

# The Village Green Highlights

A Quarterly Publication of the Village Green Owners' Association

Fall 2008

## 20 More Years of Drilling in the Baldwin Hills?

Should Los Angeles County okay 20 more years of oil and gas drilling in the hills just south of Village Green, including drilling of up to 1,000 new wells? If you said "No," you're not alone.

Over 500 neighbors from Culver City, Baldwin Hills and other nearby unincorporated communities, and the Village Green packed four public hearings in August and September to protest the plan of Texas company PXP (Plains Exploration and Production Company) to expand drilling in the 1,000-acre hillside oil field, part of the Inglewood Oil Field. Adding insult to injury for many present, the document containing the standards to regulate the drilling had been written by the drilling company, PXP!

The drilling area is located in the hills north of Slauson Avenue between La Brea on the east and West Los Angeles College on the west and is bounded by parts of Culver City, Los Angeles, Baldwin Hills and several other unincorporated communities, and the Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.

At each hearing, the County insisted it had no other choice but to eventually approve new drilling, while speaker after speaker urged the County Planning Commission to—at the very least—delay its decision for 60 days to allow a fuller examination of how to deal with the many risks and impacts of drilling on both people and the environment. At the fourth hearing (held during the daytime in downtown Los Angeles, making it difficult for residents to attend), residents won a partial victory: the commission voted to continue the hearing on October 1st and directed County staffers to explore residents' recommendations for strengthening the regulations.

In their statements, community members presented detailed and knowledgeable testimony. They pointed out inadequacies in both the Draft Environmental Impact Report and the proposed standards regarding the risks of explosion, noise, odor, traffic, vibration, ground subsidence, deteriorating water quality, earthquake, visual blight, and other negative impacts.

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## Town Hall Meeting '08 Residents Ask about Assessments, Pets, Budget

At the Town Hall Meeting on Saturday, September 20, the clubhouse was filled with residents curious about everything from the pet policy, to potential rising assessments, to landscaping policy and noise complaints. Following Village Green tradition, the first hour consisted of the Board's prepared answers to questions submitted in advance by residents. In the second hour, residents stepped up to the microphone to ask questions of the Board.

The Board organized questions submitted in advance into 9 categories: governance (CC&Rs and handbook revisions), tenant and resident issues, pet policy, landscaping, security, staffing, design review, maintenance/repair, and budget/assessments. All of the questions and answers are posted to the VG Web site —continued, p. 3

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# Garden Gurus

## GREENing the Green

At a meeting that I recently attended at the Green, one of the residents suggested that we start looking at new ways to Green the Green, or even start a Green the Green committee to see how we can better utilize our natural resources. Even without a committee, there are ways residents can start Greening the Green:

### Compost

Create your own soil by starting an easy composting system. Composting is another word for recycling. Most folks hear the word compost and think smelly and flies. However, I have been composting in my patio since I moved into The Green six years ago and I use a very simple system. I have a large plastic trash can with a tight fitting lid and as I clip and prune the plants and roses in my patio, I toss the plant material into that trash can and put the lid on tightly. I keep tossing in leaf material (Chinese elms are a constant source of leaves for me), and the plant clippings, and add a little moisture, and once a month I stir the pot. In 6 months I have a trash can full of soil, organically manufactured and ready to add to my patio soil. I keep the lid on all the time so there's no problem with odor, and plant material doesn't smell bad unless it gets too wet. This is easy, and fun and cheap. For lots of other composting systems, check out the guru of composting, *The Rodale Book of Composting*. Another good resource is *Backyard Composting*, available on Amazon.com for 1 cent per copy. The second book gives all the details and recipes needed for a successful patio composting system. (Never add weeds to this compost recipe, as this form of composting doesn't heat up the pile enough to kill the weed seeds.)

### Azaleas Love Coffee!

Another recycling tip: I have discovered that a cup a day of brewed coffee poured on my azaleas at my front entrance, keeps them blooming all year long. Azaleas normally only bloom in the mid-winter and early spring, but a cup of coffee poured on them 365 days a year keeps them in bloom all the time. And of course it's organic. You can also pack used coffee grounds around the base of the plants to keep the acidic levels up. They like their pH to be between 4.5–6.0 (*Farmer's Almanac*, 2008).

### Save Water

Lastly, with the new legislation coming on out of City Council regarding water use in Los Angeles, please remember to save water and not wash your patios or sidewalks with your hoses. Water will be an increasingly important issue year after year and will be increasing in cost as we have seen in the past few months. More to follow on this topic in the Winter *Highlights* issue coming out in January 2009.

—Laurie Liles, VG Landscape Committee

## HALLOWEEN AT THE GREEN

Village Green children will trick-or-treat this year on Halloween night Friday, October 31st starting at 6:30 p.m. If your house will welcome them, please have lights, decorations, or pumpkins clearly visible on your porch or window, so children know they can knock on your door. If your children wish to participate, the meeting point is "the Bones" (large tree on Main green) at 6:15 p.m.



## Watch the Water!

**Please don't hose down cars or patios!!**



It wastes water (which we pay for through our Association dues), and it's prohibited by the **Los Angeles Prohibited Water Use Ordinance**

We're in drought conditions now; the Mayor and LADWP are considering fines for violators of up to \$300! Watch the water!

Visit [www.ladwp.com](http://www.ladwp.com) for more information.

at <http://villagegreenla.net>. Some themes emerged from the questions:

- **Enforcement of various rules, from parking to pets to design modifications.**

The Board reminded residents that there are procedures for our rules. For example, pets should be registered with the office, and design modifications to units must submit a Modification Request Form, available at the office. Similarly, complaints and concerns should be registered with the office in writing. If issues are not addressed promptly by the office, the Board should be notified, either by letter, or statement at a Board meeting.

- **Operating Budget and Reserve Funds**

Treasurer Daniel Milner explained that the income from higher assessments this year have been spread throughout the operating budget to cover rising costs. He explained that our operational budget is in very good shape; it's our reserve funds that are getting dangerously low. The Board explained that the reserves are where money for the large expenditures comes from, such as re-piping and replacing sewers, and rewiring the buildings. These are one-time projects and are part of the Rehabilitation and Master Plan Project (RAMP), which will be managed by Gafcon. The board is in the final stages of creating a contract with Gafcon. When asked pointedly is assessments will rise next year, the Board said they will not know until the budget process is complete in November, but told residents to be prepared for another increase.

- **Security**

The Board and the office have been pleased with Platt Security's work. Director Nat Hutton asked for an informal show of hands from residents attending: the majority raised their hands to show they were pleased with Platt. Hutton stated that he would prefer to have more officers on the property but budget restraints prevent this. There were good suggestions from the floor for improving the response process for the escort service.

- **Historic Landmark Status**

Many concerns touched on our Historic status—landscape issues, design issues, and budget issues. The Board told residents that they are currently speaking with the City of Los Angeles about having the Village Green participate in the Mills Act, which would save most residents money on their yearly property taxes.

Read all the questions, the Board's answers, and minutes from the open questions section of the meeting online: <http://villagegreenla.net>.

—Susan Edwards, *Highlights* editor

## DIDJA KNOW?

The summer proved to be a fun and exciting time for some of our neighbors. We thought you would be interested in these interesting events and wonderful milestones.

Thinking about traveling to the beautiful country of Ethiopia? Well, if you need some ideas about things to do and places to visit, our neighbor Susan Edwards can help you out. She recently returned from an 18-day vacation visiting the historic sites of the northern highlands and the capitol of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. Susan experienced the culture and beautiful landscape that abounds in this country rich with history. What made this trip even more memorable for Susan was that her father lived in Addis Ababa as a Peace Corps Volunteer and she was able to recreate some of the photographs her father took in the early 1960s. To see some of the fantastic photos of her wonderful vacation, visit her blog at <http://jolifanta.wordpress.com/tag/ethiopia/>. So Susan, where is your next great adventure taking you??

Fond farewell to our longtime neighbor and friend, Joan Neister, who recently moved. Joan lived in Village Green for over 30 years, was a very active member of Court Council, and served as Court Council Representative for Court 3. Thanks for being such a great neighbor and friend of our VG family. Don't be a stranger!

In September, the door of retirement was opened to our neighbor of 30 years, Pauline Carroll. Pauline enjoyed a 30-year successful career in the Worker's Compensation profession and spent the last 15 years with Liberty Mutual Insurance. Congratulations on your retirement!

So what have you been up to lately that you would like to share with your neighbors? Don't miss this opportunity to reach out and stay connected. Contact any member of the *Highlights* editorial staff to share your tidbit of excitement.

—Barbara Washington,  
Communications Committee

They exposed the weakness of the proposed measures to monitor and mitigate the risks. And they criticized the absence of meaningful accountability and penalties for accidents and violations. Village Green Board director Diann Dumas commented, "I was so impressed by the level of analysis offered by the community." Apparently, the County Planning Commission finally agreed, since they voted to continue the discussion and include the community's recommendations in their deliberations.

### **A Little Background**

Drilling has been going on in Baldwin Hills since the 1920s. Many experts attribute the 1963 Baldwin Hills reservoir failure to soil subsidence caused by drilling. The dam break caused a massive flood, which took five lives and destroyed 277 homes. It also had a serious impact on Village Green, as described by long-time resident Helen Spears in an article she wrote for *Highlights* in the 1970s (reprinted in October 2005, view it online at [http://villagegreenla.net/archive\\_oct05.pdf](http://villagegreenla.net/archive_oct05.pdf)). As many Greenies know, building foundations had to be rebuilt, floor and wall tiles changed, and landscaping replanted.

In January 2006, an unusually large release of gas from a drilling operation in the area forced many hillside residents to evacuate their homes in the middle of the night and resulted in at least 60 calls to emergency services and the Air Quality Management District. In that same year, PXP drilled 49 new wells, subjecting residents to drilling for 320 out of 365 days that year. Five months after the January 2006 incident, the County passed an "Interim Urgency Ordinance" prohibiting new drilling; the ordinance expired in June 2008, and PXP has declared its intention to apply for new drilling by late October, with or without new, stronger standards. PXP, in a brochure recently mailed to "Neighbors," declared their drilling safe. Many community members are not so sure.

Expanded drilling is also an important concern for Village Green residents who enjoy Kenneth Hahn State Park and would like to see it reach its full potential. In 2001, the state established the Baldwin Hills Conservancy to acquire land in order to implement the Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan. About 120 publicly owned acres are within the operating oil field, but they cannot be accessed until PXP's drilling activities have ended and the surface restored to a state suitable for parkland. Many wonder whether state and local government should continue to prioritize drilling over parkland when global warming demands a reduction in oil dependence.

### **Where Things Stand Now**

The issue remains unresolved as of the *Highlights* copy deadline, but one thing is clear: the community is not giving up. The unity that is developing between homeowner and other organizations from Baldwin Hills, Baldwin Vista, Ladera Heights, Windsor Hills, Culver City, Culver Crest, Marina Del Rey, Village Green, and other areas, backed up by the Culver City school board and city council and with support from Los Angeles legislators including Congresswoman Diane Watson and State Senator Mark Ridley Thomas, is impressive. Lark Galloway-Gillian, Executive Director of the Community Health Councils, a member of the Greater Baldwin Hills Alliance, stated the community's position succinctly: "We want to see this land become clean and green and the park that we were promised."

—Lucy Fried,  
Village Green Homeowner

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## **ADVERTISE IN HIGHLIGHTS**

Rates start at \$20. Discounts for VG residents.  
E-mail [vghighlights@yahoo.com](mailto:vghighlights@yahoo.com) for information and a rate sheet.

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# FROM THE MANAGER'S DESK

Robert Bonfiglio, VG Manager

Well, we are in the home stretch for the year 2008! And the Village Green property is looking pretty darned good! By the end of the year, we will have completed the painting of 19 residential buildings, the maintenance yard, and the last three garage courts (6, 14 and 16). We will have addressed many concrete repairs and pruned the trees in Courts 7 through 13. We cleaned out the maintenance yard and all of the abandoned garages (which are now for rent!). Well, enough of the maintenance and repairs, let's talk about some issues.

Before the end of this year, we will conduct a walk-through the property with the Board to determine where some of the issues below need to be addressed.

**Security**—We have been hit with several serious crimes this year. Please keep in mind what our escort and patrol, Platt Security, is here to do—they are to respond to a situation and, if needed, contact the local police department. They are not armed officers and do not get directly involved in situations, especially if it is confrontational. They respond and react. For those folks looking to have feedback from the officers on matters that have been called into their dispatch center, please make it clear to the dispatch operator that you are requesting "follow-up" action on the matter you have called in to report. Be sure to leave your name and contact information (i.e. unit, court and phone number) with the operator and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

**Trash Areas**—We started using Viking Cleaning Service on August 4th. Their task for the first month was to make a deep impact into certain areas that have not been touched in a long time. One of those was the trash areas. While not altogether bad, Viking was able to clean them up and remove all the items that made their way under the bins. In addition, VG maintenance removed all items that should have been left on the street. Please remember to close the lids (as most of them are always open!) and if you have any large bulky items, please leave them at the street and call the City to have them removed.

**Swings and Children's Toys**—There are several swings that are hanging from the trees throughout the property. These are not allowed as they pose a liability. All of these will be removed by October 1st if they are not already removed by those that installed them. Please remember that it is not permitted to leave children's toys in the front of the units—please bring all toys onto your patio area when the kids are done playing with them.

**Modifications to Units**—One item that continues to plague The Green is when a homeowner starts a remodeling project and has not notified the office. Each and every remodel **MUST** go through a process. You must fill out an Application for Modification form, which will be reviewed by the Design Review Committee (DRC). The DRC checks to make sure that work is not taking place to the common property that belongs to the Association. If so, the committee makes recommendations, such as pulling permits, altering the layout, etc. Most homeowners seem to think that they can remodel any way they want, but in reality they cannot. In addition, you may be hampering your ability to take part in or garner the full depth of the Mills Act tax credit if you alter your unit (more on this Act at a later date). Please respect this process. The Board of Directors has given the Manager the authority to stop any project that has not gone through the Application of Modification process. And that includes involving the Association's attorney, if necessary.

**Cable Installation**—Many homeowners have Time Warner Cable install cable lines at their unit. While this is permissible, Time Warner seems to think it is o.k. to wrap the cable up and over the walls of the building, around the fascia boards and over the roofs. This is **NOT OK!!** The cable must enter your unit at the lowest point from where it comes out of the ground. The cable enters your unit, and then, within

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## Think Twice Before Changing Closet Doors

A recent argument among my neighbors involved a dispute between an owner of a lower unit whose new upstairs owner installed rolling closet doors. The argument arose when the owner upstairs refused to listen to the noise concerns of the resident downstairs

People living in upstairs apartments maintain that the downstairs dwellers are simply intolerant. To them, the closet doors don't seem to make that much noise. In fact, the noise travels straight downstairs. Every time you move that closet door, there is a loud rumble, clank, and a thud, downstairs. Packing for a trip, doing your laundry, cleaning house, and moving those doors? To the downstairs resident, who may be reading, writing, or even trying to sleep, the noise is a torture and a torment. Thunder, thunder, thunder, clunk, clash clang, hour after hour. It may be quiet for a few minutes. "What a relief, they're done," thinks the downstairs dweller. But no, up it starts again.

Before you tear out those lovely French doors and put in doors that roll on tracks, be aware that there is no sound insulation between apartments, and those tracks are another person's ceiling.

Beryl Feller,  
Village Green Homeowner

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### From the Manager's Desk, continued from page 5

your unit you can direct the cabling to whichever room you desire. Many homeowners have been made to bring this up to this standard, and many more will be instructed to do so after the property-wide walk through takes place (before the end of 2008). Please let Time Warner installers know this as they install your cable.

**Satellite Dish Installation**—Please keep in mind that all dishes must be out of sight, on your balcony or patio and are NOT allowed on the roof, chimney, or anywhere that it can be seen. Please refer to the Homeowner's Handbook for exact installation guidelines. There are fines for non-compliance. Read the policy about satellite dishes on the Web site for more information. Again, homeowners will be notified to remove and reposition their dishes after the walkthrough.

**Air Conditioner Units**—These are not allowed and homeowners will be asked to remove them if found during the walkthrough. The only units allowed are the units that can be installed on a patio and are used due to qualified medical need only. Again, the homeowners that are in medical need of an A.C. system must show proof of this need from a medical doctor and need to go through the Application for Modification process. Contact the office for more information about this process.

**Garage Inspections**—We will be conducting garage inspections before mid-November and the same rules apply as last year's inspection—no flammable items, no propane tanks, no storage (you must be able to fit a full-sized automobile inside). Please start to clean out your garage now to save time before the inspection. Remember, please do not throw any flammable items, paints, oils, etc. in the trash. If you leave any of these items in the trash areas, we will need to have them specially disposed of at a cost to the Association. In the past, this has not been cheap. Please call 3-1-1 to locate a disposal center for these items.

—Thank You, Robert

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### Love Our Landscape Join Landscape Committee

The more I read about the Village Green and the more I experience it, I realize what a special place it is. The cool green sense of serenity, right in the heart of the city.

No effort should be spared to maintain and enhance this environment.

But there are challenges. To address these, we need more volunteers on the Landscape Committee; more ideas and energy. We need others willing to work on special targeted projects.

VG Landscape Committee strives to address concerns of residents. The welcome mat is always out at monthly meetings on the 2nd Mondays of the month, 7:30 p.m. in the Clubhouse.

Call me at (323) 295-1278. Manager Robert Bonfiglio keeps the Committee up to speed. Come on over!

—Georgia Lumpkin  
VG Landscape Committee Chair

# Village Green Homeowners Association

## September 2008 Newsletter

### Notes from the Board Meeting on September 23, 2008

#### Proposals

Ad-Hoc Web site Development Committee recommended an update to the Village Green Web site to accomplish the following: Create tiers of access, for public viewing, restricted portion for owners and residents and a section for board members; and to revise Web site's structure to make updates easily managed by non-technical people. Board voted to approve Ad-Hoc Committee's recommendation 7-0-0-2. Board tabled a proposal from the manager for pest exclusionary work due to lack of information.

#### RAMP

Board discussed current revision of Gafcom proposal for Phase II—Property Condition Assessment (PCA). After a lengthy discussion, Board voted to accept proposal for Phase II—PCA and to request that Gafcon immediately prepare a Phase III proposal for interior & exterior re-piping, sewer replacement, and site irrigation.

#### Engineering and 2009 Budget

Board discussed completed engineering report on Buildings 8 & 14. Manager will return with two proposals from structural engineers for remediation work. Board briefly discussed 2009 budget preparation process. Two open meetings for this will be scheduled for Monday, October 6, 2008 and Monday, October 20th at 7pm.

The Board thanks residents for your comments and questions at the Town Hall meeting last Saturday!!

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## Manager's Report

**New Items**—No new items.

#### Ongoing Items

- Exterior Painting—Building 90 is complete. Building 91 is being prepped; the last to be painted in 2008.
- Engineering Services—J. Byer Group has sent the engineering study. A copy is in the Board room for all Board members to review. I believe the next step would be to get a civil engineer involved.
- Garage Courts—Construction repairs are complete for Court 14; we experienced additional roof repairs, costs to be determined (minor cost). Repairs to Court 16 begin on September 22 and should take two weeks to complete.
- Maintenance Yard Repair—We removed two more 40-yard dumpsters (one metal, one wood). The yard is almost ready for construction repair. Final cleanup will take place before construction repairs (mid-October).
- Handicap Ramp—I spoke with Commissioner Valerie Shaw and she will help to see if it is feasible to have the ramp installed.
- Exclusionary Work—Last year we experienced many units that became invaded with rodents. Because of this, we had Amway Pest Control give us a price to “seal” up the openings in all of the residential buildings, maintenance yard, and clubhouse/office. I have submitted a proposal/contract from Amway and believe it to be priced fairly. We did not go out for bid as Amway has been our pest control service for many years and has done fine work. In buildings where they have completed this work, we have not experienced any problems. I would like to move forward with Amway as the contractor.

#### Completed

- Garage Courts—All painting and work in Court 6 is complete. A new door to the laundry room was installed
- Maintenance Yard Roofing—this is complete.

## Committee Reports

**Court Council**—After hosting the Town Hall Forum, Court Council will develop proposed policies to submit to the Board on some of the issues discussed. It also will be assisting the Cultural Affairs Committee to plan the Holiday party.

**Cultural Affairs Committee**—Both summer concerts went well with many residents in attendance. The committee appreciates the kind words of support sent by Board Member Diann Dumas. Plans are currently underway for both the Halloween Party on Saturday, October 25th, 4:00–6:00 p.m. and a Holiday Party in December.

**Cultural Landscape Report Committee (CLRC)**—the Committee is nearing the end of completing the inventory of VG’s landscape. As a result, the CLRC is in urgent need of a CAD (Computer Assist Design) operator or operators to input the inventory information into the computer. We are interested in volunteers or paid CAD operators! Please call Ted Lumpkin at (323) 293-4413 for more information.

**Safety Committee**—This month the Committee congratulates Court 5 for holding their first Neighborhood Watch pot luck. Welcome to the Neighborhood Watch community! In October, we’ll offer a Women’s Self Defense workshop, taught by Woman Power, on Saturday, October 11th, 10 a.m.–1 p.m. More information is online at the VG Web site, or swing by the Office to see the flyer. The Committee is working with the Board and Design Review Committee to improve the lighting and landscaping on the eastern edge of the Village Green, in Courts 1–4, 16, and the maintenance yard area.

### Report from Platt Security

#### Incidents in the VG, August 15–September 14, 2008

**August 19**—Court 15, 9:45 a.m., armed robbery; resident reported that a 20-year old black man approached him with a gun and took his wallet and \$38 cash.

**August 22**—Court 15, 12:50 p.m., medical emergency; LAFD responded and took resident to hospital.

**August 23**—Court 14, 2:45 p.m., fire; a trash bin fire was started by hot, used coals dumped in the trash. Officer put it out with a fire extinguisher and LAFD responded. Court 9, 11:51 p.m., noise complaint; Officer responded to resident reporting noise from individuals on Colliseum. LAPD had responded and arrested the men, who were later released.

**September 1**—Court 4, 3:33 a.m., noise complaint; resident’s complaint of noise from another unit.

**September 2**—Court 16, 3:20 p.m., dispute between neighbors reported.

**September 3**—Court 6, 3:30 p.m., complaint; officer responded to a resident’s complaint that a german shepherd chased him back to his patio.

**September 9**—Court 17, 7:50 p.m., complaint; officer responded to a dispute between a resident, the painters and VG management. Court 15, 1:05 p.m., theft; a landscaper with TruGreen reported a stolen leafblower.

**September 10**—Court 4, 11:34 p.m., noise complaint; resident complaint about noise from another unit. Officer heard loud talking and asked residents to keep the conversation down; residents complied.

**September 11**—Court 10, 11:55 p.m., robbery; as she drove into the court, two black males wearing stocking caps surrounded resident’s vehicle, opened her door, and took her purse.

**September 12**—Court 8, 12:38 p.m., theft; resident reported car window broken and stereo stolen.

### Los Angeles Police Department Crime Stats

#### August 2008

Crimes that occurred  
in a one-mile  
radius of Village Green

• Burglary	11
• Grand Theft Auto	11
• Theft from Vehicle	7
• Personal Theft	6
• Robbery	4
• Aggravated Assault	9
• Rape	0
• Homicide	0

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