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# The Canyon Crier

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## CCEA ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 16TH

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The 68<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Chevy Chase Estates Association will be held on Wednesday, March 16, 2005 at 7:00 p.m.

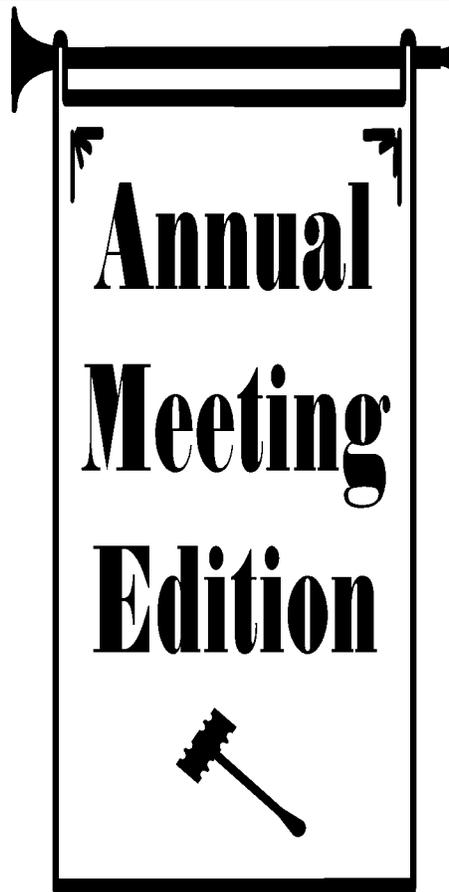
The Annual Meeting will be held in at the Chevy Chase Country Club, 3067 East Chevy Chase Drive.

The evening will start with a half-hour social at 7:00 p.m. At 7:30 p.m., we will conduct the business portion of the meeting, including the Presidents' report, the Treasurer's report and election of Directors.

### Election of Directors

Any CCEA member may run for an open Director position by submitting a resume and a petition signed by 10 CCEA members. Resumes and petitions should be sent to Richard Murray, CCEA Co-President, 2908 Chevy Chase Drive, Glendale, CA 91206.

The following Directors, whose terms will expire in March 2005, have agreed to serve another three-year term,



and will stand for re-election by the membership at the Annual Meeting:

Greg Crawford  
Suzanne Mitus-Uribe  
Brit Trydal

There will be one additional vacancy for a Director position.

### Candidate Forum

For more than 40 years, CCEA has sponsored a City Council Candidate Forum at the Annual Meeting to give Canyon residents an opportunity to hear from individuals running for City Council.

The City Council election is vital to the future of Chevy Chase Canyon and the entire City of Glendale. We encourage all members to attend the Candidate Forum and to vote in this important election.

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### Come One, Come All

The Annual Meeting is a great opportunity for you to meet with your CCEA Board of Directors, discuss issues which are important to you and have a say in the future of our beautiful canyon. See you there!

## Election Time!

### *Good grief, who are all these candidates?*

by Craig Curtis

Confusion is common when election time comes around – particularly when there are more than a dozen candidates for City Council this year! But, we all need to give the candidates careful consideration because the future of our fair city is up to *you!*

Here are a few thoughts to consider when casting your vote: Over the past 10 years, what have candidates *promised* about preserving our hillsides and how well (if at all) have they kept those promises after they were sworn in? It seems that some of these folks — once they were safely ensconced in our City Hall — either forgot their promises or had a serious change of heart. As Council Members, their “Protect the hillsides!” campaign slogans rapidly changed to, “Slope isn’t important; good design, that’s the key!” How

do these politicians justify their broken promises in light of the recent deluges which caused landslides and tremendous property loss in Glendale’s hillsides?

Eleanor Roosevelt wrote, “If someone betrays you once, it is his fault; if he betrays you twice, it is *your* fault.” We should all heed Mrs. Roosevelt’s advise when reviewing the candidates, their qualifications and the list of promises they will all doubtless make.

To conclude with another thought from Mrs. Roosevelt: “Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is mystery. Today is a gift. That is why it is called the present.”

Consider the future of our canyon and of our entire city when you vote. Your vote does make a difference!

## In Memoriam

The Canyon lost a good friend when Gerald (Jerry) Briggs passed away on January 29, 2005.

Jerry dedicated himself to our Association for nearly a quarter of a century, during which time he earned many distinctions, including being the longest-serving president in the history of CCEA.

Jerry’s contributions to the Canyon are too numerous to list, but foremost among them must be his tireless devotion to enactment and enforcement of the Hillside Ordinance. The residents of Chevy Chase Canyon owe Jerry tremendous gratitude for helping preserve the natural beauty of the Canyon.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Jerry’s wife, Marylou, in this difficult time.

Jerry, we will miss you.



## Real Estate News

### Canyon sales since July 2004

(data from the Los Angeles County Tax Office)

by Brit Trydal

<u>Address</u>	<u>Sq Ft</u>	<u>Br/Ba</u>	<u>Sales Price</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Sq Ft</u>	<u>Br/Ba</u>	<u>Sales Price</u>
1555 Arundle Place	1712	3/2	\$745,000	2341 Flintridge Drive	2799	4/3	\$720,000
2111 Ballmain Way	2901	4/3	\$959,000	2524 Flintridge Drive	3412	5/4	\$1,645,000
3118 Buckingham Road	3661	4/4	\$1,085,000	3146 Hollyburne Court	3300	4/3	\$850,000
3261 Buckingham Road	1657	3/2	\$660,000	3160 Hollyburne Court	3029	4/3	\$906,000
2126 Camino San Rafael	3408	4/3	\$1,298,000	3805 Karen Lynn Drive	2123	4/2	\$840,000
3146 Charing Cross Place	1861	2/2	\$750,000	3851 Karen Lynn Drive	2198	4/2	\$910,000
2311 E. Chevy Chase Drive	1908	2/2	\$649,000	2640 Kennington Drive	2623	4/4	\$695,000
2575 E. Chevy Chase Drive	2058	3/3	\$545,000	2728 Kennington Drive	2551	3/3	\$600,000
2935 E. Chevy Chase Drive	2309	3/3	\$740,000	3140 Kingridge Way	2560	4/3	\$860,000
3028 E. Chevy Chase Drive	3698	4/4	\$1,275,000	3291 Linda Vista Road	2024	2/3	\$695,000
2891 Edgewick Drive	2880	3/3	\$769,000	3455 Linda Vista Road	1184	2/2	\$800,000
3655 Figueroa Street	3032	4/4	\$750,000	3018 Paddington Road	1866	3/3	\$775,000
3311 Emerald Isle Drive	2079	3/2	\$779,000	2911 Saint Gregory Road	2700	4/3	\$1,240,000
3415 Emerald Isle Drive	2567	4/3	\$949,000	2981 Saint Gregory Road	2867	4/3	\$959,000
1996 Erin Way	3146	5/4	\$899,000	3772 San Augustine Drive	2500	4/3	\$1,260,000
3531 Fallenleaf Place	3070	4/3	\$908,000	1616 Sheridan Road	1737	3/2	\$655,000
2224 Flintridge Drive	2934	4/3	\$850,000	1676 Sheridan Road	2417	3/4	\$975,000

# Presidents' Message

by Ginger Bremberg and Dick Murray

**2**004 was an active one for your Association, and your Board of Directors has worked hard to protect the Canyon and keep members informed.

## Hillside Ordinance

The Hillside Ordinance remains the most significant matter affecting the Canyon. We had hoped to be able to report that the City Council had finally stepped up to the plate and addressed all the issues necessary to strengthen the Hillside Ordinance, but alas, that is not the case. The Council, as it has done for years, continued to duck, side-step and put off what we recognize are hard decisions.

As we reported to you previously, after indicating by a four to one vote (with only Dave Weaver voting no) that they would approve certain amendments to strengthen the Hillside Ordinance, the Council apparently lost their nerve and failed to take the promised action. It appears that several of the Council members simply bowed to the pressure and influence of the builders, architects and developers.

We need Council members who will stand up for what is best for the entire community, not bow to the influence of real estate speculators. Remember, four of the five City Council seats are on the ballot. If you are fed up with false promises about strengthening the Hillside Ordinance, be sure to talk to the candidates at our Candidates' Forum on March 16<sup>th</sup>. And cast your vote for individuals who are serious about protecting the Canyon.

## Chevy Chase Reservoir

Glendale Water & Power is in the second year of a multi-year city-wide water-system improvement program. Three projects directly affect the Canyon. The first two –

the cleaning and relining of the water main on Chevy Chase Drive, and replacement of water mains on Cascadia Drive and surrounding streets) have been completed. GWP has now begun planning the third project in our area: the replacement of the reservoir located under the Chevy Chase Country Club's golf course.

The first stage of the reservoir project is to determine exactly where the new reservoir will be built. Because this choice will greatly impact Canyon residents during the construction process, your Association will work closely with GWP to ensure that Canyon residents remain informed and have an opportunity to offer their opinions before a final determination is made.

## 2674 Kennington

A builder wanted to build a large house on a lot with a 73% slope. Your Association objected. The Zoning Administrator approved it anyway. We appealed and lost. We then appealed to the City Council and won by a four to one vote (with Dave Weaver again being the only vote against us). Two weeks later, the City Council reversed itself, and advised the builder they would consider approving a smaller house. The Council sent the case back to the Board of Zoning Adjustments, which approved a smaller house. Again we appealed to the City Council (after all, the land hadn't gotten any less steep!), but this time the City Council approved the building, effectively endorsing development on 73% slopes.

## 2312 E. Chevy Chase Drive

The owner of this vacant lot wanted to build a home on a lot with a 68% slope and a frontage of only 63 feet. In addition, the proposal required the cutting down of pro-

tected oak trees. More than 200 concerned homeowners signed a petition opposing the building and destruction of trees.

Again, the Zoning Administrator approved the project. Again, we appealed to the BZA and lost. Again, we appealed to the City Council. And again, by a four to one vote (yes, Dave Weaver was the hold-out), we won and the development was stopped. Unfortunately, however, this was a short-lived victory. The owner has now filed a new application, this time for a smaller house. As you might guess, the Zoning Administrator approved the request, despite the fact that your Association and all the neighbors still oppose the development on the same basis. Your Association has appealed this decision, and we will, of course, keep you posted.

## City Buys Open Space

Although we often take issue with actions of the City Council, in this case, they are to be complimented wholeheartedly. The Council approved the purchase of two large parcels of land in the Canyon: the Poulsen Tract (about 78 acres between Scholl Canyon and East Chevy Chase Drive) and the Murchison Tract (about 148 acres overlooking the Canyon). Both tracts will be used as park land. Again our compliments and thanks to the City.

The Association wants to express its heartfelt thanks to our members for all their support, and to both the Glendale Homeowners Coordinating council (representing approximately 22 homeowners associations) and to V.O.I.C.E. (Volunteers Organized In Conserving the Environment) for their continuing, unwavering support of our position on the Hillside Ordinance.



## Controlling In-fill Lot Development

The hundreds of small, steep vacant lots – known as “in-fill” lots – in the Chevy Chase Estates area have become popular targets for get-rich-quick land speculators. A quick survey of lot sales on only two of our Canyon streets shows that nearly 60% of the 77 small, extremely steep in-fill lots have been sold in the last four or five years — and sold at fire-sale prices!

What’s going on here?

Well, it appears that many longtime owners finally realized that the costs of building retaining walls, bedrock foundations and other extensive engineering features required to mitigate geological hazards make it prohibitively expensive to develop these lots properly. Add to this the general opposition of residents to the unrelenting increase in development in canyon and hillside areas, as well as the strong pro-hillside positions taken by many Glendale homeowners’ associations over the past several years. As a result, many of these longtime lot owners have put their vacant lots up for sale.

Who would buy these lots? And why?

Looking at the sales listings, it appears that speculators are taking advantage of the ease with which virtually any

project is approved by Edith Fuentes, Glendale’s Zoning Administrator.

The basic pattern is for developers to buy a steep (what most people might think of as “unbuildable”) vacant lot for pennies on the dollar, hire an architect to design the biggest house possible, present the project to the notoriously builder-friendly Ms. Fuentes, push through whatever conditional use permits and variances might be required, and then put the whole package on the market for four to five times what they paid for it. One recent ad actually said something like, “Build your Dream House! Plans and approved permits included! All you have to do is start construction!”

One such dream-house lot recently went up for sale for more than \$300,000; it was remarkably similar to a nearby lot that sold for only \$70,000. Not a bad profit when your expenses are the price of the lot, maybe \$30,000 for a set of plans and a few thousand in fees.

But this is America, you say. Free enterprise and capitalism are what we stand for, right? Why should we worry about unsuspecting would-be homeowners buying these vacant lots? After all, caveat emptor – let the buyer beware.

Well, if nothing else, we should be concerned because many of these lots never get fully developed, but neighbors are forced to suffer through the attempts. For example, there are two lots on Kennington Drive which have been under “development” for more than two years, with nothing to show for it but construction blight, eroded hillsides, and intermittent noise and inconvenience for all the neighbors.

What can we do? The Chevy Chase Estates Association Board of Directors has been lobbying the City Council to make changes to the Hillside Ordinance to require a Variance to build on a lot steeper than 60% slope. In return for its efforts, CCEA has been met with resistance from the City Council, as well as threats and slander from land speculators (the more audacious of whom actually deny being speculators at all, claiming instead that every application is to build a house for their son or daughter). The bottom line is, the current City Council is simply afraid to take a stand. They are afraid to prohibit development of unacceptably steep hills, despite the danger of landslides and the threat to public safety.

Under the current Glendale

*(Continued on page 5)*

CONTROLLING DEVELOPMENT  
(Continued from page 4)

Municipal Code, the maximum allowable size of a house (in square feet of living space) is determined by the size of the lot. This restriction is known as the Floor Area Ratio (or "FAR"). The Municipal Code defines a maximum ratio of house living area to lot area, with different limits for different parts of the City. For example, on a relatively flat 10,000 square foot lot in our area, the largest allowable house would be 4000 square feet, plus a 700-square-foot garage.

In 2003, the Planning Commission proposed an ordinance which would allow the development of very steep lots, but limit the size of the house based on the steepness and size of the lot in question.

The City Council rejected the Planning Commission's proposal then, but it is time for the City Counsel to reconsider their decision.

The failed Planning Commission proposal was called a Variable Floor Area Ratio plan. Rather than applying one FAR to an entire area, a Variable Floor Area Ration plan would create a sliding scale which would force houses on very steep lots to be smaller. The basic concept is, the steeper the lot, the smaller the allowable house. This would serve to limit the undesirable visual impact of mansions perched on cliffs. It would also encourage builders to consolidate vacant lots to increase the land area available for each house, which is actually a goal stated in the General Plan.

CCEA supports the Variable Floor Area Ratio concept as well as restrictions on the maximum height of houses on slopes greater than 30%. All these proposals would address residents' valid concerns about the objectionable size and massing of homes on steep downhill lots without prohibiting development.

Many cities in California use the Variable Floor Area Ratio concept, and we think it the

CCEA supports the creation of a Variable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in the Hillside Ordinance. A sensible plan might look like this:

Slope	FAR	Maximum Allowable House Size	
		7500 sq ft lot	12,000 sq ft lot
30% or less	0.4	3000	4200
40%	0.3	2250	3200
50%	0.25	1875	2700
60%	0.2	1500	2200
70%	0.15	1125	1700
80% or greater	0.1	750	1200

Maximum house size = FAR limit (see table below) for the first 10,000

time has come for Glendale to do the same. As the U.S. Supreme Court recognized, "Land use planning is not an all-or-nothing proposition." Landowners simply do not have the unfettered right to develop properties to whatever extent they might desire.

Under the proposed plan, if unusual circumstances existed where a builder felt he should be allowed to build a larger house, the current Variance process would be available for him to show why his case was exceptional and should be exempt from the normal rules.

Developers will doubtless scream at not being allowed to build their 6000-square-foot "dream houses" in the canyons of Glendale, but the City has no legal obligation to give these developers free rein. The fact is, the screaming would eventually stop, but the destruction of our hillsides would last forever.

The citizens of Glendale understand this. Now it's time for the City Counsel to get on board.

## More Than Our Hillsides Are Slipping Away

*by Steve Hedrick*

I should disclose up front that I'm a candidate for Glendale City Council. This fact may lead some to believe that I'm critical of City Hall for this reason. But those who know me, know differently. I am a hillside homeowner, and for years, I have pushed for responsible hillside development in Chevy Chase Canyon and will continue to do so, whether elected or not. With that said...

The recent rain and subsequent mudslides should be a wake-up call for our City government. The City Council cannot continue to approve unrestrained development on steep hillsides without improving our infrastructure. Upgrading roadways, managing water flow and improving drainage costs money. The City is reluctant to fund these expensive projects. Due to this neglect, many of us will have to pay for the damage caused.

As we clear away the fallen trees and debris from our properties, mop the mud from our basements, and repair flood damage, let's keep in mind that, even now, the City's Zoning Administrator is approving exceptions which will allow more hillside construction. Very little, if any, consideration is given to how these piecemeal approvals affect the safety of existing homeowners. No one is evaluating the combined impact of all these approvals over the years. This culture of gross negligence has to stop. The City's mantra of, "Let the builders build!" as they turn a blind eye to the ramifications, must change.

Let's not confuse lack of planning on the part of our City Council with the fine job that our Public Works Division performed during the recent rainstorms. These working men and women did an exceptional job. They worked tirelessly through the storms and their quick response saved lives and property. Thank you!

The cause of the water damage and mudslides are still being investigated, but preliminary conclusions point to poor rainwater management. Apparently, the recent heavy rainwater easily crested insufficient street curbs and saturated the hills, causing flooding and slope failures.

Here's why.

Over the years, the City has repaved our narrow streets, raising the height of the roadbed but neglecting to increase the height of the curbs that channel water safely downhill. So, the torrent of water goes up and over the curbs, causing flooding and mudslides.

It was recently discovered that the drainpipes under Dunsmere Road have been eroding for years. The street nearly collapsed. From the extent of the long-term damage, it is apparent that the City does not have a program for inspecting these under-street drainage systems. Had it not been for a Canyon resident who noticed a large sinkhole near the edge of the road, Dunsmere Road could have completely collapsed, cutting off all the homeowners who live on Dunsmere, Cornwall, and Tyrell. There are similar stories throughout the Canyon.

Other cities require developers to pay hefty fees into a fund for future infrastructure upgrades, before they are allowed to build. Unfortunately, developers in Glendale get away with contributing very little. They take their profits and move on to the next empty lot. What is even more unfortunate is that we, the existing homeowners, end up paying the price.

*Steve Hedrick is a board member of the Chevy Chase Estates Association. He can be reached at [ShoBizStev@aol.com](mailto:ShoBizStev@aol.com).*