

WESTWOOD PARK ASSOCIATION

Newsletter ~ Winter ~ 2008



Letter from the President

Many of you have expressed concern about the aging Monterey Stone Pines on Miramar and the potential for more tree limbs breaking off. You'll be pleased to know that the Association has a licensed arborist evaluate each tree in our common areas. Branches are removed, as are entire trees, if they are found to pose an imminent danger.

As these Stone Pines reach the end of their lifespan, the costs for maintenance and removal go up. Tree care and replacement are becoming a major expense for the association. This year we are looking at having to pay upwards of \$20,000 to prune and remove aging trees—almost half of our yearly budget--and this figure will only increase as the trees continue to age.

As we remove the Stone Pines, we are replacing them with Red Flowering Gum trees. You can see a few mature gum trees on Miramar and several young ones that were recently planted. The plan is to ultimately have a uniform line of gum trees all the way down Miramar.

On another note, several residents have complained about cars being parked on front setbacks (yards), in violation of Planning Code Section 136 (30). It is illegal to park in the front yard area, even if it is paved over. You can report violators to Kate Conner at the San Francisco Planning Department at 575-6914. You can also email a dated photo of the violation to Kate.Conner@sfgov.org, which is the most effective way to get a warning letter sent out. Reports can be made anonymously.

Thanks again to everyone who helps out to make our neighborhood such a great place to live. On behalf of the Board, I want to wish each of you a happy, healthy, and safe holiday.

Greg Clinton, President

board@westwoodpark.com

Westwood Park Association Board Members

Greg Clinton
President (term expires 2011)

Anita Theoharis
Vice President (term expires 2009)

Asa & Geoff Williams
Co-Secretaries (terms expire 2009)

Julie Hagelshaw & Grant Edelstone
Co-Treasurers (terms expire 2010)

Anne Chen
Member at Large (term expires 2009)

Nanette Asimov
Member at Large (term expires 2010)

Members of the Westwood Park Association Board of Directors are volunteers elected to serve three-year terms.

Board meetings are usually held on the third Tuesday of each month at the home of a board member, and begin at 7 p.m.

For information and the location of upcoming meetings, visit www.westwoodpark.com.

Contact us via e-mail at:
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or by voicemail at:
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Residential Guidelines Survive Public Challenge

By Anita Theoharis

Westwood Park scored a significant victory this year when the San Francisco Planning Commission unanimously affirmed that the WPA guidelines prohibit vertical additions. This was the first time the Planning Commission was asked to apply the WPA guidelines since their enactment into city law in 1995.

Westwood Park representatives submitted exhaustive oral and written evidence at a hearing on May 8, 2008. They argued that vertical additions of any sort would erode what makes our neighborhood special, and they cited the original developers' vision of a neighborhood of low California bungalows that maximize each home's access to light, air, privacy and views. They reminded the commission of Westwood Park's designation as a Residential Character District ("RCD") under San Francisco law.

In addition, the commission received letters from experts who had been involved in our original designation as a Residential Character District: Susan Lowenberg, a former president of the Planning Commission; Pedro Arce, a former senior planner; and Joe O'Donoghue, former president of the Residential Builders Association. All confirmed that the main focus of the Westwood Park Guidelines was to avoid the detrimental impact that vertical additions would have on the look and feel of our neighborhood.

By unanimous vote, the Planning Commission agreed. The commission found that vertical additions would have a significant, detrimental effect on the neighborhood and its character. Expansion should instead be accomplished within the existing structure or by horizontal additions.

While this result is gratifying, equally pleasing was the coming together of residents to ensure that the special protections fought for and won a decade ago would be preserved. Particular thanks to Kurt Meinhardt for authoring our guidelines, writing his design review and providing compelling testimony; to Hugh Byrne for creating an updated digital map of Westwood Park showing our building heights; to Greg Clinton for compiling a history of the park; to Greg Morris for his many photographs used in testimony; and to the more than 300 residents who sent letters or e-mails of support to the mayor, supervisors and planning commissioners.

Special thanks to all who endured a five-hour wait to testify; and for the support and interest of Mayor Gavin Newsom and Supervisors Sean Elsbernd and Aaron Peskin. We are grateful for the time that Supervisor Elsbernd and Planning Commissioners Christina Olague, Bill Lee, Ron Miguel and Mike Antonini took to make site visits to Westwood Park. They and Commissioners Kathrin Moore and Hisashi Sugaya were obviously prepared for the hearing and very engaged in the issues. The Planning Commission took particular note of Supervisor Elsbernd's letter of support in deciding in our favor.

If you would like to learn more about the history of Westwood Park and the origins of our special place in the Planning Code, you can view the hearing online at http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=20. Click on the May 8, 2008 Planning Commission hearing.

Viewers can shortcut to the Westwood Park issue by choosing item #11. 

Westwood Park: Ready 4 Anything

By Bob Geleta

Neighborhood Emergency Response Team (NERT) volunteers meet twice a year for drills, in April and October.

On Oct. 18, at least eight members of the Westwood Park NERT team joined 14 other teams from around the city at Aptos Middle School for refresher training sponsored by Emergency District Coordinating Center 9 (the Ocean Avenue Fire Station). Team members attended sessions on emer-

gency communications and on search and rescue.

NERT training is free. To enroll, call 970-2024. We are also looking for additional volunteers – ideally two households per block to help coordinate things in case of a large-scale emergency. If you are interested, please leave your name and contact information on the Westwood Park at 333-1125 or e-mail Melanie Johnson at mdrjohnson@comcast.net.

To comment on this issue of the newsletter, send an e-mail to board@westwoodpark.com. Please indicate whether your comments may be published in future editions of the newsletter.

by: Nanette Asimov, Editor
Erica Langdon, Design
Anne Chen, Production

WP to Gain Wellness Passes From CCSF

By Nanette Asimov

City College officials acknowledged in November that they have excluded Westwood Park from its share of community passes to swim and exercise in the school's sparkling new Wellness Center on Ocean Avenue, and said they will fix the problem. It's not yet clear how many free passes will go to Westwood Park residents, but the number is likely to be 30 or fewer, distributed each spring, summer and fall semester.

"The sad thing is that you were left out of the loop from the beginning," said Linda Shaw, special assistant to interim Chancellor Don Griffin. "I don't know why Westwood Park was left out of the mix."

Shaw said City College will now

Shaw told the newsletter that the number of passes is limited to 120 because the center is a teaching center for students, not a community recreation center. The 120 passes have been distributed three times since the center opened, said Shaw and Dan Hayes, who oversees the Wellness Center. They said the passes went to neighborhood associations in Districts 7 and 11 that border the college.

Westwood Park is in District 7, but has gotten no passes. "There were passes distributed in the spring semester, summer, and, to my understanding, this fall," said Hayes. "There were 60 passes per district. The passes were given to neighborhood leaders of both those districts." Hayes said he created the passes

stars!!!!!!" wrote one student. "This is by far the best thing I've ever seen my tax dollars get spent on!" gushed another.

Greg Clinton, president of the Westwood Park Association, was less pleased. "I was very upset to learn that City College had been handing out passes to other neighborhood groups and never informed Westwood Park about these passes," he said, adding that college officials even told the Association in June that passes "might" be created in the future.

"In fact, they were already handing them out to other neighborhood groups like Sunnyside, and not letting Westwood Park know about it," Clinton said. "This doesn't feel fair at all, especially after our Association has been so supportive of the college's expansion."

Westwood Park resident Nicole Stagnaro has agreed to keep the list of residents interested in passes, which will be good only for adults for the semester provided. To be placed on the waiting list (first-come/first-served) contact Nicole at nicolestagnaro@gmail.com or by cell, at 646-872-6000. The idea is to give two passes per household while they last. ↪



The new Wellness Center on Ocean Avenue (photo credit www.ccsf.edu).

identify all eligible neighborhood associations "and divide up the available tickets among them before the spring semester," which begins January 12.

The \$84 million "Community Health and Wellness Center" opened in January, and was built with voter-approved bond money.

Neighbors recall that college officials seeking support for the bond in 2005 said there would be public access to the grand new center now offering everything from a yoga room to a "natatorium."

each semester "and passed them forward," but didn't remember to whom he gave them. Shaw said she thought Sunnyside got some, but couldn't name recipients.

Chris Coghlan, president of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association, said his group got 30 passes last spring from an assistant to the previous chancellor, Phillip Day. He got none in the summer, but got another 30 this fall after requesting them from Interim Chancellor Griffin's office.

Meanwhile, the center is getting rave reviews on Yelp.com: "Five

Halloween Contest Winners

By Nanette Asimov

(with help from—and apologies to—Jack Finney, author of “Invasion of the Body Snatchers”)

On a quiet fall evening in the small, peaceful neighborhood of Westwood Park, Kathleen Loia and 5-year-old Grace, out strolling, discovered an insidious, horrifying plot. Silently, subtly, almost imperceptibly, alien life-forms were taking over the minds and bodies of their neighbors – the evidence manifest within a black Audi sprawled across the once-neat lawns of 549 and 555 Miramar.

“Oh, my God!” Loia cried.

Inside the grim sedan gleamed grinning skeletons where humans once sat. Body parts oozed from its wheels, separated from their owners by some horrifying transaction only a depraved mind could imagine. Death was everywhere. Police had come and gone, having etched chalk circles around the bones and bloody cleavers that littered the driveway. Smoke billowed from the wreckage. Shrunken heads dangled from posts. A fanged, 8-foot ghoul – its red eyes flashing in warning – watched from the dimness, awaiting fresh victims.

“Unbelievable!” said Loia, shaking her head. “It’s perfect! It’s what Halloween is all about.”



Which is why the judges in Westwood Park’s annual Halloween contest awarded **1st Prize** (Westwood Park t-shirts) to the Marsh and Nicholson families who worked cooperatively to create mass death and destruction in the neighborhood.

The judges awarded **2nd Prize** (a Westwood Park DVD) to 40 Valdez. With its life-sized ship, the Hexon Valdez – piloted by those minions of the netherworld, Bush, Cheney, McCain and Obama-- and a tank of high-priced Hell Gasoline (selling regular for an arm, mid-grade for a leg, and super for a soul), this house best summed up the scary year now coming to a close.



The **3rd Prize** (a CD of neighborhood photos) went to 788 Faxon for its creative use of one of the Park’s loveliest features: the picture window. Passersby saw the glass ghoulishly transformed into a huge TV screen featuring (what else?) the Addams Family TV show! (Best scene: Gomez dropping a cooked chicken into a tank of piranhas as Morticia gazes on admiringly.)



Hall of Fame: 199 Faxon (Edgar Allan Poe would be proud)



Honorable Mentions: 530 Staples, 801 Monterey, 800 Miramar, 641 Miramar, 29 Eastwood. (Great job!) 

Scenes From The Annual Picnic



Future firefighter tests the equipment

A good time was had by all at our annual picnic and meeting on September 27.

Photo credits: Greg Morris.



Neighbors enjoying the great weather



Local celebs: Ingleside Police Captain Denis O'Leary with District 7 Supervisor Sean Elsbernd

Perks of the Park

The Association has several volunteer opportunities for those interested in helping out the neighborhood. Some are very important, but don't take up much time. More people pitching in eases the load on others who volunteer

their time. Possibilities include:

- Coordinating Westwood Park Yahoo e-mail group
- Helping out with Annual Meeting & Picnic (once a year, and much needed!)
- Coordinating graffiti reporting and abatement
- Reporting violations of front yard parking and paving regulations
- Newsletter articles (write them - or just suggest them!)
- Plus whatever else might come to mind!

Contact the board at board@westwoodpark.com if you're interested in lending a hand.

New Neighborhood E-Mail Policy

By Greg Clinton

As some of you are aware, controversy has arisen about use of the Westwood Park e-mail list. Some residents have complained that they are receiving too many e-mails from neighbors on the list, and that the list is being used to promote personal or commercial interests. Therefore, they have removed themselves from the list. On the other side are those who appreciate an easy and cheap way to stay in touch with neighbors and share resources, referrals, questions, and so forth.

The main purpose of the e-mail list is for the Association to keep residents informed about important matters that pertain to the neighborhood as a whole. If residents remove themselves from the list, then we lose our ability to stay connected to the larger neighborhood.

As a result, the board voted to restrict the e-mail list so that only the board can send out e-mails. Anyone who wants an e-mail sent out to the list may send it to the board (*board@westwoodpark.com*), who will determine if it is appropriate to send out.

For those who want to be able to e-mail each other, residents can sign up for a new Yahoo discussion group (<http://groups.yahoo.com>). One of our residents has volunteered to coordinate this discussion group, and the Association will keep you informed about how to join. Residents on the current Westwood Park e-mail list will now get e-mails only from the board.

To sign up for the new list, please visit www.westwoodpark.com and click on the "subscribe" link. This should hopefully satisfy all. 

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ASSOCIATION

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