



Wilshire/Montana Neighborhood Coalition

Neighbors Working Together For A Better Community

Wilmont efforts lead to hiring of “Parking Czar”

FALL 2008

MISSION STATEMENT

The Wilshire/Montana Neighborhood Coalition (Wilmont) is founded on the basis that all people, regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or income level, can work together to improve the quality of life in the community. Wilmont's territory extends from the Pacific Coast Highway to the west, 21st Street to the east, Wilshire Boulevard to the south and both sides of Montana Avenue to the north.

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On July 23rd, the City Council approved an amendment to the 2008-09 budget that will fund two additional jobs at City Hall. It might sound like a bit of boring arcana that could easily be overlooked. In reality, the resolution represents the culmination of years of work from Wilmont and its Chairwoman, Jeanne Dodson. It also represents a major step forward in efforts to find more parking for our beleaguered residents.

In January of 2009, the City has been authorized to hire what some have referred to as a “Parking Czar”. Until now, Santa Monica government has never included anyone who had the ultimate responsibility of finding and implementing solutions to our severe parking problems. As stipulated in the Budget Amendment, this new position will be “related specifically to citywide traffic and parking issues”. The second approved position will provide much-needed staff support.

Over the past years, Wilmont has worked tirelessly for parking reform. Our initial efforts were aimed at getting City government to understand and acknowledge the severity of our neighborhood's parking problems.

We conducted the first – and only – residential survey to actually count the number of residents and parking places. Our survey showed that on one sample block there were approximately 340 adult residents. When the number of parking places in buildings and on the street was calculated, however, it showed that those 340 residents had only 201 places to park. This presentation was one small step towards convincing authorities that the problem needed to be addressed.

When the need had been established, we turned our attention to finding possible solutions. As part of the process to update Santa Monica's General Plan (LUCE), last year we convinced the City to hire experts to study the problem and come up with some answers. Our board members worked diligently with these consultants to research parking strategies throughout the world and

to devise some creative solutions. Residents from across the city attended numerous neighborhood meetings and came up with many more innovative suggestions.

Once the ideas were gathered and the LUCE process was complete, however, Wilmont board members were extremely disappointed to discover that not one penny had been allocated in the City budget to implement any of those improvements. Without the personnel to turn those concepts into reality, all that work and all those great ideas would be wasted and absolutely nothing would change.

After complaining to the Planning Commission and the City Council, Wilmont was lucky to gain the support of two Councilmembers, Kevin McKeown and Ken Genser. With their assistance, the support of other neighborhood groups, and Wilmont's negotiating and arm-twisting, City staff and the full Council finally agreed to fund two new positions that will focus exclusively on improving traffic and parking.

Wilmonters should be hopeful that parking change may be on the horizon soon. Having battled government bureaucracy for years to get to this stage, however, we can't afford to be complacent now. We've made a good start, but have a long way yet to go. First, we'll need to monitor the individuals who are hired to fill these additional positions. It's critical that the new parking manager knows our community and the myriad, unique factors that have contributed to our current dilemma. We'll also need to be assured that the person who is hired will listen to our residents' concerns and not just address the interests of business, developers and tourists.

While some improvements can be started immediately, change will not necessarily be quick or painless. We've built ourselves into a nearly impossible situation and finding any solution will not be an easy feat. Difficult choices may be necessary and we'll need to have the political will to carry them out. But with a little ingenuity, a lot of hard work -- and the addition of a new “Parking Czar” -- residents can hopefully look forward to a less frustrating parking future.

Wilmont helps to improve pedestrian safety in our neighborhood

In May of 2007, a 90-year-old Santa Monica resident who was crossing 4th Street at Idaho Avenue, was struck by a vehicle and died as a result of the injuries sustained.

As the representative organization for our neighborhood, Wilmont used its influence to petition City officials to improve pedestrian safety at this corner. Advisory boardmember, Freida Dubin, spearheaded the effort and worked for many months with Santa Monica's Director of Planning & Community Development, Eileen Fogarty, to implement the needed changes. With Fogarty's assistance, in July of this year, Wilmont succeeded in having stop signs placed at the intersection of 4th Street and Idaho.

These stop signs are a significant improvement for the safety of pedestrians crossing at this intersection, and hopefully will help to prevent additional fatalities from occurring there in the future.

Preferential Parking in Wilmont

In April 2008, Wilmont sponsored several neighbors in the 1100 block of 9th Street (between Wilshire and California) to try and get preferential parking on their street. This is one of the last blocks in the area that does not yet have preferential parking for its residents. The street usually fills up very early in the morning and stays full until late at night due to parking from employees of neighboring businesses and the busy Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf on the corner of Wilshire and 9th.

Several neighbors got together and, with a grant from Wilmont, mailed the required City petitions to all the residents on the street. Eighty-eight letters were mailed out and only twenty-seven were returned. Unfortunately, this was not enough for preferential parking to be enacted on this block, since two-thirds of the neighbors must support it.

Although the petition process was not successful on this block, it may work on yours. For more information about preferential parking for your block, visit the City's website at: <http://www.smgov.net/planning/transportation/preferentialparking.html>.

An interview with Neighborhood Resource Officer Joe Cortez

Joe Cortez is the Neighborhood Resource Officer for Beat 4 with the Santa Monica Police Department

Questions for Officer Joe:

a.) What is the new community-policing program?

It's called the Neighborhood Resource Officer Program. The program is about bringing the community and police department together, as a team, and giving the community one person to go to for their policing needs. Kind of like ol' Barney Fife, where everyone knows their local officer. The Chief of Police, Tim Jackman, has put the Neighborhood Resource Officers in charge of thoroughly knowing our assigned area and responding to ongoing issues.

b.) What do you do and what areas do you patrol?

We have eight beats in Santa Monica, with each beat having an assigned officer. I'm the Neighborhood Resource Officer (NRO) for Beat 4, which includes the Wilmont area. The NRO is like the team quarterback – we're in charge of our beat and call all the plays. For example, if you call regarding chronic homelessness in the neighborhood, I'll get our officers from our homeless division out to your block. We can help you set up a neighborhood watch, address long-term concerns like ongoing noise violations or chronic homeless issues, and address your overall community policing concerns. Of course, if there is an emergency, call 911. But, if there are long-term issues that you want to discuss, call me - Officer Joe.

c.) What are the most common crimes committed in our area?

Major crimes have substantially decreased in the Beat 4 area. Larceny and simple theft are the most common crimes, especially stealing things from motor vehicles and bike theft. People are using weak bike locks and getting their bikes stolen from alleyways and carports.

d.) As residents, what can we do to prevent crime and keep our neighborhood safe?

Lock your doors and windows when you aren't home. It's a common practice for thieves to check for open windows and doors. They can quickly get in and out without anyone knowing. Also, know your neighbors and be very aware of who is in your area. Tell a neighbor that you trust when you'll be out of town, and ask them to keep an eye on your place. Call the police when you see something out of the ordinary.

e.) What is a neighborhood watch program and do they actually work?

A Neighborhood Watch involves a group of neighbors who meet periodically to discuss what's going on in the neighborhood. Your Neighborhood Resource Officer and Crime Prevention Coordinator, Ana Montalvo, will provide you with tools to keep your neighborhood safe.

In addition, we can conduct a thorough safety assessment of your property. But, the most important aspect of a Neighborhood Watch Program is getting familiar with your neighbors. We have received calls from residents who know that their neighbor is on vacation and have observed something out of the ordinary. Thanks to these calls and the Neighborhood Watch, we've often caught someone in the act of a crime. Neighborhood Watch Programs are very successful.

f.) How do we set up a Neighborhood Watch program?

Setting up a Neighborhood Watch Program is simple. Call Ana Montalvo, our Community Relations Crime Prevention Coordinator, at (310) 458-8774 and she'll be happy to assist you in setting up your own Neighborhood Watch Program.

g.) Any other words of advice?

Be very aware of your surroundings. Don't hesitate to call the police – we never get upset with calls from the public. If you have any issue that you need to resolve, I'm here to help.

Officer Joe can be reached at (424) 200-0684 or by email at joseph.cortez@smgov.net. You can learn more about the Neighborhood Resource Officer Program at www.santamonicapd.org.

Get involved where you live

Around 620 BC, the legendary observer of human character, Aesop, said, "After all is said and done, more is said than done."

It's amazing how time flies. Here it is 26 centuries later and how true Aesop's words ring today. No matter what your politics, most would agree that, in today's America (and certainly that includes Santa Monica), it is no longer enough to simply lament or to throw your bedroom slippers at the endless string of TV news stories about government's increasing disassociation from its citizens.

It's time to get off the couch and out into the world of hope, action, and change. Needless to say, there's a lot going on in our nation's presidential campaign these days. The blow-by-blow machinations are in our

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Annual Meeting

The Wilshire/Montana Neighborhood Coalition held its annual meeting on June 7th this year at the main Santa Monica library's Community Room. We were pleased that so many people came to hear presentations, meet their neighbors, sample some great food, and might even have gotten lucky and won a door prize. The Santa Monica Police Department and Crime Prevention's Neighborhood Resource

Center program informed us that each area of the city has an officer assigned from this unit. Wilmont has Officer Joe Cortez. We also heard from Eileen Fogarty, Planning Director for the City of Santa Monica. Ms. Fogarty reported about the City's general plan update, the Land Use and Circulation Elements (LUCE). There was plenty of time given for the audience to ask questions of our guest speakers.

The members voted to elect Benjamin Steers, Gale Feldman, Mary Fenstermacher and Sean Milliken to the Board of Directors. They also voted to pass three resolutions; 1) to support the 4th of July parade in Ocean Park with a \$500 donation; 2) to publicly support the passage of RIFT (Proposition T); and, 3) to request that the City Council set aside funds to hire personnel to implement parking changes in Wilmont. We hope to see you next year at our annual meeting in June of 2009.



Officers from the Santa Monica Police Department speak at the Wilmont annual meeting.

Planning Director Eileen Fogarty discusses the Land Use and Circulation Element.



Thank you!

We want to recognize all the vendors who were kind enough to donate door prizes and services for our annual meeting. Many thanks to the following local establishments for their generosity and neighborhood support!

Angelo's Shoe Repair
Drugtown Pharmacy
Fromin's Deli
Gaslite Lounge
Izzy's Deli
Kensington Caterers
Panera Bread
Pets on Wilshire

Get involved Continued from page 2

face, like it or not. It's about high stakes, high drama, and high profile. The continuous media-born buzz captures our attention and, perhaps, leads us to think that local issues offer little allure and have no punch.

Not so. Not by a long shot. There's no better way to launch your journey from alienation to activism than to join with your neighbors in working to improve the quality of life in our local community. You help make the news rather than hear about it. You make results rather than inertia. And, if you live between Wilshire Boulevard and Montana and in the area from 21st Street to the beach, you can make things happen by joining the Wilshire/Montana Neighborhood Coalition (Wilmont).

Choose your issue: traffic, increasing construction density, LUCE, personal safety, quality of life, burgeoning commercial development, preferential parking, the future of rent control, and many more. Wilmont has talked the talk and walked the walk on behalf of our community for many years.

Wilmont represents our neighborhood's interests

on various boards and committees, including the Neighborhood Council, Community Corporation and the Workforce Housing Committee. We speak at City Council meetings and have been working with City staff to find a solution to our area's serious parking problem among others. We welcome your opinions, questions, concerns, and participation.

The Board of Directors meets the third Monday of each month at 7:00 PM at the Ken Edwards Center, 1527 4th Street (just north of Colorado Avenue across from Santa Monica Place). We invite you to observe, chime in, volunteer or help in any way. You'll see and meet neighbors who, like you, decided that action beats apathy.

Make your decision to influence the future of Santa Monica official by becoming a Wilmont member. Call us at 310-840-2257 or visit us online at www.wilmont.org.

Make a change in your life. Make things happen. Join the dialogue. Join your neighbors. Join Wilmont!

Important Notice

Wilmont has recently experienced difficulties with politically motivated individuals using our group's name without permission. Over the past weeks, anti-RIFT mailings have been sent to residents throughout Santa Monica. One of the signers is a woman named Nancy Desser (misspelled "Dresser"), who is purporting to be a "Co-Founder of the Wilshire Montana Neighborhood Coalition".

Please note that Nancy Desser does not represent Wilmont in any way, shape or form and has not even been a member of the group since records have been kept more than 13 years ago! Terry O'Day, co-chair of the organization that disseminated the erroneous material, was notified weeks ago that Desser's information was incorrect, but chose to use it anyway.

As we're heading into the election season, it appears certain groups and individuals are using duplicitous methods to try and confuse the public. For the record, Wilmont's board voted to SUPPORT the RIFT initiative. More importantly, at Wilmont's recent annual meeting, the attending membership voted overwhelmingly to SUPPORT the measure, as well. That support has been echoed by RIFT endorsements from each and every neighborhood group in the city.

If passed in November, the Residents' Initiative to Fight Traffic, now designated as Proposition T, would limit traffic congestion and runaway commercial development in Santa Monica. To find out more information about the initiative, log on to www.smrift.com.

Wilmont was organized to represent the interests of our residents and we welcome all points of view. If you would like to voice an opinion on this or other topics, send an email to info@wilmont.org. Anyone seeking a group endorsement or additional participation is encouraged to join us the third Monday of each month for our 7PM meeting at the Ken Edwards Center, 1527 4th Street.