



.... A coalition of homeowners and local non-profit organizations, dedicated to saving Chatsworth from excessive, irresponsible development. Save Chatsworth, Inc. was founded in July of 2002.

In this issue . . . Save Chatsworth 's plans to revitalize SMMC Park, Development Project updates, CEQA changes

Development Project Updates

Centex Homes - Topanga Canyon Blvd. Housing Project (between Marilla and Plummer Streets)

The west side of Topanga Canyon Blvd., north of Plummer Street, is undergoing massive change, as construction commences on a project that was originally approved in 1988 by the City of Los Angeles for 29 single family home, an apartment building and an office building lot. Over the past 17 years, the tract maps have been renewed many times, taking advantage of City and State extension legislation. Two public community meetings to date have been organized by the developer, Centex Homes, and one meeting by current City Councilman Greig Smith. Centex Homes Director of Land Development, Ron Gallagher, has apologized for the poor communication that Centex has maintained with both the City Councilman's office and the community, and has agreed to a new traffic study, and committed to replacement oak trees that are larger than what is normally required by the City. Gallagher also has announced that Centex plans to build condominiums instead of apartments, and has introduced a plan for 108 units, which will require review by the City and also the Chatsworth Design Review Committee.

This project is seventeen years behind in mitigating what is now legally acceptable and allowable as to the environmental impact on the existing surrounding community. Citizens attending the community meetings have been dismayed that their concerns about oak tree removal, grading and drainage, the outdated traffic study, and the environmental impacts to the Plummer Street/Valley Circle Scenic Corridor are not adequately addressed in accordance with today's standards. The community is also concerned about the visual impact of this small lot development that will be filled with two-story homes that are five feet from property lines, creating a "solid house" visual impact in a very visible area.

Councilman Greig Smith promised at a July 22, 2005 meeting with the developer and concerned homeowners that as a result of the extraordinary amount of time extensions that were obtained in this case, he will introduce legislation that will require projects more than six years old to conduct a new traffic study. Considering our rapidly growing population and the pace of new home construction, this is a much-needed step in the right direction by the Councilman's Office, and Save Chatsworth urges Councilman Smith to fight for such reform. Save Chatsworth will be following this Centex project closely, as the planning process in this case has left many shaking their heads.

Storage Facility at De Soto and 118 Fwy.

Over the objection of the Chatsworth Neighborhood Council, the City approved an 86,000 square foot storage facility planned for 11056 De Soto Ave., just south of the 118 freeway. Recently, four concerned community members sued the City over its approval of a variance to build this project, located on the east side of De Soto Ave., just south of the east-bound on-ramp of the 118 freeway. Failure to conform to the Chatsworth-Porter Ranch Community Plan, the lack of a transportation study, and improper notification of the mitigated negative declaration are some of the disputed issues. Save Chatsworth members are concerned about the precedent-setting nature of this change in existing zoning, from RA-1 (Very Low II Density Residential) as the development of commercial properties along the Chatsworth-Simi Freeway Scenic corridor is contrary to our mission statement, which supports the historic preservation of the spectacular vistas across the Santa Susana Mountains. Supportive letters from the community are welcomed – please address your letters to Councilman Greig Smith, c/o City Hall, 200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

City Sphere of Influence and Las Lomas

Las Lomas developer Dan Palmer still has hopes that Los Angeles City will annex his property into its limits so that he may build what he labels a "self-contained" town on 558 acres between the Golden State and the Antelope Valley freeways. The plans for the project call for 5,800 single-family homes. Both the cities of Santa Clarita and Los Angeles oppose the project, citing the enormous amount of additional traffic that will burden the area, in light of other projects, such as Newhall Ranch, that are yet to be built. Environmental organizations have great concerns that such a large development in this area will block wildlife access between Los Padres and Angeles National Forests.

Hidden Creeks

The developer for this project would also like to see his project incorporated into the City of Los Angeles. Hidden Creeks, which is adjacent to the northwestern border of Porter Ranch, proposes 188 homes built on 132 acres, with additional acreage utilized for open space. Most of the lots would measure 18,000 square feet in size. The developer plans an equestrian facility of about 80-100 stalls and a public park with soccer and softball fields, which will not be lit at night. One major flaw is that the developer plans for only 5 equestrian lots (out of 188!), and would like to see the new homeowners who have horses board their horses at the project's stables. Another serious concern is that the proposed location for the equestrian facility is next to Mormon Creek, a stream under consideration for future plans for Los Angeles City water recharge projects. The Chatsworth Neighborhood Council has also voiced disapproval of this project.

Save Chatsworth Seeks Grant for Revitalization of Conservancy 13-Acre Park at Canoga and 118 Freeway

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Save Chatsworth is a qualified tax-exempt organization under the Internal Revenue Code section 501(c) (3). Donations are greatly appreciated and are fully tax-deductible.

For more detailed information on the contents of this newsletter or for a schedule of events, please visit our website@ www.savechatsworth.org.

Save Chatsworth seeks to apply for grant money to fund a revitalization and reforestation project on the site of the 13-acre Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy open space park at Canoga and the 118 freeway, commonly known as "Horner Park".

Save Chatsworth's vision for this natural park area, which is widely used by equestrians and hikers, includes the removal of invasive, non-native plants, tree trimming and brush clearance, trash clean-up, graffiti removal, the planting of new native plants and trees, and the establishment of a central rest area on the flat mesa, including benches, trash receptacles and hitching rails, and also informative and educational signage about the wildlife and birds that frequent the park. Our goal is to accomplish these improvements in several stages, over a period of time.

Many grants require "matching" funding from the community, which may come in the form of monetary donations, donation of merchandise and supplies, use of equipment, and volunteer effort. If you are interested and can be of help with any of the above, please contact info@savechatsworth.org for more information. A meeting will be held October 10 to discuss grant applications (see website for more details).



Officers 2004-2005

Vanessa Watters, founding member and Twin Lakes resident, **President**

Jeannie Plumb, founding member and horse ranch owner, **Vice President**

Marty Woll, founding member and President of Chatsworth Neighborhood Council, **Treasurer**

Katherine Weisman, Twin Lakes resident, **Secretary**

Anna Rapagna Cox, founding member and Twin Lakes resident, **Past President**

Deerlake Ranch Update

Negotiations are under way for the sale of this 375-home project located between Canoga and Topanga Canyon north of the 118 freeway, approved by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in 2004, by Presidio Partners Chatsworth, Inc. An adjacent 65-unit condominium project, also approved in 2004, has already been purchased by Toll Brothers.

One condition of approval provides for Supervisor Michael Antonovich to appoint community members to a Mitigation Monitoring Committee before the commencement of construction to monitor the progress of both projects, in regards to construction of the infrastructure, grading and problems with erosion and dust control, trail access, and other environmental concerns. This communication with County inspectors and construction supervisors will be critical to the residents of Twin Lakes, and for equestrians and hikers who use the trails.

Fifth District Deputy Patti Friedman, who worked closely with the community during the public hearing process for these projects, retired this summer, and Bob Haueter is now the head of the Fifth District Field Office here in Chatsworth (818-993-5170). The Mitigation Monitoring Committee will be responsible for maintaining close communication with the Supervisor's Field Office, and telephone contact numbers for both the committee and the project manager will be made available for the community to report any concerns when construction commences.

La Vina and the Altadena Trails

*Controversy still surrounds a housing project approved by Los Angeles County in the early 1990s. At present, trails for the Altadena community that were promised as part of the conditions of approval for the La Vina development project remain unfinished. Developers for La Vina, a 272-home gated community next to the Angeles National Forest never built trails in Millard Canyon that were agreed upon during the permit process conducted in the late 1980's. Dedicated open space was turned over to the homeowners association, which has blocked trail completion. Los Angeles County has filed suit against three developers, seeking an easement or right of access so that the County can build the trails. **Save The Altadena Trails** has named the County, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the homeowners association in their own lawsuit seeking compliance.*

CEQA Changes

Proposed legislation in Sacramento could potentially weaken CEQA (The California Environmental Quality Act), much to public detriment. Certain proposals could undermine citizens' right to get involved in the approval process for development projects and to challenge a governing body's decisions. Instead of requiring that a developer prepare an environmental impact report for a project based on the findings for that particular project, a "qualified" EIR certified at some time during in the 10 years prior to the proposed project might be used instead. These proposals, if passed, could seriously compromise the private citizen's ability to comment on the impact of a particular project on their community. For more information, please refer to California Assembly Bill 1387 (Jones), Senate Bill 832 (Parata), Senate Bill 948 (Murray), The Southern Sierran Magazine, August 2005 Issue, the Jones and Stokes Impact Report at www.jonesandstokes.com, and the League of California Cities Website. Also check the CEQA website at <http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa>.