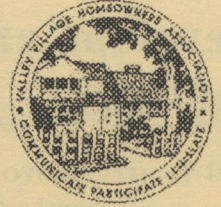


THE VALLEY VILLAGER

VALLEY VILLAGE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION



VOL. 13 NUMBER 4 November 2003 P.O. BOX 4916, VALLEY VILLAGE, CA 91617

VVHA Opposes Car Wash Project

THE PROJECT:

A car wash has been proposed on the vacant lot, formerly a gas station, on Laurel Canyon Boulevard at the 101 freeway. Since the gas station closed, a variety of uses, all generating high volume auto traffic have been proposed and discussed with the Valley Village Homeowners Association (VVHA). The underlying zoning limits use to commercial office and no such project has ever been proposed. None of the projects proposed complied with the Valley Village Specific Plan (which sets the criteria for new development within Valley Village). Those projects were therefore rejected as inappropriate uses for the site. A car wash is an expressly prohibited use under the Plan. In addition, given its location so close to access routes to Laurel Canyon and the 101 freeway ramps, a high auto traffic volume use of this site raises significant ingress and egress site safety issues and Laurel Canyon traffic flow safety issues. Single family homes back up to the rear of the property. This car wash project, different from the one in the public record, was submitted at the last minute at an August public hearing.

“...if approved, the applicant could at a later date add to the project size and expand into a convenience store operation as well as a car wash.”

The applicant seeks exceptions to the Valley Village Specific Plan in order to operate a car wash. VVHA, area residents and property owners and Councilwoman Wendy Greuel opposed the application at the August public hearing. The LA city hearing examiner recommended denial of the application. The applicant appealed that decision to the City of LA Area Planning Commission. The applicant obtained a continuation of that hearing in order ‘to lobby for support’ and the hearing is now rescheduled for November 20th. Given the language of the exceptions sought, if approved, the applicant could at a later date add to the project size and expand into a convenience store operation as well as a car wash.

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Chandler Busway Landscaping



At the request of Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has established a landscape advisory committee consisting of representatives of the communities along the Chandler/MTA Busway. Valley Village Homeowners Association President Lori Dinkin and Marc Woerschling are the Association’s representatives on the committee, who will present the MTA with the community’s preferences for landscaping on the Valley Village portion of the busway. The first meeting was held on October 22.

When the Busway plan was being proposed, a color brochure was distributed at a public meeting. The brochure beautifully depicted grass, flowers and shrubs in a park-like setting. Two years ago the MTA staff and their consultants presented a landscape plan consisting entirely of drought resistant plants and

(continued on page 3)

Development Updates

4901 Laurel Canyon Blvd.

After many months this vacant house has finally been fenced off at the request of Valley Village Homeowners Association. We are attempting to determine what is proposed for the site; and we have requested that the City issue an abatement citation since the property presents a fire hazard

11847 Riverside Drive

A home was demolished recently on the north side of Riverside between Radford and Carpenter. This is the center lot of a three lot block. VVHA has contacted the owners' representative to advise them of the VV Specific Plan. A five unit condo is proposed. The rear of the property backs up to a dedicated but unimproved and unopened alley. Under the Specific Plan, the applicant is required to improve the alley for the width of his lot. This doesn't make sense since there is no access to the rear of the lot. The applicant proposes an exception to that Plan requirement to allow them to landscape the space rather than pave an unusable alleyway. There seems to be no reason to object to this request.

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From The President

Hello,

On November 4th I attended an interesting panel discussion chaired by our Councilwoman Wendy Greuel at the Braude Center. Many subjects were discussed by various panelists, among them, Jill Barad, David Fleming, Ralph Sonenschein and Fred Vitti, The subject was Secession One Year Later: A Valley View. They discussed the viability of establishing an independent borough system for Los Angeles similar to those in London, Tokyo and New York. Also covered were traffic problems, the need for affordable senior housing and the flight of businesses from the area. The panel addressed need for campaign reforms and clean elections (isn't that an oxymoron?) and many other ills that plague the city. Questions were fielded by handing in written cards to the moderator.

Cingular Wireless has applied for a Conditional Use Permit that is an exception to the Valley Village Specific Plan to install an antenna on the building at 12512 Chandler Boulevard. The hearing will be November 14th, 1:30pm at the Braude Center in Van Nuys. The Association will present a compromise requiring the company to put up a camouflaged low unit on the roof of the apartment building.

No doubt you have noticed the work in progress on the traffic island on Laurel Canyon at the 101 Freeway. Thanks to Councilwoman Wendy Greuel's efforts, planting will begin within the next few weeks. Our job is to maintain the island and we have contracted to have it done for a very minimal amount per year.

Another great program coming up! Those attending the Valley Village Homeowners Association meeting Wednesday, November 19th will meet State Senator Richard Alarcon. Since being elected to the State Senate in 1998, Senator Alarcon has established himself as a key player. Prior to joining the State Senate he spent five years as a member of the Los Angeles City Council, so he knows needs and priorities. This is an opportunity to meet an important figure on the State scene at a very critical time.

In keeping with our commitment to address local issues we will also have David Mays from the Department of Public Works. He is Executive Liaison for Neighborhood Councils and will be working closely with the community on matters of Street Services, Sanitation, Street lighting, Trash pick-up and Engineering.

Maricela Gomez, Valley Deputy for Councilwoman Wendy Greuel will also be at the meeting to bring us up to date on City Council activity.

Lori Dinkin, President

Busway (Continued from Page 1)

none of the ambience shown in the color brochure. The plan lacked an irrigation system, which raised questions as to whether even drought resistant shrubs could survive the hot Valley summers without any water. The Association felt this plan was at variance with the pretty picture MTA presented on the brochure. It did not reflect the Valley Village residential style and was contrary to the wishes of the community.



The Association sent a letter to the MTA and to elected officials in opposition to this proposal. The letter urged that a second public meeting be held and that cost figures for four alternatives for the Chandler median be prepared and considered. As a result the advisory committee was formed and a second public meeting was scheduled.

The meeting for the East Valley will be held on:

**Wednesday, December 3, 2003
6:30 to 9:00pm
Valley College, Monarch Hall
5800 Fulton Avenue, Valley Glen**

The meeting will be conducted as a workshop. The MTA staff will present pictures and information on the MTA's proposed landscaping plans, plant palette renderings, drawings of busway station architecture, and a construction schedule. Refreshments will be served at the meeting.

The Association representatives on the committee will urge that a permanent irrigation system be included with the landscaping and that at least a portion of the median consist of grassy lawns rather than desert plants in order to have a more park-like appearance.

**Association Meeting
November 19th 2003
See back page**

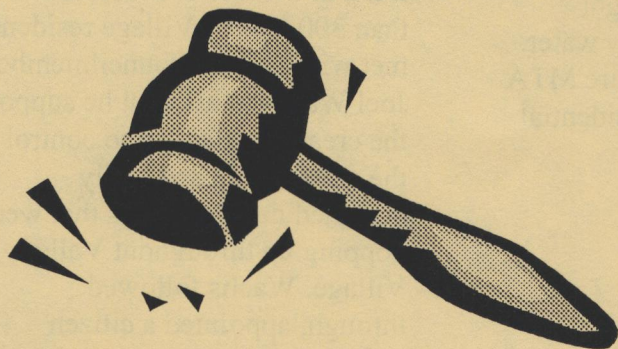
The Specific Plan

Back in the late 1980s, more than 300 Valley Village residents met with former Councilmember Joel Wachs to ask that he support the creation of a plan to control the out of scale and badly designed developments that were popping up throughout Valley Village. Wachs followed through, appointed a citizen committee, and after three years of work by the committee, the City Council approved more restrictive specific development guidelines for Valley Village called *The Valley Village Specific Plan*.

The fruits of that labor are visible; no more high-rise apartment buildings, the new low density condos on Riverside, the senior housing project on Chandler and the small, well landscaped shopping center at Riverside and Laurel. Since the adoption of the Plan, VVHA has had a successful track record in working with developers to bring appropriate projects, sensitive to single-family neighbors, to Valley Village.

One of the key purposes of the Plan states: "To preserve the quality and existing character of the Valley Village area and to minimize adverse environmental effects of development and promote the general welfare by regulating buildings by height, and bulk, and prohibiting commercial uses which are not compatible to their site and surroundings, or which cause parking or traffic circulation impact."

Court Ok's Fees



U.S. Court of Appeals Upholds City Billboard Fee.
On August 15, 2003 the U.S. Court of Appeals overturned the District Court's injunction and upheld the billboard inspection fee proposed by Councilman Jack Weiss and passed by the City Council in February, 2002. The fee is needed in order to fund an inspection program by the Building & Safety Department to determine what percentage of an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 billboards in the City of Los Angeles are illegal.

In issuing an injunction in October, 2003 prohibiting the enforcement of the billboard inspection fee, the District Court judge claimed that the billboard fee of up to \$314.00 per sign was a "burden" on free speech. The court felt billboards are more likely than on-premise business signs to have non-commercial messages on them (such as public service announcements). Thus, the modest inspection fee applying to billboards rather than to all signs, placed a greater burden on non-commercial speech.

The court of appeals rejected the legal analysis in the injunction, noting that previous Court decisions, including those by the U.S. Supreme Court, have upheld the distinction between off-site signs, i.e. billboards, and on-site business, identification signs. When the analysis of the impact of the inspection fee is limited to just billboards rather than all signs, there is no unequal treatment of commercial and non-commercial messages on billboards because the fee applies to both kinds of speech equally.

Neighborhood Council Board of Directors Election

The 15 member Board of Directors of the Neighborhood Council of Valley Village was elected on October 22nd during a community-wide vote at Colfax Elementary School. Certification of the election occurred five days later and the results are as follows:

Sean Jasso	Education
Daniel Wiseman	Faith-Based Community
Ginny Hatfield	Senior Organization
Breice Reiner	Community Service Org.
Debra "DJ" Harner	Cultural Organization
Paul Hatfield	At Large Candidate
Nick Pool	Business Representative
Ann Hull	Business Representative
Stuart Simen	Business Representative
Tom Paterson	Residential Renter
Tony Braswell	Residential Renter
Walter Katz	Residential Renter
Peter Sanchez	Residential Homeowner
Jody Hidey	Residential Homeowner
Chris Pechin	Residential Homeowner

The first meeting of the newly elected board is scheduled for 6:30PM, Wednesday, December 3rd at Colfax Elementary School, the permanent meeting location. Mark the date on your calendar and stop by to greet the new Board. Remember, it is only through your participation that the Board can effectively act as your advocates with City Hall.

Neighborhood Councils were given birth in the last Los Angeles City Charter Reform as a means of decentralizing local government by encouraging the residents of all the city's various neighborhoods to become directly involved in quality of life issues affecting them. The Councils are composed of stakeholders who meet on a regular basis to listen and respond to the concerns and suggestions of their neighbors and fellow stakeholders.

NCVV opens a new avenue of communication to City Hall and the Association looks forward to a beneficial partnership.

THE PROJECT: (continued from page 1)

VVHA has analyzed the proposal presented by the applicant and submitted a 20 page critique of the application. The applicant has not met his required burden of proof to support the exceptions sought. Analysis supports the argument that the applicant is seeking a prohibited special privilege and that the applicant has created his own self-imposed hardship by proposing a project that does not comply with the underlying zoning and development criteria of the Plan. In approving any exceptions to the Plan, the City of LA Area Planning Commission must make specific findings to justify exceptions, and is expressly prohibited under the Municipal Code, from granting special privilege to the applicant, or granting exceptions to self-imposed hardship.

PROBLEMS WITH THE PROCESS:

VVHA has examined documents in the city public file of this case. Originally, the project was submitted as a 5200 sq. ft. convenience store/car wash in early 2003. Initially the project had a 3,000 sq. ft. store with food service and a 2,200 sq. ft. car wash. That description created an unfavorable traffic impact analysis. In March, the city required a traffic impact study. In May, without having received the required March traffic study, the city approved a no environmental traffic impact assessment. The applicant's traffic analysis required by the city wasn't submitted to the city until a few days before the August hearing.

At the August hearing, the applicant's attorney submitted a completely different project than the one that had been under review with city planning for nearly eight months prior to the hearing, and it was not the project we had been reviewing in the city public file. The new project, while reducing the size of the car wash building, created new and different traffic flow problems within the site and on Laurel Canyon.

TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ISSUES:

At the August hearing, one of the greatest concerns of those attending was the many traffic flow problems this type of business would create. Additional automobiles will be drawn to the area adding to the existing congestion of the 101 freeway on and off ramps. Further, the newly landscaped median north of the 101 freeway blocks entering the car wash from the south and exiting to the north on Laurel Canyon.

ACTION:

VVHA is concerned about the tactics of the applicant's representatives. We are asking you to join in opposing this project by filling out and sending the slip below. Please return it immediately to us so we can submit it into the public record at the November 20th hearing. Your personal attendance at the hearing will make a difference. The meeting will be held at: Sherman Oaks Woman's Club, 4808 Kester Avenue, Sherman Oaks on Thursday, November 20th at 4:30pm

Cut out and return in the enclosed envelope to Valley Village Homeowners Association PO Box 4916 Valley Village CA 91617

Valley Village Car Wash Project

Dear Area Planning Commissioners. Please reject this car wash project it does not meet the Valley Village Specific Plan. I believe such a use at this site is inappropriate and presents traffic flow issues that cannot be mitigated.

Name: _____

Address: _____ Zip _____

Homeowners Association Meeting

Wednesday, November 19, 2003 - 7:30pm
Colfax Elementary School, 11724 Addison Street
Valley Village, CA 91607

Valley Village is honored to welcome **California State Senator Richard Alarcon** as featured speaker at our meeting. Senator Alarcon represents the Twentieth Senatorial District and is Senate Majority Whip. He will speak on the topic "*California: What Is In Store For Us.*" Senator Alarcon has wide experience in service to the City of Los Angeles and to the State of California. As a life-long resident of the San Fernando Valley he is in close touch with this community.

David Mays, executive liaison between Neighborhood Councils and the very important Department of Public Works will address the question of how we can improve communication with the DPW through Neighborhood Councils.

Don't miss the opportunity to meet and talk to the people who can affect our quality of life.

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