



Citizens Committee to Save

Elysian Park

October 24, 2011

No. 141

Memorial Tree planting November 19, 2011

The Citizens Committee to Save Elysian Park will sponsor its annual Memorial Tree Dedication and Planting on Saturday, November 19, at 11:00am. Please note the earlier 11:00am time.

The ceremony will be at Elysian Fields where most of the trees will be planted. We will also plant several in the Chavez Ravine Arboretum section of Elysian Park near the restroom by the parking lot off Morton Avenue. If it is raining or seriously threatening rain, the ceremony will be at the Elysian Adaptive Recreation Center on Academy Road just East of the Police Academy.

If you would like to plant a tree for a loved one or for yourself, please call early. The deadline for calls is Monday, November 7. Call Mary at (323) 667-0867

Directions to Elysian Fields: Take Angels Point Road (across from the road to the Grace E. Simons Lodge) all the way past Angels Point to the top of the hill.

NOTE: We are running out of room in Elysian Park to plant trees! This may be our second to last planting. The number of trees for planting, as well as the choices of trees to plant have been limited by LA Recreation and Parks management.

Elysian Reservoir Update Decision for Elysian Reservoir is Imminent

The Final Environmental Impact Report for Elysian Reservoir was issued in September. The five-member Department of Water and Power Commission is scheduled to vote on accepting the FEIR and choosing the alternative for the reservoir on either November 1 or 15. The FEIR recommends the floating rubber cover as the Environmentally Superior Alternative. This is a shortsighted conclusion because it considers only short term effects versus long term gains. Although the landscaped buried tank would have a longer construction time and create more short term environmental damage, it would last 100+ years and would create 14 acres of new useable park land. The floating cover would have to be replaced five or six times in 100 years (each time causing disruption of park use and negative noise and air impacts) and would be a permanent industrial style blight at the bottom of a beautiful 40 acre park canyon.

The FEIR is also grossly flawed in its analyses of aesthetics/views. It states that views of Elysian Reservoir are virtually non-existent, which is not true. It also states that selective landscaping can screen unsightly views, which is also not true. The reality is that the reservoir is a major focal point of the canyon, and the only way to preserve beauty there is to cover the reservoir with landscaping. That this would create 14 acres of new useable park land is additional incentive for this solution.

The DWP Commissioners understood this when in 2008 they unanimously voted to make the landscaped buried tank the Preferred Alternative for the EIR. At that time DWP staff had recommended an aluminum cover with solar panels. All three alternatives were studied in the EIR. Now, in October 2011, DWP has been pressured by the Mayor and City Council to keep rates from increasing, and DWP claims it has no money. And so a \$25 m (floating cover) versus a \$110 m (landscaped buried tank) is being budgeted for Elysian Reservoir.

The Avenue of the Palms

You've all ridden or driven down the park road called Stadium Way through the Avenue of the Palms. This allee of Canary Island Date Palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) is a well-known landmark throughout the region. It's perhaps the best-known segment of the late 19th century beautification effort in Elysian Park, which also resulted in plantings of Eucalyptus throughout the hills, and the planting of rare and unusual trees in the Chavez Ravine Arboretum.

Planted in 1895, the palms are at about the end of their natural lifespan, having survived a proposal to construct a six lane highway through the park in the 1960s. In addition, the date palms in the park are suffering from Fusarium wilt. This invariably fatal disease is spread by the use of chain saws in pruning the palm trees. Further, they are suffering from the effects of compacted soil, due to paving being extended up to their trunks, and from a lack of irrigation.

At the July meeting of CCSEP, Don Hodel of UC Cooperative Extension and a well-known expert on palms, addressed the Committee, diagnosed problems, and gave suggestions for replanting of the Avenue with a different species. (Since the Fusarium lives in the soil, new Date Palms cannot be planted.)

Complicating the issue, the Avenue is part of the Elysian Park Arboretum, which is Historic-Cultural Monument No. 48, and as such any replanting must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes. Translated, this means that since we can't replant with Canary Island Date Palms, we have to replant the Avenue with palms that look pretty much like them.

CCSEP has decided to commence interplanting the existing palms with new palms—about 100 new palms will be required— and it will be one of the most complicated and costly projects that CCSEP has undertaken. The palm species to be selected and the arrangement for their replanting are still up in the air. CCSEP has appointed a committee to investigate appropriate palm selections, to interface with Recreation and Parks, to arrange for the actual planting, and to publicize the rebirth of the Avenue.

Watch this pace for periodic updates on the progress of the replanting!

Elysian Park Expansion

Want to change the world? Even just a small part of it?

This fall the students at Dorris Place and Allesandro Elementary Schools in Elysian Valley will leave their own indelible mark by helping to choose the name for a new park in their neighborhood. The soon-to-be-named 18-acre expansion of Elysian Park on Riverside Drive was finally opened this spring after CCSEP waged a 20-year battle to protect this open space from development. The property was acquired in the 1990's using Proposition K funds.

The new park is an important improvement for Elysian Valley, a residential/industrial stretch of Riverside Drive which some mistake as an on-ramp for the 2 or 5 freeways. The park is a welcome addition to the community as Elysian Valley has suffered for many years from a lack of recreational facilities. Next time you're on Riverside Drive, pause there a while and take a break from your commute.

The park begins on Riverside Drive, just north of Stadium Way. At street level, there are basketball courts with usually a friendly pick-up game in progress, but most of the park meanders up the hillside where you will find hiking paths, secret glens, and upper playing fields for Frisbee; a loop path with descriptive signs that highlight the plants and the local wildlife that live in this native California Walnut forest: birds, rabbits, and even foxes! If you feel a little more ambitious you can hike the switchback paths up the steep Landa Street hill and on into the wilder areas of the park. Your reward at the top: fantastic views of the city looking north-

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CCSEP meets the 1st
Wednesday of the month,
7:00 P.M. at Barlow
Hospital-Williams Hall.

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Sunday in the Arboretum

On Sunday, October 9, 2011 the Southern California Horticultural Society (SCHS) hosted a second tour of the Chavez Ravine Arboretum in Elysian Park: "The Trees of the Chavez Ravine Arboretum PART 2, Guided Tour and Picnic." (The first tour--Part 1--was in July.)

The October tour was lead by Don Hodel, from the University of California Cooperative Extension and author of "Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles," and by Bart O'Brien, Director of Special Projects for Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden and co-author of "California Native Plants for the Garden."

It was a beautiful day and we began our tour by revisiting a few specimens of trees near the play area that had been discussed on the July tour; we heard additional commentary on their growth habits and current condition.

The tour continued up the Arboretum, crossing Elysian Park Drive until it reached its goal—Palm Hill. Tour Leader Don Hodel, who specializes in trees, is a well-known expert on palms. The group spent some time discussing, in depth, the tall Chilean Wine Palm (*Jubaea chilensis*), the large fan palm at the entrance of the road to the Lodge. It is a slow-growing palm. You can't really tell the age of this palm, but ours must be pretty old. It was in fruit when we saw it, and the yellow golf-ball-size fruits were scattered on the ground. The yellow flesh is edible, but it's insipid. The nut, which looks like a tiny coconut, can be split and the meat eaten. These nuts are often for sale in local markets in Chile.

Other rare palms were visited, such as one with thorns, and one that grows only in the shade. The group learned that some palm trunks appear to shrink as they grow. That is a sign that during that growth period, there was less water for the palm, and so the palm did not grow as large as it otherwise would.

The group also learned that the grass should be removed from around the palm trunks, and the palms mulched (and in the rest of the Arboretum, too). The mulch will then slowly release nutrients to help the palm grow.

After the tour, the group repaired for a bountiful pot-luck picnic lunch provided by the SCHS and those who attended the tour.

Elysian Reservoir continued from page 1

This may sound like a logical conclusion until the cold hard facts are revealed. The Coalition to Preserve Open Reservoirs was formed in 1989 when DWP disclosed its intention to cover or build filtration plants for 10 open drinking water reservoirs across the city. CPOR entered into mediation with DWP staff in 1990, which continues to date to resolve the various reservoirs' fates to the satisfaction of the surrounding communities. Twenty-one years and hundreds of meetings later Elysian is one of two remaining (Upper Stone is the other) whose fates have not been decided. The community surrounding Elysian unanimously favors the landscaped buried tank and decries any other alternative.

As recently as 2009 DWP okayed \$192 m to replace Silver Lake and Ivanhoe- they will be left as open water- with buried landscaped tanks (Project Headworks at the junction of the 5 and 134 freeways). Currently more than \$200 m has been spent there. In 1998 \$100 m was allocated for landscaped buried tanks to replace Upper and Lower Hollywood Reservoirs- they remain lovely and uncovered as emergency water supply. In 2004 \$101 m was provided for a filtration plant at Lower Stone Canyon Reservoir.

Elysian Reservoir was the initial reservoir DWP announced for covering in 1985. So it is somewhat strange that Elysian was left until the end when there is no money.

CCSEP has been in touch with Councilmember Ed Reyes who supports the landscaped buried tank. He is lobbying state and federal agencies for compliance deadline extensions. This would allow time to find additional funds. We have also contacted Senator Boxer's and Congressman Becerra's local representatives for assistance. An extended deadline may delay choosing an alternative.

Unfortunately, all five DWP Commissioners are new since 2008 when the former group voted to have the landscaped buried tank as the Preferred Alternative for the EIR. CCSEP has appeared before members of the new panel in April and again on October 4 to inform them about Elysian Reservoir and the past twenty years. We offered tours but received no takers. Elysian is unique to all of the other reservoirs in that it is the only one in a park, and this park is also a hugely popular inner city Regional Park.

If the Commission does not vote for the landscaped buried tank alternative CCSEP has the option to sue over either the inadequacy of the EIR or environmental justice. We will be investigating our options.

**Support the
CCSEP
Join Today!**

**Membership
Information**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

New Member \$10

Renewal \$10
(Student and Seniors, \$5)

Donation \$ _____

I'd like to help

I'm interested in the following:

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east towards Eagle Rock and Pasadena and the towering San Gabriel Mountains beyond.

The current facilities are Phase I of the park development. Phase II will include construction of a 2500 square foot community building with restrooms on the Riverside Drive street level. A terraced trail system with railroad-tie steps and a scenic outlook at the upper Landa Street level will also be developed when the funds become available for Phase II.

The Riverside Park has its own special neighborhood feel and is a worthy addition to Elysian Park. We are anxiously waiting for the name selection. I hope you stop in soon and explore your park.

Help complete our archive

Do you have old CCSEP memorabilia taking up valuable space in your basement? Were looking for old newsletters in particular to fill out our archive, specifically the following issues: Numbers 52, 65, 67, 69, 74, 75, 83, 88-90, 95, 96, 99-103, and 108. If you do please contact us and we'll arrange to pick them up, scan, then return to you ASAP.

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