

THE WILLMORE CITY ENTERPRISE



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLMORE CITY HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

MAR 2005

March 16th Meeting

March 16th is the date of our annual meeting with election of 3 of the 7 Board members. Please join us at 7:30 p.m. at the Willmore Neighborhood Police Center at 910 Daisy Avenue. The Community Police Officers will be joining us at the beginning of the meeting for updates and questions. We will be reviewing some of the neighborhood and city wide issues that we have been working on this past year and would like input from everyone on priorities and focus for the coming year. See you there!

Old Houses: 1054-1060 Maine Avenue

Cheryl Perry and I have agreed that this newsletter needs a series of profiles of old houses that give back to the neighborhood. She suggested I begin with the house I know best, which is difficult because I know too much about it. Since 1986, I feel I have taken most of it apart and put it back together again. I'm not done. I got to relaxing and enjoying it and

Three architects have categorized it as middle-class shingle style, despite its lack of shingles. I mostly call it arts and crafts; it's not Victorian and it predates craftsman. The southern part of the roof and the cobblestone-patterned porch are what warrant the shingle-style designation.

It is unique for four things: the roofline, the porch, the fact that the stones are limestone and not granite, and the windows. The upstairs windows are 5' x 9' and what most people put into living rooms, and there were three more downstairs. It's a keeper, and I can say that because I'm just its custodian and not its designer or its builder.

When I moved here, a lovely old man named Mr. Taylor lived nearby. He told me that he and his brother had just moved here from Ireland when the earthquake struck in 1933. He said they would walk past and marvel that the stonework had survived intact. It's not all that intact today. At 11:02 on November 30,

1990 a heavy truck rammed into it. It proved to be quite educational, and insurance paid for the education along with the repairs. Those little bitty stones that show are really great big stones with just their ends showing. We cleaned the stones for reinstallation by wiping off the sandy remains of the mortar with our bare hands, which means the unaffected parts are just sitting there, held together by failed mortar. For its 83rd birthday, the porch got reinforcement inside the corner pillar for the first time.

I don't know of another house in Willmore that has suffered more abuse than mine. It turns up in the 1907 City Director as a single-family house. It had a 17' x 17' dining room, a decent-sized living room and one of those whatever rooms downstairs. I am sure the southeast corner contained a kitchen, a water closet, and maybe more uses, but that spot is now unreadable.



continued on page 2

THE WILLMORE CITY ENTERPRISE

Old Houses continued.....

Upstairs there were three large bedrooms (the smaller two were 13' x 13'), a huge bathroom, and two - count 'em, two - upstairs porches. I think it was built on old plans that had been adjusted for 1907 living. A bedroom may have been redrawn into the bathroom and two good-sized (for the time) closets, meeting needs that had only recently emerged.

Eventually along came the aptly named Mrs. Edna Gross. She decided, in 1950, to turn it into three apartments, one up and two down. The upstairs was reasonably nice, but downstairs was gross. Downstairs is now one apartment. Upstairs, the most noticeable change is that the porch has been reopened. An interim owner had removed two walls that appeared to support the place; they have been rebuilt.

Somewhere along the line, the entire house had been sheathed in pink asbestos siding. That is where Peter Devereaux enters the picture. Peter is a restoration contractor who was involved in the early days of Willmore preservation. In 1978, he bought the house to preserve it. He removed the asbestos and filled every nail hole. He got the windows working. He got it to where someone could come along and begin work on the interior.

I have lived upstairs since 1986. With those huge windows, I have trouble remembering that my space used to be bedrooms. The attic holds a lot of stuff. Why didn't I turn it back to single-family? I didn't need the space, even when the kids used to move back in, and I was too close to retirement to handle the mortgage without rental income. Maybe when I'm gone, someone will make it single-family again. If they had children, they would apparently be the first children to grow up there.

Carol McCullerty

Redevelopment Funds Come to Willmore

It has been my pleasure to be WCHA's representative on the Central Project Area Committee for Redevelopment for the past two years. The term "pleasure" is probably a very large overstatement, as all of WCHA's previous representatives would certainly agree. CPAC has had a tumultuous history at best, but for the first time since its inception, the Central Project Area has the ability to raise funding through the sale of bonds. In February, the Redevelopment Agency authorized the sale of bonds that will allow for approximately \$51 million to be spent on redevelopment projects in the Central Area.

Because developing Open Space has been a top priority for Central Area residents, one of the first orders of business for CPAC at the March 3rd meeting was to ask the Redevelopment Agency to allocate \$15.65 million to acquire land to allow for the development of approximately 40 acres of open space throughout the Central Project Area. Included in the 40 acres is the Union Pacific Railroad owned parcel that has been on Willmore's radar screen for a very long time. As many of us are aware, Long Beach Parks, Recreation & Marine received a \$2.23 million grant from the State of California towards acquisition of that property. But due to competition for the site and escalating property values, that grant has fallen short of funding the purchase. CPAC is asking the RDA to appropriate enough funds to complete the purchase. It is my understanding that the City has entered into negotiations with Union Pacific to do just that. Once the property is under the City's ownership, community planning input meetings will be held to determine exactly how this potential parkland will be used.

The acquisition of this site was one of the major goals of the Willmore District Implementation Plan. The final draft of the Implementation Plan funded by the Redevelopment Agency is due by the end of March. Because the Central Area Strategic Guide for Development was not specific to the needs and goals of our unique neighborhood, WCHA felt that a separate plan for the Willmore Historic District was needed. Thanks to the support of our 1st District Councilmember, redevelopment staff worked with neighborhood representatives in the development of this separate Implementation Plan.

Another major goal of the Implementation Plan is to relocate vintage homes threatened with demolition due to new development (such as the West Gateway area) into the Willmore City Historic District. WCHA was recently given approval to relocate the "School House" temporarily sitting on West 3rd Street to a RDA owned site in the 400 block of Daisy. Contract negotiations are underway for that project.

Carrol Goddard

THE WILLMORE CITY ENTERPRISE

Cheap Therapy: A jaundiced look at the General Plan

By: Carol McCafferty

Saturday morning, February 26th I sat in the auditorium at the Gas Department with more than a hundred residents from all parts of the city ...and everyone agreed on something. I have never seen such unanimity on a city issue.

I have been missing Willmore City meetings for much of the past year so I could attend a planning group working on the next Long Beach General Plan, which will guide future zoning decisions. There were five "cluster" groups representing geographic areas of the city. Willmore is in the Southeast cluster area, and that is the group I attended. In all that time we were never offered a peek at the plans for the other four clusters.

At last, on the 26th, all five groups were in the same room and so were their planning maps. And there was unanimity: no one wanted increased density for their area. Belmont Shore? Park Estates? The eastside tracts? North? The west side? Wrigley? Name an area of the city, and the people opposed any more density. In the case of the two clusters east of Redondo, it was sort of tragic-comical, because they were being assigned only token density increases and they didn't like it. When cries of anguish sounded from the three clusters west of Redondo, it was about what I expected, and I joined in.

It is a fact that there is a great divide at Redondo Avenue; ask any Realtor. To the east are single-family neighborhoods and small pockets of expensive apartments. To the west, there's us, all manner of inappropriate mixes of housing plus a wide mix of ethnicities and income levels. The city expects a massive influx of new residents, and west-of-Redondo is expected to make space for 95% of it.

I need to mention here that Willmore City isn't affected by the plan in any substantive way. We are an "interior neighborhood", not on the Blue Line or any major bus corridors, and I think it's great. West Anaheim is slated for rezoning, but the new zoning could never be any worse than what was assigned to it last time: a major highway-type category that allowed for just about anything, including a day camp for the homeless.

On that morning at the Gas Department I realized that everyone, in choosing a place to live, takes density into account, even if it's done subliminally. We westerners like more density than the easterners, but only as much as we agreed to when we moved in.

Maybe five years ago, at a Willmore City meeting, I was told that the single-family neighborhoods would not be upzoned. The decision goes back that far, so it came as no surprise when we were told that the preponderance of new housing would be along Long Beach Blvd. at the "transit nodes". Long Beach and Anaheim, Long Beach and PCH, and other intersections are considered transit nodes because bus lines connect with the Blue Line. Any street with heavy bus traffic counts as a "transit corridor" and is targeted for increased density. As long, that is, as it is west of Redondo.

The transit corridor/transit node concept is the latest thing in planner-think. It was presented to us at the first meeting; at later meetings, no matter what we thought we had said, the maps came back to us with dense housing at the nodes and along the corridors. Where we got to have input was how high it should be (up to six storeys) and whether the place could (not should) have ground-floor retail. The fact that new retail frontages, just by their newness, would rent for so much money that a struggling small business (I like small businesses) would likely go belly-up wasn't discussed. The answer to our desire for small businesses might lie in more liquor stores. We also got to look at façade designs. Since they were only examples, it didn't look like much of a choice to me. So I shined it on.

Something we didn't discuss in much depth, or seek opinions about from those who would be directly affected, is whether people living on the streets behind the new behemoths prefer three, four, or five storeys of apartment dwellers overlooking their backyards, or maybe tall windowless walls. Either choice blocks light. We didn't talk much about guest cars taking up scarce curb space on those streets.

I worry about Anaheim east of Atlantic to about Junipero. Twenty years ago, East Anaheim was a ghost street lined with unused deco buildings. We named it Deco Row. Cambodian commerce has resulted in extensive rehabilitation and many dozens of small businesses now occupy those buildings. We owe the Cambodians a great debt for the preservation of those buildings, and don't need to be setting them up for demolition followed by higher rents. Allegedly there will be a future element regarding historic preservation, and Anaheim could be included. We know how well preservation policies have worked in Willmore City, don't we? I have to be skeptical about the future of a whole street of good buildings and thriving businesses.

**Cheap Therapy: A jaundiced look at the General Plan
continued.....**

Before I moved to Willmore City, I lived 20 years in an east of Redondo single-family neighborhood. All too often I heard slurs against the apartment dwellers on our boundaries. They were, to many minds, "those people" so "what can you expect?" Personally, I don't think badly of apartment dwellers, but I fear their landlords, the people who set the tone for the building, and usually live miles away. A landlord who won't evict an obnoxious tenant soon has a building full of obnoxious tenants. We know all about it. We also know those commuter landlords think what they create is what we deserve; otherwise why don't we live in single-family neighborhoods? I see no point in creating opportunities for more of them. We have been told there will be some sort of mechanism to protect us from landlord abuse. If you believe it, you'll buy just about anything, won't you?

Early on, I mentioned planner-think. The planners tell us they are going to fix our neighborhoods, when they helped break them in the first place. West of Redondo is a case study of earlier examples of planner-think, much of it now discredited. One reason east of Redondo is in good shape is that planners have had little to say there. At our very first cluster meeting, in the first 15 minutes, our consultant described 12-unit buildings on 8,000 square foot lots as overcrowded and unacceptable. I ask every Willmoran to look down his block and see if there isn't at least one of these monstrosities within an easy walk. Each one has about half as many parking spaces as units. That was planner-think in the 60's. Look across from my house and see the building with nine garages for 18 units, all lined up along Maine Ave., taking up the curb space needed for the nine units that didn't get parking. That was planner-think. They didn't predict the number of cars that would be in my neighborhood then, so why should I believe their guiding principle now that says all those immigrants to Long Beach Blvd. and the corridors will ride the Blue Line? Nobody saved single-family housing for us, and there are no plans to relieve us of our planner-inspired blight.

Most west of Redondo neighborhoods never had a shot at single-family zoning because they were built out haphazardly (but small scale) long before zoning came to Long Beach. Then many were upzoned to R-4 (apartments, big ones) at the same time the sprawl to the east was being built out as single-family R-1. West of Redondo neighborhoods are planned chaos.

I admit I walked in the cluster experience with a load of skepticism and maybe a chip on my shoulder but I am truly worried about the City's vision for our future.

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What's New at the Bembridge House?

The Bembridge House is getting a new roof. Long Beach Heritage was recently awarded a grant from the Long Beach Navy Memorial Heritage Association for the installation of a badly needed new roof. The goal is to have the new roof on before next year's rains.

Also happening at the Bembridge Heritage Homesite is the stabilization of the carriage house. The ground breaking ceremony for that took place in February and they expect to have it completed by the end of March, depending on the weather.

Tours of the Bembridge Heritage Homesite are available by reservation. Call the Long Beach Heritage at (562) 493-7019 for further information.

Old-Fashioned Hardware Stores

We are blessed with an old-fashioned hardware store on East 4th Street and another on East Anaheim, run by the Barnes Brothers, Trent and Taylor. Now a third Barnes Brother has opened yet a third old-fashioned hardware store at 929 E. Wardlow Rd., Cal Heights adjacent. For "the usual" I will continue visiting the 4th Street location; I owe them my loyalty for taking away the drudgery of driving to Signal Hill, and for believing in downtown.

When I want period hardware I'll go visit Tom Barnes on Wardlow. He has a fine selection of old doorknobs, door and drawer handles, ball-end door hinges, I can't remember what-all, all carefully stripped of paint and ready to use. He has glass doorknobs that are typical of the twenties. He has creative house numbers, but watch out if your house is older than 1920. And he has catalogs galore.

And he's just as helpful as his brothers. The phone number is 490-2669.

Carol McCafferty

Thank You

Many thanks to those of you who have renewed your membership dues for 2005. Your support and your participation in WCIA makes Willmore City the best neighborhood ever!

Willmore City Heritage Association		The Willmore City Heritage Association is committed to the preservation, protection and improvement of the physical environment and quality of life in the Willmore City/Drake Park neighborhood.	
Business card size ad \$50/year (10 month guarantee) Please send business card with check _____		WCHA Board Members* - 2004 Cheryl Perry, President* 436-2815 Miguel Reiman, Vice-President* 951-3307 Doug Sambrano, Secretary* 208-5038 Tish Greco, Treasurer* 983-1759 Carol McCafferty* 432-8999 Ernie Villa* 436-6522 Mark Perry, Newsletter* 436-2815 WCHA Voice Mail 436-8611 Police Center Chair: Carrol Goklard 618-9507 Willmore Community Police Center 570-1146 1st Council District Office 570-6919 visit us at our website: http://www.willmorecity.org	
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Monday & Thursday 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Childcare provided: ages 4-10

646 W. 9th (9th & Maine)

Info: 562-495-1729 Se habla español

Copies provided free of charge by the
Neighborhood Resource Center (562) 570 1010

The March meeting will be held on
Wednesday March 16th
7:30 p.m.
Willmore Community Police Center
910 Daisy Avenue

The WCHA Board will meet on the
fourth Wednesday of every month.

Mark Your Calendar!!

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