



RANCHO PALOS VERDES

COMMUNITY FORUM

Fall 2002

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[Wayfarers' Chapel: Unique To Our City](#)

Lloyd Wright's Tree Chapel



panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean and Catalina Island. For over fifty years the Chapel has welcomed countless wayfarers. But, how many know the story of the glass, stone and redwood gem set along the southern coast of Rancho Palos Verdes?

The Wayfarers' Chapel is the creation of two geniuses separated by centuries: Architect Lloyd Wright, son of the famed architect, Frank Lloyd Wright; and, Emanuel Swedenborg, an 18 Century mystic and theologian. Whereas Lloyd Wright described the outer environmental world and our relationship to it, Swedenborg described the inner world of mind and spirit. It is this dynamic relationship of inner and outer worlds that makes the Chapel unique.

The Wayfarers' Chapel began as a dream of Elizabeth Schellenberg, a member of the Swedenborgian Church who was also the local postmistress of the Palos Verdes Peninsula in the late 1920s. She dreamed of a little chapel on a hillside over the Pacific where wayfarers could stop to rest, meditate and give thanks for the beauty and wonder of creation. At that time, the Peninsula was largely open farmland with a two-lane gravel road skirting the shoreline from San Pedro to Palos Verdes Estates. The drive from Los Angeles to the Peninsula was an all-day outing.

Another Peninsula resident, Narcissa Cox Vanderlip, also a member of the Swedenborgian Church, offered to make the dream come true and agreed to contribute land for the chapel site. Mrs. Vanderlip invited a young architect, Ralph Jester, to draw up plans for the chapel. Ralph and his wife Lois were long-time residents of the Peninsula and lived in a Lloyd Wright designed home on Narcissa Drive. Unfortunately, however, the great depression of the 1930s and then World War II delayed the development of the plans for the church.

Following the war, Jester reviewed his sketches of a Spanish mission-type chapel; not satisfied with his design, he urged his friend Lloyd Wright to apply his genius to the project.



This offer came shortly after Lloyd Wright had a profound experience while visiting the redwoods in northern California. While having lunch at a small restaurant, he looked up through the skylights and saw the redwoods arching overhead, forming a cathedral-like surroundings. He vowed that this would be his inspiration if he ever received a commission to build a church. When approached by Ralph Jester, the natural tree chapel took form in his mind.

"I want the trees and their trunks to be seen," he said, "and the space beyond, so that those who worship in the sanctuary will perceive the grandeur of the world around them and beyond them. . . I used glass so that the walls and roof are transparent. The trees, the natural growth, the sky and the sea become part of the Chapel. The glass provides protection, but at the same time gives the congregation a sense of outer as well as inner space."

Lloyd Wright's design of glass, Palos Verdes stone, and redwood beams was a startling innovation and captured the imagination of the Swedenborgian church members throughout the United States and Canada. Church members pledged \$25,000 for the building and Mrs.

Vanderlip donated over three acres. On July 16, 1949 the cornerstone of the Chapel was laid and the site consecrated. Dedication service was held on May 13, 1951, with the president of the Swedenborgian Church officiating.

In 1954 Wright designed the soaring Hallelujah Tower that goes down two stories into the soil and locks in solidly to anchor the sanctuary to the hillside. At night the tower with its lighted cross is visible for many miles out to sea. Sailors passing through the Catalina Channel call it God's candle. A chime of sixteen

bells in the tower proclaims each quarter hour, peals forth at the end of wedding celebrations, and plays for special events and services.

Mr. Wright designed the colonnade and original visitors center in 1958. The grass-terraced amphitheater offers visitors a spectacular view of Abalone Cove, Catalina Island and the Pacific. The blue tile roof of the colonnade blends the colors of the ocean and the sky. Easter sunrise services and other special events are held there. Because of landslide damage, the visitors' center was closed in 1982 and finally removed in 1995. Wright's design for the glass loggia office at the base of the tower was his final project for the Chapel before his death in May 1978.

Continuing the architectural tradition of his father, Eric Lloyd Wright, a design consultant, teamed with local architect Dean Andrews in constructing the new visitors center. The design echoes the Chapel's architecture: the natural thirty and sixty degree angles, blue tile roof, Palos Verdes stone and glass is repeated to unify the structures.

The new Visitors Center was dedicated in May of last year as part of the Chapel's 50th celebration. Displays in the center focus on the architecture of Lloyd Wright, the Chapel's services and celebrations, and, of course, the story of Emanuel Swedenborg and the Swedenborgian Church.

Lloyd Wright believed that the plantings were as important as the architecture. The Tree Chapel is surrounded by Coastal Redwoods. Inside, ornamental grape ivy and sword ferns line the stone walls. Depending on the season, orchids, azaleas or poinsettias highlight the altar and chancel in the sanctuary. A twisting Toyon tree is framed in the round circle of glass above the altar. Wright wanted the gardens immediately adjacent to the chapel to reflect plantings found in the redwood forests. These forest floor gardens feature rhododendrons, azaleas and many other native plants. The walkways leading from the Chapel have Italian stone pines overhead to form arboreal walks. The main garden features a multitude of roses.

A church without a membership, the Chapel welcomes people from all walks of life and religious backgrounds. In Lloyd Wright's words, "This Chapel was to be a place for people to meet, and think, and contemplate the forces of nature and God Almighty. The setting of this Chapel is to receive people, the wayfarers."

RPV TURNS THE BIG 3-0: HELP PLAN THE CELEBRATION

RPV IS TURNING 29-again. OKAY, it's really 30!! Most people pretend this particular birthday doesn't exist, but for the City, turning 30 years old is a cause for major celebration.

The City wants to commemorate its 30th anniversary of incorporation with a series of community events to be held between September and November of 2003. Preliminary ideas include a family picnic and barbecue, a bicycle ride, guided nature hike, a golf tournament and a formal dinner/dance.

The City is looking for resident volunteers to help with planning and organizing this 30th Anniversary Celebration. So whether you've been a resident of the City for 5,10, 20, or all 30 years, or even if you just moved here last week and like what you've seen so far, let us know if you want to be a part of this momentous anniversary. If you're interested in offering your time and energy to this project, please contact the City Manager's Office at 544-5205 or send an email to citymanager@rpv.com. Turning 30-it's something to be proud of.

WHY DOESN'T THE CITY REGULATE CABLE TELEVISION RATES?

Each time the local cable television operator, Cox Communications, increases its rates, the City receives a flurry of angry phone calls and letters from residents asking why the City doesn't block the increase. Unfortunately, and as much as we would like to, the City has no legal authority to regulate cable television rates.

The rates charged for cable television service break down into four categories: basic service, expanded/premium service, equipment rental and installation. With the adoption of the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996, the rates for expanded/premium cable service (i.e. CNN, HBO or Disney) may not be regulated by any federal or local agency, and are controlled instead by market demand. With regard to basic service (i.e. over the air channels such as ABC, CBS and PBS), equipment rental (such as converter boxes) and installation, only the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has the authority to regulate the rates charged for these services. To do this, the FCC has established "benchmark" rates that serve as a cap for the rates cable companies nationwide may charge for basic cable service, equipment rental and installation. Therefore, cable service providers like Cox Communications may set their rates for these services any place at or below the maximum established benchmark rate.

City records indicate that Cox Communications has not increased its rates for basic cable service in the last three years. The rate Cox charges for basic service is below the established FCC cap. The current FCC cap for basic service is in the \$18 to \$19 per month range, while Cox Communications charges its subscribers \$15.55 per month for this service. With regards to rental of a converter box, the current FCC cap is \$4.12 per month, while Cox is currently charges \$3.00 per month. The cable company cites the rapidly escalating cost of purchasing expanded/premium programming as the primary cause of the rate increases that have occurred in recent years. According to a Cox representative, the costs the company must pay for this type of programming are increasing approximately 20% per year. Because the rates charged for expanded/premium services are controlled by market demand, the increased cost for programming is largely passed on to the subscribers who select these channels.

Some people are aware that the FCC has a procedure by which the City can become "certified" to review rate increases pertaining to basic cable, equipment rental and installation. Both the Cities of Los Angeles and Rolling Hills Estates are certified to review cable rate increases. However, the federal law stipulates that, if the proposed rate increase is at or below the benchmark, the certified local agency would have no authority to deny or block the increase. Because City certification would not result in any benefit to our residents, the City Council has chosen not to pursue certification with the FCC.

COMPUTER AND ELECTRONICS RECYCLING DAY

Get Rid of your Obsolete Electronic Equipment

Now is your chance to get rid of the obsolete electronic equipment that has been gathering dust and getting in the way. On Saturday, November 16, the City and SoCal Computer Recyclers are sponsoring a recycle round up for obsolete computer equipment. Obsolete electronics equipment is quickly becoming a significant source of material disposed of in our local landfills and the equipment that you recycle will help the City meet State mandated goals for reducing the amount of trash going to the landfills.

The roundup will take place on Saturday, November 16, between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. at the City Hall Yard, located at 30940 Hawthorne Boulevard.

The City has teamed up with SoCal Computer Recyclers to recycle electronic equipment safely and properly. Computers and printers can be broken down into their various components such as metal, plastic, and, of course, circuit boards. When this equipment is dismantled and recycled, these materials are reintroduced into the raw materials stream instead of the waste stream. Even the hazardous CRTs (Cathode Ray Tubes) that contain lead can be rebuilt and made into new monitors.



Bring your obsolete computer and electronic equipment to this round-up and you won't even have to get out of your car-place your recyclables in the trunk and it will be unloaded for you. Any equipment that has market value will be resold; all information on the hard drive will be erased. SoCal Computer Recyclers will contact schools, churches and other non-profit organizations to donate useable equipment.

Only computers, monitors, printers, cables, keyboards, televisions, stereo equipment, telephones, VCRs, hand-held computer games and network equipment will be accepted. No software, furniture, white goods (washing machines, refrigerators, etc.), used batteries, microwave or conventional ovens, or non-computer related mechanical equipment will be accepted.

Call Rancho Palos Verdes Public Works Department at (310) 544-5252 for more information.

GRADING AND RETAINING WALLS

Check the City's Code Before You Start

This City offers lots of reasons for people to make their homes here. One of them is the rural feeling provided by the City's canyons and diverse topography. The City's hilly, sloped landscape can also prove frustrating to the homeowner when they attempt to achieve more useable yard by grading and building retaining walls on this hilly and steep terrain.

Unfortunately, the City encounters many incidents of grading and construction of retaining walls done without getting City approvals and permits. The purpose of these approvals and permits is to have the project go through a process that will ensure the project meets the limitations and standards for grading allowed by the City's building code. If a homeowner grades and builds a retaining wall without getting approval, they will be required to get an after-the-fact approval which carries a penalty-double fees.



People are often misinformed about what constitutes "grading." It is not simply the smoothing or flattening of land for a flowerbed. Grading involves excavation that is three feet or more in height or depth, or when at least twenty cubic yards of soil is either removed (exported) or brought onto the existing site (imported). To be on the safe side, homeowners should

contact the City before moving any soil, or starting any excavations; this is especially important when the area being graded or excavated is a sloped area.

To improve their property, homeowners sometimes build retaining walls without getting the required approvals and permits. Retaining walls are defined as a wall or structure that holds back soil, whether on a flat or sloped surface. In most cases, retaining walls are constructed in an attempt to terrace or "stair step" a sloped portion of property to create a flat area for a garden or deck. In other instances, the retaining wall is holding back a slope. Generally, the City's Code discourages terracing on slopes, however there are provisions to approve retaining walls in certain cases.

To make sure that plans for walls or any structure that is retaining soil is built according to code, homeowners should have their plans reviewed by the City. To avoid delays and double fees for legalizing after-the-fact grading, the best practice is to consult with City staff before starting construction. Consider the following tips prior to moving any soil or constructing any type of wall that retains, or holds back earth:

- Prior to construction discuss the project with the City's Planning and Building Staff, preferably in person. Provide staff with topographical and other pertinent information about your property.
- Have staff explain planning or construction terminology that is unfamiliar to you.
- Hire contractors who hold a valid state contractors license and a City business license.
- For the sake of accuracy, follow up with City staff on the information your contractor gives you regarding the requirement of City approvals and permits.
- Consider these tips for any other new development on your property including the construction of fences, walls, hedges, patio covers, decks, re-roofs or any type of structure addition, repair or replacement

Contact the Planning, Building and Code Enforcement Department with any questions you have about a project you are considering on your property. Staff can be reached at (310) 544-5228. Remember that in most cases, new projects are a two-fold process, requiring both a Planning Department application and approval, and the associated building permit and inspections. City staff is here to ensure that your project is approved, permitted and constructed safely according to code requirements.

BUDGET MESSAGE FY 2002-03

Beginning in July 1999 the City Council established a two-year budget cycle and adopted a budget that included the anticipated revenues and expenditures for the next two fiscal years. The current two-year budget was adopted by the City Council in June 2001.

The City Council reviewed the second year of the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2001-03 at a Budget Workshop held on April 30, 2002. Concerned about the economy and interested in changing some priorities, the Council directed staff to prepare a "baseline" budget for FY 02-03, omitting discretionary expenditures and reserving them for later consideration.

The "baseline" budget proposed by staff and approved by Council is the City's general operating and capital improvements budget for the next fiscal year and does not contain any new programs. It assumes the same level of service in FY 02-03 as is shown in the two-year budget document, plus some specific increases to the budget totaling approximately \$800,000. The most significant increases were to the City Attorney's contract, and additional professional support for the Finance Advisory Committee and the new Emergency Preparedness Task Force.

The discretionary items not included in the "baseline" budget are summarized in the chart below. Both the Department recommendation for funding and the City Manager's recommendation for funding are shown.

FY 2002-2003 DISCRETIONARY BUDGET ITEMS

DESCRIPTION	Department Requested Budget	City Manager's Proposed Budget
Additional Full-Time Employees	\$171,000	\$171,000
PVDE Drainage Improvements - Sunnyside Ridge	\$1,400,000	- 0-
Citywide Drainage Improvements	\$100,000	\$100,000
Residential Overlay Program	\$1,000,000	\$663,000
Master Planning	\$200,000	\$200,000
Sewer Maintenance	\$350,000	\$350,000
Traffic Signal Addition	\$135,000	\$135,000
Transfer to Building Replacement Fund	\$100,000	\$100,000
TOTAL:	\$3,456,000	\$1,719,000

The City has attempted to maintain a General Fund Reserve balance of 50% of the annual estimated General Fund revenue for each fiscal year. Under this policy the General Fund Reserve balance required for FY 02-03 is \$6,451,870. The projected ending General Fund Reserve balance will be \$7,549,022 on June 30, 2002. Therefore, the amount of the projected General Fund Reserve available for appropriation on June 30, 2002 is \$1,097,152 (the projected ending General fund reserve balance of \$7,549,022 less the General Fund Reserve policy level of \$6,451,870).

In addition to the available General Fund Reserve, there are an estimated \$934,827 of FY 02-03 General Fund Revenues that have not been included in the proposed budget.

The proposed sources of funding for the discretionary items included in the City Manager's Proposed Budget are shown below:

Use of Projected General Fund Reserves Available as of June 30, 2002:	Discretionary Items Included In the City Manager's Proposed Budget:	Use of General Fund Revenues Available Through FY 02-03:
\$1,097,152		\$934,827
	Additional Employees »	(\$171,000)
	Residential Overlay »	(\$663,000)
	Building Replacement »	(\$100,000)
(\$200,000)	« Master Planning	
(\$100,000)	« Citywide Drainage	
(\$350,000)	« Sewer Maintenance	
<u>(\$135,000)</u>	« Traffic Signal	
<u>\$312,152</u>	NET GENERAL FUND RESERVES AVAILABLE	\$ 827

The Council determined that the Projected General Fund Reserve Available as of June 30, 2002 was best suited for "one-time" expenditures because these are funds that are unobligated, but are not a continuing

source of revenue in future years. The Estimated General Fund Revenues Available through FY 02-03 may be utilized for "recurring" expenditures because the total amount of baseline expenditures plus discretionary expenditures are within the annual estimated revenues.

Over the next year, staff and the Finance Advisory Committee will be working on a long-term financing plan for the City's Drainage Improvement Program. Therefore, no drainage projects have been proposed for funding in FY 02-03. However, the "baseline budget" does include funds for completion of the studies for the Citywide Drainage Improvement program as a one time expenditure.

The discretionary expenditures approved by Council for funding from General fund Revenues anticipated in FY 02-03 include the cost of funding additional employees and setting aside money for building replacement to make "life-extending" repairs and modifications to our facilities. Finally, the residential pavement overlay program that has been a part of the City's regular services to its citizens since the adoption of the Utility Users' Tax in 1996 was considered by the Council to be a recurring expenditure and was funded at the highest level possible considering funds available.

View Restoration and Preservation - The Current Process

The View Restoration Permit process provides a mechanism for residents of the City to restore a view that is blocked when foliage on an adjacent private property exceeds 16 feet in height or the ridgeline of the primary structure on the property, whichever measurement is lower.

View restoration can occur via two separate and distinct processes: View Restoration and View Preservation.

The view restoration process is utilized to restore a view from a property that by design had a view when the lot was created but is now significantly impaired by foliage on another property. Also, under this scenario, **there is no photographic documentation** of the view as it existed in November of 1989, when prop M was adopted, or anytime since then. The process is designed so that the view holder pays to have their view restored. Once restored, the foliage owner is financially responsible for all future maintenance. View restoration actions are decisions made by the View Restoration Commission (VRC) and their decisions can be appealed to the City Council.

The view preservation process is utilized to restore a view from a property that by design had a view when the lot was created but is now significantly impaired by foliage on another property. However, unlike view restoration, **there is photographic documentation** of the view as it existed in November 1989, when the View Restoration Ordinance was adopted, or anytime since then. Under this scenario, staff would use the documentation and restore the view to what is shown in the photograph. The process is designed so that the foliage owner pays to restore and to maintain the view from the applicant's property. View preservation actions are administrative decisions made by the Director of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement and can be appealed to the View Restoration Commission and the City Council.

Under the current view restoration process, an applicant must first file a Notice of Intent to file an application for view restoration or view preservation. There is no fee for filling the Notice of Intent and it is not considered a formal application submittal rather, it is the starting point for initiating Pre-Application process. Once submitted, Staff schedules and facilitates the pre-application meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to explain the City's view restoration process and to help facilitate an agreement between the participants. If an agreement is reached, then staff or the participants will draft said agreement and the file is closed. If no agreement is reached, then the applicant is free to file the formal view restoration or view preservation application. At the present time there is no filing fee for view preservation applications. However, the initial filing fee for view restoration applications is \$185.00, and based on the complexity of

the project, you will then be required to establish a trust deposit that will be used to cover the cost of processing your application through to the View Restoration Commission (VRC) hearing.

The following photographic examples depict before and after views that were found to be significantly impaired:



For more information regarding the View Restoration and Preservation Ordinance and/or the View Restoration Commission, please contact the Planning, Building and Code Enforcement Department at (310) 544-5228.

Ho! Ho! Ho! To "Breakfast with Santa" We Go!

Mark your calendars for Saturday, December 14th for some old-fashioned holiday fun with Santa. Breakfast, crafts, carols, and pictures with Santa await children of all ages at Hesse Park from 9:00am to 10:30am. Bring your camera!

Children & Adults, \$6 each. Registration forms at Hesse Park. Call the North Pole at 541-8114 for more information. All proceeds benefit the RPV REACH Program, for young adults with developmental disabilities.

Sign up today! Santa's sleigh is on the way!

MAKING BUS CONNECTIONS JUST GOT EASIER

No Need To Carry Extra Cash To Transfer

The MTA is introducing Ezpass, which will be accepted by 12 different transit systems and allows you to

travel all across Los Angeles County for one low fare. Transit systems in the Peninsula area accepting the Ezpass include the MTA, LADOT, Torrance Transit, and Gardena Municipal Bus Lines.

This Ezpass will simplify travel for those riders who regularly use two or more of the 12 participating bus and rail systems with a common "currency." The pass will also make boardings easier and will relieve riders of having to carry extra cash or purchase additional transit passes.



An Ezpass for local lines starts at \$58 for adults and \$29 for senior/disabled customers. Premium service stamps for express service range from \$15 to \$75 extra for adults and from \$7.50 to \$37.50 for seniors and the disabled.

Ezpass is good for unlimited travel on the following transit systems: City of Commerce; Culver CityBus; Foothill Transit; Gardena Municipal Bus Lines' LADOT; Long Beach Transit; Montebello Bus Lines; Norwalk Transit; Santa Clarita Transit; Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus; Torrance Transit; Metro Bus &

Metro Rail.

For more information on Ezpass, please call 1-800-RIDE-INFO (743-3463) or 1-800-COMMUTE (266-6883).

EQUINE RESPONSE TEAM GETS CERTIFIED

Local Group Looking for Volunteers

The first group of Peninsula volunteers just got certified to become members of the County's Equine Response Team. Getting this hard earned certification were Kay Bara, Cathy Cozier, John Douglass, Sherree Greenwood, Juanna Lamb, Leslie Stetson and Ron Stewart. More local residents are in training to join the team sometime later this year.

This volunteer equine rescue team was formed in 1997 to address the concern about evacuating horses from the area in the event of a fire or some other disaster. Members of the response team are required to complete over fifty hours of training sessions and drills that cover disaster management procedures, fire safety and disaster psychology, first aid, emergency trailer loading techniques and vehicle operation. For the program to be successful on the Peninsula, the group is looking for volunteers who are committed to equine rescue and safety. For information about the next training session contact Kaye Michelson at L. A. County Department of Animal Care & Control at 562 940 8909.

HOME IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Loans Available To Low And Moderate Income Residents

If you are in need of improvements to your home, the City of Rancho Palos Verdes may be able to provide some assistance. Improvements such as the repair or replacement of roofing, heating, plumbing, windows, are eligible projects. Also, the testing of lead based paint hazards and lead based paint abatement measures are considered eligible items.

Through the use of federal Community Development Block Grant funds, the City offers grants of up to \$5,000 and/or deferred zero percent (0%) loans of up to \$10,000 to low and moderate income residents. The loan is payable upon the sale of the home, transfer of title, or if the home is refinanced.

The program has had a significant response since its inception in early 1999. To date, the Home Improvement Program has completed 30 projects. Currently, four projects are under construction and an additional eight residents are in the process of obtaining bids for their work.

Applications are currently being accepted as a result of additional funding earmarked for the 2002-2003 fiscal year. To be eligible for a grant and/or loan, you must be the owner and occupant of a single family detached dwelling, be a resident of the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, and meet certain income requirements. Persons whose income is less than \$30,850 for a one-person household and \$35,250 for two-person household are eligible.

For income limits of larger households, additional information or an application, contact Esther Portillo on Wednesdays, at (310) 544-5252.