

The Village Green - CLR Part 2. Treatment Recommendations

TRIP REPORT for January 11 - 12, 2013

Date Issued: January 28, 2013 (Revised: April 2, 2013)
RE: Work Session 1: Meetings with CLR Committee, Site Reconnaissance and Community Meeting
January 11 and 12, 2013

Participants: Village Green CLR Core Committee: Holly Kane, committee chair; Robert Creighton, 2012 board liaison; Gordon Brooks; Steven Keylon; Ted Lumpkin; Georgia Lumpkin; George Rheault, 2013 board liaison; Tamorah Thomas

Additional Village Green Participants: Mickey Fielding; Jeffrey Mintz; Steve Haggerty; April Garbat, Intern

Owners and Residents of Village Green: between 60 and 70 participants

Mundus Bishop: Tina Bishop, Shelby Scharen

Issues Discussed:

- Initial Site Tour by CLR Committee
- Site Project Overview, Project Goals
- Information needed, drawings available
- Key Issues and Areas
- NHL and Significance
- Community Meeting and Site Walk
- Treatment Ideas by landscape characteristic

Work Session with CLR Committee – afternoon of January 11, 2013

The work session consisted of a kick-off meeting, a site tour lead by the CLR Committee, and a follow up meeting. The purpose of the work session was to review data needs, discuss/confirm the agenda for the two days, discuss key issues related to the site, review the NHL’s importance and confirm project goals.

1. MB identified data and information needed to begin preparation of the treatment guidelines. These included the following.
 - A copy of the CAD xrefs will be provided to fill in the gaps on the existing condition and analysis information from Part 1 drawings. This information is needed to inform the treatment recommendations.

- An existing conditions plan will be prepared by the CLR Committee to include with Part 1. It will include existing walks, drives, trees and vegetation.
 - MB will let the CLR Committee know of any additional data needs.
 - A copy of the Village Green pruning plan will be provided to MB.
2. A site tour led by the Core Committee occurred and included review of all major issues and ideas.
- The tour began at the Admin Building and included stops at the Central Green, at most Garden Courts, and at most Garage Courts, and along portions of the site perimeter. MB later in the afternoon did its own site survey unaccompanied by Village Green representatives.
 - Key issues and needs included the following.
 - Pruning: often shrubs are overgrown, hard to keep up with, and then cut back, making shrubs look woody
 - Various blights attacking plants: oleander, red leaf eucalyptus
 - Need to identify what is good pruning vs. less desirable
 - Overplanted beds, too many plants in narrow areas, especially between fences/patios, garage walls and the sidewalk
 - Missing features: trellises, removed for painting and not put back
 - Garden Courts: overplanted
 - Olive tree allee between Admin and Clubhouse buildings: only 1 tree remains
 - Maintenance and sustainability of lush vegetation – this quality is important to residents
 - How to treat early vs. late planned vegetation
3. It was agreed the treatment recommendations would be developed as guidelines, and that the document will be complete enough to stand-alone. It will also be presented as part of the full CLR.
- Each landscape characteristic will be described by brief text (a brief explanation); and graphically.
4. MB provided an overview of what it means to be a National Historic Landmark (NHL), what responsibilities this implies, and how this influences the treatment recommendations.
- The NHL designation is an acknowledgement of importance;
 - The original designation analyzed the original design, not later modifications, and determined the complex to be nationally significant;
 - Later plantings do not meet the standard for architectural and historical significance according to the Secretary of Interior Standards.
 - The CLR recommends modifying the period of significance to be 1935 to 1948; this is currently under consideration. MB concurs with this recommendation as it covers design and implementation related to the original plans and consistent with the themes that determined the NHL significance.
 - Can the period of significance be extended to 1978, marking the conversion of apartments to condominium? This is not recommended as the NHL designation is based

on architecture, landscape architecture and garden city movement. The site can be managed successfully without extending the period. If this continues to be a desire, further research would need to be undertaken and an additional context would need to be developed to support the extension. This would be another project.

- The contribution of Winans should be included within the site history section in Part 1.
 - Elements of Winans' plan will be considered during the development of treatment recommendations. Some of these elements include extant plantings such as trees and shrubs.
5. Preliminary Goals were developed to guide the treatment recommendations.
- Reveal Historic Character
 - Protect the Wow-Factor
 - Holistic Landscape
 - Conservation of Resources
 - Integration of new features
 - Simplification of Spatial Qualities
 - Infrastructure Repair
 - Protect the Urban Forest
 - Acknowledge the later period and its development
6. Vegetation was discussed.
- Tina provided a quick impression of the vegetation, noting that most is sheared detracting from the appearance. The absence of the original groundcover layer loses the linear qualities that originally were intended to be a base to the buildings.
 - The following summarizes the discussion.
 - Maybe some trees need to be removed due to wear and tear on the buildings/threat to building structures and maintenance issues;
 - Keep shrubs low so can see the tree trunks; Use shrubs that you wouldn't have to shear/ keep naturalistic;
 - Pine trees next to patios – maybe not designed, they are overgrown and provide too much shade;
 - Possibly use a walkable groundcover; Diversify plant palette of groundcovers and punctuate with shrubs as accents; Change landscaping between the buildings and the greens;
 - Lawn, restore as easy to walk on and use, free of trip hazards caused by irrigation-related depressions;
 - Keep trees, even if not on original plan – provide habitat for birds, etc.
 - No trees should be removed.

Work Session with CLR Committee – morning of January 12, 2013

The morning work session consisted of a review of the PowerPoint presentation to be shared at the community meeting, a discussion on terminology and a discussion on two landscape characteristics – spatial organization and circulation.

1. The presentation was modified slightly to ensure accuracy and eliminate unnecessary complexity, and was presented at the community meeting.
2. MB provided a draft outline of the treatment guidelines to work from. The draft was meant to elicit conversation not to provide any definitive recommendations. MB noted comments on each landscape characteristic for use in developing guidelines.
3. Spatial organization was discussed as one of seven landscape characteristics to be included in the treatment guidelines.
 - Tina Bishop diagrammed the existing spatial organization of the site, which is consistent with the original design. The goal of future improvements is to work with this arrangement. This will be described in graphics and text for review by the committee in the first draft.
 - The following documents some ideas discussed, to explore further.
 - Hierarchy of open spaces from center green to garden courts and garage courts is essential to preserve;
 - See opportunities for keeping some areas open that may have been active recreation during the historic period (like the nursery and tot lot in garden courts 14/15);
 - Like the idea of the trees reinforcing the open spaces;
 - Some indicated a preference for introducing decomposed granite into garden courts and to provide seating as was originally intended;
 - Removing non-contributing garages to regain open spaces in some garage courts and near the original administration building will be studied;
 - Need to look at trash areas – need to be re-formatted, recycling, compost;
 - Need space for individuals outside their front doors, between the door and the walkway;
 - Like openness of Garden Court and not too many trees, like sunny green space
4. Circulation was discussed and included all walkways, potential material selections, and current issues.
 - Tina Bishop diagrammed the fundamental qualities of the circulation system, describing the original design intent. She noted walkways that are currently missing from the original system and areas where materials have changed.
 - Tina Bishop described how different materials could be used including colored concrete done in a texture to resemble decomposed granite to reflect the appearance of the original paths; use of decomposed granite built using a stabilizer material to bind it so it is firm and meets universal accessibility standards; an edge would be necessary for decomposed granite
 - The following documents the discussion.
 - Walkways- keep the organization, the tree canopies, compression of some spaces and openness of others, diagonal paths and the winding through areas/open and enclosed space – enjoy that you can't see the whole thing at once;
 - Discussed decomposed granite – would be in favor of restoring walkways to this surface, especially if it can be done to last longer;

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- Like decomposed granite in allee –wouldn't have to irrigate and could save money on irrigation and maintenance but initial cost is unknown;
- Some liked the idea of decomposed granite in the allees, which would be a good gathering space and place to linger;
- Need to keep walkways clear by removing vegetation – not too overgrown so that people can walk;
- Surface needs to be wheelchair and bike accessible.

Community Meeting – morning of January 12, 2013

The community meeting included a presentation from the CLR Committee and MB on the work previously prepared for Part 1, along with a review of the purpose of this project (treatment recommendations) and preliminary goals.

1. Holly Kane, chair of the CLR Committee, welcomed the community and introduced members of the committee who were present as well as members of the board.
2. Tina Bishop provided a brief presentation that included a summary of the work completed to-date on Part I of the CLR: historic research, existing condition documentation, and analysis of integrity, a description of the purpose of this project (treatment guidelines), and the project goals.
3. The meeting included an hour of comments from the Village Green community, followed by an hour long site walk with community members to discuss specific issues. The following notes are from both discussions.

General Community Comments

- Do not turn everything back to the 1940s – we like the way it is
- Concern about turning back the clock too much
- Not to fund such projects: recreational facilities, tot lots & wading pools without owner consensus
- Each project element should be individually considered and approved by the residents
- Look at the big picture, even if expensive, still might be doable
- Historic plan had vision and purpose. Today, we should achieve the purpose but not necessarily the design. Use native plants as part of the vision.
- Think of the future, children, and sustainability
- Concerns of developers – don't want to lose the integrity of the site and then have it redeveloped – therefore need to continue and keep up with maintenance
- Need to seek balance between preservation, livability, and financial issues
- Need to strengthen the relationship between the Village Green and the larger community
- Every project proposed cannot and should not be approved or rejected without residents knowledge and approval
- Must be cost projections associated with this project before approving anything
- Need to be concerned about sustainability, but water is free
- No mechanical design decisions
- No decisions based on fear
- Need to seek long-term view of acquiring grants
- This is a showcase for the Garden City of America
- Existing conditions illustrate possibilities – ok to explore ideas
- Invest in things that will pay back – ok to increase costs if investment pays off
- Supportive of the project – we need to provide a blueprint for the future
- Implementation – need to complete projects and not just talk about them
- Environmental pollution in the adjacent area, adjacent areas were not part of the original plan

- Clarence Stein wanted residents to have some control over the front of their own units
- Approach this as one area at a time
- Need to promote solar energy – important for the future of our children
- Enthusiastically support and allow residents to be part of this project
- Don't get caught up in history
- 1935 – 1942, back to the bubble of this time?
- Now, people have schools and parks to go to
- Keep the values of the community, but don't be afraid of change

Vegetation Comments

- Center green as a large space for different activities – need to preserve; see as a place for picnicking and like everyone's front door; preserve open space in middle for sun and dappled edges of shade; like the open space of green but don't lose the trees and share – retain as one space; preserve large open green for running;
- Improve strip along Rodeo Road - currently lawn and not well maintained, could remove it and install California native plantings instead, save water and be more sustainable [Note: this may require review and permit approval from the City of Los Angeles];
- New modern element: traffic and pollution – need taller denser trees/shrubs
- Groundcover is green and attractive – not necessarily have to be ivy
- Use companion plants;
- Grass in front of house is important
- Tree replacement concerns – only looking at historic trees?
- No tree should be removed;
- People on the 1st level would like privacy and shrubs at their buildings, not groundcovers
- Use more flowering plants along fence edges
- Courtyards – make a lemon grove, possibility to make an edible landscape
- Children currently play on the lawn – adding groundcovers would change that use
- In favor of less lawn
- Groundcover isn't habitat for animals; Ivy can take over, would prefer not to use; Explore use of California native plants;
- Areas in front of buildings could be owner-designed.
- Garage Courts – like overgrown pathways, dense and lush look between the patios and the garage courts; Should use plants that don't have to be sheared and constantly maintained so people can walk by; Use smaller plants in Garage Courts, between patios and walkway;
- Patio walks: Use flowering peach to punctuate the line of fences with smaller plants in between
- Keep barrier of shrubs between the parking areas/garages and patios;
- Large plantings protect patios – shearing the shrubs makes the patios look like a parking lot, need plants around the patios that are located outside the patios for a screen /aesthetic; Like buffer between the walkway and cars;
- Like colorful shrubs and other plantings;

- Trees at the edge of development create separation between the site and cars/traffic.

Land Use, Spatial and Views Comments

- Large triangles northwest and northeast of center green – only open space near those courts and the most densely populated areas (with the fewest amenities). Need to keep these courts open and save this open space for the residents.
- Like things the way they are – like the diversity (of the community), like the pathways and the greens, need to preserve interaction between the community so no designated areas for seniors or children (as in a senior center or playground) – gathering areas should all be integrated so people of all ages know each other.
- Do not remove trees in order to preserve views to Baldwin Hills;
- Baldwin Vista is not what it was – the view of open natural area no longer exists as the hill is now a residential development
- Recreation facilities
 - Recreation facilities have been previously rejected by the homeowners (due to maintenance and construction costs); do not want additional tot lots or wading pool; there are other locations for kids to play;
 - Issues of people outside the community entering to use play facilities or other features
 - Additional recreation facilities would attract others – could be a problem for residents and negatively impact the quality of life (e.g., parking, traffic, and foot traffic)
 - Using the green as a golf course doesn't make sense, excludes others
 - Possibly put pool in patios/ or people's private space
- Tot Lot/Playgrounds
 - Re-establish tot lots in garage courts
 - Temporary play area – could move around
 - Add playgrounds to garden courts
 - Add children facilities – but don't enclose or gate
 - Kid areas – a growing garden vs. a playground; garden would be an opportunity to teach children and for them to learn about plants, the growing process, growing food, about the ground feeding itself – teaches people how to be more sustainable
- Wading pond
 - Restoring the wading pond will attract animals
 - Once the coral tree has reached its natural lifespan, consider the opportunity to re-establish the pool
 - Water feature – allow a shallow wading/splash pool
 - Put kid's wading pool elsewhere?
- Dog Run
 - Consider needs of dog-owners
 - Create dog run, at the edge of site, a place to allow dogs to go
 - Temporary dog park – could move around
 - Need a place to walk dogs, somewhere within the green

- Community Garden
 - Grow food, herbs in the garage court – remove parking spots for garden spaces
 - Community garden – would like to expand, use a space that’s not on concrete (as the one is currently)

Comments on Features and Other Items

- Preserve brick undulating walls
- Remove ugly trash barriers
- Love the stone wall, steps, and use of DG;
- Like trellises and vines on buildings – would love to see this on other buildings, restore trellis and use of colorful vines
- The irrigation system is dangerous – large depressions in the lawn are not safe
- Evaluate the relationship across Sycamore and at the edge of the development for possibilities
- Need to look at safety issues, particularly lighting issues

Work Session - Treatment Ideas discussed with CLR Committee – January 12, 2013

The end of day work session concentrated on discussions related to the remaining landscape characteristics including land use, features and additional discussion on vegetation.

1. Land Use

- Robert presented the ideas from the Playground Committee, and will follow up by sending the committee’s diagram to MB next week. The following is how they would like to proceed.
 - Use places that kids already use
 - Large trees, natural stones
 - Around the Central Green
 - Create gathering areas, distributed across site, where the community naturally gathers
 - Less about actual play equipment
 - Provide benches, inviting for everyone
 - Fluidity of play areas and integrated approach
- Discussion on the Central Green included maintaining it as the primary open space with the ability to continue hosting the Association’s events.
 - Maintain as ‘Front Door;’
 - Maintain events: Music, Plays, Movies, Drinks on the Green;
- Additional guidance is needed in the recommendations on a process for accepting future land uses.
 - This is more likely a policy issue to be taken up by the board, but the range of appropriate uses and locations can be addressed by the CLR.
- Will or should there be opportunities for people to plant?
 - These could be included in areas that are underused or not public, or that do not have an important role in the overall composition.

- Explore re-establishing a gathering spot for the community in each of the Garage Courts
 - It is possible to remove the two garages at the entrance and the additions to the other garages as these are all non-contributing. The HSR recommends removing these.
 - The idea was suggested to convert the clubhouse back to its original use if possible.
2. Small Scale Features
- Walls and Patios
 - Walls are covered under HSR; the CLR can affirm the recommendations for repair and restoration of patio walls and brick walls. Brick walls are an example of an important element to remain, even though they were built after the end of the period of significance by one of the original architects.
 - Gates: guidance is currently provided in the Association's regulation on wood vs. iron gates. This should be reiterated in the guidelines.
 - Lighting
 - Consider sustainability and safety.
 - It is possible and desirable to re-wire the site lighting to a central system for the building- in which the porch light to come on automatically at dusk.
 - Original Light posts
 - Original light posts remain and are augmented by additional posts built using the original style. These are not always placed in original locations. The CLR can provide general direction, but the lighting will be addressed separately.
 - The existing condition plan should indicate existing post locations, showing original vs. new posts.
 - Seating is desirable in many locations
 - Original benches were never installed. Benches are commercially available that would meet the need for seating.
 - It is desirable to have benches with backs and backless. The bench will be steel, as was Barlow's. The CLR should indicate locations.
 - The Association does not currently have a memorial bench program, but it has been informally proposed as a way to replace the Memorial Tree program and to provide funding for benches.
 - Fences
 - Historic chain link fencing occurs at Garage Courts; fence covered with vines, shrubs and groundcovers; retain plant material;
 - It is desirable to repair extant historic fences and to consider their role in separating parking from walkways.
 - Water Feature
 - It could be restored as a wading pool as part of restoring the Clubhouse if the community desires it;

- For now, the Coral tree should remain as is until a time when it is a hazard or no longer healthy. It is not necessary to replace it once it is gone.
- 3. Vegetation – Discussion continued related to trees, groundcover, lawn and shrubs. The afternoon conversation is documented here. Both will be considered in developing guidelines.
 - Removal and re-planting should be shown as part of the vegetation plan in the guidelines;
 - East edge – screen of eucalyptus
 - security issues along the edge
 - neglected and overgrown
 - Clean buffer needed – clean up and replant
 - Add trees to the edge along Coliseum
 - Overgrown Aleppo Pines in the East and West Courts, encroaching on some buildings
 - Consider wind issues if trees are removed
 - Canopy cover is too thick/dense
 - Address exotic invasive species
- 4. Circulation - Discussion continued. The afternoon conversation is documented here. Both will be considered in developing guidelines.
 - Recommend that over time patios be converted back to concrete paver appearance
 - Already have rule that they must be preserved
 - Association maintains as necessary
 - Benches
 - Main Routes

Follow up Items

1. CLR Committee will provide the following to MB to prepare the draft treatment guidelines.
 - Existing Condition Plan
 - Play Area Plan
 - List of trees that have terminal diseases
 - Pruning Plan
 - Arborist Best-Management Practices (get from arborist, will then add to recommendations for vegetation)
2. Project Schedule will be revised to allow more time for community input and review by CLR Committee
 - Submittal of Treatment Guidelines Draft to committee; public presentation of draft guidelines March 23, with public comment period to follow
 - Trip 2 will be March 23rd
 - The CLR Committee will further detail the remainder of the project schedule.