exempt from environmental review and oversight. Housing advocates claim this as a major victory toward resolving California's housing shortage. Environmental advocates say the harmful amendment provisions must be repealed to protect our communities.

Arroyo Seco or Arroyo Incendio?

Continued from front page 1

However, the master plan indicates that brush should be cleared. It's true that we need to preserve the lower Arroyo Seco as a wildlife corridor, but we also need to preserve the lives of the people who live around it. Further, it's not going to be much help if that wildlife corridor is burned to a crisp.

Also, consider that when the Arroyo Seco master plan in 2003 was written and accepted by City Council, climate change was not a factor as it is now. We have more fires than we did back in 2003.

Besides brush clearance and Arroyo management, we must assess if our city is ready for another major fire. If strong winds ground helicopters, can ground crews cope? Relying solely on mutual aid may not suffice when aerial support fails.

After the Altadena fire, some older hydrants proved incompatible with new hoses and couldn't supply the volume water needed for multiple fires. As seen



Dead, dying, or non-native trees need removal.

in Pacific Palisades, water shortages could become a concern.

The Arroyo Seco can ignite rapidly, possibly leading to a difficult-to-control megafire. Clearing brush helps buy time for the fire fighters and allows residents on narrow, pine-lined hillside roads to evacuate safely. Is Southern California Edison maintaining its power lines in a portion of Altadena? This is especially important around the

transmission tower bases to reduce the risk of fire in case of arcing?

We must take the steps to ensure that Pasadena is properly prepared for future wind-driven wildfires? Experts warn that powerful Santa Ana winds — possibly reaching 100 mph, as they did in the Eaton Fire — will occur more frequently. Urgent action is required. The windy season is approaching.

An answer to your question

Editor's note: During this year's annual WPRA meeting, those attending submitted questions about the program theme: Helping residents better protect their life and property from the threat of wildfires. We continue to seek answers to many of those questions. What follows is the answer to one critical issue about fire insurance.

Question. Regarding annual insurance renewal, will insurance companies be required to renew policies that come due during the 12 months of quarantined coverage? What will be the term of the renewal?"

Answer. From Julia Juarez, California Deputy Insurance Commissioner Senate Bill 824 (2018) requires a mandatory one-year moratorium on insurance companies canceling or non-renewing residential insurance policies in certain areas within or adjacent to a fire perimeter after a declared state of emergency is issued by the Governor. Following this declaration, the Department of Insurance partnered with CAL-FIRE and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services to identify wildfire perimeters and adjacent ZIP codes within the mandatory moratorium areas. The protection from cancellation or non-renewal lasts for one year from the date of the Governor's emergency declaration.

This one-year protection applies to all residential policyholders within the affected areas who suffer less than a total loss, including those who suffer no loss. Those who suffer a total loss have additional protections under the law. If you live in one of those ZIP codes, your insurance company cannot issue a cancellation or non-renewal for wildfire risk for one year from the date of the Governor's emergency declaration associated with the nearby fire.

If your ZIP code is included in the moratorium and you received a notice of cancellation or non-renewal for wildfire risk, contact your insurance company to seek a reinstatement of the policy. If your insurance company refuses, contact the department at (800) 927-4357 and file a Request for Assistance."

A thank-you and friendly reminder

The WPRA appreciates the financial support we receive from our members. Since it is our only source of funding, we depend on it to achieve our organizational objectives. The member-donors listed below have contributed \$100 or more between **July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025**. If your name is not listed or is incorrectly listed, please send an email to membership@wpra.net. As always, we thank you for your generous support.

We need your continuing support

To make it easier for you to help support WPRA services and initiatives, we have enclosed an envelope within this issue. Just insert (1) the completed form on the envelope flap and (2) a check (made out to the WPRA) into the pre-addressed envelope, add a stamp, and mail it. You may also donate securely online using a credit card by visiting wpra.net and clicking on "Donate," at the top of the home page.

Platinum \$500+

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
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| The Bert and Darrell Banta Family | The Ewing Family | Larry and Kristen Mantle | Fred Schwarzenbach and Leslie Prussia |
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| | Josh and Nancy Leichter | | |
| | Dan and Denise Levenick | | |
| | Ted Levin and Jenifer Crolius Levin | | |

Nina ...

Continued from page 5

always the same: 'Just terrible...' and then she would immediately jump into the issue that was bothering her, and then smile. Fighting for what mattered to Nina and her city was her lifeblood. She would tell you exactly what her concern was, and she stayed true to that whether speaking privately or publicly; she was intellectually honest. Sometimes we were aligned on a policy matter and other times we were not, but Nina was always open to listening and working to solve a problem. — **Jennifer Paige, AICP**, director, City Planning and Community Development Department

SOME PEOPLE COME INTO YOUR LIFE like a fresh breeze. Others like a hurricane. Nina was definitely a category 5. It was 2006 and the Linda Vista School was closed, its playground locked off from the neighborhood. Disaster. Who you gonna call? Ghostbusters weren't available. The answer was obvious: Nina. Meeting after meeting Nina came on like a force of nature, with me hovering beside her, mouth agape at her courage, her good sense, her vision. We were turned down time after time. But not defeated. With Nina's guidance and tenacity, we went on to plead our case with City Council, Pasadena Unified School District and the City Manager. A mere 233 feisty meetings later, Nina and I had the park opened. But no play equipment. Once again, Nina went to work. And a mere 356 won't-take-no meetings later, and a genius flair for sniffing out money from the City and elsewhere, Nina had the Linda Vista Park opened. Play equipment and all. — **Betsy Nathane**, vice president, Linda Vista-Annandale Association

"ARE YOU FOR OR AGAINST THE NFL MOVING to the Rose Bowl?" I'll never forget the seriousness in her tone as she firmly placed her hands on her hips. I was taken aback, and admitted to her that I wasn't well informed enough to take a position. Her response was, "Good, as long as you're not in favor of it you can be on the Board of LVAA." Although we didn't always agree on



In happier times, Nina breaks into a grin with friend and then-fellow Linda-Vista Annandale Association board member Phil Hosp.

community issues, I was impressed with her knowledge and knew that she had the best interest of our neighborhood in mind. I'm thankful that she took a stand against overdevelopment of the Linda Vista hillsides and mansionization. I will always be grateful for her passion and advocacy. — **Caryn Hofer**, commissioner, Historic Preservation Commission

WHEN I JOINED THE ROSE BOWL STAFF IN 1995, I was warned about the stadium's neighbors — and especially about their leader, Nina Chomsky. I was told she was outspoken, difficult to deal with, and firmly opposed to the Rose Bowl. For the next 23 years, we spoke and met regularly. She was deeply knowledgeable about land use, EIRs, and CEQA, and I listened carefully when she shared her perspective. One of my lasting memories of Nina, however, had nothing to do with the Rose Bowl. In 2011, when my mother was diagnosed with advanced cancer, Nina heard I was seeking the best care for her. She offered to connect me with the then-president of City of Hope, a personal friend of hers. Thanks to Nina's generosity, my mother received extraordinary care and treated like a VIP. Nina was never "anti-Rose Bowl," in my view. I know Pasadena will miss her deeply. — **Darryl Dunn**, former General Manager of the Rose Bowl Stadium

WPRA shares ...

Continued from page 6

of large, dense development within and adjacent to historic and landmark districts and listed structures as well as destroy many of Pasadena's eligible historic resources. Pasadena currently is surveying all structures in the city to determine historic status. If SB 79 becomes law, Pasadena and cities state-wide will have to determine the exact status of all structures within SB 79 areas at great expense of time and local funds.

Infrastructure costs. Pasadena is an older, compact, built-out city. SB 79 will lead to an infrastructure crisis. Pasadena's infrastructure, including water and sewer lines and public safety services, has not been designed and built with conversion of major commercial and low-density residential areas into large, dense developments. A critical question is who or what entity will absorb this enormous infrastructure cost. Will costs be absorbed by developers, thereby increasing housing development costs and/or reducing housing production? Will Pasadena's residents bear the cost, and/or eventually, the State of California?

THE PASADENA HERITAGE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

has chosen our new Executive Director, Dr. Bridget Lawlor, effective December 1, 2025. Dr. Lawlor has served as Preservation Director since August 2024, and she will take the helm from interim Executive Director Zoot Velasco. Source: Pasadena Heritage

PASADENA HERITAGE'S LEGENDARY CRAFTSMAN WEEKEND

has been expanded to Craftsman Week, October 12- 19. Walking tours, lectures, excursions and special events will all be part of this celebration of the American Arts & Crafts Movement, Pasadena style. A very special Keynote Speaker this year will be Brett Waterman of TV's popular Restoration show. Visit the PH website for all the details!



The City of Pasadena's Transportation Management Center (TMC), under the Department of Transportation, oversees traffic signals throughout the city to manage vehicle flow.

OPINION

A more current, detailed Orange Grove traffic study is long overdue

By Orange Grove Residents' Council

Orange Grove Boulevard is carrying far more traffic than it was designed to handle. An informal review of the failed "road diet" plan in 2018 revealed that more than 15,000 vehicles travel the corridor every day, with another 78,000 exiting the 110 Freeway at Orange Grove. These figures are seven years old, and car volume is likely higher today. The result is recklessly dangerous speeds 24/7 — unsafe conditions for residents, all drivers, pedestrians, users of alternative transportation, and the disabled.

The City of Pasadena already has tools to measure the problem and model solutions. An analysis of the traffic impact of all new developments on surrounding intersections seems warranted. For example, Caltrans uses advanced microsimulation models to illustrate how traffic flow, queues and safety outcomes would change under different scenarios. These are practical tools used every day across California.

So, where is the modeling for Orange Grove and west Pasadena? When the City presented plans at the Convention Center in April, an experienced traffic

engineer indicated to the Orange Grove Residents Council that "as of yet, we really don't have a solution" for north-south congestion; not only for Orange Grove, but every north-south corridor.

That is not acceptable. Residents deserve more than vague assurances. They deserve data to formulate, propose and execute a strategic plan.

We deserve microsimulation modeling of Orange Grove and west Pasadena to demonstrate how proposed changes, such as lane reductions, signal timing adjustments, or a reconfiguration of Raymond Avenue, would affect traffic volumes, speeds and safety.

The City should also provide forecast-based analysis to clarify what happens once changes are implemented. That is, will congestion simply shift traffic elsewhere? Will north-south mobility improve? And most importantly, results must be released to the public, so the community can engage in a fact-based discussion rather than mere speculation.

Pasadena prides itself on being innovative. It was one of the first cities in California to adopt Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis for planning.

Yet in west Pasadena that commitment to data-driven solutions has not been delivered where it matters most.

Orange Grove is overloaded, unsafe and deteriorating. Pasadena and Caltrans have tools to model solutions. It's time to use them, openly, transparently, and in collaboration with the community.

The Orange Grove Residents' Council comprises Dan Baker, Chuck Chillingworth, Janet Christmann, Wes Hampton, Stan Kilpatrick, Wolfgang Kupka, Mike Lewis, Kevin Litwin, Dave McCarthy, Mike Netter, Bill Opel and Steve Russell.

THE CITY OF PASADENA HAS IDENTIFIED TWO CITY-OWNED LOTS

— one next to City Hall at 302 N. Garfield Ave., and another at 267 Cordova St. — as leading candidates for future affordable and supportive housing developments. *Source: Pasadena Now*

PASADENA'S RENTAL HOUSING BOARD SET

the 2025–26 landlord registration fee at \$238 per rental unit, up from \$214.71 in 2024–2025, and approved the Annual General Adjustment (AGA) for the next rent increase cycle at 2.25% for the period Oct. 1, 2025–Sept. 30, 2026. *Sources: City of Pasadena and Pasadena Now*

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES HAS AWARDED

nonprofit HillSides a \$12 million grant to construct a comprehensive mental health facility for young adults through California's Proposition 1. The resulting HillSides Hope and Recovery Hub in west Pasadena will provide outpatient mental health services, and integrate a partial hospitalization program and a peer respite program. *Source: Pasadena Now*

OPINION

'Zone Zero' is not the answer to fire risk in Los Angeles

Native vegetation is critical to community health and safety

By John Howell
CEO, Arroyos & Foothills Conservancy

California is moving quickly toward adopting a proposed ban on most vegetation within 5 feet of structures in high fire-hazard areas. Known as "Zone Zero," the ban is intended to reduce home ignition from wind-blown embers. But the approach is not backed by science and threatens the livability, biodiversity, and resilience of our city. We urge you to learn more about the role of native plants in fire safety and to speak up: send comments to the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (information below).

The fear of planting near homes largely stems from the behavior of fire-fuel plants, such as invasive grasses, mustards, and palm trees, that dry out and easily ignite. However, studies have shown that well-maintained California native foliage can actually protect homes

during a fire. Many native species, like Ceanothus and Toyon, retain a high moisture content, slowing fire spread and extinguishing rolling embers. Large native trees, like Coast Live Oaks, have fire-resistant trunks and waxy-leaf canopies that can intercept flying embers before they reach a home.

Fire scientists emphasize that most home losses in urban fires, such as the ones we experienced in January, are driven by house-to-house ignition, not green vegetation. Removing all plants within 5 feet of structures would preclude native habitat in the zone, which would be taking a step backward for biodiversity protection. Tree canopies would also be reduced, eliminating shade, worsening heat island effects, and raising energy costs — all in conflict with climate resilience and community health.

There are alternative, proven strategies. Home hardening, for example, works



by implementing ember-resistant vents, sealing eaves, and using non-combustible materials for roofing and hardscaping. Combined with smart design and landscaping, these measures protect homes without sacrificing the benefits urban greenery provides all species.

"Zone Zero" is intended to be finalized and signed into law by the end of this year. Informed public comment can make a difference. Please email your concerns to PublicComments@bof.ca.gov and call for site-specific, science-based approach.

We all want to ensure that our neighborhoods are safe, and allowing suitable native plants within 5 feet of our homes that are properly cared for can make a difference.

Visit arroyosfoothills.org for more information about our projects, events, and to donate to our mission.

THE CITY'S PUBLIC WORKS

DEPARTMENT HAS made significant progress over the past five years in upgrading the city's public lighting system by converting 620 outdated lights to energy-efficient LED fixtures. The conversions have resulted in an energy savings that are equivalent to the daily output of 332 rooftop solar panels. *Source: City of Pasadena*

THE CLOCK IS TICKING for the seven Western states (including California) fighting over their share of the dwindling Colorado River flow. The states have until November 11 to reach an "agreement in principle," or report that a deal is unlikely. Pasadena receives approximately two-thirds of its water supply from the Metropolitan Water District, which delivers water from Northern California and the Colorado River. *Source: Politico*

California Climate and Pasadena Water and Power

LA COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS HAS

COMPLETED its now-annual program to remove 100,000 cubic yards of sediment (in 300 trucks daily) from the 100-year old Devil's Gate Reservoir to provide flood protection to downstream communities, while preserving the ecological value of the Hahamongna Watershed. Sediment was transported to Sheldon Pit, with organic debris sent to Scholl Canyon Landfill. *Source: Pasadena Now*

THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

will soon begin construction on a project to bring additional water to Southern California communities (including Pasadena) hit particularly hard by the state's last drought. The Sepulveda Feeder Pump

Stations Project will push Colorado River water and stored supplies from Diamond Valley Lake into communities that currently have limited access to these resources. These communities rely almost exclusively on water from the northern Sierra, delivered through the State Water Project. The board voted July 8 to authorize an additional \$54 million to complete design and begin construction. Construction on the first of the pump stations is expected to begin later this year. Completion of the approximately \$280 million project is expected in early 2029. *Source: The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California*

PASADENA WATER AND POWER

CONTINUES to be committed to meeting the City's goal to achieve 100% carbon-free electricity by the end of 2030. *Source: City of Pasadena*

Tree of the quarter: Persian silk tree

The Albizia's leaves are alternate, compound and fern-like.

The entire canopy is completely covered with white or pink flowers resembling fluffy pompoms; the pink variety is fragrant.

This deciduous tree is fast growing to a height of 20 to 40 feet and a crown spreading as much as 50 feet.

By Emina Darakij
President, California Urban Forests
Council

Albizia julibrissin

Origin: Asia
Family: Fabaceae

Also known as the Persian silk tree, the Albizia belongs in the Fabaceae family, is native to Asia, and can be found growing in a wide range of areas from Iran to Japan. The Albizia is named after an Italian botanist and nobleman Filippo del Albizzi, who introduced it to Europe in the 18th century.

This deciduous tree (sheds its leaves in the fall and is dormant in the winter) is fast growing to a height of 20 to 40 feet and a crown spreading as much as 50

feet. The shape of the crown is droopy and umbrella-like making it a good shade tree.

The Albizia prefers a sunny location, tolerates extreme heat conditions, is drought tolerant and tends to have multiple trunks. This tree is considered invasive in Hawai'i, the eastern U.S., particularly in Virginia to Louisiana and in the Mid-Atlantic region, but not in the southwest U.S.

The Albizia's leaves are alternate, compound and fern-like. When touched, at nighttime or when it rains, the leaves fold down thus giving it the nickname of "night sleeper or sleeping tree" in Japan. The fruit is a flat pointed bean-like pod that contains several brown seeds. The tree can be propagated from seeds.

In late spring and throughout the Fall, the entire canopy is completely covered with white or pink flowers resembling fluffy pompoms; the pink variety is fragrant. Wood from the tree may be used to make furniture and is also reportedly psychoactive — the flowers used to make teas. In Chinese medicine it's considered an antidepressant.

The Albizia tree is stunning when in bloom and attracts many pollinators such as hummingbirds, butterflies and bees.

Emina Darakij is also chair of the Pasadena Beautiful Tree Program and engaged with other tree organizations, including California Re-Leaf, the Arbor Day Foundation and American Forests. She is also a past president of Pasadena Beautiful and Street Tree Seminar, Inc.

JOANNE NUCKOLS, a South Pasadena resident and a longtime opponent of the controversial 710 Freeway extension, passed away on Aug. 29. She was a member of the hard-working team [Stop the 710" committee] that helped to prevent the 710 Freeway extension between El Sereno and Pasadena from becoming a Southern California reality.



Joanne Nuckols

WILLIAM "BILL" THOMSON JR., who as Pasadena's 48th mayor spearheaded the transformation of Old Pasadena into a thriving business and arts district, died on Aug. 17. He was 89. Thomson served as



William "Bill" Thomson Jr.

mayor from 1988 to 1990 after being elected to the City Council in 1981 and served until 1997. He was also instrumental in bringing major sporting events to the Rose Bowl, including four Super Bowls and the 1994 World Cup. *Source: Pasadena Now*

ARLINGTON GARDEN HAS OFFICIALLY REOPENED following a fire that destroyed its storage shed and staging area. The garden is free, as usual, from 8 a.m. until sunset. The fire damage is limited to the area immediately around the shed and down the access road, which is currently fenced off to the public. *Source: Arlington Garden*

THE PASADENA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION HAS AWARDED \$395,000 in education grants to 11 local nonprofit organizations to support student success in the greater Pasadena area. *Source: Pasadena Now*

PASADENA'S DOO DAH PARADE will

skip 2025 and return on Nov. 22, 2026, in its original Old Pasadena location. The Light Bringer Project, the nonprofit producer of the irreverent annual event, cited this year's wildfire crisis and uncertainty over education funding as key reasons for the postponement. *Source: Pasadena Now*

THE ROSE BOWL LEGACY FOUNDATION has received a \$1 million philanthropic commitment from Helen and Roger Ma. Their pledge closely follows a \$3 million gift from Mickey and Lee Segal. These pledges will help support the \$80 million foundation's Lasting Legacy campaign to preserve and enhance the Rose Bowl Stadium. *Source: Rose Bowl Legacy Foundation*

THE PASADENA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE and Civic Association, during its inaugural gala in June, installed veteran journalist Frank Girardot as its new board chair. *Source: Pasadena Now*



No mess. No stress. Just a whole lot of holiday spirit and a full turkey dinner with all the trimmings including potatoes, gravy, and so much more — even vegetarian options.

Celebrate the holidays at the Senior Center

Looking for a fun, festive and oh-so-yummy way to celebrate your Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays this year? Look no further than the Pasadena Senior Center (PSC). And this year, as it has for the past 40+ years, the PSC will be plating turkey, trimmings. Holiday songs and even Santa Claus will be back to bring joy and community to older adults in Pasadena.

If you've never attended PSC's

Thanksgiving or Christmas luncheons, then this is one unique tradition that you must incorporate into your calendar! The luncheons are the only local senior center holiday events that are actually held on the holidays themselves.

And even though it's only October now, it's never too soon to begin to plan how to spend your Christmas. While we can't promise "dashing through the snow," the PSC can promise attendees a jolly

afternoon, and a fun and festive meal with their families

and friends. What's more, the PSC will have live music, courtesy of our sponsor, the Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts.



The Thanksgiving and Christmas luncheons are one of a kind, sell out every year, and provide attendees with a true sense of camaraderie and community. This year the Thanksgiving luncheon is slated for noon on Thursday, Nov. 27, while the Christmas luncheon will be on Thursday, Dec. 25 at 1 p.m. The cost is only \$10 for members and \$12 for non-members of all ages for each event, both held in Scott Pavilion.

Prepaid reservations must be made at PSC's Welcome Desk or at pasadenaseniorcenter.org no later than Sat., Nov. 22 (Thanksgiving) and Sat., Dec. 20 (Christmas). Children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and guests of all ages are welcome to attend. For more information, call, (626) 795-4331.



Giovanni and Mary
Lavagnino

Across the American West: Giovanni and Mary Lavagnino's Pasadena story

By Christian Rodriguez
*Visitor Services and Outreach Manager
Pasadena Museum of History*
By Christian Rodriguez

While preparing for a talk at Pasadena Museum of History on Charles Lummis and his Pasadena ties, I stumbled across a curious line in his journals about fundraising for the Southwest Museum. In February 1909, he wrote: "The Lavagninos are said to be wealthy and are very promising; and I shall cultivate them. They are the kind of people who know what museums are for."

I traced this remark to Giovanni Francesco Lavagnino (1848–1919) and his wife, Mary Lorena Larson (1865–1924), then living at 593 E. California St. in Pasadena.

Giovanni's story is a classic immigrant success. Born in Alessandria, Italy, and educated in Palermo and Freiberg, Germany, he became a respected

mining engineer. He managed operations in Sardinia before emigrating to the United States around 1879.

His career took him from the silver mines of Leadville, Colorado, to Butte, Montana, and later to Utah and Mexico. He rose to prominence as president of the Conglomerate Mining and Milling Company. By 1901, Giovanni and Mary had settled in Pasadena.

Less has been published about Mary: born in 1865 in Salt Lake City and of Swedish descent, she worked as a schoolteacher before marrying Giovanni in Denver in 1895. Among the business records and mining deeds in their family papers — now housed at The Huntington Library — is Mary's diary, which offers a more personal glimpse of their lives, often filled with the loneliness of a young wife separated from her husband.

In March 1896, only one year into their marriage, she wrote: "Again we are separated—and I find the separation

harder to bear than ever. But tonight I am not so sad, for ... a telegram saying that Giovanni would be here this week I am so glad that I will not have to make the journey alone."

Mary's diary reflects the isolation and emotional taxation many women in the 1890s West endured, as well as the ways mobility and distance shaped daily life.

The Lavagninos were survived by four children. In 1927, the family redeveloped their former home into La Casa Torre, a Mediterranean-style courtyard apartment complex designed by Pasadena architect Everett Phipps Babcock. It still stands today as a designated historic monument.

As for Lummis' hopes of "cultivating" them as patrons of his museum, little seems to have come of it—aside from a polite thank-you note from Mary for a copy of his songbook of California Spanish folk songs.



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RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

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