

# BRENTWOOD HILLS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

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www.brentwood-hills.org

## Brentwood Hills Homeowners Association Newsletter — June 2014

### Fire Safety in the Canyon

By Debra Hockemeyer — Treasurer, BHHA

On Sunday, May 18, Brentwood Hills residents joined our neighbors in Mandeville Canyon for our first ever Wildfire Evacuation Drill for our single-exit canyon, in a joint effort coordinated by LA Fire and Police Departments, with other national, state and City agencies in attendance. Over 877 homes participated (77% of the canyon), and 33 different Fire Houses were represented. The Red Cross was on hand, as well as most other city services. In addition, Councilman Mike Bonin was there to meet constituents.



BHHA Directors Jerry Adomian, Sue Keane, Debra Hockemeyer, and Judy Handler greet evacuation drill participants.

There were many good lessons learned from this inaugural drill, as not everything went as planned. Not everyone received a phone call, email or text. Many were surprised by the last minute change in the way traffic was routed into Paul Revere Middle School. Some were not able to enter the Paul Revere School parking area and were forced to park on side streets. Some people with elders or disabilities were not able to walk the long distances required into the evacuation area. Nonetheless, the drill was priceless in allowing the Fire and Police

departments to practice what it's like to evacuate a large hillside area with only one exit.

Special thanks to BHHA's Jerry Adomian, who dedicated 100s of hours to coordinate with board members from both Mandeville Canyon and Upper Mandeville Canyon Homeowner Associations, as well as city officials, to make the evacuation drill a success. We will be meeting with city officials on June 5 to provide feedback on what worked and what did not work. If you have not already done so, please take a minute to let us know any additional thoughts or concerns you may have, by emailing Jerry Adomian ([JAdomian@Earthlink.net](mailto:JAdomian@Earthlink.net)) and Debra Hockemeyer ([Debra@WesternRidge.com](mailto:Debra@WesternRidge.com)).

Thank you again to everyone who participated. We appreciate your contribution to our community safety!



Councilmember Bonin listens in on a fire safety discussion.

## Crime in Brentwood Hills

by Eric Edmunds — President, BHHA

One of the benefits of this community is we are one of the most—if not *the* most—crime-free precincts in the entire city of Los Angeles. There are several reasons for that. For one, we are relatively inaccessible; our invited guests get lost trying to navigate up here, let alone bad guys from distant parts of the city. There's one way in and one way out, and Brentwood Hills is not close to a getaway route like Sunset or Wilshire. Also, because this is an affluent area, people have burglar alarms and patrol services.

Those who subscribe to LAPD Senior Lead Officer Maria Gray's weekly crime reports for 90049 (to sign up, send her an email at [30469@lapd.lacity.org](mailto:30469@lapd.lacity.org)) will observe that most crime in Brentwood takes place in the flats—the apartment district south of Sunset and San Vicente, and the commercial corridor along San Vicente and Wilshire—and consists mostly of bicycle thefts and automobile smash-and-grabs.

But Brentwood Hills is not crime-free. In the past ten years, there have been at least two home invasion robberies. In the first, marauders entered a home on Cheryl Place whose owner left the garage door open. The invasion lasted several hours, during which criminals terrorized a family, children and an au-pair, and accompanied the mother on two forced trips to an ATM to withdraw money. Another instance was a follow-home where bandits spotted a homeowner with expensive jewelry or a Rolex at Vicente Foods. The couple was followed to their home on Bayliss, and before they could close their garage door, the bad guys were upon them, tied them up, and ransacked the house.

Most crime here, thankfully, is not home-invasion, homicide or rape, but burglary. A prime target nowadays is construction sites: thieves prey on expensive tools and material (copper pipe, drywall, etc.). Thefts by people who look like construction workers authorized to be on site (they sometimes are!) often occur in broad daylight.

If you announce on Facebook that you're leaving on vacation, or put an out-of-office or away-from-home auto-reply on your email or voicemail, you're asking for trouble. Burglars are typically in and out in six minutes, and prefer the daytime when nobody is at home. They make a beeline for the master bedroom and master bath, where they know most jewelry and valuables are hidden. If they encounter a safe, most often they'll just take it rather than crack it. It's smarter to hide your valuables in the kids' closet, or other counter-intuitive nook and cranny.

A lot has to do with how visible your property is. Burglars prefer homes screened from the street by hedges, landscaping and walls, and flag-lots, of which we have a lot here. When they get no answer ringing the doorbell, they like to go around to the back, and enter through the kitchen sliders. If you keep a ladder by the side of the house, criminals will use it to head directly for an open second-floor window.

Door-to-door solicitors have been a concern lately. But so should be your maids, gardeners, handymen, construction workers and others who have access to your house and know what's inside. They could guide friends and



confederates to where you live. So be vigilant and keep your eyes open. As the signs say in New York, “If you see something, say something.”

A crime unique to our neighborhood, and which we need to be particularly vigilant against, is *arson*. Several years ago, a mentally-disturbed homeless man walked halfway up Mandeville Canyon Road and lit a massive brushfire that raced up the canyon walls to the author’s home on Cordelia. He was tackled and restrained by some of our compatriots in Upper Mandeville. LAFD helicopters did an amazing job putting the fire down. A couple years ago, some teenagers smoking in the brush above Hollyhock started a Labor Day fire that closed off the canyon.



There are a number of things you can do to increase your awareness and protect yourself, your family and your home. Some tips:

- Know your neighbors, and your block-captain. Look out for each other.
- Subscribe to a patrol service that can watch your house during vacations, including pick up the mail and poke around the back. Palisades Patrol (310-454-7741) will also escort clients home, monitor your alarm, and contact you if they see anything irregular. Patrol service signs in your front yard are a major deterrent to burglars.
- If you don’t subscribe to a patrol service, stop mail and newspapers when you’re away.
- If you have a burglar alarm, *use it*.
- Put “Beware of Dog” signs on your side gates. Burglars hate dogs.
- Mail theft leads to identity theft. If you haven’t received expected mail, find out why. Your “address of record” may have been changed without your knowledge.
- Keep your garage door shut. Many crimes of opportunity from open garages result in theft of bicycles, tools and other property.
- If you suspect you’re being followed, don’t drive home and open the garage, and don’t stop or pull over . . . especially if they rear-end you. Instead continue down the hill and head for the nearest police station (1663 Butler Ave., L.A. 90025, just S of Santa Monica Blvd.). Or call Palisades Patrol for an escort.



- Subscribe to Next Door Mandeville at [nextdoor@r.e-mail.nextdoor.com](mailto:nextdoor@r.e-mail.nextdoor.com). It’s an excellent way to plug into what’s going on in the Canyon and connect with your neighbors—including crime, suspicious solicitors, downed trees, rattlesnakes, where to find a handyman, etc.
- Never leave valuables or gadgets visible inside your parked car. Lock them in the trunk (when you’re not being observed doing so).
- ***Come to BHHA’s annual meeting in October!*** Hear up-to-the-minute reports from Senior Lead Officer Gray and the Fire Department, and let them answer your questions.

## Your Membership in BHHA

BHHA has been instrumental in protecting Sullivan Canyon and the Santa Monica Mountains parkland to the north and west of our neighborhood, including the public acquisition of the Westridge-Canyonback Wilderness Park at the end of Westridge Rd. We are committed to protecting and preserving the open space that surrounds our community, and ensuring public access to the extensive trail system throughout the Santa Monica Mountains.

BHHA keeps our community informed through email notices, our website and our annual block party. We also undertake initiatives to help preserve our community's quality of life. Here are some specific things that we've done over the past year:

- Worked closely with the LAFD, LAPD, Councilman Bonin's office, UMCA and MCA in organizing the May 18 Fire Evacuation Drill to educate our community on wildfire safety and to provide critical training to enhance community safety in the event of a wildfire in the Santa Monica Mountains;
- Worked with LADWP on repairing the problems that led to the frequent and lengthy power outages in our community, including permanent repair and replacement of transformers and underground power cables to avoid such outages in the future;
- Contributed to purchasing brush helmets for our firefighters;
- Commented on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the proposed Archer School Expansion, to try to reduce the horrendous traffic on Sunset;
- Held an open house in the neighborhood with Councilman Bonin to educate him on our community issues and to hear his initiatives for our district;
- Contracted with Palisades Patrol to patrol Brentwood Hills common areas;
- Ensured SoCalGas sufficiently restored Sullivan Canyon after their pipeline maintenance work;
- Worked with the Fire Department to ensure fire safety in our community, including the grading of the Westridge fire break in such a way to preserve the hiking trail and wildlife habitat;
- Joined the Hillside Federation and continued collaborating with sister homeowner associations to ensure our natural areas are protected from commercial encroachments, like the currently proposed 180 foot communication tower on San Vicente Peak, which is proposed to have multiple microwave dishes and an 800 watt blinking red light;
- Encouraging Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training of Board members and members of the community, in order to act as points of contact if there is a regional emergency;
- Contributed to the Mandeville Canyon holiday lighting, including the bridge on Westridge Road;
- Contributions to Kenter Canyon School, Brentwood Green and other community organizations;
- Represented the neighborhood on legislative issues and regarding development projects and local ordinances;
- Served as the community's interface and contact point with state and local elected leaders;
- A great Annual Meeting with catered food and open bar!

Over the past 30 years, with your help, **BHHA's Legal Defense Fund** has fought and won battles at City Hall and in the Courts to preserve our community, and to require prospective developers to strictly comply with City codes and CEQA (the California Environmental Quality Act). BHHA works closely with UMCA, MCA, the Hillside Federation and many other community groups on these initiatives, which include:

- Opposing developer Castle & Cooke's 29-mansion expansion of Mountaingate Subdivision and establishing the Nancy and Dick Riordan Trail;
- Protecting and beautifying the Westridge Trailhead, to make it more attractive and user-friendly, including adding parking spaces;
- Fighting the massive proposed Boeckman and Eastport development projects at the end of Westridge Road, and working with the City, the County, the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy and other community groups to acquire and protect those lands forever as public parkland;
- Protecting the Backbone Trail above Will Rodgers Park from being turned into a dirt road.

### **Brentwood Hills Homeowners Association Initiatives for 2014-2015**

Some of the initiatives we're hard at work on for 2014-2015 include:

- Restoring the block captain program to our community (we need volunteers!);
- A marquee sign to post BHHA & Brentwood Hills notices on activities and issues;
- Improving "No Smoking" and "Fire Danger" signs around trails;
- Improving the BHHA Website to make it more useful to our members—this will cost money, so please send in your dues!

Additionally, we would like to know about *your* concerns — all you need to do is send an e-mail to [president@brentwood-hills.org](mailto:president@brentwood-hills.org). If there are any issues you would like to help with, remember that *BHHA is an all-volunteer organization* — we can always use more help!

BHHA relies on your contributions in order to maintain these programs. **Dues are only \$50** per household (\$100 for those willing to contribute at the *Platinum* level) to help fund these valuable initiatives. Please send in your membership for 2014.

Please **mail a check** to: BHHA Membership, P.O. Box 49495, Los Angeles, CA 90049.

Or **pay online** — instructions at: <http://www.brentwood-hills.org/membership.html>

***Thank You for Your Support!***



**Community Update E-mail List:** If you're not already on our email list, please sign up! Send an email with subject line "join" to [communityupdate@brentwood-hills.org](mailto:communityupdate@brentwood-hills.org) today!

## Reliable Power (DWP)

Many of our members experienced four major power outages between December 2013 and March 2014, with one of the outages lasting an excruciating 44 hours! We requested DWP management attend our March board meeting, where they explained the recent outages and the restorative and preventative measures they are taking.

Ultimately, we need a new circuit to be installed in the main power station servicing Brentwood. It's known as DS-66 and is located at the corner of San Vicente and S. Gretna Green Way. DWP is currently in the planning stages for this upgrade, and has not released an estimated completion date. Initially, they informed us it may take 2 years. We urged Councilmember Mike Bonin to push for a much earlier completion date (ideally no more than six months). Improvements to help relieve and redistribute the current load are also needed to the Pacific Palisades and West LA circuits, especially in the event of an outage

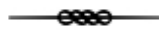
In the interim, a comprehensive study of the overall design and the existing infrastructure (individual components such as poles, wires, substructures, and cables) has been completed. As a result, DWP has completed many restorative and preventative measures, including:

- 7 overhead items required repair or replacement (this includes the Allenford pole which supplies power to our fire hydrants).
- 15 Underground items required repair or replacement. All have been completed with the exception of 2 metal street/sidewalk lids (pending delivery).

In addition, we have requested that DWP consider:

- Rapid approval and deployment of the oil sensors on the LADWP water pumps, so that rain/drain water that floods our underground power cables can be automatically and quickly pumped out in an environmentally safe manner.
- Rapid approval and deployment of portable, temporary LADWP generators for back up power, in the advent of power loss.

DWP has agreed to communicate directly with our appointed liaison, BHHA Treasurer Debra Hockemeyer, to provide status on outages as well as progress towards long term improvements. This should provide better two way communication and reduce the frustration that many of us have experienced with the automated outage recording.



## No Smoking in Brentwood Hills

Homeowners, please be reminded that there is no smoking outside your home, as we live in a high fire danger area. Please do not smoke when you are walking in the neighborhood. It is against the law. Unfortunately, it is common to see cigarette butts on the sidewalk, in the gutter, and under bushes with dried leaves or pine needles. Serious fires in Mandeville Canyon have started this way—let's not let that happen here!

In addition, if you are having construction at your address, please remind the contractor to explain to the workers not to smoke and that it is against the law. Construction workers can often be seen smoking during their breaks. You, as the homeowner, must exert your authority over those you employ. This applies to gardeners and other service personnel, so please inform them as well.

2014 promises to be one of the most dangerous fire season in decades. Please help keep our community safe and report anyone that endangers our neighborhood.

## Westside Traffic Issues Discussed in Quarterly Traffic Committee by Debra Hockemeyer

Our councilmember's office and the LADOT host a quarterly meeting to gather the perspective of community representatives from the various homeowner associations in Brentwood and the Westside on all of our #1 issue: Traffic! These quarterly meetings were originally put in place in 2013 after the installation of a stop sign at the intersection of Bundy and Mayfield, to establish a forum for discussion of traffic issues.

There are a number of proposed initiatives in various stages of impact analysis and implementation, but the overarching mood of the last meeting on May 9 was to hold off on making further decisions until: (1) the Sunset construction at the I-405 Freeway comes to an end (it *has!*), and (2) the beginning of the 2014-15 school year at Archer and Brentwood Schools begin (in late August). Once these two criteria are met, accurate surveys can be made of the entire traffic flow system from Mandeville Canyon to the I-405, to help determine the improvements that will yield the greatest benefits. Right now, LADOT makes decisions solely based upon safety, but they are getting an earful about traffic flow and seem open to consider traffic issues in the context of the bigger picture.

### Some improvements currently moving forward:

- Bundy / Mayfield Stop Sign – the stop sign is due to be replaced with a traffic circle pending the new fiscal year (which starts July 1).
- Signage alerting drivers to the divergence of Bundy from Kenter – a sign that had been in place for many years disappeared about a year ago and has not been replaced
- Kenter line repainting (Bonhill to Sunset) – Kenter was repaved but lines have not been repainted.

### Initiatives under consideration:

- Barrington Ave northbound at Sunset: “No Right Turn on Red” during peak hour – “peak hour” may be redefined for this right on red restriction. Most residents consider both morning and late afternoon / evening as peak hours. There is no safety issue here, just a flow issue.
- Barrington Ave southbound right lane north of Sunset – investigate making the right lane a straight or right-turn only (restricting left turns from the right southbound lane). This primarily affects traffic north of Sunset flowing south on Barrington and turning onto Sunset (predominantly Archer School traffic during certain times of day).
- Installation of a dedicated left-turn arrow and possibly a longer turn lane at Sunset eastbound at Kenter. This is the only direction in this intersection that doesn't have a left-turn arrow.
- Momentary “All Red” at Sunset (West) at Bundy (for safety).
- Reversible lanes on Sunset east of Barrington – the LADOT representative believes that LADOT may not have the resources to study or consider such an option, which is likely to be expensive.
- Installation of “Do Not Block the Box” signs at Barrington Ave and Sunset – LADOT does not have signs that include wording about fines, but they have been reviewing better placement of signs to remind drivers not to block the intersection.
- Gretna Green / Mayfield stop signs – the Mayor's office reported that installation of these signs did not follow proper procedures and should not have been installed based on any request from the Mayor's office.



Green light but nowhere to go: Sunset traffic extends beyond Kenter Ave. on typical weekday afternoons.

Other issues needing more discussion / investigation:

- Bicycle issues on Upper Mandeville Canyon and Westridge.
- Farmers Market “No Parking” signs on Gretna Green between San Vicente and Montana Ave – the Farmers Market requested signs banning *overnight* parking on the block a few years ago. New signs prohibit parking on the south end of Gretna Green, which is an area where many patrons park when the Farmers Market is open.

For more information or to provide constructive solutions, please feel free to contact BHHA Board Member Debra Hockemeyer ([debra@westernridge.com](mailto:debra@westernridge.com) or 310-795-7771).

## Voting and the Polls

by Eric Edmunds

For most of the last 30 years, there have been one or more polling-places in Brentwood Hills, usually in garages on Banyan Dr. and/or Cordelia Road. The last couple of November and Presidential elections, the lines at those polls have been surprisingly long. While that provides a nice opportunity to stand in line and chat up your neighbors, it's not so nice if you're late for work.

For the June 3, 2014 elections, there were no polling-places in Brentwood Hills. The polls were in Palisades Village at 851 Alma Real Dr. That's a 15-minute drive from here.

For those of us intolerant of these procedures and delays, an increasing percentage of Californians are now voting by mail ahead of time. To download the forms, go to [http://www.lavote.net/Voter/Absentee\\_Voting.cfm](http://www.lavote.net/Voter/Absentee_Voting.cfm). Or check the box “I want to be a Permanent Vote By Mail Voter” on your sample ballot. You will automatically receive a ballot to vote by mail every election.