



Speech of Board President Jerri Allyn

State of the Green, Village Green Owners Association 'Community'

Annual Meeting, Saturday, February 1, 2014 10:00 am to 12:30 pm

Welcome! It's great to see you here. My name is Jerri Allyn. I have been the Interim President for the past two months, during a year of tremendous changes, challenges and accomplishments.

I stood before owners in January 2012 at a Meet-the-Candidates forum. When asked why I wanted to serve the Village Green 'community' as a Board member, I answered, "I hear owners call this place a 'community', but its an odd one, consisting of people who've made an investment in a condo, within a pretty park... Regardless, I've lived here two and half years, and it's time for me to pitch in."

I work professionally, most often in low-income neighborhoods, producing arts and education projects that strive to BUILD a greater sense of community, within lives that have been fractured in our modern world. I was not looking for 'community' when I bought property here. I have eight brothers and sisters, at least 15 nieces and nephews, in five states, on three continents. Contemporary life has my friends working around the globe. I myself live a fractured, hectic life, and continually hold tight to a sense of family and community.

But within this emerald isle, this sanctuary in the City of Angels, 'community' came looking for me. After a roller coaster year on this Board, I am now very much a

part of this Village Green ‘community.’ Hook line and sinker. I am honored to serve, and thank my talented fellow directors and the staff for showing me the ropes - as well as our appointees, DeeDee Chappelle and Lucy Fried, for jumping aboard mid-stream and giving it their all.

State of the Green

Village Green has not escaped the results of the greatest recession since the 1930s. We’ve experienced the turnover of units and unfortunate loss of neighbors, as well as revenues. Yet we have turned a corner. As our tax bills and the published prices of newly purchased units have shown our property values are climbing back up.

Here are some high and low moments from 2013:

- We celebrated the 40th anniversary of our HOA – when we moved from a privately held rental property to this Home Owners Association in 1973.
- Village Green became smoke free (except for inside the units of residents who have lived here since before April 2013), joining the healthy environmental movement.
- In the heat of summer we had a well failure, and successfully installed a new pump.
- The 50+ Club, which brought companionship and adventure to senior residents for 25 years, disbanded and left a gap we have yet to fill.
- We acknowledged the 50th anniversary of the Baldwin Hills Dam break, a flooding of water so fierce it brought death to 5 residents who lived here in 1963.
- The Cultural Landscape Committee, chaired by Holly Kane, brought out a report they have worked 10 years to produce. Holly, with co-chair Steve Keylon, organized monthly education workshops about the plan’s proposed rehabilitation of the 1940’s landscape design, complementing the Mid-Century Modern architecturally designed complex that we live within. Their work has provoked additional research and implementation proposals from owners interested in other historic periods and treatment approaches. The committee’s work is done; however, the conversation continues.

- The Building Stabilization Project: After at least four years of careful study to understand the subsidence of two buildings - engineering, soil, geo-con tests; and an architecture study - all to find the most effective method of doing this project with the most favorable outcome, we finally hired an architect and a contractor and broke ground in November of 2013.
- We have come through everything with a balanced operating budget and money in the Reserve and Special Assessment Accounts. We have resolved, as a Board, NOT to increase dues and have committed to managing our budget closely, though we are challenged with increasing costs.

Can we do better? Of course. Are we ready for what lies ahead? We're going to do our best... as we face, for instance, a drought that Governor Brown has declared a state of emergency, and an 11% increase in the cost of water.

Soon you'll hear reports from the committees, which I think you'll find impressive. I am honored to serve with these members, along with the Inspectors of Election. There is absolutely no doubt, that we could not have accomplished all that we have this season without the contributions of our volunteers. I speak for the entire Board when I say we are deeply grateful.

I want to appreciate some people whose deeds you may not be aware of:

- Neighbors who help keep us safe and call Platt when they notice someone who may be up to no good.
- People like Jordan Moore, who respond to perceived needs. Jordan proposed that we increase battery recycling and offered to bring our batteries to a center. The next time you've got defunct batteries, you can deposit them in Jordan's newly installed recycling box, on a post near the front office.
- Mickey Fielding's passion for wildlife led her to produce an informative flyer about how to respond to coyotes, who visited the Green last fall. Director George Rheault organized a great education workshop with an Animal Services Officer from the city, representatives from the Sierra Club, the Baldwin Hills Conservancy, and members from other local HOAs.

These are a few examples of how owners are doing things to build community and striving to meet the needs of residents at the Green...Along with our incredibly responsive and dedicated staff from our Manager Peter Fay, Assistant Manager Sherri Giles, Administrative Assistant Alex Martinez, Maintenance Manager Harold Graves and his team, - to our Head of Security Officer William Davis and his staff, , and our hard-working groundskeepers. It's no secret that I think our crew is doing an excellent job. This is because I have worked with staffs who do a half-baked job, or a dysfunctional one. To me, it's a breath of fresh air to work with a team that actually keeps checking off accomplishments. They've kept us on schedule, as we enter the 4th year of our Special Assessment projects.

Your Directors volunteer 8 to 16 hours a week, at the least. Do we welcome your involvement and ideas? You bet. We need all of the best heads we can get to assist with Board initiatives. And the Committees would love more participation.

I've also spoken with many who aren't into working on Committees, or their schedules don't jive. And I've become aware of other needs.

- I met a neighbor who's been managing AIDS related illnesses for 25 years. When he has a doctor's appointment, it takes him over half-a-day traveling to and fro by bus. Maybe those not into working on committees could volunteer to drive a neighbor to medical appointments?
- Monthly, we hear complaints about trash. What about launching the *Trash Walkers* - those who commit to carrying a bag while they walk the Green, picking up the stray stuff that flies around in between the once-a-week pickups by TruGreen?

These are not the decisions and budget issues that demand the attention of Directors' each month. These are about quality of life-- those little things that are just as essential as a healthy checkbook, to a robust sense of community within this emerald isle.

...Where we also sometimes butt heads with those who think very differently than we do, or with those we do not like... Which brings me to the insults and confrontations that several have experienced this year. I am asking everyone, myself included, to do

some soul searching and ponder the following: What is it going to take for us to quit butting heads, and either listen to one another, with a commitment to consensus building and understanding; or at the least, compromise, with respect? I'm very serious about this. Those who talk with me on a regular basis know I dwell on this dilemma, and brainstorm various strategies. What I have learned from those I differ with during this past year, is this: When I am able to call forth respect (which sometimes requires digging very deep) and empathy, I feel a lot better and things turn out better, than when I strike back.

For some, a Village Green condo is an investment. We have over 100 offsite owners among our ranks. For me, Village Green has become a phenomenal American experiment in urban living. While there are differences that challenge us, there are all kinds of delightful differences as well, and I'm hoping we shift to a more productive direction this season.

We are way more than an emerald oasis. Along with traditional marriages, we are in an oasis of domestic partnerships; mixed marriages; multi-racial children; fostered and adopted youth; diverse sexual orientations; varying faiths and economic status; those who are differently-abled; and more--all making up a population that includes members as young as a few months old, those who have lived nine decades, and everyone in between.

In this very segregated city--I have worked all over L.A. County, and have experienced this segregation firsthand--in this Green Village, we stroll and bike, we jog and play, we picnic and debate, we work and we dance together among all these differences, in an oasis that approximates the American Dream. Is it perfect? Perfect is for fairytales. The Village Green is for us. And it's what we make it. ###

