

Mulholland Neighbors Rescue Last Parcel for Recreation

BY TOM CAMERON

Residential neighborhoods could be a great deal more pleasant and enjoyable if neighbors were more neighborly—like a group of 330 families on Mulholland Drive.

It was a couple of years ago when residents of the hillside area along the skyline drive began to worry about the future of their hitherto wide-open community. The few remaining open spaces were being claimed by developers who began fashioning "rice-paddy" pads with bulldozers and earth movers as a preliminary to erecting more houses. The area has no public parks.

It looked like high time to not only think about conserving some part of the area for recreational use, but to do something about it.

A group led by William McClellan proposed buying from the owner of the last

potential site a 6.5-acre property at 2500 Crestview Drive just south of Mulholland in the Hollywood hills. The owner agreed to sell if the group could obtain approval for construction and a zoning variance from the city.

At this point architect Richard J. Hunter, landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, dean of the school of landscape architecture at UCLA, both residents of the area, were called in to create the first plans to develop the site with recreational facilities in mind. Other residents, including Irving Zeiger, Helen Stout and Don Barr, organized support in the community and obtained financial pledges. Within nine months about 200 families had agreed to buy a "share" in the project, thus launching the planning and legal negoti-

ations for the project.

Town meetings, where initial subscribers were invited to tell what kind of recreational facilities they preferred, were conducted. Armed with this data, Hunter then started to develop a master plan for the site and to prepare the studies necessary to support an application for a zone variance that would permit construction of a recreational facility in an R-1 zone. This required more than a year, but the group didn't sit on its hands. It elected committees and conducted meetings that produced the data needed by Hunter to begin the final phases of the design.

Hunter designed a low-profile, two-story building to take advantage of the 270-degree view of Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley and the

mountains. The structure, housing many activities, has 16,500 square feet of floor space, with a dining room, clubrooms, cocktail lounge, kitchens and outdoor dining terrace on the second level. The first floor will accommodate two gymnasiums, sauna baths, dressing and locker rooms. Six tennis courts are to be installed at the rear of the second level. Materials were chosen to blend in with the location, and plantings were selected with the same objective.

The project is being managed by a non-profit corporation consisting of 330 families—those who put up their money in evidence of their willingness to cooperate in conserving some of the esthetic and recreational values of their community. Some new communities, built by a single developer, have these amenities provided without much effort on their part, but in a case where piecemeal and unorganized building is under way, such as on Mulholland, it requires something like this to avert a community problem with which everybody would have had to live unhappily.

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