

The Village Green Highlights

A Quarterly Publication of the Village Green Owners' Association

Spring 2009

The 2009 Annual Meeting Community in Action

The Village Green Owners Association held our annual meeting on Saturday, February 7, 2009 at the Baldwin Hills Elementary School at Hauser and Rodeo Road. Guest speaker Carolyn Wells, Magnet Coordinator for the Baldwin Hills Gifted/High Ability Magnet School, addressed the audience of approximately 116 owners, speaking about the elementary school and its virtue of being a gifted/high ability school

with a diverse population of children and high test scores. After the quorum was met (268 ballots required for quorum), the meeting was called to order, and the 11 candidates running for the five open positions on the Village Green Board of Directors gave their presentations. The presentations emphasized platforms such as improving communications with residents, education of directors serving on the board, a need for reviewing the financial documents, and the impending infrastructure work that is needed.

After these presentations, owners in the audience were allotted three min-

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ELECTION RESULTS

Results for 5 Director Positions

5 New Board Directors Elected:	Votes
Steve Haggerty	182
Daniel Millner	154
Robert Nicolais	136
Drew Furedi	134
Nat Hutton	133

Candidates Not Elected:

Tom Brown	132
Joseph Khoury	129
Dan Frank	115
Cynthia Singleton	102
Pauline Carroll	96
James Bilgihan	78

Proposals to change VGOA Bylaws
(276 votes are required to change the VGOA bylaws)

Proposal A (1)—Limit the number of rental units at VG

Yes—120 No—160

Proposal B (2)—Directors must reside at the Village Green

Yes—181 No—95



Village Green 50+ Travel Club

On April 13, 2009, Village Green Social Recreation will celebrate 10 years of success. The committee has beaten the odds of many residents who said it would never last. The club operates with monies received from membership dues, trip profits and fundraising activities. The club receives NO FUNDS from the Village Green Owners' Association.

The Social Recreation Committee was established in 1999. The following year, in 2000, the Committee

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" We hope you like the new look of *Highlights!* The Communications Committee wants to thank Reatha Simon for joining us last Fall, designing the newsletter, and helping us with the makeover. Thank you Reatha!"

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

Black History Event Draws Crowd

More than 50 residents and guests made their way to the Village Green Clubhouse on a wet, windy February afternoon to hear a courageous black Los Angeles attorney discuss the significance of Barack Obama's election for black people and all Americans. When he finished, they gave him a standing ovation.



Attorney Leo Branton, born in 1922 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, arrived in Los Angeles at a time when there was not a single black law firm here. Establishing his own firm, he became, in Johnny Cochran's words, "a lawyer's lawyer," with a clientele that included entertainment stars such as Nat King Cole and Dorothy Dandridge and political activists famous and unknown, including Communists and members of the Black Panther Party.

Branton placed Obama's victory in the context of the long struggle of black people for freedom and equality: "Barack Obama stands on the shoulders and on the graves of many people." He reminded the audience of the pre-Civil War era when the United States Supreme Court ruled, "The black man has no rights which the white man is bound to respect" (Dred Scott Decision), and counted a slave as 3/5 of a man. He shared memories of the 1960s civil rights movement and his trips to the rural South to secure basic legal rights for students and community members who had been fire-hosed, beaten, and jailed during sit-ins and marches for integration and the right to vote.



Branton also touched on the case for which he is perhaps best known and most admired—the 1972 trial of the black University of California professor and former Communist Party member Angela Davis for murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy in a courtroom takeover. The jury acquitted Davis on all counts. Branton said the most difficult challenge the defense faced was to explain why she had fled after the event, because flight is considered to be evidence of guilt. Facing an all-white jury in San Jose, Branton told them to imagine they were black. "Be black, think black. If you're black, you don't ask why Angela fled; you ask why she allowed herself to be caught." The *Los Angeles Sentinel* newspaper wrote, "The trial...served as a standard for modern day litigation, pioneering the use of the media, [and] jury consultants, and highlighting the unreliability of eyewitnesses." (5/1/08)

In response to audience concerns about continuing racism and lack of equal opportunity, Branton said that Obama cannot bring change without people's involvement. "[Martin Luther] King's dream has not yet come completely true. Barack Obama's election is a first, partial step." He added, "I hope he will not only be the first black president but will also be the first who saved this country from economic turmoil and unnecessary, foolish, stupid wars."

Branton was introduced by Tony Nicholas, familiar to residents who attended his presentation last year on the Nicholas Brothers. The event concluded with a mouth-watering meal arranged by Marcie Thelemaque, featuring not only chicken and sides from Collard Green Café in Inglewood, but also greens and pecan pies made by residents Joe Khoury and Allison Grover-Khoury. Kudos go to Molly O'Brien and the Cultural Affairs Committee for this thought-provoking Black History Month event, with thanks to Jean Wilson, Jean Wynne, and Alva Harper for logistics.

—Lucy Fried

Second Annual Village Green Home Companion



"The Village Green's own future American Idols performing at the second annual Village Green Home Companion"

On Sunday, March 22, a packed house was entertained by our many talented neighbors at the second annual Village Green Home Companion. They sang, they spoke, they acted, and they wowed the audience with their talent and creativity at this event that is becoming a Village Green tradition.



Manager's Report

Looking Back on 2008, Looking Ahead to 2009

I would like to thank all residents for a great 2008! Below, I give an overview of our accomplishments of 2008, and my goals for 2009. I look forward to working with you in this new year and will keep you informed of developments in all areas.

—Robert Bonfiglio
Village Green General Manager

2008 Accomplishments

2008 was a remarkable year! We completed a huge amount of recurring projects paid from the reserve funds. We painted 19 residential buildings, which made a huge dent in the residential building paint program; we only have 19 buildings left to go, of which, eight or nine are slated to be painted in 2009. We also completed repairing and painting all the garage courts this year. Although there are no garage courts to be painted in 2009, in 2010 we will begin to repaint several courts, placing them on a regular painting schedule that assures the garage courts and buildings will never be allowed to fall into disrepair again.

In addition, we finally repaired, painted, and renovated the maintenance yard!!!! Gone are 30 years of trash and storage. Gone are the leaking walls and rotted wood. Gone is the flooding. All roofing and carpentry are now repaired. The landscaping office and the carpenter shop are now free of rodents and rain-water. There is room for the maintenance crew to safely perform their work. The crew's break room is painted and cleaned out. We installed a sump pump, which was crucial to relieve the carpenter shop from continual flooding. The well and pump area is no longer a mud puddle when it rains, as it has been re-leveled and paved. New lighting illuminates the yard as well as Rodeo Place by Court 17. And, finally,

the outside of the yard has been pruned and lined with plants so that the homeowners facing the yard can have something nice to look at.

In addition, we have repaired many patios, replaced 11 garage floors, fixed numerous concrete walkways, made 16 overhang repairs, performed exclusionary work for pest control on *all* buildings and cleaned all of the residential, garage, clubhouse and maintenance yard roofs.

2009 Goals

2009 will mark a turning point at Village Green. We have caught up with all of the work orders, and this year we have entered a "maintenance mode." This will allow us to move soon into a preventative mode. The maintenance crew will be actively looking for work that needs to be performed in the common areas. The goal is to be proactive rather than reactive. The Board also approved non-recurring reserve work for this year, which includes interior pipe replacement for three buildings and sewer replacement for one or two courts.

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Architecture Students Visit the Village Green



On February 8 the Landmark Committee hosted a talk and tour of the Village Green National Historic Landmark. Professor Lauren Bricker of Cal Poly Pomona brought 86 architecture students for the tour. The Landmark Committee organized the event. Residents gave tours on various aspects of landmark issues related to the Village Green: Ted Lumpkin gave a tour on the Cultural Landscape Report, Gabriel Cervantes on sustainability features, and Robert Nicolais on history. Our Manager, Robert Bonfiglio also talked about maintenance issues. A good time was had by all.

—Robert Nicolais
National Historic Landmark Committee

Our Election Process In-Action

Village Green has several committees but none with more responsibility than the Election Committee that oversees the running of the VGOA election process each year. Their job is to monitor the ballot box, make determinations on questionable ballots, determine the quorum, and count the ballots received. The 2009 Election Committee was commanded by three residents—Kathryn Carr, Cynthia Cyrus and Betty Harris—who accepted the Board’s invitation to act as “Inspectors of Elections.” They had several meetings over the course of December and January to discuss the process and make required arrangements. They also recruited 10 volunteers to assist them in counting ballots on Saturday, February 7th after the annual meeting. The volunteer list included: Penny Bannerman, Priscilla Browner, Muriel Dickerson, Laurie Liles, Georgia Lumpkin, Barbara McCully, Jim Walton, Mickey Walton, Barbara Washington and Brian West.

Since the adoption of new election rules by the State in November 2006, VGOA has been required to use “secret” ballots. Each resident’s voting choices are kept secret by inserting them into a white, unmarked envelope, which is then placed into a yellow envelope that contains the owner’s name, address and signature. The yellow envelopes are used to check against a master-voting roster to assure that there are no duplicates. On the day of the annual election, once the quorum is achieved and polls are closed, the Inspectors escort the ballot box back to Clubhouse and begin the final sort and count of yellow envelopes.

The inspectors and their band of volunteers begin by opening the yellow envelopes to remove the white envelopes—separating the anonymous ballots from the yellow envelopes. They then open the white envelopes, remove the ballots, and sort them into stacks of 25. Once all ballots are sorted, the volunteers are grouped in threes. In each group, one person calls out the votes on each secret ballot, while the other two mark the votes on tabulation forms. After each stack of 25 ballots, the two tabulation counts are checked against one another to assure accuracy. With this year’s election, it took five groups of three volunteers two hours and 45 minutes (1pm to 3:45pm) to count all the ballots. The final step occurred when

Cynthia stood before a large chalk board lined with names of the candidates, and the proposals, and asked each counting group leader to call out their tabulation totals for each stack of 25 ballots, which she then wrote on the chalkboard. Cynthia asked several volunteers to add the chalkboard totals, and the Inspectors then determined which candidates had received the highest vote count.

We have 629 units here at Village Green and only voters who are in good standing may cast a vote. In the 2009 Election, there were 534 owners eligible to vote, which made our quorum requirement 268. VGOA received 288, or 53% voter turnout. The top five candidates running received 182, 154, 136, 134, and 133 votes each. Very close indeed. It was impressive to witness the volunteers’ dedication to their serious tasks. Our collective thanks goes out to all these volunteers for making this year’s election process smooth, transparent and certified.

—Reba Glover, Board of Directors

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utes each to share their comments. One owner reminded all of us that we are a community, and that politeness and courtesy is not passé. Another owner asked that the Board reduce spending, review insurance costs, and develop a plan to deal with delinquencies. The third and last owner complimented the landscaping vendor TruGreen. Following this, committee spokespersons gave owners updates of the committees’ activities in 2008. Social Recreation received a well-deserved round of applause for celebrating its tenth year at Village Green, with Priscilla Browner at the helm. The Association president and the treasurer gave their reports, and the property manager, Robert Bonfiglio, received applause as he described some of his goals for 2009 for the office administration. The 2008 annual meeting minutes were then approved by the owners in the audience, and the resolution to move \$100,000 of excess 2008 income to the reserves was also approved by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:50 p.m. so that the ballot box could be taken to the VG Clubhouse for counting.

—Reba Glover



Curious About The Mills Act?

The Mills Act is a state law that helps cities protect their historic resources by granting property tax reductions to owners who commit to maintain and preserve their properties according to Mills Act standards. Many residents who are active in the Village Green community believe that Village Green participation in the Mills Act is the best avenue for translating our Historic Landmark status into financial benefits for homeowners. While savings will vary, initial examinations of property tax documents indicate that most Village Green homeowners would see annual tax reductions from a few hundred to several thousand dollars. The lower rates would pass on to new owners—another plus for sellers.

The Mills Act sparked attention last fall when the owner of the Crest Theatre in Westwood learned his property tax bill could have been reduced from more than \$43,500 to about \$17,000 if he had applied earlier for the Mills Act (*Los Angeles Times*, 11/22/08). The distinctive old theatre, like Village Green, is a City of Los Angeles historic-cultural site and thus eligible to apply for the program. Village Green is not only a *city* historic site but also one of only seven *national historic landmarks* in Los Angeles. Thus, we are in a good position to be accepted into the Mills Act program, and receive these tax benefits, provided we can successfully demonstrate that homeowners are committed to maintenance and preservation.

An important precedent was set in 2007 when the city signed its first Mills Act contract with a homeowner association. This contract put to rest the question of whether homeowners within an association would have to sign individual contracts to qualify for Mills Act benefits. If Village Green opts to apply for the Mills Act and is accepted, a contract would be signed between the city and the Association, followed by reassessment of property tax rates. The time required from application to the receipt of new lower tax rates is about 18 months.

Application Process

An informal group of Village Green owners, keen to see lower property taxes and progress on deferred maintenance, met recently with officials from the Office of Historic Resources, which administers the Mills Act for Los Angeles. Board member Steven Keylon attended the meeting. He envisions a process of research, a period of Board and homeowner education and discussion, and then a vote on whether to apply. It is not clear whether the Board or VGOA membership would make the decision. Keylon feels the City probably would not require a membership vote. *Highlights* Editor and former Grants Committee chair Susan Edwards suggested that the Board may prefer a homeowner vote to ensure the decision represents the community's wishes and encourage greater buy-in.

The application process would include agreement with the city on a list of deferred maintenance projects and a timeline for doing the work. Keylon believes irrigation, wiring, and re-piping would probably head the list. Prior to acceptance, some units with proposed projects would probably be visited by City inspectors, by arrangement with the homeowners, as would the site as a whole. Site inspections

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would also occur periodically during the life of the agreement. "The Mills Act agreement is a 10-year contract and there is a penalty for not complying."

Tax Cuts & Offset Maintenance Fees

Assuming we will soon be faced with some type of increased homeowner fees to pay for the deferred maintenance projects, the property tax reductions offered by the Mills Act would take some of the sting out of the increases. This would be especially helpful for people who purchased their units during the recent real estate boom and who have high mortgages and taxes. For example, a \$3,000-per-unit special assessment would be less onerous if the homeowner is saving \$1,000 in taxes that year.

However, long-time owners who bought in when prices and taxes were considerably lower would realize the smallest benefits. These owners are likely to include many people living on fixed incomes who may have difficulty managing increased Association fees—the Mills Act will not offer much relief for these owners. Keylon seemed aware of the problem but said it had not yet been discussed by the Board or committees. He agreed it should be discussed.

For more information about the Mills Act, visit the City's Web site at <http://preservation.lacity.org/mills-act>
— Lucy Fried, Court 13

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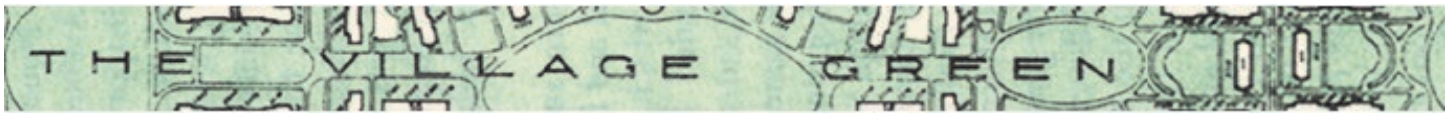
The office will change as well. The procedures in the office will be proactive in organizing and completing work before it is due. In addition, my goal is to make the office open to walk-in traffic for more hours each day, instead of closing for four hours from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

I am genuinely concerned about some issues homeowners face in 2009. The reserve budget is funded at only 1.7%. This does not allow for the funding of reoccurring reserve items (such as asphalt repair and roofing replacement), in addition to the infrastructure items that need to be completed. This places the homeowners in a precarious situation. Should any type of unplanned work need to take place, special assessments will be the only answer. In addition, you will be deciding on the repair to the infrastructure work this year. This work is crucial to the Green and must be addressed very soon.

Beyond 2009...

Looking further into the future, some things to consider will include the following: How would we accommodate electric vehicles and charging stations? The Expo Line light rail will be here soon; will we want some type of shuttle service to the station? I understand 16 babies were born here in 2008. This trend will continue, and with the other children already here, we may need to accommodate them in new ways—possibly in the form of the "tot-lots" that were part of the architects' original plan. Environmental concerns such as energy and water conservation will also need to be addressed, in addition to things that we don't even realize at this time. THIS is the magic of Village Green—to be able to adapt to the changing times and needs of the residents.





DIDJA KNOW?

2008 ended on a very exciting note for several of our Village Green neighbors and it looks like 2009 is already proving to be a year filled with new adventures, great opportunities, and more personal success stories for our neighbors. Here is a snapshot of some of our neighbors' rich and exciting experiences for you to enjoy!



16 New Village Green-ers!

Rumor has it that there must be something in our water because in 2008, our Village Green community grew to include the birth of sixteen new beautiful babies and several first-time parents.

Our welcome additions included

Kennedy Jordan Calloway, Shimone J. Chason, Sarah Madeline LaForge, Cai Morton Bloom Furedi, Desmond Buckley Bilgihan, Ray Inara Frankel Posner, Eric Ocean McGowan, Gavin Sawyer Britt, Talula May Worth, Jacob Jiung Kim, Samantha Ray Creighton, Jay Amaris Wal-tower, Charles Quetzal Vouaitchevitch, Rainier Tien Schmitz, Miles Yi Li Flanagan, and Annalisa Aiko Berlejung. Congratulations to all of our proud new parents!

Giving to the Global Community



When neighbor Jean Miao began the 2008 school year as an English teacher, her neighbors had no idea that it would be in Beijing, China! Jean decided to rent her unit and move to China where she is now teaching Eng-

lish in the Business school at Tsinghua University. Jean is having so much fun that she may stay another year. What a great way to experience another culture and give back to a community at the same time.

Speaking of giving back, kudos to our neighbors

Nat Hutton and Cynthia Singleton for volunteering their time as tutors at Windsor Hill Elementary school. Nat and Cynthia can be found every week on the campus teaching reading proficiency skills to some very ambitious and energetic young students.



Both recently completed a comprehensive intergenerational training program through the Oasis Senior Community Club, which has afforded them this great volunteer opportunity. Cynthia and Nat agree that seeing the excitement and enthusiasm of the students as they are engaged in learning has been a personally rewarding experience. Thanks Nat and Cynthia for making a difference in the lives of our youths and giving back to our community.

Retirement

After spending 16 years dedicated to the affairs of our community and the Board of Supervisors, long-time neighbor of 20 years, Barbara Hill, retired as Deputy to former Supervisor Yvonne Burke, of the 2nd District on January 20, 2009. Upon her retirement, the Board commended Barbara for her outstanding civic pride, demonstrated by her numerous contributions for the benefit of all the citizens of Los Angeles County. We certainly can look around and see how greatly our community benefited from the years of dedicated services and contributions during former Supervisor Burke's elected term. Congratulations, Barbara on your retirement!

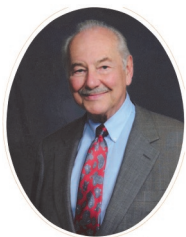
As you see, our neighbors have embarked upon some really cool and exciting journeys in 2009. Perhaps you would like to share a tidbit about what you have been up to lately. If so, contact any member of the *Highlights* editorial staff to share your tidbit of excitement.

— Barbara Washington

Passages

Helen Blye

Helen Blye, resident of Court 14, died February 24, 2009 at the age of 81. Born in Oklahoma to a large and loving family, she moved to Los Angeles to live with her sister and attend college. She received a BS degree from Cal State, followed by a Master of Science from USC. After teaching in El Centro, California for four years, she joined LAUSD and was a dedicated and nurturing grade school teacher for 40 years. She purchased her Village Green townhouse in the 1970s during the conversion to condominiums and lived there until moving to a retirement home in December of 2006. Helen was a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, a world traveler and an avid bridge player, winning trophies around the U.S. Fun loving, adventurous, independent, religious and a genuinely nice person, she will be missed by family and friends.



George Totten

George Oakley Totten III, resident of Court 17, died on March 2, 2009 at the age of 86. He had been a resident of the Village Green since 1980. George was a professor of East Asian Studies and Political Science and had retired from teaching at USC at age 70, but continued

to actively pursue his work up until his last week, which included promoting the Romanization of Asian languages. He has written, or contributed to 35 books and published over 70 articles on themes related to East Asian politics in Japan, Korean and China. George's daughter Linnea reports that George truly enjoyed life at the Village Green. Over the past 30 years, he was often seen jogging around the Green, and was an active member of the community. Specifically, he was involved in the effort to get the Village Green accepted as a National Historic Landmark.

THE GAFCON UNIT CONDITION SURVEY FORM

All residents should have received the GAFCON unit survey. This is part of a property condition assessment that will inform decisions about future repair and maintenance. Please fill it out immediately and return to the office.

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 vghighlights@yahoo.com, or to the office.

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added a "travel club" for persons 50 years of age and over. With a combined membership of Village Green residents and the neighboring community, 375 seniors have never been so active. Motor coaches leave the "Green" on a monthly basis (sometimes twice a month), taking members to enjoy historical, theatrical, and gaming activities, as well as land tours and cruises. The club has taken over 139 trips.

So, what do you when you want to get out of Dodge? Join the 50+ Travel Club. We offer a wide range of activities at an affordable cost. Stop by the clubhouse Thursdays (unless otherwise specified) between 12 noon and 3:00 p.m. Trips for the year are posted on the bulletin board at the rear entrance of the Clubhouse, or give me a call (323) 290-9259.

A Year to Remember

On Thursday, December 10, 2008, the club held its Ninth Annual Christmas Luncheon and Dance at the Proud Bird Restaurant. One hundred and seventy members and guests attended the gala affair. Priscilla Browner, founder of the club, honored 21 Village Green "charter member" residents and 16 community "charter members" for their continuous support and dedication to the club during the past eight years. Honorees received a certificate of appreciation and a unique monetary gift.

Village Green honorees were Helen Washington (co-founder), Lillian Newman, Melvin Browner, Eleanor Boyd, Kathryn Carr, Alice Haggerty, Carmelita Richardson, Elaine Lambert, James Paige, Yvonne Hood, Flora Goins, Luell Hill, Joseph Boone, Ruth Boone, Marjorie Ellis, Horace Owens, Eugene Lambert, Violet Parks, Jeri Marie Morrie, Janet Ticeson, and Ruby Wilson.



Community honorees were Lenora Bowman, Olive Braithwaite, Palmyra Cameron, Aurelia Cox, Janos Damnavits, Guinivere Flavien, Marian Louse Howell, Virzell Iverson, Helen Jackson, Rosie Jackson, Virginia Jones, Lela Lavender, Clarisa Morrison, Freddie Pinson, James Pratt, and Sallie Pratt.

— Priscilla Browner
Chair of Social Recreation Committee