

# BRENTWOOD HILLS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

POST OFFICE BOX 49495 • LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90049

www.brentwood-hills.org

Neighborhood News

March 2003



Two of the many no smoking signs in our community. The sign on the left is at the intersection of Mandeville Canyon Road and Mandeville Lane.

## Strict No Smoking Law Ignored by Many

There are obviously many advantages to living in such a beautiful part of the city, but there are also some important safety risks that we all share. Chief among these is the possibility of a major fire, due to our proximity to native brush throughout the neighborhood. At our board meetings during the last few months we have been hearing more and more frightening stories of many gardeners, builders, city workers, hikers, cyclists, and even some neighbors who are choosing to ignore the law which bans out-door smoking in our community.

The entire Mandeville Canyon area from Sunset Boulevard north is part of a larger zone which is designated a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (it is also referred to as a Mountain Fire District or Buffer Zone - see page two for some history of the fire zone designations).

L. A. Municipal Code 57.25.14 states:

### **SEC. 57.25.14 . SMOKING PROHIBITED.**

It shall be unlawful for any person to light, ignite or smoke any cigar, cigarette, tobacco in a pipe or other form of smouldering substance within a Mountain Fire District.

Smoking out-doors in our community is simply not legal, whether on the street, on your front steps, or in your back yard. There is no other possible interpretation of the law. The major problem that we have is enforcement. If you see someone smoking, please ask them to put it out. If they will not, call the police (it's best to use the West LA Division direct number, which is 310-575-8401, and not 911).

Please let your workers and visitors know that out-door smoking is not allowed here. If you see someone smoking, call them on it. We must take responsibility for the safety of our neighborhood. If we do not it is only a matter of time before we suffer the potentially severe consequences.

## **What is the History of the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone?**

The Mountain Fire District was established in January 1963 as a direct result of the November 1961 Bel Air Fire. A total of 484 homes were lost during that conflagration.

In April of 1971, the Fire Buffer Zones were established as a direct result of the wind driven Chatsworth Fire in September of 1971 where 198 homes were destroyed or damaged.

In April of 1981 the Los Angeles Fire Department established the Brush Clearance Unit to coordinate and conduct inspection sweeps of the Mountain Fire District and to contract noncompliant properties to be cleared of hazardous brush.

In February of 1986, as a result of the 1985 Baldwin Hills Fire that destroyed 53 homes and killed three people, section 57.21.07 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code was amended to include Mount Washington, El Sereno and Baldwin Hills in the Brush Clearance Inspection Program.

In 1993, as a result of the Oakland Hills Fire in which 3,403 homes were lost, 780 in the first hour of the fire, the Bates Bill No. AB337 was enacted requiring local jurisdictions to identify and establish Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. The Los Angeles Fire Department's Bureau of Fire Prevention and Public Safety joined with the Planning Section to conduct a survey utilizing the criteria established by the State Fire Marshal. The Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone lies mostly within the boundaries of the Mountain Fire District and The Buffer Zone.

Subsequent to Assembly Bill No. 337, Assembly Bill Nos. 3819 and 747, which are more restrictive, have been enacted reinforcing the provisions of Assembly Bill No. 337.

In April of 1997, section 57.21.07 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code was amended to increase the clearance of hazardous vegetation to a total distance of 200 feet from any structure unless otherwise specified by the Chief.

The Amendment further added criteria for maintenance of landscape vegetation in such a condition as not to provide an available fuel supply to augment the spread or intensity of a fire. These criteria included, but were not limited to eucalyptus, acacia, palm, pampas grass, and conifers such as cedar, cypress, fir, juniper, and pine.

In February of 1999 section 57.21.07 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code was again amended, this time establishing a fee for inspections of properties in the City of Los Angeles to determine if a violation of this section exists.

When the fee was first introduced, it raised several other issues. The Fire Department was directed to reevaluate the current Mountain Fire District and Buffer Zone to see if the boundaries drawn in 1961 and 1971 respectively were still valid. It was as a result of that assignment that the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone was established.

## **BHHA 2003 Board of Directors**

The officers for 2003 were selected by BHHA's board at our December meeting.

Continuing their respective roles as President and Vice President are Michael Leslie and Dominic LoBuglio. John Given is the new Treasurer, and Stu Krieger is the new Secretary.

Rounding out the rest of the board are: Martine Anderson, Loretta Ditlow, Eric Edmunds, Sheila Greenberg, Judy Handler, Bob Kadlec, Sue Keane, Arnold Levee, Randy Sherman, Bill Sullivan, and Lisa Troe.

We generally meet the first Wednesday evening each month. If you are interested in attending e-mail [webmaster@brentwood-hills.org](mailto:webmaster@brentwood-hills.org) or contact one of the directors for the location.

## **Thank You to Chez Mimi, Harvest Cafe, and Zax**

We would like to thank three local restaurants for their generous donations, which allowed us to provide a free raffle to BHHA members who attended the annual meeting in September. Each of the three restaurants donated gift certificates for dinners for two. We hope that providing this small incentive will encourage more participation at our annual meeting. If you have any other suggestions for raffle items in the future, we would love to hear your ideas.

The gift certificates were provided by:

Micheline Hébert  
**Chez Mimi**  
246 Twenty Sixth Street

Bashar Molem  
**The Harvest Cafe**  
13018 San Vicente Boulevard

Chris Schaefer  
**Zax**  
11604 San Vicente Boulevard

Thanks again to all three restaurants for generously supporting our efforts to have a successful annual meeting.

## **Dog Issues Continue**

Two dog issues continue to be frequently discussed at our meetings.

The first is that many dog walkers on Westridge Fire Road and in other areas of the neighborhood continue to ignore their responsibility to clean up after their animals as required by law. Obviously it is not only community members who use the fire road, which is a popular destination for many dog owners on the west side. It is possible that some take their animals to the fire road thinking that because it is a wild area that the clean-up is not necessary. That is not the case. If you see someone not cleaning up after their pet, please remind them of their responsibility.

The second and more serious concern is that there have been many reports of stray and off-leash dogs, and some of these have been aggressive. Locally, Westridge Fire Road is the only place where dogs are allowed off-leash, and then only if they are under the immediate control of their owners. This policy could easily be changed to on-leash if the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy decides that the under-control policy is not sufficient. MRCA Rangers have also been known to write tickets on the fire road on occasion, so if your dog is not well-trained, be forewarned.

On upper Westridge Road there was a recent attack from a large aggressive dog on a much smaller animal. The larger dog had apparently escaped his fenced-in yard. In Upper Mandeville Canyon there have also been a number of attacks from dogs loose in the neighborhood. If you have animals, please make sure that they are not able to escape your yard when you are not home. They can be a serious threat to people, property, and wildlife. Smaller animals are a potential meal for coyotes. Your pets could be reported to animal control, and you risk losing them or being fined.

Repeated abuse of the rules could result in dogs being banned entirely from Westridge Fire Road. There are so few good multiple use park areas where dogs are welcome that we hope this will not have to happen, and if everyone can be responsible for their animals, it doesn't need to. Clean up for your dogs, and if they don't behave while off leash, please keep the leashes on.

## Current Brentwood Crime Alerts

### Attention Brentwood Residents Home Invasion Robberies

Two home invasion robberies recently occurred at single family residences located in the Brentwood Area of West Los Angeles (WLA). Both crimes were committed by the same male suspect and occurred on Thursday, March 6, during early morning hours. The suspect first entered a home (via an unlocked front door) located in the 700 block of Moreno Avenue (just south of San Vicente Boulevard) at 2:50 AM. Soon thereafter, at approximately 3:30 AM, the suspect forced open a kitchen window to a home located in the 200 block of Bristol Avenue (just north of San Vicente Boulevard) and entered the location. In both cases the suspect pointed a handgun at the victims and demanded money and jewelry. At the Bristol Avenue location, the suspect fled without taking any property after he struck the victim once on the back of the head with his handgun. The victim was not seriously injured.

The suspect was described as a male Black in his 30's, approximately 5'-10" in height, with a medium build. The suspect was armed with an unknown type of handgun, and wore dark clothing and an unknown type mask. No vehicle was seen or heard.

No similar crimes have been reported in and around the WLA Area. Also, it appears that the suspect randomly selected the above locations.

Residents are advised to revisit their home security and take the following precautions: lock all doors and windows, activate alarm systems, place padlocks on side gates to prevent access to rear yards, remove and trim shrubbery that hides doors and windows, light the outside of homes to discourage prowling or loitering, and maintain a good relationship with neighbors.

For detailed crime prevention handouts, please contact the Community Relations Office of the WLA Community Police Station at (310) 575-8431. If anyone matching the above-described suspect is observed, please call 911 immediately and refer to this bulletin to have a police unit dispatched. Any other suspicious activity can be directed to the WLA Robbery Unit during regular business hours at (310) 575-8441.

### Multiple Mail Thefts Reported Locally

UMCA and BHHA have each received reports of mail theft from resident's mailboxes in Mandeville Canyon and Brentwood Hills. Three UMCA members have reported such thefts, and at least one BHHA member has lost mail twice. Thieves want your checks, credit card applications and bank and other statements. Don't be a victim!

#### Follow these steps to protect your mail:

- Always place mail for pick-up in a blue U.S. mail collection box, at your post office, or hand it to your letter carrier. Don't place it for carrier pick-up in a personal mailbox or area where it can be easily stolen.
- Promptly remove mail from your mailbox, especially if you're expecting checks, credit cards, food coupons or other negotiable items. If you won't be home when the items are expected, ask a trusted friend or neighbor to pick up your mail.

#### Never leave mail in your mailbox overnight.

- Never send cash or coins in the mail. Use checks or money orders. Ask your bank for "secure" checks that can't be altered.
- If you don't receive a check, food coupon or other valuable mail you're expecting, contact the issuing agency immediately.
- Have the post office hold your mail if you will be away for any length of time, and they will hold your mail until you return.
- If you change your address, immediately notify your post office and anyone with whom you do business via the mail.
- If you are a victim of mail theft, report the theft to the Postal Inspector immediately (The Southern California Division Law Enforcement Branch of the United States Postal Service) at:

Postal Inspection Service  
United States Postal Service  
PO Box 2000  
Pasadena, CA 91102-2000  
Phone: 626-405-1200  
Fax: 626-405-1207

- For more information visit:

<http://www.usps.com/postalinspectors/>

*Thanks to Wendy Rosen for allowing us to edit and reprint this article from UMCA's Canyon Echoes.*

## **Brentwood Hills Telecommunications Update**

There are two important developments in telecommunications in the neighborhood since our last newsletter. First, Adelphia is now online with digital cable and cable modems, which represents the first affordable high speed internet solution offered throughout our community, although it is not yet universal. Second, Sprint is in the process of upgrading the local infrastructure for cellular phone service, which they claim will allow cell phones to be used throughout the neighborhood, including in-doors, once all of the cellular base stations are installed and properly adjusted. Read on for more information.

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### **Adelphia Cable Modems Available**

As many are aware from the Mandeville Canyon Association sign, Adelphia is now providing internet access via cable modems throughout our neighborhood. Adelphia's service is called "Power Link." This long awaited development has finally provided an affordable high speed internet solution to most members of our community, although it is not yet universally available.

Adelphia also provides other services through the new infrastructure, including digital cable television. Except for occasional growing pains as they have expanded service to accomodate additional users, internet via cable modem has been a very dramatic improvement over dialup since it came on-line last fall.

Most issues with the new service have revolved around getting new systems up and running properly - once they are set up and working they seem to do well. A few residents have found that they still cannot order the service until additional infrastructure is in place. We would love to know what your experience has been with Adelphia, how the service has worked for you, or if you have had any difficulty in establishing service.

If you are interested in Adelphia's Power Link or other services, you can contact Adelphia toll free at 888-551-5465. You may also get information and availability for any of Adelphia's services on the web at: [www.adelphia.com](http://www.adelphia.com).

Some in the community are holding out for DSL service. Covad is apparantly offering DSL to some residents of Mandeville Canyon, but most of us are too far from the switch to establish service at a price point that is competitive with Adelphia. The only DSL option beyond 15,000 feet from the switch is IDSL, which only allows a 144k/144k connection and is \$89.95 per month according to Speakeasy, Covad's local provider.

### **Sprint Upgrading Cellular Service**

It is no secret to anyone with a cell phone that cellular service in our community is spotty at best. If you are fortunate to live at exactly the right spot, you may have fairly good service most of the time. If not, you may have no service whatsoever.

In the event of a natural disaster such as an earthquake or wildfire, many residents are concerned about the prospect of losing land line phone service for an extended period of time (days or perhaps weeks is not unimaginable).

Sprint is hoping to change this during the coming months, as they aggressively upgrade their service in the Mandeville Canyon area. Sprint representatives made an informative presentation and answered many questions at the most recent Upper Mandeville Canyon Association meeting. The Sprint reps provided some specific details of their plan (locations of the twelve cell phone base stations that are either here now or will be soon) and were vague about others (just when the service will be running optimally - the best hope was by the end of this year or sooner, an estimate we have heard many other times from other companies).

The claim was made that Sprint would like to be able to compete with traditional land line services for all home telecommunications needs, including telephone, high speed internet, and so forth.

In addition to the tremendous convenience, as well as the possible savings due to additional competition that improved cell phone service would provide, the significant increase in safety is something that would benefit the entire neighborhood. Time will tell whether Sprint is able to stick with their plan. Since the upgrades will only work for Sprint customers, we would appreciate hearing from any of you as you see (or don't see) the improvement in your cell phone service.

## New Welcoming Committee Formed

Directors Sue Keane and Martine Anderson have put some of their boundless energy and enthusiasm into forming a new BHHA Welcoming Committee. They are providing a useful packet of information to new homeowners in our community, and are co-hosting a wine and cheese gathering which will be an informal opportunity to meet with BHHA directors and other homeowners. We applaud them for their dedication to BHHA, especially since they have only recently moved to the neighborhood themselves.

They have contacted approximately forty new families who have moved in during the last two years or so to attend the new neighbor open house on Sunday, March 30 from 4-7pm. If you were overlooked, or for more information, please contact Martine (889-7882) or Sue (440-0290) as soon as possible.

If you moved in prior to that time and are feeling left out, please feel free to come to one of our monthly meetings and introduce yourself, and make a point of attending our annual meeting in the fall. These are excellent ways to get to know the people and issues of our neighborhood.

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### Helpful Telephone Numbers

<b>Fire/Police Emergency:</b>	<b>911</b>
<b>Fire Department:</b>	Station #19 12229 Sunset Boulevard Los Angeles, CA 90049 (non-emergency): 310-575-8519
<b>Police Department:</b>	West LA Division 1663 Butler Avenue Los Angeles, 90024 (non-emergency): 310-575-8401 Sr. Lead Officer Dennis Hinman: 213-509-3312 West LA Community Relations: 310-575-8431
<b>ADT Security (Patrol Service):</b>	310-478-0301
<b>Animal Services</b>	West LA Center: 888-452-7381 For stray animals: 213-893-8400
<b>MRCA</b>	24 Hr. Emergency #: 310-456-7049 Ranger Latham (Westridge Fire Rd): 310-471-9635
<b>Parking Enforcement:</b>	310-665-0377
<b>City Council Representative:</b>	Council District 11 Councilwoman Cindy Miscikowski 1645 Corinth Avenue Los Angeles, 90024 310-575-8461 (westside) 213-485-3811 (downtown)

# 2003 BHHA Membership Drive

Annual dues to Brentwood Hills Homeowners Association are now due for 2003. The cost remains the same, a remarkably low \$35 per year, to support our activities. Our sole mission is to protect and enhance the quality of life in our neighborhood. We accomplish this by:

- keeping on top of local issues at our monthly meetings
- communicating to members via newsletters, e-mails, and our web site
- maintaining a strong relationship with our city council member and staff
- participating in other important local organizations, among them:
  - Brentwood Community Council
  - Mandeville Canyon Local Volunteer Neighborhood Oversight Committee  
(what we often refer to as the trailhead committee)
  - Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Citizens Oversight Committee  
(established by the recently created Benefit Assessment District)
  - Tri-association committee, with MCA & UMCA

What our all-volunteer board asks in return for our hard work is your support: please contribute your annual dues, communicate your concerns to us, and attend meetings when you can. We all benefit from a strong homeowners association.

Please fill out the form below and enclose it in the envelope provided along with your check for \$35 made payable to BHHA. Feel free to use the back of the membership form or an additional sheet to communicate any concerns or comments, and return everything to:

Brentwood Hills Homeowners Association  
PO Box 49495  
Los Angeles, CA 90049

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to:

receive newsletters by e-mail

receive other communications by e-mail

*all membership information is strictly confidential*

## Brentwood Community Council Certification Outreach

Formed in 1998, the Brentwood Community Council (BCC) has become a broad-based instrumental forum in building and maintaining consensus for the many issues which face the Brentwood community. Now, the BCC is applying for certification to become an official neighborhood council, as part of the city's neighborhood empowerment initiative.

Certification will allow this advisory board to become the "official" voice of Brentwood. Other benefits to be derived from certification include up to \$50,000 of funding, early notification and acceptance of official neighborhood comments on land use and other local issues, free computers, input on city department budgets, and evolving forums for the city and neighborhoods to work together more efficiently and effectively.

The BCC must reach out to more than 30,000 stakeholders, those who live, work, or own property within the Brentwood community. For more information, e-mail BCC Chairwoman Flora Gil Krisiloff at: [krisiloff@aol.com](mailto:krisiloff@aol.com) or visit the BCC website at: <http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/la/brentwoodcc>.

If you would like to support BCC's neighborhood council certification effort, you may fill out the petition form below, and send it in with your dues payment, and we will make sure that it reaches its correct destination.

### Petition to certify the Brentwood Community Council as the Neighborhood Council for the Brentwood Community

I support the certification of the Brentwood Community Council to serve as the neighborhood council for the Brentwood Community, under the City of Los Angeles, Department of Neighborhood Empowerment certification process:

	Address, Phone & Email	Affiliation (check all that apply) <input type="checkbox"/> Homeowner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Organization <input type="checkbox"/> Business <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Organization <input type="checkbox"/> Renter <input type="checkbox"/> School <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	Would you like to receive the monthly email agenda?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Signature			
Print Name			

*The space below is intentionally left blank for comments to BHHA, or you may add an additional sheet with your dues.*

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