

Highlights

A Quarterly Publication of the Village Green Owners' Association

Winter 2011

A New Look for the Village Green

New signage throughout the Green is part of a site-wide re-branding project

By Shumway Marshall, Court 14

The day before Thanksgiving, workers installed a new sign in front of the Village Green Clubhouse that welcomes visitors and residents alike. It is the centerpiece of a re-branding project to create a unified visual identity for the Village Green.



The new branding is not just all looks—it's also about safety. A goal of the effort, led by the Design Review Committee (DRC), was to create better signage that would enable emergency response teams to better find individual units.

"Many of the old signs were rotting and falling down. Plus they were confusing to visitors," said Christian Daniels, chair of the DRC committee and creator of the design. "We wanted to replace them with something clean, simple and informative that represented the unique environment of the Green."

The process started in March 2008 and included updating letterhead and signage around the Green, including signs for each court that indicate unit numbers and parking rules. Signs have also been designed for the garage and laundry areas.

The new branding features the typeface "Neutra," which is based on the work of Los Angeles architect

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Save the Date:

**Village Green Annual Meeting on
February 5, 2011**

The VGOA's Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday February 5, 2011 at the Baldwin Hills Elementary School auditorium at 10 a.m. The ballot for the annual election will include candidates for 5 open positions on the Board of Directors. Directors finishing two-year terms are Drew Furedi, Steve Haggerty, Robert Nicolais, and Daniel Milner. In addition, Director John Keho will finish his term, as he was appointed to the Board this year.

In addition to electing new Board members, owners will vote once again on the proposal from the Board to initiate a 20% special assessment over 10 years. If the spe-

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Village Green Owners' Association
5300 Rodeo Rd.
Los Angeles, CA 90016
<http://villagegreenla.net>

Hands-on Fire Extinguisher and Emergency Training

By Shumway Marshall, Court 14

When an emergency strikes, such as an earthquake or a fire, do you know what to do?

The residents of Court 13 are better prepared thanks to an event organized by the court's emergency preparedness Task Force.

Owners and renters gathered in the court driveway on a gloomy Saturday morning in November for a one-hour training designed to empower people to respond effectively in an emergency.

"This was a hands-on example of how a court can follow through on the educational activities that the Village Green Safety Committee provides—events such as the recent seminar on earthquake preparedness, which featured speakers from the Los Angeles Fire Department and the Red Cross," said Lucy Fried, the Court Council representative who helped organize the event.

Residents Fred Wilson, a retired fireman, and Don Dongallo, an electrician, demystified fire extinguishers, allowing people to hold them and locate the release pins and triggers. Amy Dawes and Tina LeBrun demonstrated how to use additional tools in an emergency, such as a crowbar to open a jammed door.

Everyone also identified the fire extinguishers provided by the Village Green Owners Association, found at various points in each court, such as in the laundry rooms and on the sides of garage buildings.

Task Force members then led residents on a tour of building patios to locate and note the water shut-off valves and automatic earthquake gas shut-off valves found in some of the patios. The gas valves are sensitive to motion changes during an earthquake and stop the flow of gas into a building, greatly reducing the likelihood of explosion and fire.

"A training like this one is a good idea for all courts," said Regina Bryant, who attended the event and is the Court Council representative for Court 17. "The information is essential and people need to know what to do in an emergency."

Special thanks to Gabriela Worrel and Martine Hubbard, members of the court's hospitality group, who provided hot coffee, fresh fruit and homemade pumpkin pie.

For more information and ideas to host a similar event in your court, contact Lucy Fried at lucyh@ca.rr.com.



Participants in the hands-on fire extinguisher and emergency training in Court 13.

The Grant Committee Needs Your Help!

The Board of Directors Approves the Exploration of Alternative Sources of Revenue for the Green

By Dan Frank, VGOA Director

During the last year, Village Green has been grappling with some very difficult issues regarding the funding of infrastructure improvements to the Green. Recently, the board made the difficult decision to raise regular assessments by 20% in order to ensure that funding will be available to address infrastructure needs before they become an even more expensive problem.

In an effort to offset residents' financial burdens, the Board recently voted to expand the mission of the currently inactive Grant Committee to explore a variety of options for alternative revenue sources and cost-saving strategies. The committee will also revive earlier efforts to find traditional grant opportunities. Possible opportunities are listed below, followed by actions that can be taken to explore their viability:

- Federal, state or local grants - action: Research grant consultants.
- Federal, state or local funding sources - action: Research stimulus funds, etc.
- Corporate grants from such entities as Target, Wells Fargo, Chase, Albertsons, Ralphs, CVS, Rite Aid - action: Direct outreach to such corporations.
- Corporate sponsorship of annual events such as the 'Concerts on the Green' - action: Direct outreach to area corporations.

- Revenue from filming at Village Green - action: Outreach to site location agents.
- Estate planning - action: Create a straightforward process by which VG residents can include Village Green HOA in their will.
- Donor program - action: Identify planned VG amenities, such as park benches, playground equipment, etc. for which residents can donate funds and be recognized with a plaque or by other means. Revive past program and advertise in newsletter.
- Property value reassessment - action: Facilitate reassessments as a cost reduction strategy for residents if Mills Act status is not attained.

In order to make any of these options a reality, we need energized committee members to help with this effort. We are looking for residents who can bring new ideas to the table, assist in identifying and pursuing alternative sources of revenue and help implement past programs such as the donor program.

If you are interested in this effort, please contact me. I'll be the Board liaison for this committee. Please e-mail me at danieldoylefrank@yahoo.com and use the subject head "Grant Committee Revival Meeting."

Once we get a good idea of who's interested, we'll set a meeting time to get this effort underway.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Interview with Our New Manager, Peter Fay

By Reba Glover, Court 1



Effective November 1, 2010, Village Green Owners Association Board of Directors hired Peter Fay as the new general manager, replacing Robert Bonfiglio, who resigned in August 2010. I had an opportunity to sit with Peter and ask him some questions about his new post and his priorities for the Green in the coming year. Upon arriving at the VG office, I was immediately struck by his clean and orderly desk and office, and his very professional appearance, complete with name tag.

Peter comes to us with 30 years of experience in property management. He is from the New England area, where his family owned property in Massachusetts and he became involved property management. He moved to California about 12 years ago for family reasons, to be nearer to his daughter. Peter explained to me that he has primarily worked with older properties, and that because of those experiences, he has extensive knowledge of construction projects, maintenance, front office management and staffing. His philosophy is for an Association's Board of Directors to tell him what direction they want to go and he will strive to get them there.

Peter said that on first impression Village Green reminded him of a small town in Vermont with its open spaces, greenbelts and common areas. He had not previously heard about Village Green and said he was impressed with our level of maintenance of the structures and the landscape, especially the trees. Peter related a situation from a previous association, whereby the owners and board were hesitant to spend \$170,000 on needed concrete repairs to their garages. Ten years later, they are spending over 2 million on this project. Fay goes on to say, "Generally speaking, what you don't repair today will cost more and more, each year that passes."

So far, he has reviewed the office procedures and maintenance processes and has found inefficiencies that he will compile in a report to the Board of Directors for action. He gave the example of the severely outdated phone system that cannot be repaired any longer and should be replaced. He also mentioned the very time-consuming parking enforcement procedure that he hopes to improve upon next year.

Fay has also reviewed the existing contracts and will report back to the Board on areas that he would recommend making changes. "Often times, I have advised Boards that they should spend more money with this contract, rather than being cheap." He has managed over \$30 million dollars in contracts over the last 10 years. He is very pleased that Harold Graves, maintenance supervisor, knows the property so well. Fay is working with Graves to incorporate the 10-year plan elements into the 2011 budget for implementation. Items that will be tackled next year include the copper re-piping of units, water supply lines, and painting.

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Fay was very complimentary of the Budget meetings held recently at Village Green by the Board of Directors, calling them “some of the most professionally run budget meetings” that he has seen. Describing the opposite end of the spectrum, he went on to say that he has seen board directors throw chairs and storm out of meetings. He is also very complementary of the Village Green committees, saying that they are truly working committees that produce a tangible result. He has met with several committee chairs and hopes to meet with more in 2011. His other plans for 2011 will be to address other areas of inefficiencies and get those corrected. He would also like to review the current ways that the office communicates with the residents, and vice versa, and will hopefully incorporate more electronic communications in the future.

My last question to Peter was ‘What action can an owner take to instantly improve the quality of life here at Village Green?’ He answered that in his experience, quality of life at an association can be improved if people talk to one another when there is a problem between neighbors, and, above all, be kind to one another. Time will tell whether Peter is successful here at Village Green, and whether or not residents and the Board will heed his advice.

Ballot Proposal:

Swap the 20% Dues Increase for a Limited (10-year) Special Assessment

In the November election, the Board’s proposed 20% special assessment over a 10-year period to fund the Association’s reserve fund received 155 votes for, and 195 votes against—therefore, the proposal was rejected.

The Board subsequently announced that regular monthly dues would be increased by 20%.

In the February Annual Meeting Election, the 20% special assessment proposal will be on the ballot again.

The Board has already approved the resolution to repeal the 1 ncrease in regular assessments, if the February ballot proposal is approved.

The advantages of converting the dues increase into a special assessment include:

- Funds go directly to reserves and are only used for deferred maintenance.
- The increase is for a limited time
- Operating budget remains limited and cannot swell to encompass the new level of income.
- Owners can pay off the entire special assessment amount at once and receive a 12% discount.

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Richard Neutra, a man who is regarded as one of modernism’s most important architects.

“The Design Review Committee chose the Neutra typeface, in part because the architect’s design philosophy was so in line with the master plan of the Village Green” said Daniels. “Neutra’s buildings are all distinctly modern and have a harmonious relationship between the indoors and outdoors.”

The new branding replaces a lotus insignia believed to originate from the period when the Village Green converted from rentals to condo units in 1972.

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cial assessment is approved by owners at the election, the 20% annual increase to regular monthly dues will be replaced by this 10-year special assessment.

You should receive your secret ballots in the second week of January.

Meet the Candidates:

**Tuesday, January 18, 2011,
7:00 p.m. in the Clubhouse**

**Saturday, January 22, 2011,
10:30 a.m. in the Clubhouse**

Preserving the Village Green's Historic Landscape

The Cultural Landscape Report

By Holly Kane, Chair of Cultural Landscape Report Committee

Most of us live at the Village Green because of the park-like landscape, as well as the feeling of community and serenity we are fortunate to experience every day. The beauty of the landscape and the sense of permanence make this a unique place in Los Angeles. Indeed, the Village Green has an unusual past, and this is what makes it a special place in the entire United States. We live in a National Historic Landmark property—one of only seven in Los Angeles, and the only one that is a privately owned condominium property.

Because our home is recognized by the U.S. government as an historically significant place, we have a responsibility to maintain the buildings and the landscape in a manner that is compatible with the importance of our property. Did you know that Baldwin Hills Village (as the Village Green was known when it was built in 1941-42) was designed by some leading architects? Clarence Stein was a famous east coast architect who designed garden-style communities similar to ours. Reginald Johnson designed many stately homes around Los Angeles, Pasadena, and Santa Barbara from the 1910s through the 1930s, and worked for the firm of Wilson, Merrill & Alexander. Robert Alexander went on to become

architect Richard Neutra's partner for many years after completing Baldwin Hills Village. The landscape architect was Fred Barlow, Jr., who also designed landscapes for large estates, campuses, and the Hollywood Park racetrack, and who also advocated the use of native plants in his landscape designs. These talented professionals spent years working out the design details for Baldwin Hills Village, and the result of their efforts is much of what we love about the Village Green today.

The National Park Service (NPS), which oversees historic properties in the United States, recommends preparing a document called a Cultural Landscape Report to clearly spell out what is historic in the design and appearance of our landscaping. It is a tool that can be used in future decision-making and in ensuring proper maintenance, as well as a necessary element for us to be able to get grant funding for projects. We completed the other report that the NPS recommends last year—the Historic Structure Report—which does the same things for our buildings.

The Cultural Landscape Report committee is devoted to documenting the history of the Village Green and its landscape.

By researching old documents and photographs and by talking with people who lived here in the past, the committee is gathering a comprehensive history of our community and the changes that have taken place over 70 years. Over the last several years, volunteers have surveyed the plants and trees in the common areas. The Cultural Landscape Report, or CLR, will document the history and changes of this landscape, as well as compare the historically designed landscape to the existing landscape. Using the expertise of outside professionals, the committee will complete an evaluation and make recommendations to guide future managers and Boards with the treatment and maintenance of our historic landscape. The benefits for all the owners will be having a clear direction for the replanting of lost trees and landscape features, a regular maintenance plan that will save money over the long term, as well as a solid base for requesting grant money to help defray expenses.

We all love the grand old trees and the beautiful, mature landscape, and with a comprehensive Cultural Landscape Report to guide future decision-making and keep the beauty of our landscape intact, we all benefit.



The Cultural Landscape Report Committee

By Reba Glover, Court 1

The Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) Committee is an ad hoc committee created for the sole purpose of drafting a blueprint (or, really “green” print) for the landscape future here at Village Green. The committee members meet once a month on the fourth Monday in the Clubhouse. On Sunday mornings you can find them roaming the Green with clipboards, making an inventory of every plant on the property.

The goal for this committee is to hire outside professionals to organize their inventory and complete a Cultural Landscape Report in 2011. The committee members have worked tirelessly to arrive at this point. They have been able to identify

most of the original tree specimens used in the original landscape plan and almost half of the shrubs. The vines species are still undetermined because it is difficult to find historic information on them.

The committee is especially interested in old photos of Village Green to assist them in their research of the plant specimens. If you are interested in volunteering for this committee or if you have old photos of Village Green, please contact Holly Kane or Steven Keylon through the Village Green office at (323) 294-5211.

Meet the Committee Members:

Holly Kane, Chair of the Committee, is originally from the Midwest. She was invited to attend a CLR meeting by the former Chair, Sara Loe. Kane purchased a unit here after falling in love the Green.

Gordon Brooks, secretary and Chair of the Tree Committee, is from the East Coast. His participation in the CLR committee naturally grew out of being a member on Landscape and Trees Committees. He believes strongly in the preservation of history, after having worked at a Natural Historic monument back east while growing up.

Fred Wilson, former committee secretary, is a geologist and has spent the last four years of his life roving Village Green every



CLR Committee members. Back row, Steven Keylon, Holly Kane, Gordon Brooks. Front row, Ted Lumpkin, Gailyn Saroyan, Georgia Lumpkin, Fred Wilson

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Sunday morning with a clipboard to inventory the plant specimens. He enjoys doing it and was glad to be part of the effort.

Ted and Georgia Lumpkin (Ted was former Chair of the committee, and Georgia is current Chair of the Landscape Committee) moved to Village Green in 2001, after selling their home in Windsor Hills. After seeing the existing deferred maintenance to the buildings and grounds, Ted joined the committee in the hopes that when completed, the Cultural Landscape Report would become the master plan for future Boards and managers to use to maintain the landscape.

Several years ago, Gaylin Saroyan, then a member of the Landscape Committee, was sent by the VG Board of Directors to a three-day seminar in Santa Barbara. There she met Charles Birnbaum, formerly a coordinator of the National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative and now the Founder and President of The Cultural Landscape Foundation. Birnbaum is credited with using landscaping as a defining characteristic for historic sights. Saroyan returned to VG with

knowledge of how to write a Cultural Landscape Report.

Steven Keylon (a Director on the VG Board) moved to VG seven years ago because of his interest in modern architecture. He became active in several committees. After attending a meeting of the CLR group, he began to research Fred Barlow, Jr., who designed the landscape here at VG. He was able to locate the children of Barlow and last year, they revisited their childhood at VG while talking with Keylon (see the Fall 2009 *Highlights* for the article). Keylon and the committee were able to learn more of the landscaping from this research.

Robert Nicolais (also a Director on the Board) worked on the original application for the National Historic status for Village Green, and was one of organizers of the committee, works now to get the CLR completed.

Other previous or inactive members include Jeffrey Mintz, Gabriel Cervantes, and Sara Loe (former chair of this committee.) Loe was instrumental in getting the committee organized.

Happy New Year!



Village Green *Highlights* is the community newsletter of the Village Green Owners' Association, incorporated August 8, 1973. We make every attempt to ensure the accuracy of all information. However, we are not responsible for errors, omissions, or inaccuracies in this publication. The editor reserves the right to edit articles and letters for tone, clarity and length. Opinions expressed in *Highlights* do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Board of Directors or the Management. Please submit submissions or comments to the editor at highlights@villagegreenla.net, or to the office.