

# STATUS OF THE Master Plan

The Baldwin Hills Conservancy continued its mission to implement the "One Big Park" conceptual plan this year with the acquisition of 102 acres of coveted property straddling both sides of Fairfax Avenue and extending north of the ball fields behind Slauson Avenue and up to Stocker Street. **An \$11 million grant from the Conservancy's Proposition 40 funds made it possible to close a three-year negotiation for the surface rights of the property. This will provide long-term opportunities to expand the sports complex and add new, much needed, active recreation facilities.**

This purchase represents the largest physical land acquisition by a public agency in the Baldwin Hills for nearly a decade. Thanks to unprecedented collaboration with our partner agencies from the County and State, the property has been protected for future recreational enjoyment.

Building on the success of the Stocker Corridor acquisitions, the BHC partnered with Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation to acquire the property on the east side of La Brea Ave. This tax default acquisition was facilitated in part by Councilman Bernard Parks' leadership in garnering support for a generous waiver of funds owed to the City of Los Angeles.

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CHAIRMAN  
Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer Sr.

les. Plans for linking Jim Gilliam Park, Norman O. Houston and Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area through development of a trail network are now being researched.

Land acquisition and planning for the development of new facilities in the Baldwin Hills are challenges that have proven elusive in the past, yet progress is steady. As the Conservancy targets new sites, other acquisitions by area partners have provided additional synergy with the One Big Park concept. This summer, West Los Angeles College completed a 13-acre acquisition on Jefferson Blvd. and Leahy Street which will provide a second entrance to the college nestled inside the western ridge of the Baldwin Hills. This key access point will drastically improve emergency egress for students attending the growing campus, and as adjacent parklands are acquired, it will serve visitors and students seeking to explore the remaining native habitat covering the west facing slopes.



Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, Sr.

**The Conservancy will be able to continue acquisition efforts, thanks to the bond funds made available through the California Clean Air, Safe Parks and Clean Water Act of 2002.**

However, additional funding is needed to complete its mission. The Conservancy remains committed to creating a world-class park for the people of Los Angeles and has a great appreciation for everyone's past support. As we look to the future, we ask for your continued diligence and advocacy to insure state, federal and local funds are directed to this worthwhile goal.

L. Denise Smallwood RESIDENT

# Walking Trails IN THE STOCKER CORRIDOR

I discovered it on my way to the Crenshaw Mall. A mom, dad and two daughters marching into the thick brush.

How did they get up there in the lush thicket high above Stocker Street, just west of Crenshaw? Had the neighborhood been taken over by adventure seekers willing to take on rabbits, snakes and who only knows what else? Peering up in awe over my steering wheel and holding up traffic, I counted two more families, a runner, and then two women, strolling casually along a peaceful rim.

Could it be possible? A walking trail perched high above Stocker Street, smack dab in the middle of a metropolis, practically in my backyard! The next morning, I donned my sneakers and turned right out of my front door, a left at Valley Ridge Avenue, and left onto the mouth of the trail, where city



Stocker Trail's western entry

buses and honking cars speed by. Within 20 minutes (depending what kind of shape you're in), the trail carries you 200 feet above it all.

At the top of the southern trail, I ran into David Simmons, 64, who sat at the lone look-out bench catching his breath. **"So many cars fly 50 mph down this stretch of Stocker, but they look almost like model cars from up here. And it's hard to believe the sound is completely drowned out by the birds and rustling grass."** He explained how the stretch of earthly beauty had been threatened by proposals to build high density, low-income housing and other development projects. "It's like you're in a different world up here, and it's really beautiful."

*Could it be possible? A walking trail perched high above Stocker Street, smack dab in the middle of a metropolis, practically in my backyard!*

The amazing trail, which offers panoramic views of downtown Los Angeles, was created as part of an ongoing effort by the Baldwin Hills Conservancy to make it easy for city

dwellers to have improved access to open space. "You can go as fast or as slow as you want, and it's so peaceful. It's a good place to just clear your mind after a long day," said Helen Young, a Park View resident, as she caught her breath after winning a contest with her son, Rondale, about who could lap the trail first. Rondale, 17, added that there are few places in the black community where people can get this experience. "It's a privilege to have this trail in this community. Plus it's good for your health."

The Conservancy plans to widen and resurface the mile-long trail to accommodate more users. Natural retention walls and large rocks for resting and stretching will also be installed, pushing the overall cost of the project to \$5 million, including acquisition costs. **"The trail is a symbol of promoting healthy lifestyles and educating urban communities on the environment," said David McNeill, Executive Officer of the Conservancy. "In the long run, investing in this type of elusive resource is well worth the money."**

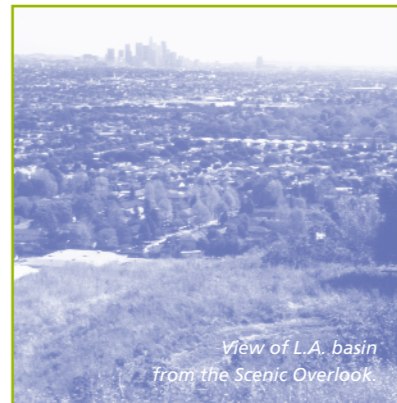
## BALDWIN HILLS

Elenore Williams STAFF WRITER

The Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook rests above Culver City at the northwestern section of Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. The State Park owned and operated site hosts unparalleled panoramic views of the Santa Monica, San Gabriel and Santa Susanna Mountain Ranges, the Santa Monica Bay, the Los Angeles basin, the Palos Verdes Peninsula and Catalina Island. Working from the community-based vision for the Baldwin Hills Parklands, California State Parks and the Baldwin Hills Conservancy are pleased to be putting the long awaited \$7 million project physically on the map. **The construction plans call for an 8,000 square foot facility that will include a Visitors' Center featuring historic and natural exhibits; a small Media Theatre for a broader state park experience** with other park units and classes; a Multi-Purpose Center; and both interior and exterior bathrooms for public use. In addition, a catering kitchen will be built which will be utilized to host small special events at the adjacent open-air pavilion area. Multiple plazas will be installed at the overlook for optimal hiking and view enjoyment.

# Scenic Overlook

## Construction will Benefit Park & Community



View of L.A. basin from the Scenic Overlook.

Access to the 68-acre park has been severely restricted since the work on the Overlook began in August. Department staff, contractors and local public agencies are currently the only people allowed to enter the property. According to Craig Sap, Acting L.A. Sector Superintendent of State Parks' Angeles District, the Department initially tried to provide limited access to the Overlook for community residents, but after researching the matter and discussing it with the general contractor, a determination was made that limited access would not be safe and would likely impede construction progress.

The Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook will have restricted access until around March, 2008. State Parks will work closely with the contractor to keep the project on schedule and prepare for the grand opening of the new facilities in the Spring. The end result will be an Overlook full of new resources that will benefit the park and surrounding communities for years to come.

Robert Osborne SECRETARY, FRIENDS OF THE BALDWIN HILLS

# ask not WHAT YOUR PARK CAN DO FOR YOU...

The Friends of Baldwin Hills is a 501c(3) non-profit organization formed by a coalition of community stakeholders who maintain an intimate connection with the Baldwin Hills Parklands and its regional amenities. From Marina Del Rey to Leimert Park, the Friends are connected through the gift of the unique public lands and recreational resources accessible within minutes of our homes and offices. Standing together, the Friends has moved mountains to ensure undesirable projects and questionable politics don't intrude on the vision for the "One Big Park" master plan and the "Park to Playa" concept, all while actively creating programs for youth and families to enjoy when they venture into the hills or travel the Ballona Creek. A few examples of what Friends are up to include the L.A. Audubon Society's monthly bird walks at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area ([www.laaudubon.org](http://www.laaudubon.org)), or the Sierra Club's urban camping and trail maintenance program ([http://angeles.sierraclub.org/news/SS\\_2006-02/Crenshaw.asp](http://angeles.sierraclub.org/news/SS_2006-02/Crenshaw.asp)).

Whether you are a member of the Kenneth Hahn Walking Club or the Ballona Network, volunteers and participants are always needed to help keep the parklands vibrant with people and programs that bridge cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. **If you haven't asked what you can do for your park lately, perhaps you should join Friends and take part in sustaining the creation of a world-class park for current and future generations.** To get involved in the Baldwin Hills Parklands, or for more information, please visit our website at [www.fotbh.org](http://www.fotbh.org).

Newsletter of the Baldwin Hills Conservancy,  
a partnership of communities,  
state and local agencies.

# THE PARK VIEW

WINTER 2006

Must all good things come to an end? Not if there is still serious work to do, asserts David McNeill, Executive Director of the Baldwin Hills Conservancy (BHC). Creating the largest urban park conceived in over 100 years takes time, especially when most of the land has been an oil field for over 75 years.

*Creating the largest urban park conceived in over 100 years takes time...*

Nonetheless, just six years after its enabling legislation, the California legislature will be considering whether to eliminate the BHC and walk away from the community-based vision for a two square mile world-class park in the heart of Los Angeles. With 767 acres currently protected, a balance of over 650 acres remains to be acquired and a long list of world-class amenities await necessary funding and leadership for implementation. **Why then is the prospect of eliminating the Conservancy a consideration?** Being one of the eight conservan-

cies in the state, the BHC is an experiment launched by leaders of the urban park movement. Oddly enough, this Conservancy is one of two in the entire state with a sunset date, which is set to take effect in 2008 unless the date is repealed.

"The transformation of the oil fields into parkland should not have a termination date," states Michael Jones, President of the 501c(3) Friends of Baldwin Hills, Inc. People from near and far have fought too hard to preserve this land for future generations to enjoy as park space." The legislature has just begun to address the disparity of parkland in predominantly black and brown communities. A recent study of Los Angeles open space showed white neighbor-



## 2008 End of the Line?

David McNeill EXECUTIVE OFFICER

hoods claim 17.4 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Conversely, Latino areas claim 1.6 acres and in African American communities, the number dives to 0.8 acres. Political action will ultimately decide the fate of the BHC. Assembly Majority Leader Karen Bass has pledged to carry legislation that would save the BHC from the chopping block. Speaking from a meeting in her district office, a resolute Bass quipped, "Sacramento has some unfinished business to attend to in the Baldwin Hills and I'm ready to lead the push to keep the BHC alive so this park can be realized." The community definitely plays a role in the outcome. Voters hitting the polls in November to support Prop 84 will further fund implementation of the "One Big Park Vision" for Baldwin Hills. Moreover, during the coming 2007 legislative session, public support for Assembly Member Bass' bill will help secure the future of the BHC and our cherished parklands.

## OIL DRILLING SOUGHT BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS

It is common knowledge that the unincorporated area of the Baldwin Hills has included as part of its landscape, historical oil and gas production operations as far back as the 1920s. **What people may not know is that Culver City and members of the Baldwin Hills community have expressed ongoing concerns about the increasing number of new wells being drilled over the past few years. The primary concerns expressed are excessive noise during the night, visual intrusion of oil wells, and the release of noxious fumes and odors negatively impacting residents within the last year. Also the juxtaposition of oil and gas production to public parkland, commercial and residential areas is a major concern.**

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## ORDINANCE

Carman Spiva RESIDENT

At a public hearing in early August, attended by several area homeowner groups, the County Board of Supervisors, led by Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, adopted an interim urgency ordinance to impose additional temporary restrictions on the drilling of new wells and the deepening of existing wells in the Baldwin Hills Zoned District. They also initiated a zoning study to consider potential additional permanent regulations of these historical oil and gas production operations in the area, including a determination of the appropriate environmental review to be required. Members of the impacted communities will get a short reprieve while studies are conducted. Representatives from the oil production company, Plains Exploration and Production Company (PXP), have met with community members to address the concerns and have taken action to mitigate the impacts of oil drilling operations to adjacent neighborhoods and parklands. The ordinance will remain in effect for a period of 10 months and fifteen days from the original adoption date of June 27, 2006. For more information, visit [www.planning.co.la.ca.us](http://www.planning.co.la.ca.us).

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## OUR FAMOUS Parklands

The Baldwin Hills area has a rich and lush history beginning all the way back to 1542 when the Tongva Native Americans inhabited these lands with a population estimated at 30,000.

Baldwin Hills has grown and changed over the years and we want the communities that celebrate its legacy to be excited and inspired by the evolution.

### ENTER TO WIN...

a family picnic, reunion or special event at Kenneth Hahn's popular Burke Roche Point, a beautiful oasis to host 100 of your closest family and friends. Burke Roche Point is a private area with breathtaking views, natural trails and covered picnic tables. The winner will receive a priority reservation to create a day that will be remembered forever.

### WHAT POPULAR 1960'S TV SERIES WAS FILMED IN BALDWIN HILLS?

#### HOW TO ENTER:

Send us the correct answer to this question (*Hint: Ponderosa*) along with your name, address, phone number, email address and let us know how often you visit the park and what part of the park master plan you would like to see built first! Mail to: Our Famous Park Contest, 6709 La Tijera Blvd #323, Los Angeles, CA 90045. Good Luck!

Entries must be received by December 31st, 2006. A winner will be drawn and announced in The Park View, Spring, 2007. Only one entry per household. Void where prohibited. Other restrictions apply. Must be a Los Angeles County Resident. Prize valued at \$300.00. The Baldwin Hills Conservancy reserves the right to cancel this contest at any time without notice.