

Benedict Canyon

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Benedict Canyon Association Newsletter

www.benedictcanyonassociation.org

COUNCILWOMAN KATY YAROSLAVSKY MOVES TO HALT HOTEL PROJECT IN BENEDICT CANYON

Mindy Rothstein Mann & David Elson



Councilwoman Katy Yaroslavsky

On Tuesday, May 16, the City Council heard Councilwoman Katy Yaroslavsky's motion regarding the proposed Bulgari Hotel in Benedict Canyon. The motion she introduced asked the City Council to request that the Department of Planning reconsider allowing the developer's application for a General Plan amendment from moving forward. This would effectively stop the hotel project from being put through the EIR process and effectively end that portion of the project.

Councilwoman Yaroslavsky stated that she did not make this request lightly; she made a passionate argument that there were many reasons which supported her motion. She argued that this Hotel Project is an ill-conceived and inappropriate project for this area and the request for this zoning change must be stopped in its tracks now. Councilwoman Yaroslavsky predicted that if the project is allowed to continue through the EIR process it will only be more difficult to stop it later once the various City departments have invested more time and the developer has committed more time and money. She explained that

she is in favor of unions and union jobs but that this is simply the wrong place for a hotel and that there would be many other union projects within her district.

Yaroslavsky explained that there have been significant changes in circumstances since the Planning Department approved the developer's request to initiate a change to the General Plan. There have been several recent fires in the hillsides, and we've become more aware of severe climate change affecting us. Furthermore, planning policy is moving away from big development in the hillsides and towards preserving open space and biodiversity. The local environmental groups are opposed to the proposed hotel and are concerned about the effects it will have on the Santa Monica Mountains including the impact on wildlife. The Wildlife Ordinance has been working its way through City Planning for several years and will be voted on shortly. Yaroslavsky argued that given these factors, this project in an environmentally sensitive area simply doesn't make sense.

As many Benedict Canyon residents know by now, a developer is seeking the City's approval to build a hotel on the east side of Benedict Canyon between Wanda Park and Hutton Drive on a 33-acre parcel. This rugged piece of property will require massive grading (more than 100,000 cubic yards) in order to build the proposed project. The developer, who has branded his project "Bulgari Resort Los Angeles," has plans for 58 rooms and suites, 8 private mega-estates, the largest being 48,000 sq ft, two restaurants, a 10,000 sq ft spa and a private cinema. Because Benedict Canyon is not zoned for commercial development, to approve the project the L.A. City Council must approve a change to the City's General Plan. In 2017, at the request of the developer's lobbyist, Planning Dept. approved the request to initiate an amendment to the General Plan.

Cont. on page 14

BCA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Like everyone else in our neighborhood, we all had to get used to the changes in our lives since the Pandemic, and the Benedict Canyon Association adjusted as well while keeping to our 75-year-old mission: the preservation of our beautiful canyon and neighborhood.

While not necessarily visible to our constituents, the Board of the BCA, all unpaid volunteers still met remotely every month; had updates from our Los Angeles Police Department Senior Lead Officer James Allen and our City Council District 5 representative (previously Paul Koretz who termed out and was replaced by Katy Yaroslavsky) and reported those updates to our members; responded to inquiries from those of you who have contacted us; participated in Neighborhood Council meetings; wrote letters of support, or opposition as the case may be, to various organizations fighting for our goals; and devoted countless hours to the BCA.

We were able to get portions of Benedict Canyon Drive re-paved; pushed for electronic speed limit signs (which have been installed on Benedict Canyon Drive) and speed humps; gave input on important wildlife and ridgeline issues to the City Planning Department; held a “meet-the-candidates of Council District Five” webinar as well as a debate between the two finalists; and conducted a Neighborhood Watch



David Kadin

video meeting with Officer Allen to assist residents to coordinate watch groups (which are also beneficial for emergency preparedness).

Over the years, the development of Benedict Canyon has always been an issue of interest to those who live here. We must continue to preserve the unique habitat of the flora and fauna but still respect the rights of property owners to renovate or build on their property within City guidelines; that's why we support the Wildlife Ordinance which is still working its way through the planning process.

There has arisen a project, however, which has the real potential of changing the entire character of Benedict Canyon: this project attempts to change our residential zoning to commercial zoning to develop a 58-room hotel, restaurants, a 10,000-square-foot spa, gym, a cinema as well as eight private estates. The impact on our

canyon and quality of life would be disrupted forever: from the numerous pre-construction truckloads of dirt hauling to the years of construction with all the workers involved, to the permanent 24/7 traffic resulting from the staff, guests and other workers going in and out of the Hotel. If this project is allowed, how many more commercial projects would follow? And, of course, we all fear the danger from the careless flick of a cigarette from those who are unfamiliar with our Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The BCA has strongly opposed this project and has worked closely with Save Our Canyon to make our voices heard. We need your support to preserve the Canyon and the Santa Monica Mountains.

If you haven't joined yet, please do so on our website: www.benedictcanyonassociation.org and if you are already a member thank you for your continued support and please renew your annual membership if you haven't already done so. We plan on resuming in-person meetings soon for everyone who wishes to attend.

Very truly yours,

David Scott Kadin

David Kadin,
President,
Benedict Canyon Association

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THE WILDLIFE ORDINANCE IS ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE PLUM COMMITTEE

Mindy Rothstein Mann

After 9 years of research, open houses, hearings with the public, and working its way through the various city departments, the Wildlife Ordinance was unanimously adopted by the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee on Tuesday, June 20. The final draft that was approved by PLUM has been through several revisions in Planning based on input it received from the public and this draft represents a compromise.

Some who support the Wildlife Ordinance feel that the initial draft has been gutted and that the regulations in this last draft don't go far enough. The Ordinance enjoys strong support in the City's environmental community—it is supported by CLAW, NRDC, The Santa Monica Mountains Task Force, Heal the Bay, The Sierra Club, Friends of Griffith Park, Save Our Canyon, Laurel Canyon Association, and The Hillside Federation, to name just a few.

Opponents feel that this draft is still too restrictive. They believe the Ordinance is infringing upon their property rights. The Real Estate Industry has been especially vocal and has taken to social media to wage a campaign to defeat the Wildlife Ordinance. Unfortunately, much of their campaign has been based on misinformation.

Here are some of the important facts about the Wildlife Ordinance.

What is the next step?

The ordinance is being reviewed by the City Attorney's office before it moves on to the full City Council for approval. The ordinance is set to initially be enacted between the

405 and 101 Freeways. The plan is to eventually expand it to other environmentally sensitive areas of Los Angeles.

Other Neighborhood Councils have already expressed a desire to have the Wildlife Ordinance in their area to give them additional construction regulations needed to protect wildlife and habitat.



Deer in Canyon Garden

Background

The Wildlife Ordinance is not being rushed through. The idea was first introduced in 2014 as a response to rampant development, and wildlife habitat destruction & fragmentation within the Santa Monica Mountains. City Council directed the Planning Department to conduct a study and create an ordinance with a set of land use regulations that would protect wildlife connectivity in the city. The planning staff responded by consulting various research teams

of ecologists and biologists to study the ecological impacts of property development and to inform the ordinance's regulations.

Public Notification and Input

The Planning Department engaged in public outreach to bring awareness to the proposed plan, including workshops between 2018-2021, presentations to neighborhood councils, public hearings in 2022, and mailed more than 62,000 notices to residents living in the affected area. It developed an informative website and posted updates.

There were articles in the BCA newsletter which discussed the Wildlife Pilot Study, and emails were sent to inform residents about the workshops. Our neighborhood council, the BABCNC, formed a special ad-hoc committee which held more than 20 public Zoom meetings to discuss the ordinance and to gather public input before submitting recommendations to the planning staff.

How will this Ordinance Benefit People and Wildlife?

Protecting and maintaining areas for wildlife also serves the purposes of addressing safety and hazard mitigation (specifically wildfire, flooding, and erosion) while also addressing water and air quality. The overall intent of the Ordinance is to achieve protection of natural resources, wildlife and open space, thereby advancing sustainability and resilience goals for the City.

Cont. on page 12

THE RICH CULTURAL HISTORY OF BENEDICT CANYON

Gail Malmuth

Benedict Canyon's deep cultural history is comprised of expeditions by Don Gaspar de Portola from Mexico, who passed this way en route to Monterey while beginning the Spanish colonization of California. It is believed that Captain Don Fernando Rivera y Moncada, Lieutenant Don Pedro Fages, and Portola's party camped near this spot on August 3, 1769. However, as with much of California's colonial history, it was superseded by the Gabrieleno and Tongva Indian Tribes, as well as countless other Native American Indian Tribes. Unfortunately, the Native American tribal villages were not named by a pan-tribal association during colonization, rather, they were given names derived by Spanish missions and were thereafter referred to as Gabrieleño and Fernandeño.

The name Tongva, and Gabrieleno are the most widely circulated names, and gained popularity in the late 20th century. Others choose to identify as Kizh and disagree over the use of the term Tongva. Along with the neighboring Chumash tribe, the Tongva were the most influential people at the time of European arrival. They developed an extensive trade network through te'aa (plank-built boats) and a vibrant food and material culture based on an Indigenous worldview that positioned humans, not as the apex of creation, but as one strand in a web of life (as made evident in their creation stories). Over time, different communities came to speak distinct dialects of the Tongva language.



A Mission Indian (Gabrieleño) woman filling a granary with acorns, c.1898

Most of what is now Benedict Canyon was sacred ground to the Native American Indian tribes in the area. The creeks on Yoakum Drive supplied water for the Native American Indians and sustenance for the myriads of wildlife in this canyon. Also, the hundreds of native Oak Trees throughout Benedict Canyon provided an abundance of acorns,



Don Gaspar de Portola

called wiiwish, for food. Due to the mistreatment of the Chumash Tribe, as one example of the indigenous people's homeland, the Native American Heritage Commission now requests copies of the EIR (environmental impact report), to be directed to them by law, due to their footprint and in an effort to preserve this sacred land.

Chief Andrew Salas, and Samuel Dunlap (Native American Indian Archeologist), are investigating this area further for insights into Benedict Canyon's rich Native American heritage, to better preserve this residential district's rich indigenous history. Due to historic facts that could not have been found at the time, the local Native American Indians did not have the ability to rely on the Alquist Priolo Act of 1972, as we do today. These special study zones represent areas that contain potentially active earthquake faults. In California it is required that they be disclosed to prospective purchasers of homes/properties which are located within such a zone. Had they had this advantage, they could have foreseen dangerous circumstances and prevented great loss due to building on seismically unstable land.

For our neighbors in Benedict Canyon, we have the good fortune to share in the awareness and appreciation for how much this sacred area has blanketed us all with incredible natural beauty and history.



UPDATE ON SHORT TERM RENTALS (STRS)

Barbara Nichols

The Los Angeles Short Term Rental Ordinance, in many cases erroneously referred to as “Home Sharing,” has become a source of pain, fear and annoyance to neighbors, whether turned into party houses or occupied by noisy and disruptive tenants. We purchased single family homes, and paid dearly for them, to live where we would know our neighbors, not to live near a transient motel.

In 2022, the Police Department had 10 party house calls for Benedict Canyon in the 2200 block, 6 for the 9400 block of Beverly Crest, 4 for the 2700 block of Ellison, 1 for San Ysidro and 30 for the 2300 block of Kimridge. We have had 5 homicides in 3 short term rentals in the last 3 years in our Benedict Canyon neighborhood, our only homicides. Most recently, there was another incident at 1169 Angelo at 3:45 in the morning where 3-4 shots were heard, and an incendiary device damaged a car. This home is listed as a short-term rental and the police believe it was being used as a site for gambling.

We have had enough! Your BCA VP, Barbara Nichols has joined a steering committee to tackle the problems with STRs, making changes to the ordinance and increasing funding for enforcement. Currently there

are 9 enforcement officers for over 22,000 STRs in Los Angeles! The requirement for “primary residence” is essentially unenforceable. People do not live in many of these properties, or even California, and far exceed the 120 days per year rental limit. They have caused a reduction in long term rental housing in Los Angeles, a rise in rents of about \$810/year and are a factor in the increase in homelessness. Our new group, PLAN, Preserving LA Neighborhoods, has sent a letter to LA Mayor Bass requesting a substantial increase in the budget for STR enforcement. The letter was signed by over 14 Neighborhood associations and Neighborhood Councils supporting our request and representing over 200,000 residents.

A recent study by McGill University estimated that 45% of Los Angeles STRs are illegal. Property owners are allowed one STR per year— it must be the property they reside in, and it cannot be rented for more than 6 months in any given year. Some 43% of STR listings are by hosts with multiple properties.

In addition to the Mayor, all City Council members, key Planning Department personnel and the City Attorney were copied on the letter. We are adding neighborhood associations and Neighborhood Councils daily to support our objectives for better regulations and enforcement. Please add your voice with your letters and phone calls to city officials. If you have media contacts, please let us know so we can get even more coverage of the detrimental effects STRs represent to our communities due to the lack of enforcement of the regulations. Contact the steering committee at preservelaneighborhoods@gmail.com.

The minority who can make more money with STRs vs. long term rentals are inflicting misery on the majority of the residents.

PARTY HOUSE HANDBOOK

The Bel Air-Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council wanted to make sure that all residents had the latest information about how to best secure relief from out-of-control parties in the hillsides. Its ad-hoc committee created a comprehensive handbook which is an invaluable resource. The updated version of the Party House Handbook is free and available to download on the BCA website <https://BenedictCanyonAssociation.org> or the BABCNC website <https://www.BABCNC.org>.



Party House photo - Jorik Kleen/Unsplash

RATTLESNAKE SEASON IS HERE!

Most bites in Southern California occur in the warmer months between April and October.

Mindy Rothstein Mann

While bites from rattlesnakes can be extremely dangerous, the truth is that rattlesnakes are not naturally aggressive or vicious and prefer to avoid confrontation with people. And while we want to avoid encounters with a rattlesnake, we also need to remember that they contribute to healthy biodiversity and play an important role by keeping the rodent population in check.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife cautions that most bites occur when people attempt to handle a snake or when they surprise a snake. They offer the following safety tips to avoid being bitten:



Diamondback Rattlesnake

- Stay alert when outdoors.
- Wear sturdy boots and loose-fitting long pants. DO NOT wear sandals or flip-flops in brushy areas.
- Stay on well-used trails. Avoid tall grass, weeds, and heavy underbrush.
- Check rocks, stumps, or logs before sitting down.
- Shake out sleeping bag and tent before use.
- Do not grab “sticks” in water. Rattlesnakes can swim.
- Let others know where you are going, when you plan to return, and carry a cell phone. Hike with a companion when possible.
- Do not try to touch or handle a snake, dead or alive. They might still inject venom shortly after death.
- Keep dogs safe by keeping them on a leash during hikes.

SCORPIONS! THEY LIVE AMONG US

Jill Demko

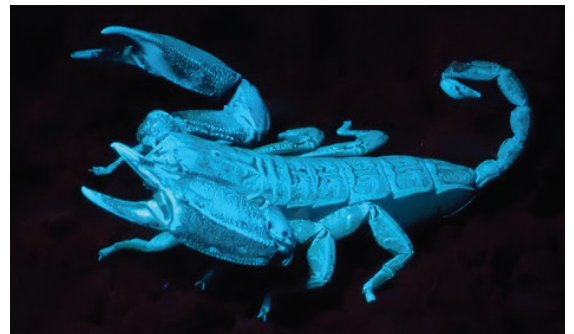
While scorpions might look frightening there is no cause for alarm! Of the three types most often found in our area, the only type to cause any harm is the Bark scorpion. Although its sting can be painful, it is rarely life-threatening. Young children, older adults, and people allergic to its venom are most at risk of serious complications.

These nocturnal creatures are attracted to moist, dark areas and can find their way inside homes via pipe drains and plumbing systems. While they are often found in the kitchen or bathroom they can be found anywhere indoors since they can climb any surface that is slightly rough such as walls and ceilings.

Outdoors, most scorpions like to live under rocks, logs, boards, and clutter. The Bark scorpion, however, prefers to rest on vertical surfaces like trees, bushes, and walls. If you prefer keeping scorpions outdoors, seal any exterior cracks or holes since scorpions can squeeze through tiny cracks only 1/8" wide.

Scorpion Facts:

- There are 41 types of scorpions found in California, but the 3 most common scorpions in Los Angeles are the Arizona Hairy scorpion, the Bark scorpion, and the Stripe-Tailed scorpion.
- They can survive a whole year without food.
- The scorpions in our area are typically 2–3 inches long.
- They have been around since before the dinosaurs, 437 million years ago.
- They can live as long as 25 years but usually somewhere between 2-10 years.
- They can survive submerged in water for up to 2 days because they have “book lungs.”
- They glow in the dark! UV light will turn the proteins in their exoskeleton a bright turquoise color.



Bark Scorpion



IS CONSTRUCTION IN YOUR AREA OUT OF CONTROL?

Mindy Rothstein Mann & Robert Schlesinger



Construction/Work Hours are Limited to Monday – Friday 8am-6pm

Earth Hauling and Cement Trucks are Limited to Monday – Friday 9am–3pm

Storage of equipment in the public right-of-way is prohibited.

Living near a construction site can become a nightmare. While some things might be out of your control, being aware of the Hillside Construction Regulations that govern our hillsides can often help mitigate the impacts and safety of streets in your neighborhood.

1. Construction, Hauling, Grading and Demolition work cannot begin before 8:00am and must end by 6:00pm Monday–Friday. Furthermore, only one truck is allowed to park on a sub-standard street at any given time. Additional trucks must stage on a standard width street.
2. Construction work is forbidden on Saturdays—only light interior construction is allowed between the hours of 8:00am-6pm. Flood light illumination on a work site is prohibited after 6:00pm and all construction is prohibited on Sundays and State or Federal Holidays.
3. A construction site must post its permits visibly on the front of its job site.
4. Dirt and cement truck hauling hours are limited to Mondays through Fridays from 9am to 3pm and are forbidden any other time. Furthermore, only one truck is allowed to park at any given time on a substandard street. Additional trucks must stage and wait on a standard street.
5. The proliferation of dumpsters, storage bins, and construction materials in the public right-of-way in our hillsides poses a serious safety issue. The City requires that you obtain and display a permit on any dumpster that is parked on a public street. Furthermore, the storage of materials in the street is considered an “obstruction” in the public right of way; you can report these offenses by filing an “obstruction request” through the MyLA311 app.
6. There is a strict NO SMOKING OUTDOORS regulation in the hillsides since we are located in a Very High Fire Severity Zone. This applies to construction sites as well. If you observe construction workers who are in violation of this NO SMOKING rule be certain to file a report.

A construction site in violation of these basic rules can be reported to the LAPD through the **MyLA311** app (download via the AppStore or GooglePlay) or website.

Benedict Canyon residents are the first line of protection against inappropriate development in the canyon. We encourage you to contact the BCA through our HOTLINE 310.553-4BCA if you become aware of a proposed development, grading, or a tree removal, which seem questionable or illegal.

BENEDICT CANYON ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

Mindy Rothstein Mann

The 76th Annual Benedict Canyon Association Town Hall Meeting was held virtually on March 28th, 2023. David Kadin, the president of the BCA, gave a brief history of the BCA and an overview of our accomplishments over the last year. He highlighted our efforts to fight the Bulgari Hotel and the various ways in which we continue to offer our residents up-to-date information about safety issues.

David introduced the slate of BCA board members for 2023 and our representatives to the neighborhood council. He welcomed the guest speakers -Councilwoman Katy Yaroslavsky, LAPD Senior Lead Officer James Allen and LAFD Battalion Chief Joseph Everett. Unfortunately, City Attorney Hydee Feldstein Soto fell ill and was unable to attend.

Councilwoman Yaroslavsky briefly discussed her background and outlined some of her top priorities for CD-5:

- Protecting the Santa Monica Mountains and stopping the development of the Bulgari Hotel in Benedict Canyon.
- Finding better solutions to deal more effectively with the homeless crisis and finding ways to keep people from becoming homeless in the first place.
- Enforcing the rules that are in place for short-term rentals and ensuring that there are consequences for party houses.
- Ensuring that DWP is held accountable for improving aging infrastructure in the hillsides and ensuring that DWP has better communication with residents when issues arise.
- Having adequate, professional staffing in her office and responding to her constituents in a timely manner when they contact her office.

Senior Lead Officer Allen of the West LAPD and LAFD Battalion Chief Everett followed the Councilwoman. They answered questions regarding crime and safety issues, emergency access routes, short-term rentals and party houses, and the enforcement of construction and brush clearance regulations. They both spoke of the importance of forming local neighborhood watch groups (see opposite page).

David ended by thanking everyone for their participation and reminding attendees to join or renew their BCA membership.

Sign up for Councilwoman Yaroslavsky's weekly newsletter at <https://bit.ly/CD5Newsletter>.

A wealth of information can be found at the Council website: councildistrict5.lacity.gov.

General Inquiries to the Councilwoman's office can be sent to Councilmember.Yaroslavsky@lacity.org.

Contact Haley Martinez, our new Council Deputy with any problems/questions at Haley.Martinez@lacity.org

Contact Jarrett Thompson regarding transportation issues at Jarrett.Thompson@lacity.org.

Officer Allen can be reached at 39318@lapd.online or 310-444-0741.

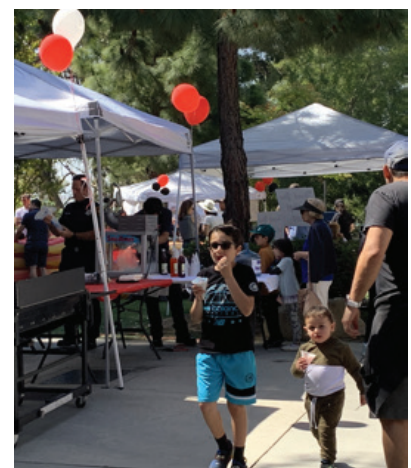
Chief Everett can be reached at joseph.everett@lacity.org or 310-575-8509

OPEN HOUSE AT FIRE STATION 99

May 13th marked the date for the annual Open House Celebration at Fire Station 99. Several BCA Board Members were in attendance to greet residents and join in the festivities.

As always, the firefighters created an entertaining day for children and their parents alike. Firefighters were on hand grilling hot dogs, there was an abundance of silent auction items to bid on, and the main attraction was an opportunity to catch a ride on a fire engine!

Fire Station 99 along with Fire Station 71 are responsible for responding to fires and emergencies in Benedict Canyon. We are grateful to them for their protection and are happy to give them our support every year.





POWER OUTAGE? CALL DWP AND FILE A REPORT!

Donald Loze

It is not uncommon for residents in the hillsides to experience a power failure during windy conditions or inclement weather. During the rainstorms of this past winter, many Benedict Canyon residents were left without power for several days. Intermittent power outages still occur.

As we have since learned, much of the power system in the hills is 40 and 50 years old and is inadequate; the initial DWP designs were not created to deliver the quantity of power which is required to service the household needs of today. The appliances, sound systems, sprinkler systems, Internet, security devices, outdoor lighting, etc., did not exist at that time. In addition, the recent trend of mansionization has placed additional pressure on an already overloaded system.

Like the famous sticky wheel that gets the grease, areas with high numbers of reported outages get higher attention. To ensure the possibility that we are in line for DWP to correct and update our system, it is important for every customer experiencing an outage to create an "outage record" by reporting each event to DWP.

If you lose power, call 800-821-5278 and be ready to provide your name, address, and account number (as they appear on your bill).



DWP Working on Power Pole

INTERESTED IN FORMING A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?

LAFD and LAPD agree that forming a Neighborhood Watch is one of the best ways to keep your neighborhood safe; it can help reduce crime and prepare you and your family for an emergency. If you were unable to attend the Neighborhood Watch Orientation Meeting on May 17th with LAPD Senior Lead Officer James Allen, the recorded video is available on our website.

If you are interested in organizing your own Neighborhood Watch, contact the BCA @ 310.553-4222



1930 - *The William S. Miles House*1932 - *The Pauline Scott McMartin House*1934 - *The Leon and Bernice Schlesinger House*1937 - *The Lee and Claire Marcus House*

NOTABLE ARCHITECTURE IN THE CANYON

Joy Denton

The beauty and convenience of Benedict Canyon has inspired many to make it their home over the years. Some have been celebrities, heads of industry, and pillars of the community. Long ago, a number of these people chose to build their “dream houses” and commissioned the uber talented Paul R. Williams, an African-American architect who created residences for a client list that included Frank Sinatra, Lucille Ball, Cary Grant and Barbara Stanwyck. Williams also designed one of the Saks Fifth Avenue buildings in Beverly Hills, the Polo Lounge addition to the Beverly Hills Hotel, and a lengthy list of iconic properties.

Although Williams struggled with encountering historic biases, his innate talent and desire to prove his abilities—most of all to himself set him on a path to greatness. The elegance and ease of his designs still hold up today as a high bar of excellence to which others can only hope to aspire. His ability to perfect his designs across a multitude of architectural styles added to his popularity.

Today, we are fortunate to have many fine examples of Paul Revere Williams’ work in our midst. You have probably admired some of these exceptional homes on your drive through the canyon.

On another note, at one point in his career Williams became interested in prefabricated structures. He worked together with Wallace Neff (another great architect of the same genre) to design experimental Airform structures, which were small homes that only took a few days to construct using simple materials.*

Sounds like we could really use a man like Paul R. Williams in Los Angeles right about now.

*Budds, Diana (2016-12-13). *The Overlooked Legacy Of Pioneering African-American Architect Paul Revere Williams*. Fast Company. Retrieved 2020-09-16.

Photo credits and a special thank you to Michael Locke

WHAT’S NEW IN BENEDICT CANYON?

Speeding has been an ongoing problem on Benedict Canyon and, aside from stationing extra patrol cars, few solutions have been found to deter these unsafe speeds, sometimes reaching 80 mph. With the assistance of the Council Office, two SOLAR SPEED DISPLAY SIGNS have been installed on Benedict Canyon—one on the north side and one on the south side. We hope these will assist in reducing speeding on Benedict.





MEXICAN ELDERBERRY

Mindy Rothstein Mann

Mexican Elderberry, or *Sambucus Mexicana*, is a deciduous shrub to tree which is native to canyons and valleys west of Sierra Nevada from Oregon stretching south to Baja. It is one of six trees currently protected by the Los Angeles Tree Ordinance and it is an important part of our walnut woodlands which are rapidly disappearing.

The hillsides in the Santa Monica Mountains are currently adorned with the clusters of butter yellow flowers of the Mexican Elderberries. These clusters can be seen from a distance and will typically bloom from April-August followed by clusters of purple berries in September-October.

Mexican Elderberry is an excellent wildlife plant. Butterflies and bees are attracted to its flowers and many kinds of birds flock to eat its berries. Rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, and other animals eat both the fruit and the bark while deer enjoy eating the foliage.

Native people found uses for all parts of the plant. According to Charlotte Clarke, author of *Useful and Edible Plants of California*, they used the fruit for pies and jams, made a soothing tea from the dried blossoms for fevers and flu, used the wood to make bows, made an ointment from the leaves for bruises and sprains, and made a black dye from the twigs and fruit for basketry.

If you are looking to enhance your hillside or garden



Blooming Elderberry on Mulholland Drive

with native plants, consider the Mexican Elderberry. This elderberry can be planted in partial shade to full sun in well-draining soil. It prefers landscape water in its first couple of years until it's established but then it can become drought tolerant. It can be trained into a quick growing shrub or tree that can reach up to 15-20 ft tall.



OUR POTS NEED YOUR HELP!

Did you know that there are 60 planted pots fronting the flood basin on lower Benedict? Please join or renew your BCA membership and make a generous donation to keep our potted trees thriving. Our pots are aging and slowly need to be replaced. They are funded by membership dues and maintained through the generous efforts of Garrett Carlson, our local guardian angel landscape architect. Let's keep our canyon blooming!

LIGHT POLLUTION—WHAT HAPPENED TO THE STARS?

Mindy Rothstein Mann

Once upon a time we could look up at the night sky and enjoy gazing at the stars. Today, huge swaths of the Earth at night are awash in light from artificial lights and one must often travel somewhere remote to see the stars. Our canyon streets are a perfect example of how the dark sky has disappeared due to over lighting. If you drive down one of the major canyon streets at night you will find that the fronts of some homes are lit like hotels. The bright lights create a glare which makes driving difficult at night, and the lack of dark nights interferes with our circadian rhythms. Light pollution poses a danger to our wild-life as well; it disrupts the nocturnal behaviors of insects, birds, reptiles, and mammals.

Cities around the world are addressing this problem by adopting new regulations to limit night lights and L.A.'s Westside Regional Alliance of Councils recently passed a motion requesting the City of Los Angeles to do the same by implementing the following Five Principles of Responsible Outdoor Lighting:

- ★ All light should have a clear purpose.
- ★ Light should be directed only where needed.
- ★ Light should be no brighter than necessary.
- ★ Light should be used only when it is useful.
- ★ Use warmer color lights where possible (2700k or less)

The motion directs the City to enact/codify these principles through its departments and agencies for City facilities and properties such as buildings, parking lots and parks, the streetlight system, the airport and port, and for private development. Furthermore, it asks Community Plans and Specific Plans to enact similar dark sky practices, and include limitations on bright lights, light trespass and illumination of building facades.

To learn more about how you can help bring back our dark sky, go to www.darksky.org

Wildlife Ordinance cont. from page 3

Who will be affected?

The Ordinance would not require homeowners to alter their existing properties or apply the new rules to minor renovations; the Ordinance standards would apply to homeowners when:

- Homeowners plan a major remodel.
- Homeowners add 500 sq feet or more to their home.
- Homeowners grade more than 500 cubic yards of soil.

How has the ordinance changed through the process?

During the planning process, the City Staff released 3 draft ordinances.

Based on the comments and concerns voiced by the public, the Planning staff modified the regulations, and the final draft is significantly different from the original draft. Stakeholders were especially concerned about fencing and security, and how lot coverage regulations might unfairly affect smaller lots. Accordingly, almost all fencing restrictions were removed from the original draft and fences will still be allowed; fence materials that harm wildlife will not be allowed. In addition, while there are regulations regarding lot coverage, R1 and R2 zones have been exempted from the Wildlife Ordinance lot coverage standards.

There have been concerns raised concerning the ability to build ADU's and basements. This ordinance does not contain any regulations that prohibit the homeowner from building an ADU; it does not prohibit basements either, it requires that basements be included in the calculation of total allowable RFA (Residential Floor Area).

For a more comprehensive explanation of the Wildlife Ordinance, see the fact sheet released by CD5 on our website or view the latest draft revisions at planning.lacity.org. If you have specific questions, check with City Planning for accurate answers.



SENDEROS CANYON

The fight to preserve open space in the Santa Monica Mountains

Mindy Rothstein Mann

Senderos Canyon, also known as Hoag Canyon, is a 263-acre undeveloped, pristine canyon surrounded by the communities of Bel Air, Bel Air Crest, and Bel Air Casiano, and the 405 freeway.

Senderos is one of the largest privately owned undeveloped tracts remaining in the Santa Monica Mountains. In addition to its sheer size, it plays a crucial role in the habitat connectivity of our regional Southern California ecosystem. With a perennial stream and rugged steep canyon walls which act as a natural flood control basin, this canyon provides habitat for the endangered Southern CA mountain lion, bobcats, deer, the CA Black Walnut, and numerous other species.

Serious discussions have been taking place in the community to try to find a way to preserve the land as open space and place it in the public trust under the

management of the Conservancy, which considers this property one of the most regionally significant unprotected habitat areas within the Santa Monica Mountains range. Recently, the committee of Save Senderos Canyon reached a tentative agreement with the representatives of the Senderos Canyon property to acquire the property for \$40 million dollars if the money can be raised within a small window of time.

The BCA supports the acquisition of this land and its preservation as open space. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to save a very large undisturbed natural canyon in our own backyard, before it is lost forever to development. For more information, go to Savesenderoscanyon.org. To get involved and help save Senderos Canyon, email Savesenderos@gmail.com.

DONATE LAND IN EXCHANGE FOR A TAX WRITE-OFF—IT'S A WIN-WIN!

Several years ago, we ran an article in the BCA Newsletter asking if residents had land that they would like to donate in exchange for a tax write-off. We are pleased to announce that because of that article, we were successful in assisting in the acquisition of a 2-plus-acre donation of land in Benedict Canyon to the Mountains Conservancy.

The need to preserve open space and biodiversity is greater than ever! If you or anyone you know owns an undeveloped parcel, please consider whether it might be more advantageous to donate the land to a conservancy/land trust in exchange for a tax write-off. Alternatively, you can sell at less than fair market value and obtain a tax write-off for the discount provided to the conservancy/

land trust. Any parcel of any size can potentially be donated, but it is especially applicable in cases where parcels are faced with challenges, e.g., parcels that are land-locked, extremely steep, or parcels that are difficult or impractical to develop. Of course, owners of large parcels can also choose to donate a portion of their land as well.

Jamie Hall of the Laurel Canyon Land Trust (LCLT), who assisted with the previous acquisition, is available to assist anyone who has questions about the process. If you would like to explore the possibility of donating a parcel or if you are aware of a perspective parcel, please contact the BCA.

Hotel Project cont. from page 1

Councilwoman Yaroslavsky voiced her concerns about improprieties and how the process was tainted from the outset due to a conflict of interest. She added that if this project was allowed to move forward, it would prove that **“if you have enough money and can hire enough lobbyists in Los Angeles..... you can build whatever you want, wherever you want, using whatever murky, shady means you see fit to deploy.”**

Finally, in response to the developer’s argument that he had the right to a full EIR process, the Councilwoman noted that the law is directly contrary. A case involving essentially the same facts and arguments, *Las Lomas v. City of Los Angeles*, held that the developer does not have a right to a full EIR process—the City has the discretion to cancel the project at any time.

Benedict Canyon residents have overwhelmingly opposed this hotel project from the start for numerous reasons and they packed the Council Chambers that Tuesday morning to lend their support for the motion. In addition to the environmental concerns (the removal of over 700 native and mature trees and the destruction of native habitat and a wildlife corridor), there are major safety issues in our very high fire hazard neighborhood, increased traffic, and noise during 8 to 10 years of construction and then once the hotel is operational. Most of all, residents and environmental groups oppose the change in the City’s General Plan that would be required for this project due to the precedent it would set for future commercial development within the Santa Monica Mountains. Members of Save Our Canyons, who have led the fight against the hotel project (and obtained signatures of more than 11,000 people who oppose the project) spoke eloquently about the reasons to grant the motion. Representatives from the major environmental groups also spoke in support of the motion.

Union members also showed up at the Council Chambers that morning to read from prepared scripts in support of the developer and oppose the motion.

After the Councilmembers recessed to a closed session for almost 2 hours to consider the motion, they returned to vote on the motion. Several councilmembers were passionate in their support for Katy’s motion; they voiced their concern for the protection of the environment and their concern for the possibility of ethics violations. These councilmembers were: Bob Blumenfeld (CD3), Nithya Raman (CD4), Marqueece Harris-Dawson (CD8), Hugo Soto-Martinez (CD13), and Tim McCosker (CD15). But in the end the vote ended in a



Wanda Park Drive, a sub-standard street, is the proposed entrance for the 8 mega-mansions.

deadlock – 7:7. This means that the motion will be voted on again in mid-August now that the empty seat in Council District 6 has been filled.

We need the participation and support of all our residents if we are going to maintain the quality of life in our canyon that we have all come to cherish. If you would like to assist the BCA in its efforts to campaign against this project, go to benedictcanyonassociation.org and join our mailing list so we can keep you informed.

BCA CONTACT INFORMATION

Mail: P.O. Box 1265, Beverly Hills, CA 90213-1265

Hotline: 310-553-4BCA

Email: info@benedictcanyonassociation.org

Website: www.benedictcanyonassociation.org

Monthly Meetings, the 2nd Monday of the month, 7pm via Zoom; call Hotline for the link.

Benedict Canyon Association 2023 Pledge of Support

I want to help protect and preserve our canyon and the environment in which we live.

- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| _____ \$100 | Pine Tree | _____ \$2,000 | Black Walnut Tree |
| _____ \$200 | Cypress Tree | _____ \$3,000 | California Bay Tree |
| _____ \$250 | Eucalyptus Tree | _____ \$5,000 | Big Leaf Maple Tree |
| _____ \$500 | Sycamore Tree | _____ \$7,500 | Blue Elderberry Tree |
| _____ \$1,000 | Oak Tree | _____ \$10,000 | Toyon Tree |
| _____ \$1,500 | Jacaranda Tree | | |



- Please make this an anonymous contribution.
- Please make this amount an annual contribution.

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As you would like to appear in BCA publications.

Address _____

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Text to this phone number ok? Yes No

The BCA does not share its member information with third parties.

My contribution of \$_____ is made by:

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- Please charge my: VISA Mastercard AmEx

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Signature _____

Mail completed application to:
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Or Contribute online at

www.benedictcanyonassociation.org





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Dana Glenn

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Dear Neighbor,

After a long hiatus, the BCA Newsletter is back. We hope you enjoy reading this issue. We strive to include articles on matters that are important to our community.

If you'd like to contribute to future issues of the newsletter, get involved as a member of our Board, or if you'd just like to share some ideas or concerns, please get in touch with us—your input is invaluable. We need your participation, if you have the time, and we need your continued financial support.

We look forward to hearing from you; email us at info@benedictcanyonassociation.org.

The BCA Board

