

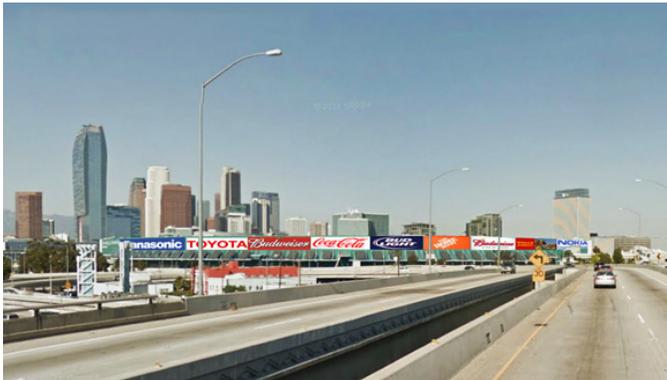
# Hillside Federation Newsletter September, 2011



[www.hillsidefederation.org](http://www.hillsidefederation.org)

## WHY THE SIGN ORDINANCE SHOULD NOT BE APPROVED

*Dennis Hathaway  
Coalition to Ban Billboard Blight*



*Simulation of ads that could be placed  
downtown under proposed Sign Ordinance*

The Coalition to Ban Billboard Blight opposes adoption of the revised citywide sign ordinance now pending before the City Council Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) committee because it would allow a proliferation of commercial advertising on both private and public property without a significant reduction in existing billboard and signage blight, and would allow new electronic signage without addressing energy use, light pollution, traffic safety, and other issues that could negatively effect communities throughout the city.

### Agenda

September 7, 2011

7:00 pm

I. Call to Order

Guest Speaker:

Sign Ordinance - Dennis Hathaway,  
Dave Garfinkle

II. Approval of July 6, 2011 minutes

III. Officers' Reports

A. President's Report

B. Treasurer's Report

IV. Old Business

V. New Business

A. Stanley Hills Drive - Tom Hulce  
Ali Simard

B. Bus Bench Ads - Wendy-Sue Rosen

VI. Adjournment

Next meeting - Wednesday, October 5, 2011

**Pinz Bowling Center, next to Jerry's Deli**

12655 Ventura Blvd., Studio City 91604

101 between Coldwater Canyon exit  
and Laurel Canyon exit

*The mission of the Hillside Federation shall be: To protect the property and the quality of life of the residents of the Santa Monica Mountains and other hillside areas of Los Angeles and its environs, and to encourage and promote those policies and programs which will best preserve the natural topography and wildlife of the mountains and hillsides for the benefit of all the people of Los Angeles.*

The City Planning Commission (CPC) approved the ordinance on March 26, 2009, after three public hearings that included extensive testimony from representatives of neighborhood councils, community groups, business and development interests, and the sign industry. Unfortunately, proposed changes to the ordinance first made public on July 22, 2011, by the City Planning Department seriously weaken the ability of the city to protect its citizens from the negative impacts of outdoor advertising.

**SIGN DISTRICTS:** The CPC retained the sign district provision allowing off-site and other prohibited sign types in sign districts, but greatly limited the potential for negative impact on communities by allowing districts only in high-intensity commercial areas zoned regional commercial or regional center. The CPC also approved a provision that allowed property owners to erect these kinds of signs only after acquiring and removing existing billboards in the surrounding community at a more than one-to-one square footage ratio. The CPC voted to “grandfather” only two pending applications for sign districts under the current city sign ordinance.

The revised ordinance now before the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) committee seriously undermines the CPC’s

intent by proposing to grandfather a dozen pending sign district applications and proposals for special signage in specific plan areas. This could result in hundreds of thousands of square feet of new off-site signage in the city without a single billboard being taken down.

The CPC rightly decided that removal of billboards blighting commercial streets in many neighborhoods provides a tangible, quantifiable community benefit as well as ensures that there won’t be a net proliferation of new billboards and off-site signage in the city.

**COMPREHENSIVE SIGN PROGRAMS:** The CPC included this provision to allow special signage rules for large properties like shopping centers and college campuses, but the provision didn’t allow any off-site or electronic signage generally prohibited by the ordinance. The revised ordinance would allow those generally prohibited sign types if they aren’t visible from the public-right-of-way and don’t exceed 10 per cent of the total signage on the property. These comprehensive sign programs would be allowed on any commercial property, either public or private, which opens the door to commercial advertising in city parks and recreational facilities.

P.O. Box 27404 Los Angeles, CA 90027 323-663-1031 president@hillsidefederation.org www.hillsidefederation.org	<b>ORGANIZATIONS:</b> Bel Air Knolls Property Owners Bel Air Skycrest POA Bel Air Ridge Association Benedict Canyon Association Brentwood Residents Coalition Canyon Back Alliance Crests Neighborhood Assn. Encino Property Owners Assn. Franklin Ave./Hollywood Bl. W. Franklin Hills Residents Assn. Highlands Owners Assn. Hollywood Dell Civic Assn. Hollywood Heights Assn. Hollywoodland Homeowners Holmby Hills HOA Kagel Canyon Civic Assn. La Tuna Canyon Community Laurel Canyon Assn.	Lookout Mountain Assn. Los Feliz Improvement Assn. Mt. Olympus Property Owners Mt. Washington Homeowners Nichols Canyon Assn. N. Beverly Dr./Franklin Canyon Oak Forest Canyon Assn. Outpost Estates Homeowners Pacific Palisades Residents Residents of Beverly Glen Roscomare Valley Assn. Shadow Hills Property Owners Sherman Oaks HOA Studio City Residents Assn. Tarzana Property Owners Assn. Torreyson Flynn Assn. Upper Mandeville Canyon Whitley Heights Civic Assn.	<b>CHAIRPERSONS EMERITUS</b> Shirley Cohen Jerome C. Daniel Patricia Bell Hearst Gordon Murley Polly Ward  <b>CHAIRMAN IN MEMORIUM</b> Brian Moore
<b>PRESIDENT</b> Marian Dodge <b>CHAIRMAN</b> Charley Mims <b>VICE PRESIDENTS</b> Mark Stratton Wendy-Sue Rosen <b>SECRETARY</b> Donna Messinger <b>TREASURER</b> Don Andres			

**ELECTRONIC SIGNAGE:** The CPC prohibited electronic signage outside sign districts, but the revised ordinance would allow them as on-site business signs anywhere in the city. The only regulations proposed are a minimum eight-second message duration and a daylight and night-time brightness limit. These regulations fail to address serious issues of energy use, traffic safety, light trespass on residential properties, change in community character, and potential for privacy invasion. At a minimum, a moratorium should be placed on the installation of any new electronic signs and conversion of existing signs until regulations are in place that protect residents, motorists, communities and others from adverse effects.

#### OTHER

**Donor Signs:** Signs recognizing donors would be allowed by-right, without special restrictions on size, location, text. This would allow signs carrying corporate logos anywhere, including city parks and other public property. These should not be allowed without strict regulations on size, text, and placement.

**Right of Private Action:** The provision allowing property owners within 500 ft. of an illegal sign to file suit if the city failed to enforce citations was removed from the CPC-approved ordinance, but should be reinstated. If budget cuts or other circumstances impair the city's ability to enforce sign codes, citizens should be able to step in.

**Signs in the Public Right of Way:** The ordinance exempts signage in the public right-of-way from any regulations. This signage should be made subject to all the regulations of the ordinance.

**Sign Adjustment:** The ordinance would allow a zoning administrator to approve a 20% deviation from sign area and height, location, projection and clearance, and time limits on

temporary signs, and would allow variances for adjustments beyond 20%. These are far from "minor" adjustments and should not be allowed without a public hearing and appeal process.

**Signs Covering Windows:** The CPC-approved ordinance prohibited any signs covering windows, but the revised ordinance would allow them if the fire department certified that they didn't present a safety hazard. This fails to account for the fact that signage adhered to windows can degrade the view to the outside, and seriously affect the quality of life of tenants of offices and apartments.

**Temporary Signs:** The revised ordinance doubles the allowable size of temporary signs, opening the door for building-size supergraphic-style signs that can be on a building for as much as 90 days in a given year.

**DOT Hazard Review:** The revised ordinance removes the provision requiring any signs within 500 ft. of a freeway to undergo a DOT hazard review. This should be restored.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

The Sign Ordinance will go back to PLUM on October 18. Attend the PLUM hearing. You can also express your opinion to PLUM by writing to the legislative assistant Michael Espinosa, City Hall Room 395, 200 N. Spring Street, LA, CA 90012 or [Michael.Espinosa@lacity.org](mailto:Michael.Espinosa@lacity.org).

More information is available at <http://banbillboardblight.org/>

[-Sign Ordinance and Planning Dept.](#)

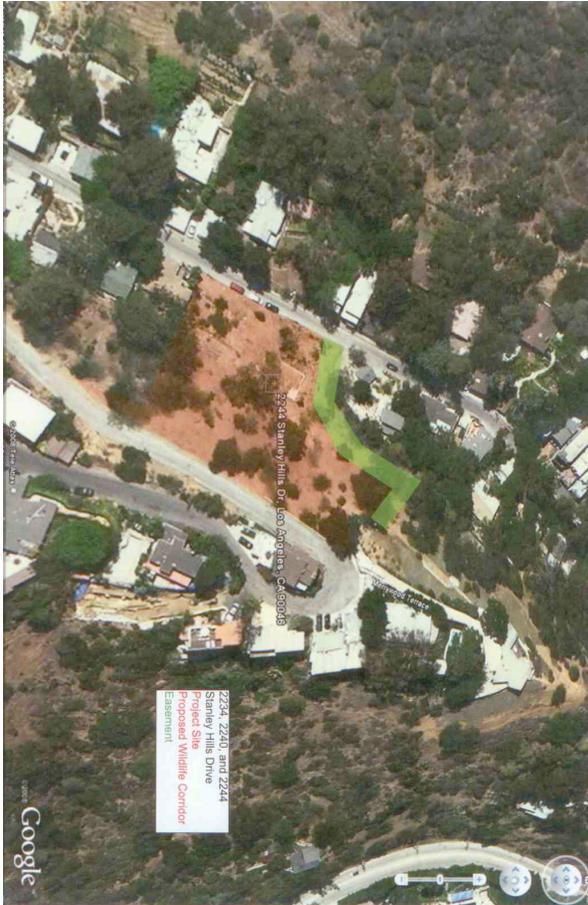
[Recommendation Report](#)

[-Planning Dept. Presentation to PLUM committee](#)

[-Additional Changes Recommended by Planning Dept.](#)

## Stanley Hills Drive May Lose Wildlife Corridor

Lynn Pitoun



*The green is the wildlife corridor requested by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.*

There was a Zoning Administrator hearing in January, 2009, regarding the conditions necessary to build a large single-family home at 2234 Stanley Hills Drive, which was to be the first of three homes built on contiguous lots at this address and 2240 and 2244. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy had added a map of a 20'-wide wildlife corridor on the property at 2244 to the ZA file. The developer had agreed with a group of neighbors to the wildlife corridor, among other conditions, as part of a private agreement to sign off on a variance to allow construction on the substandard street. The ZA, Sue Chang, included in her determination, Condition 19, that there would be a 20'-wide wildlife corridor on the developer's property per the SMMC recommendation. The developer had two weeks to

appeal the language and the mapped location of the wildlife corridor, but he did not.

Then, in late 2010, the developer went to a different ZA, Chief ZA Linn Wyatt, who had no standing in the case, and convinced her to issue a Letter of Clarification that essentially voided ZA Sue Chang's determination and instead suggested that the wildlife corridor be placed at least in part on a paper street, Merrywood, that is not owned by the developer and has not been vacated by the city. This was without the knowledge of or consultation with the neighbors, some of whom also have property that abuts Merrywood and therefore have a direct interest in whether or not it is vacated and, if so, for what purpose.

We believe that Chief ZA Linn Wyatt exceeded her authority when she essentially overturned the determination of the original ZA based on information provided only by the party who stood to benefit from the second ZA's "clarification," without consulting the neighbors or considering all of the stakeholders and their legitimate interests.

We encourage those of you who are able to attend our hearing at the Central Area Planning Commission on or after 4:30 on Tuesday September 13 at City Hall, 10th Floor. In addition, please write a letter of support to the Commission on behalf of Concerned Citizens of Stanley Hills Drive, to 200 N. Spring St. Room 272, LA 90012. The Case Nos. are: ZA 2008-0830 (ZAD), ZA 2008-0832 (ZAD) and ZA 2008-0834 (ZAD).

### Hillside Federation Meeting Calendar

Save the dates!

October 5

November 2

December 7 Party

January 4, 2012

February 1

March 7

April 4

May 2

## Sign, Sign, Everywhere a Sign?

Wendy-Sue Rosen



On Friday, August 19, 2011, the Los Angeles City Council voted to approve a Bus Bench Program that authorizes the placement of thousands of new bus benches with commercial advertising throughout the City. Community advocates, including many Federation members, were concerned that the program would allow bus bench advertisements in areas where zoning regulations preclude commercial advertising. A successful community outreach campaign was initiated just days before the City Council took action, resulting in widespread public support for an amendment to the program that would preclude the installation of commercial ads on benches in areas that prohibit or restrict such advertising.

In response, Councilmember Bill Rosendahl (Council District 11) made a motion to amend “the proposed contract to require that new bus benches with advertising be installed in a manner that is consistent with all local zoning codes, including restrictions on off-site advertising set forth in the General Plan, Community Plans, Specific Plans as enacted by ordinance, the California Coastal Act, and all other applicable law.”

The City Council passed the Bus Bench Ordinance *with* the Rosendahl Amendment by a vote of 11-1. This victory would not have been possible without the support of Federation members, including the Brentwood Residents Coalition, which led the public outreach campaign, the Bel Air Skycrest Property Owners’ Association, and the Pacific Palisades Residents Association. The amendment was also supported by the Coalition to Ban Billboard Blight, which was successful in advocating for several other important protections, including a prohibition

against alcohol advertisements on the benches. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy also filed a letter emphasizing the importance of protecting scenic areas like Mulholland Drive from commercial blight.

This community victory represents an important first step in controlling the proliferation of commercial advertising in scenic and historic areas. But the Bus Bench Program is far from the only advertising-related ordinance on the City’s agenda. The next and most immediate danger is posed by the proposed City-wide Sign Ordinance, which threatens to bring commercial blight into scenic and historic areas, despite zoning prohibitions on such signage. The Sign Ordinance, supported by well-funded and influential commercial interests, will again challenge the community’s resolve, resources and abilities.

The Hillside Federation is ready to work with the broad coalition of community organizations banding together to protect the City’s scenic and historic areas from those aspects of the proposed Sign Ordinance that threaten commercial blight.

### **Your Participation Is Needed**

On **Tuesday, October 18, 2011, at 2 PM**, the City Council’s Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee will consider the proposed City-wide Sign Ordinance. This is the most significant and potentially destructive “billboard” ordinance that the City has considered in many years. The proposed Ordinance, as currently drafted, has serious flaws that threaten a dramatic spread of commercial blight throughout the City including in public parks and other public spaces. The community must join together in proposing critical changes to this Ordinance. The Hillside Federation will distribute further information on this Ordinance as the October 18th hearing date approaches.

Welcome New Member  
Organizations!

Canyon Back Alliance  
Lookout Mountain Alliance  
Pacific Palisades Residents Assn.

## Victory for the Little Guys

The Community Alliance for Open Space sued the City of Los Angeles—and won—for improperly granting a zoning variance to permit a truck driving school on the Lopez Canyon Open Space in violation of CEQA. The judge scolded the city for their lack of enforcement of CEQA. Winning a lawsuit is no guarantee as the decision can always be appealed. On August 10, the City Council voted *not* to appeal the judge's decision. Congratulations to the Community Alliance for Open Space, Marlene Rader, and Kit Paull for your persistence and your victory!

### Web Site

The Hillside Federation has a new web site, [www.hillsidefederation.org](http://www.hillsidefederation.org). One of the things we want to do is have live links to the web sites of all our member organizations. Please send us the link to your association's web site. In return, we ask that you post a link to the Hillside Federation web site on your web site.

### Draft Minutes July 6, 2011

#### I. Call to Order

President Marian Dodge called the meeting to order at 7:05. Members introduced themselves.

**Guest Speaker: Retaining Wall Ordinance** - David Olivo

David Olivo of the City Planning Department and intern Nicole Sanchez are creating a draft ordinance for retaining walls. It will dovetail with the Baseline Hillside Ordinance. They are currently gathering input from the public.

There are several issues with the current 2005 Retaining Wall Ordinance. The definition of a retaining wall is unclear and open to interpretation. The number of retaining walls allowed (2) is restrictive and encourages excessive grading. The maximum length of

retaining walls is not defined resulting in walls 1,000 + feet long. The horizontal distance between retaining walls (3 feet) does not allow for appropriate landscaping.

Members gave numerous examples of inappropriate retaining walls; you should send pictures to David.

David gave examples of codes in other jurisdictions which have slightly different definitions and restrictions. The city is evaluating all to see which concepts work well in LA. A few cities include aesthetics in their determinations. The city has numerous ideas to clarify. Should large lots have the same requirements as small lots? Should you regulate the surface area of a wall? What if the wall is attached to the building? Should garden walls (under 4 feet) be included? Members suggested that aesthetics should be a consideration, that landscaping should be mandatory.

After they complete initial public outreach they will compose a draft ordinance. They will hold workshops on the draft ordinance before it goes to the City Planning Commission by the end of the year. Comments and photographs can be sent to David Olivo at [david.olivo@lacity.org](mailto:david.olivo@lacity.org) (213) 473-9769.

#### II. Approval of minutes

The minutes of June 1, 2011 were approved as corrected.

#### III. Officers' Reports

##### A. President's Report

Marian thanked the members of the Executive Committee who make an extraordinary team.

She received a thank you note from Jerry Daniel for the Federation's emails to keep the State from selling Ramirez Canyon State Park. Jerry will organize a tour of the park for anyone who is interested.

The Federation advised Tujunga residents on their appeal of a project on Sister Elsie Street.

Wendy-Sue Rosen gave an update on the "clean hands" ordinance, which the Federation unanimously supported last month. There was a joint meeting of the Audit Committee and PLUM on June 28 to discuss Councilmember Zine's three motions to address recent problems with Building & Safety inspectors. Clean Hands was one of them. They will hold workshops on the Clean Hands Ordinance. Wendy will send the dates to Marian when they are confirmed. Wendy wants a good turnout to show politicians why clean hands is really necessary.

Announcements: Fire Station 97 serving the Laurel Canyon/Mulholland area is holding a memorial and pancake breakfast on Saturday, August 13 for firefighter Glenn Allen who was killed during a fire where the roof fell in.

There is a lecture on Griffith Park and the Great Depression on Thursday, July 14, at the Los Feliz Branch Library sponsored by Friends of Griffith Park. Author Mike Eberts will discuss the role Griffith Park played in the WPA and CCC camps to keep men occupied and the art they created.

#### B. Treasurer's Report

Marian read the Treasurer's report that Don Andres sent. We have 30 paid memberships plus two tonight that said they would join. He's paid all bills. We need more paying members to attend the holiday party in order to keep within budget.

### **IV. Old Business**

#### A. Cell Phone Towers - Chris Spitz

The Hillside Federation supported a motion for new regulations on cell phone towers last year; many other organizations have followed suit. Pacific Palisades formed a working group as suggested by Jane Usher to make recommendations to the city. There were full page ads in the Sunday LA Times by AT& T, "We're putting in 40 new towers." Last month the report, which included enhanced aesthetics, came out of the City Attorney's Office. Chris reminded us that according to federal law you can't bring up health issues, and you can't outright deny towers; they have a right to install towers. People want better coverage; however they'd like to work with the companies rather than have towers appear within 6 inches of someone's home. Sherecommends a joint meeting with PLUM. Glendale has a good ordinance. San Francisco passed an ordinance recently; however T-Mobile has filed a law suit. Los Angeles doesn't want a legal challenge. Donna Messinger suggested they use YouTube to get community support.

#### Motions:

If you are planning on making a motion at the meeting, please prepare your motion ahead of time and bring enough copies for all member associations. This will make it easier for the directors to consider the merits of the motion and easier for the secretary to record it.

#### B. La Rocha Trail - Alexa Iles Skarpelos

Alexa reported that Tom LaBonge found \$225,000 to go toward the purchase of the vacant lots. They are within 90% of their goal. Many people in their neighborhood donated money. It helped convince LaBonge that he should be part of it. They are partnering with People for Parks, which is already a 501(c)(3), to establish a charity auction web site. They are looking for people in entertainment who could donate passes to premiers or set visits to the auction.

#### C. Modified Parking Requirement Districts - Wendy-Sue Rosen

Wendy reported that many of the Federations's suggestions were included in the amended motion. MPRDs cannot be established in a specific plan area. The minimum size was increased. Benefits were added for low-income housing. The hearing is July 14 at City Hall. Wendy urged members to attend.

### **V. New Business**

#### A. 8350, 8352, 8354, 8356 Grandview Drive - Jim Nelson

Grandview Drive is a substandard street that can't handle the houses that are already on it. In some places the street is only 9 ½ feet wide and is collapsing. Permits should not be granted on Grandview without street improvements. Jim had a copy of Municipal Code Section 12.21A17(e) (3), Special Order 007-04 from the Bureau of Engineering which states that no permits be issued unless there is a minimum 20-foot wide paved roadway. This is to ensure emergency vehicle access. Developers are going to the zoning administrators who are waiving the requirement.

There are questions about whether it is a by-right project or discretionary; whether it is on Grandview Drive or Crisler Way; and were bonds required. Grandview resident Joe Williams said Dave Tompkin of Help You Sell is trying to build four houses where there used to be two. Wendy thinks if you are building four houses you need a secondary access and an EIR. The city earlier told Joe he could not subdivide his lot. Carol Sidlow said Grandview was the street where the 1997 Laurel Canyon fire started. After the fire the city allowed the entire street to be developed without widening the road.

MOTION: Wendy-Sue moved that the Federation write a letter similar to last month's Crescent Drive letter but based on the facts of the

Grandview Drive project and addresses their concerns. The motion passed unanimously. The letter will be copied to Koretz. Wendy requested that Jim and Joe provide the Federation with copies of all documentation related to the project.

**B. 1400 Linda Flora** - Steve Twining & Carol Sidlow

Eri Kroh is proposing to build a 46, 659 sq. ft. single-family residence on Linda Flora. About 17,000 of that is below-grade basement. The project has a 4,523 sq.ft. separate building for servants' quarters, which is bigger than the average house in the area. It was featured in an article on mansionization written by Jessica Garrison in LA Times (6/12/08); at that time it was only 38,000 sq ft. This is a by-right project on a ridgeline with no EIR required. Kroh got an MND in 2007 for the grading. He will have 2 ten-foot retaining walls 1,000 feet long separated by three feet. Bel Air/Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council (BABCNC) is requesting an EIR because of the 70,000 cubic yards of grading in an area prone to landslides. BABCNC had an independent geologist, Slosson and Associates, do an engineering geology review of the site. The geologist determined that it would not be prudent to built that project on that site. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has taken a position requiring an EIR for the project.

MOTION: Wendy-Sue moved that the Federation write a letter similar to the Crescent Drive letter with the facts of the Linda Flora case. The MND is out of date and was for a smaller project. It requires an EIR. There are roadway and retaining wall issues. The motion passed unanimously.

**C. By-Right Notification** - Carol Sidlow

Carol chairs the Planning & Land Use Committee of the Bel Air/Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council. They have requested that the Department of Building and Safety provide neighborhood councils and homeowner associations with notification of all by-right projects in high-fire-danger areas and landslide areas so they can address environmental issues. The Westside Regional Alliance Council (WRAC) requested notification of all projects five years ago. A consulting firm is developing a centralized notification system, but nothing has happened yet.

MOTION: Wendy-Sue Rosen moved that the Federation request notification of by-right development to neighborhood councils and City Council offices of all development in areas designated by the City of Los Angeles as High

Fire Severity Zones and Landslide Areas. The motion passed unanimously.

**Announcements:**

There is no meeting in August. The next meeting is September 7.

Steve Twining announced that there is a meeting regarding Upper Stone Canyon Reservoir on July 12. Steve will send Marian the information and she will forward it to all.

Janet Turner: LAFD Chief Peaks said the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is not in compliance with the fire marshall and brush clearance requirements. Fire protection in Pacific Palisades was cut 33%. Wendy said the Conservancy is exempt from fire clearance unless you are in a Benefit Assessment District.

**VI. Adjournment** - The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 pm.

Submitted:

Donna Messinger,  
Recording Secretary

**Members Present:**

Bel Air Skycrest	Barbara Dohrmann
Benedict Canyon	Nickie Miner
Hollywood Dell	Alexa Iles
Hollywood Heights	Donna Messinger
Kagel Canyon	Kit Paull
Laurel Canyon	Jim Nelson
Los Feliz Impvmt	Marian Dodge
Nichols Canyon	Madeline O'Donnell
Resid. Beverly Glen	Gillian Calof
Roscomare Valley	Steve Twining
	Shirley Cohen
Studio City Resid.	Claudia Freedle
Upper Mandeville	Wendy-Sue Rosen
	John Binder

**Guests Present:**

Planning Department	David Olivo
	Nicole Sanchez
Chair Emeritus	Patricia Bell Hearst
Pacific Palisades Res.	Chris Spitz
Pacific Palisades	Janet Turner
Community Council	
Laurel Canyon	Joe Williams
	Shannon Nishida