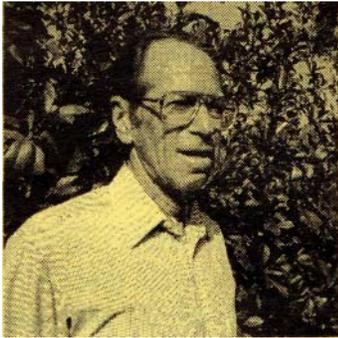


# TPOA NEWSLETTER

**SUMMER 2008  
VOL. 45 NO. 3**



*Dave Garflnkle TPOA President*

We've seen some very positive signs from the City Council in recent months, including unanimous passage of the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (see page 6), disappearance of the proposed Reduced Parking Ordinance, defeat of the attempt to annex Las Lomas to the City, and increased recognition of role of the Neighborhood Councils. We've also been successful in the posting of "no unhitched trailer" signs and some improvement (actual and promised) of traffic signal synchronization and left turn signals.

On the other hand, the City Council did pass the Density Bonus Ordinance (Ordinance 179681) implementing SB 1818. The City ordinance, masquerading under the guise of providing affordable housing, provides density, height, and parking bonuses far beyond what is mandated by State law and implementation ordinances by other cities; has inadequate provision for public notice and comment; and provides substantial benefits to developers while allowing more affordable housing units to be demolished by a project than the project provides. The ordinance will effectively emasculate the Ventura-Cahuenga Corridor Specific Plan as well as Community Plans and Specific Plans throughout the City. Two lawsuits have been filed

challenging the Density Bonus Ordinance. TPOA is a contributor to the suit filed by the Environment And Housing Coalition Los Angeles (EAHCLA), challenging the lack of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review of the ordinance. Basically, both suits seek to:

- Allow no greater bonuses, incentives or concessions from existing City zoning and Plan requirements than required by the State
- Require a development to provide a net increase of affordable housing to qualify for any density bonus
- Require public hearing and notification for density bonus requests
- Require that the project result in no adverse environmental impacts
- Require the developer to prove that bonuses are required for the project to be economically viable

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## ***IN MEMOR Y OF DORIS THORSCH***

*We are deeply saddened by the loss of our friend*

***DORIS THORSCH, long time, faithful TPOA***

***Board member and Membership Chair for many years. She will be remembered particularly for her cheerful spirit and ready laughter. Our sympathy is extended to her family and friends.***

**TPOA NEWSLETTER**

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**BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE**

*Second Monday of each month  
except July and August  
7:30 PM  
at*

*TARZANA COMMUNITY &  
CULTURAL CENTER  
19130 Ventura Blvd.  
Tarzana, 91356*

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ..... Continued**

Equally egregious, we see a continuing inability or lack of will by City agencies to enforce existing ordinances. While Tarzana does not have the junk dumping problem of South Los Angeles recently highlighted in the LA Times, a recent cleanup project sponsored by Councilman Zine's office discovered a virtual apartment complex for homeless people in the Vanalden tunnel under the freeway. We are plagued by illegal signs (see page 3), by new homes and remodels which routinely get away with zoning violations (excessive pavement in front yards, excessive fence height etc., etc., excessive occupancy of single family homes and illegal use of accessory living quarters; and abandoned homes and businesses which have been overgrown with weeds, allowed to become decrepit and become magnets for the homeless and impromptu "parties". With the downturn in the economy and City budget deficit, the situation is poised to get worse.

**What's the solution?** Call the City at 311 when you spot a violation, notify Councilman Zine's office when there is a significant infraction (Jose Martinez is his deputy for Tarzana), keep TPOA and the Tarzana Neighborhood Council informed about problems, join us in important commission, committee and City Council hearings. To paraphrase Jane Usher, President of the City Planning Commission, "When all else fails, sue."

**SUMMER IS UPON US**

Here are some tips for staying cool from Councilman Zine's office:

- Wear light, loose-fitting clothing.
- Drink water or sports drinks often (do not wait until you are thirsty) and avoid drinking alcohol.
- Offer help to those in your neighborhood with limited access to air conditioning and transportation, such as seniors or those who are ill. Check on them frequently or take them to a location with air conditioning.
- During peak heat hours stay in an air-conditioned area. If you don't have access to air conditioning in your home, visit public facilities such as shopping malls, parks and libraries to stay cool.
- Avoid unnecessary exertion such as vigorous exercise during peak sun hours if you are outside or in a non-air conditioned building.
- Stay out of the sun, wear a hat, preferably with a wide brim, and loose-fitting clothing with long sleeves and pants to protect yourself from sun damage.

We hope this helps you have a more comfortable summer.

## **WEEDS.... Halli Mason**

Weeds are a problem: in our gardens, on public land, around abandoned homes. Three species are a particular nuisance, one even deadly.

**Tree of Heaven** - *Ailanthus altissima* (native to China) has sprouted up and down Vanalden and is pervasive in Melody Acres. It is a prolific grower; thousands of seeds fall to the ground when that plant is in seed and a lot of them germinate. Additionally, the plant sends out runners from the mother plant and sends up shoots to grow into new mother trees. It seeks out water so it goes after drainpipes and sewers. When you just chop it down, without killing all the mother trees, it goes into overdrive and sends up multiple little shoots to compensate for being cut, often at the rate of ten to twenty new plants per cut.

**Pampas Grass** - *Cortaderia selloana*, *C. jubata* (native to Argentina) disperses thousands of seeds by the wind that then find a foothold in your garden, in vacant lots, on embankments and in the Santa Monica Mountains. The stretch of Rosita Street just east of Vanalden is a good example. There were no pampas grass plants 2 years ago. Now, watch them grow and multiply year after year. Pampas grass grows huge, dies out in the center, becomes a fire hazard, provides a nesting place for rats and has no redeeming value to insects, birds or any other creatures.

**Castor Bean** - *Ricinus officinalis* (native to Africa and Asia) became famous when some of our legislators were sent packages by some deranged person. The seed of the castor bean is a beautiful, speckled, shiny black. And it is deadly! Thousands of castor bean plants grew along the west side of El Caballero Country Club, all along Reseda Blvd. Even after El Cab removed them, they continue to crop up everywhere in our neighborhood. A word to homeowners: please remove them from your property; complain to nurseries that still sell them.

**Note:** Since this article was written, information has become available indicating that it may indeed be possible to eradicate the most damaging of this weed trio, The Tree of Heaven. More about this in the next newsletter.

## **RULES FOR SIGN POSTING IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS ...Cheryl Crane**

Sadly, an ever increasing number of unsightly illegal signs are now cropping up on both city property and residential front lawns in Tarzana. One way to fight the proliferation of illegal signs is to boycott any business that posts them. Another is to familiarize yourself with "rules" for posting signs. You should know that there are definitive regulations concerning placement of such signs.

**On City Property:** No signs are allowed on city-owned "right-of-way" property such as utility (light) poles, telephone poles, fences, sidewalks, curbs, or parkways between curbs. An inspector from the Los Angeles Dept. of Bldg. & Safety states that an illegally placed sign on city property is considered "abandoned signage" and may be removed by anyone. Besides being illegal, these signs are true eyesores.

**Home Occupancy Business:** A home-occupancy business (day care, hospice, psychic reading, etc.) is allowed to post a sign on its property only if it has a City Business Tax License - as well as a state license if applicable. A sign for a permitted business in a residential lot may not exceed 12 sq. ft. in the required yard and 20 sq. ft. in the buildable section of the yard. The cumulative total of all signs may not exceed 30 sq. ft.

**Retail Business:** No one may post a sign on residential or city property that advertises a retail business such as computer repair, tree trimming, copper re-piping, fence construction, unless there is an ACTIVE permit. With that, a contractor may have a 12 sq. ft. sign during the construction.

This article represents only a summary. Detailed regulations concerning sign placement are available in both the Zoning Code and the Municipal Code. Violation of the Municipal Code is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 per offense and six months in jail. To report an infraction, call 311 and provide the address and any pertinent details. TPOA respectfully requests your help in reporting illegal private signage. Let's keep our community beautiful!

## TARZANA DEVELOPMENT

**5135 Avenida Oriente:** TPOA appealed this case to the Area Planning Commission. Based on the steep slope, drainage issues, etc. we felt that 5 units was more appropriate than the 7 units approved by Planning. The APC allowed a compromise of 6 units. Among the conditions placed are the requirement that the two easternmost homes must have their front door facing Avenida Oriente and that all lot-line walls be the appropriate height. The formal APC report has not yet been issued; the decision may still be appealed by the owner.

**18603 Topham Street:** The K-9 kennel, located in the industrial zone east of Reseda Blvd. just north of the Orange Line, is currently operating without a land use permit. At a recent TNC Land Use hearing, concern was expressed about noise and waste management. Other comments were made in support of the facility by people boarding their dogs at the kennel and by industrial neighbors.

**6100 Lindley:** Child's World at Lindley & Topham: The owner has appealed the APC decision about the use of the additional property adjacent to Child's World. The Zoning Administrator's decision required that operation of the two properties be kept separate and the gate between them be locked.

**6020 Reseda Blvd.:** The Bazel restaurant has applied for a conditional use permit to increase the capacity of the restaurant from 49 to 144 seats, with sale of beer and wine for the increased capacity; allow up to 18 outdoor patio seats; extend the hours of operation, and permit live dancing and entertainment for private parties. TNC supported the original conditional use permit in 2005 and supports the current application providing adequate traffic and circulation provisions be required.

**18869 Pasadero Drive:** A building permit was issued for two massive concrete walking decks that came to within 5 feet of a neighbor's property. The neighbor felt the Planning and Building and Safety Departments were incorrectly interpreting the provisions covering decks and appealed the decision. TPOA and the TNC supported the appeal before the City Planning Commission which subsequently granted the appeal.

**5521 and 5545 Reseda Blvd, 18525-18545 Clark Street:** TPOA reviewed this proposal for a dense condo, commercial, and office project which would wrap around the corner from the El Patron Restaurant site through the first apartment building on Clark. The property is governed by both the

Encino-Tarzana Community Plan and the Ventura-Cahuenga Blvd. Corridor Specific Plan. The developer asks for a number of variances, Plan and zone changes including an increase in maximum height from 45 to 72 feet and a 92% increase in maximum density. In addition, we identified seven areas where the project has a potentially significant impact, including traffic flow at the intersection of Reseda and Clark. We have recommended that a full Environmental Impact Report be required for the project.

### TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REPORT.... Max Flehinger

We have been successful in removing most of the unhitched advertising trailers from Tarzana streets, although, occasionally, a new one will pop up. Our efforts are directed toward a complete elimination of these trailers.

Speeding on Reseda/Mecca, between Ventura Blvd. and the top of the hill, has been considerably reduced through a concentrated enforcement program of citations by the LAPD. The concern is that, without constant monitoring by the LAPD, drivers will resume their dangerous speeding habits.

The Rosebud Homeowners' Association has not yet found someone to assume responsibility for opening and closing the Yolanda tunnel under the 101 Freeway at night and in the morning. Until such an agent, acceptable to the City, is found, the City will not install gates at the tunnel.

After several conversations with the company that owns the "Got Junk" trucks and calls to Parking Enforcement, the truck was temporarily removed from Tampa Ave., 101 Freeway underpass. It recently resumed all day parking there and was impounded by the Police Department on June 24th.

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**Transportation Committee Report**  
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At the request of a stakeholder, the TNC Transportation Committee is looking into the Wilbur/Collins intersection to see whether there is a need to suggest any changes in the traffic pattern.

Left turn signals on eastbound and westbound Burbank Blvd. at Reseda Blvd. have been installed, but are not yet operational.

The LADOT is re-examining the Preferential Parking Program in order to better balance the needs of homeowners, merchants, customers, and employees. The DOT and the Department of City Planning are discussing the effect of on-street parking on land use planning and traffic congestion. The emphasis is to treat curb parking as a shared resource, not just an area reserved almost exclusively for residents.

**VENTURA/CAHUENGA BOULEVARD  
CORRIDOR SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE**

There are six communities within the Plan from Studio City to Woodland Hills. The Plan established commercial building density limits, sign regulations, Project Improvement Association (PIA) fees for new construction, traffic enhancement features, and features to enhance the aesthetics and feel of the Plan area such as pedestrian oriented areas. A Plan Review Board (PRB) was established to monitor implementation of the Plan. While generally successful in enhancing the "Main Street" of the Valley, there are several problems with the current implementation:

- Residential construction along the boulevard was not envisioned when the original plan was adopted and therefore is not included toward the maximum square footage of new development before the allowable building density reverts to a lower value.
- PIA fees paid by developers of residential buildings are lower than those paid by commercial developments.

- The PIA fees, designed to facilitate traffic flow on the corridor, have not been effective due to use restrictions and limited utilization.
- Signage regulations are under attack, particularly proposals to "upgrade" existing billboards to digital LED displays. These Las Vegas type signs are an eyesore and a traffic hazard to passing motorists.

A loose coalition of neighborhood councils, homeowner groups, and citizens (including TPOA and TNC) have formed the Ventura/Cahuenga Boulevard Specific Plan Coalition (VCBSPC) to address Specific Plan issues. Due to concerns that opening up the Plan to amendments would allow developers to push through provisions which would further weaken the Plan, we have voted not to open the Plan but to work with the involved City Council persons and Planning Department. Specifically, we have asked Gail Goldberg, General Manager of the Planning Department, to interpret the ambiguities in the Plan, in order to ensure that residential developments, including mixed use, are included in the calculation of all PIA fees and square footage build out. Recent motions before the City Council have also dealt with resolving those ambiguities and more effectively using PIA fees. Most recently, we sent a letter to the concerned Council persons strongly opposing the proposed digital LED billboards, pointing out that the Plan and Building codes specifically forbid them on several grounds.

Keep posted for the results of our continuing efforts.

**REMINDER - TRASH RECEPTACLES**

Trash containers should not be set out before 6:00 PM on the day prior to collection or left out after 8:00 PM following collection according to the Municipal Code. By bringing in the receptacles on a timely basis, not only will you be a good neighbor, but you won't be broadcasting that you are not home.

## BASELINE MANSIONIZATION ORDINANCE UPDATE

**The City Council unanimously approved the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance which went into effect June 29. The basic provisions of the ordinance are as follows:**

**Basic maximum house size:** The basic maximum house size is a percent of the lot in each zone.

- RI: 50% of lot size if under 7500 sq. ft.; the greater of 3750 sq. ft. or 45% of lot size if over that
- RS: 45% of lot size under 9000 sq. ft.; the greater of 4050 sq. ft. or 40% of lot size if over that
- RE9, RE11: 40% of lot size under 15,000 sq. ft.; the greater of 6000 sq. ft. or 35% of lot size if over that
- RE15, RE20, RE 40: 35% of lot size
- RA: 25% of lot size under 20,000 sq. ft.; the greater of 5000 sq. ft. or 20% of lot size if over that

These numbers exclude up to 400 sq. ft. for a garage, 400 sq. ft. of detached accessory buildings, and 250 sq. ft. of porches, patios, and breeze-ways with a solid roof open on at least 2 sides.

**Bonus provisions:** A bonus of up to 20% is granted for one of three provisions:

- If the second floor is not more than 75% of the first floor size
- If at least 20% of the building frontage is stepped back at least 20% of the building depth C3
- If the house meets the US Green Building Council's Design requirements at the

"Certified" or higher level.

**10% Variance.** The Planning Department can administratively grant a 10% bonus to the permitted house size without the normal variance and public hearing process.

**Residential Floor Area District (RSAD).** This provision allows a neighborhood to establish more restrictive or less restrictive home size ratios than nominal for the particular zone. This is a very positive change, since it empowers local neighborhoods and removes the often voiced objective concerning the difficulty of a "one size

fits all" ordinance for an area as diverse as Los Angeles. While a number of ways to implement the RSAD are called out, it basically requires 75% agreement by the residents in the specified area.

**Height Limits:** A two story height limit with a maximum height of 33 feet for sloped roofs and 28 for flat roofs (less than 25% slope) in R1, RS, and RE 9 lots; 36 feet and 30 feet for RE11-RE40 and RA lots. There is a provision for "average height" if 40% of the existing homes on the block are higher. There is another provision for a special Single Story Height District.

The **Baseline Mansionization Ordinance** covers the area north of Ventura Blvd. The Planning Department has been charged to define the "flat" areas south of Ventura Blvd. within 100 days of the passage of the Baseline Ordinance and submit a proposed amendment to the Baseline Ordinance to include those areas. The Department is also working on a **Hillside Mansionization Ordinance** for the remainder of the area south of Ventura Blvd. That proposed ordinance, expected within the next year or so, will go through the full public comment process. The Baseline Mansionization Ordinance has a "sunset" provision if the Hillside Ordinance is not passed within two years.

## IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION: VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Our May 6th Annual Meeting and Town Hall Forum was a great success. Approximately 200 people came to hear what the experts envision for the future in transportation. The forum was lead off by a presentation from Dr. Paul Sorensen, a RAND Corporation expert on transportation policy and lead on a current study, Short Term Congestion Reduction Strategies for Los Angeles.

Sorensen first outlined the problem: traffic is bad and increasing; a massive new buildout of freeways and rapid transit is unlikely. Perhaps most interesting was his analysis that a small increase or decrease in the number of cars on the freeway system (a few percent) can have a major effect on traffic flow. Remember how well traffic moved

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## **Improving Transportation:**

.....continued from page 6

during the 1984 Olympics? Sorensen's proposed solution was Congestion Pricing: toll lanes to replace the HOV lanes on freeways with the toll amount dependent on the time of day (i.e., the density of traffic). That approach has met with considerable resistance from the public, including claims of elitism — should only the rich drive unobstructed? As an example, very few people in the audience responded positively when Supervisor Yaroslavsky asked who would be in favor.

Councilman Dennis P. Zine and County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky favored other solutions they think may have better citizen support. Zev suggested "driver-free days" on the freeways: if the last number of your license plate ends with a 6, you would be banned from the freeway during peak hours on days of the month ending in 6. If you are a "6", there would be 26 days (Monday-Friday) in 2008 you would need to stay off the freeway. That may be too hard for people to remember. Dennis supported the idea of one-way streets, at least during rush-hour. He suggested Vanowen and

Victory as examples. The recent controversy over that idea on Pico and Olympic indicates it may not be a very popular way to relieve congestion, particularly as traffic patterns have changed; it's no longer predominantly traffic East in the morning, West in the evening. In addition, it wouldn't help freeway traffic.

Rita Robinson, newly appointed General Manager of the LA City Department of Transportation, offered no specific suggestions, but called for people to understand the situation (too many cars cause traffic congestion) and indicated that her department would work closely with Caltrans and the Planning Department to better define the impact of traffic by new construction and ways to implement "action-oriented, doable solutions."

Councilwoman Wendy Greuel, City Council Transportation Committee chair, moderated the panel and question and answer session. Her bottom line echoed Dr. Sorensen in that "there is no silver bullet" and we simply have to come up with solutions within the current constraints.

## **A NOTE TO OUR MEMBERS**

You are important to us. We welcome your comments, suggestions for articles and participation at Board meetings. We meet on the second Monday of each month except in July and August at the Tarzana Community & Cultural Center at the corner of Vanalden and Ventura. If you or another Tarzana property owner are interested in becoming more deeply involved in TPOA activities, attend a meeting and tell us about your interests. Because space is limited, call Dave Garfinkle first. His number is 881-6318.