

Boeckmann Property Now in the Public Domain

A major milestone in the life of our community was reached on January 2, 2001 when ownership of Siple Canyon (the "Boeckmann" property) at the end of Westridge Road transferred into public ownership. This is the conclusion to an epic battle going back over twenty years, when this Homeowners Association first opposed Boeckmann's initial plans to develop and grade the land for homes. Although defeated in the 1980's, like a Hydra's head new plans sprouted in 1991-92 when Boeckmann joined forces with a notorious developer named "Southwest Diversified." Their plan proposed a gated community of thirty-four mansions spilling from the crown of the knoll at the end of Westridge, down into the canyon below, to be accessed from Mandeville Canyon Road by a "corkscrew" tunnel through the inside of a mountain. The Westridge Fire Road as we know it would have been closed off and destroyed. Boeckmann proposed to grade three million cubic yards of dirt - equivalent to the volume of a sizeable ditch from here to Sacramento.

One of BHHA's first responses was to organize Save Our Mountains, Inc. ("SOMI") to be a tax-exempt umbrella coalition for the various homeowners associations and groups opposed to this project. We held mass meetings at Paul Revere; got 11,000 people to sign our petitions; raised thousands of dollars for lawyers and scientists to refute the developer's excusatory Environmental Impact Report; we got on television and in the newspapers; and made our voice heard repeatedly in the chambers of the City Council, the Mayor's office, and to countless other politicians and officials. Many of you were there at these hearings, and spoke up. Obstacles were legion, including opposition inside and outside our own community. But in the end, our cause prevailed. In a series of subcommittee and City Council votes, we secured half of the funds needed to acquire the land for the public domain. Governor Gray Davis then signed an appropriation for the balance out of the State budget. After more wrangling with the owner and his attorneys, and following City-required repair and "remediation" of the property for potential mudslide danger, the deal

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Mandeville Canyon Road Speed-Tables Coming

At a meeting on December 14, 2000 in Councilwoman Miscikowski's office concerning the alleged speeding problem on Mandeville Canyon Road, it was announced that our voluntary community education program in conjunction with Upper Mandeville Canyon Association (UMCA) had been deemed a failure. Although the City found some reduction in speeds on that thoroughfare (between Kimberly and Chalon), the reduction was considered inadequate. Consequently, City Engineering authorities plan to install five sets of "speed tables" in February.

One sidelight of this process is that further City testing will be done three months and six months after installation. At that time they must have reduced the "critical" speed (85th percentile speed) to at or below 34 miles per hour, otherwise Councilwoman Miscikowski has promised that the speed tables will also be deemed a failure, and removed.

Incidentally, UMCA has just made a request to the City to experiment first with interlocking rubber mats, which the City of Santa Monica is using for speed-humps in several locations, including La Mesa Street north of San Vicente. Whether this suggestion is received, or falls on deaf ears, remains to be seen.

Time To Renew BHHA Membership

January is here and it is once again time to renew your annual membership to BHHA. Accompanying this newsletter is a dues envelope. Please fill out the form on the envelope and return it with your dues payment for 2001.

We are instrumental in keeping this a desirable, clean, and orderly neighborhood, in addition to providing an important liaison to our city council office. Having more member involvement gives us a stronger collective voice in neighborhood and city issues.

Being located within the large urban area of the City of Los Angeles, but amidst the Santa Monica Mountains, with its great variety of wildlife and many panoramic views, makes us quite unique. Let's join together in safeguarding our neighborhood and local environment.

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finally closed. We felt like a marathon runner crossing the finish line!

Boeckmann's land will be managed and policed by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. A new public parking area is planned for the little dirt clearing about 1/4 mile up from the end of Westridge Road. That will take some of the load off our community's streets, especially Cordelia and the top of Westridge. We also hope to beautify the ugly concrete drains and eyesore signage at the end of Westridge. Special thanks must go to Councilwoman Cindy Miscikowski and her deputy Lisa Gritzner; Joe Edmiston, head of the Mountains Conservancy and his deputy Laurie Collins, all of whom worked tirelessly for our cause; and other officials who helped. A formal dedication ceremony is expected in the months ahead. Stay tuned, or look for an announcement on our website, www.brentwood-hills.org. This is truly an epic victory and a moment we can all savor, a milestone not only for our community but our children as well.

Board Meetings

BHHA board meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month. Please contact us if you are interested in attending. Currently scheduled for our February 7 meeting are LAPD Senior Lead Officer Dennis Hinman and our local Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy (SMMC) Ranger Updike. Other recent guests have included SMMC's Joe Edmiston and Council District 11 Chief of Staff, Lisa Gritzner.

Fire Insurance Policies

The following article is reprinted with permission from Councilwoman Cindy Miscikowski's January E-news Monthly.

One of the many new State laws which took effect January 1 was AB 1983. This new law protects hillside property owners from being surcharged on their fire insurance policies because their neighbors have not cleared brush in compliance with city requirements. A frequent complaint my office received during 2000 was that hillside residents who had complied with Los Angeles' 200-foot-radius brush-clearance ordinance were being surcharged because their neighbors failed to comply, thus putting them at greater risk. The new law creates greater fairness by surcharging the noncomplying owner instead. However, the California Fair Plan, which insures many hillside properties, may still seek to collect a surcharge with policy renewals. If this happens to you, contact the Fair Plan at 800-252-0089. The law's protection extends to you only if the neighbor with the uncleared brush is also a Fair Plan policyholder and, of course, only if your own property is in compliance. Also, the burden is with the policyholder to notify the Fair Plan that a surcharge is not warranted.

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The January, 2001 edition of BHHA's Neighborhood News was written by Eric Edmunds and John Given



A local resident out for an afternoon stroll

photos by J. Given